POLITICAL ISLAM: CHALLENGES FOR U.S. POLICY

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Rapporteur's Summary

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The fourth annual conference on political Islam was conducted in Istanbul, Turkey, May 30-June 5, 2005. The meeting, which was the first of the series to be held in a Muslim country, focused on recent political developments in Egypt, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, and the implications for U.S. foreign policy. The participants were also briefed on political developments in Turkey, including environmental issues relating to the Black Sea and the Bosporus.

The first day’s discussion, concerning Egypt, was led by Ibrahim Karawan, Director of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah. Karawan focused on the current state of politics in Egypt including the intense debate about leadership succession and the mood of the people. Although Egypt has faced many challenges from Islamic and Islamist groups over the years, the prospect of an Islamic Republic of Egypt is not on the horizon. Egypt's conservative institutions, especially the army, are too powerful and public support for the Islamic parties and groups too low for any dramatic change in the near term. Nevertheless, the people of Egypt are restless and express great frustration against both their own government and the United States, whose policies in the Middle East, especially its overwhelming support for Israel, are extremely unpopular. Most Egyptians believe that the United States is more interested in preserving stability in the region rather than backing genuine reforms in Egypt, including more open elections. The recent free and well publicized elections in Afghanistan, the Palestine Authority, Iraq, and Lebanon have rubbed off on Egyptians and raised questions about the upcoming Egyptian presidential elections, and whether a real choice will be possible or whether Mubarak or his son will be preordained by the establishment for continued power.

There is much frustration with Mubarak’s style of government. He is good at “hiding behind the street” and engaging in populist rhetoric, but he is much less capable of forward-looking leadership and challenging the street to adapt to the realities of modernization. Although there should be no illusions about the imminent coming of democracy to Egypt, change is inevitable. But it is better to have orderly rather than disorderly change. The model of Latin American countries, which evolved slowly to install more democratic and transparent institutions, might be appropriate.

The policy implications for the United States were discussed from several perspectives. Egypt is an important ally of the United States. It remains the second largest recipient of American aid after Israel, which amounts to many billions of dollars. Some questioned whether the continued provision of such large amounts of support, especially the military component, was any longer necessary or appropriate given the regime’s reluctance to reform its political institutions and its economy. Others argued that the withholding of aid,
especially military aid, at this crucial time would be counterproductive. The dilemma, as always, is that the U.S. has to make tradeoffs between short-term and long-term objectives. In the immediate term, Egypt’s assistance in brokering further agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, especially with regard to the impending Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, is vital. For this reason, as well as Egypt’s diplomatic support for the U.S. policy agenda in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, tampering with military programs could backfire and diminish the prospects for strategic cooperation. On the other hand, the administration’s seeming approval of the Mubarak government and its praise of Mubarak’s so-called “reforms” sends the wrong message to the Egyptian people, especially the reformers who want to see the U.S. take a tougher stand on the lack of freedoms in Egyptian political life.

Given the close ties between Washington and Cairo, and the many mutual interests both countries share, managing relations with Egypt should be the easiest for the U.S. in the Arab world. The fact that the relationship remains strong, yet prickly, and that there is much anti-Americanism within the country points to the overall difficulties America and the public present to decision makers in both the legislative and executive branches.

On the second day, Vali Nasr, Professor of Middle East and South Asian Politics at the Naval Post-Graduate School, opened the discussion with a review of the political difficulties faced by two close U.S. allies: President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have changed the regional dynamics of South West Asia. It is important for the United States to better manage relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan if there is to be stability in the region. Unfortunately, both countries are still beset with problems. In the case of Afghanistan, there has been some progress, namely the successful elections which saw Karzai confirmed as President. But unless his government, with allied help, can assume stronger control over the country—a distinct from the region immediately around Kabul—Afghanistan could descend further into feuds controlled by drug lords presiding over what could become a narco-state. Parliamentary elections scheduled for this summer have been postponed in part because a strong anti-Karzai voice is expected, especially amongst the majority. Pushoon who feel marginalized and see Karzai (who is Pushoon) as an American puppet. In the western region of Herat, Iran has emerged as a powerful influence. Herat, after all, used to be a part of Persia before the British annexed it to Afghanistan in the 19th century. Iran does not have a vested interest in the success of the Karzai government. Neither does Pakistan. Thus U.S. and allied efforts to build a pro-Western, democratic state in Afghanistan do not coincide with interests of some of Afghanistan’s most important neighbors.

Pakistan regards Karzai with considerable hostility in view of the fact that eight Indian consulates have been set up in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban. Nothing hurts U.S. interests in Pakistan as much as the overwhelming support given by the Bush administration to the military rule of Pervez Musharraf. Despite stated support, Musharraf’s government has no reason to embrace anything other than a tactical relationship with America. The Pakistani elite believe Washington has made a strategic decision to favor India over Pakistan as part of a broader, longer-term Asian geopolitical arrangement that must be viewed in the context of the emergence of China as a world power. For this reason Pakistan’s goal is to exploit the United States in any way it can. So long as Pakistan is seen by the United States to be a vital partner in the war on terrorism, its leader believes it will be successful. Americans should not kid themselves: the fundamental reasons why Pakistan supported the jihadists in Afghanistan before 9-11 have not changed. The military government has decided that cooperating with its own Muslims is preferable to embracing the more secular and democratic parties who were ousted by Musharraf and who have not been allowed full freedoms to operate within the country.

The United States needs to be a lot tougher with regard to political reform and should communicate with absence leaders such as Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. In the longer term, the United States cannot have a strategic relationship with Pakistan until the India-Pakistan conflict is resolved. The biggest obstacle to resolving this conflict is the Pakistani military, which has a vested interest in the conflict’s continuance.

In the policy discussion, it was clear that the Bush administration has bipartisan support for providing the necessary aid to ensure that the Karzai government succeeds. This, despite the fact that the U.S. is in Afghanistan “accidentally,” as distinct from its presence in the Middle East, which is based on more solid strategic grounds. Nevertheless, the U.S. has to consider alternative approaches and go to greater lengths to extend the authority of the Kabul government itself. This will not be easy in view of the opposition to Karzai and the uncertainty about the new parliament. However, most participants argued that it was right to overthrow the Taliban and that the U.S. has to stay the course and probably increase its commitment to assistance which is about 1/20 the current level of assistance to Iraq.

There was concern about the future of Pakistan if Musharraf is replaced by a civilian. In the short run, the Pakistani military would continue its rule and then put up a civilian front. Musharraf has now been in power for nearly ten years. It was suggested that the longer he stays in power and denies the democratic forces a chance to organize, the stronger the Islamist parties will become. This would not be in America’s interest.

The third day’s discussion focused on Saudi Arabia and the challenges this complex and important country poses for U.S. policy. The initial presentation was made by Mai Yaman, Research Fellow, Middle East Program at the Royal Institute for International Affairs. Yaman’s basic argument is that Saudi Arabia is a mosaic of different tribes and ethnic groups with different social identities. The centralized structure of the regime, which is based on control by the extensive al-Saud family, is coming under increasing pressure, in part due to internal social and economic dynamics and also because of the potential fallout from 9-11 and the war in Iraq. Until recently the great achievement of the al-Saud family was to maintain a balance between its internal opponents and its control of oil production, its relations with the major powers, especially the U.S., and its role as custodian of the cities of Mecca and Medina and the defender of Islam. It now faces its most serious challenge from a new generation of radical Islamists who reject the premises of the Saudi regime.

Because of dependence on Saudi oil the United States continues to support the regime, although it is unclear whether the United States has thought through the implications of what is happening and whether there is the will to push for greater reforms. High oil prices cannot solve the problems of unemployment in the kingdom because the education is so heavily based on religious instruction, but Saudi Arabia cannot keep the world at bay. Exposure to the outside world has increased the public’s demand for economic and political rights. Saudi Arabia’s identity is fragile and its regional relationships are in flux. One impact of the Iraq war has been to enhance the close relationship between the United States and the smaller Gulf states, such as Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. This has invariably weakened Saudi Arabia’s strategic importance to the U.S. In terms of domestic troubles, the regime’s efforts to deny women participation in the electoral process suffered a setback when everyone witnessed the free and open vote of women in the Afghan, Pakistani and Iraqi elections. The excuse that the denial of voting rights was somehow related to Islam was seen as a fraud. Likewise, television images of rich Saudis indulging in the South of France further undermines the credibility of the royal family. Despite visions of freedom elsewhere in the
Middle East, anti-Americanism in Saudi Arabia is strong; and there is a power struggle between the Crown Prince Abdullah, who is seen as pro-American, and Prince Naif, the interior minister, who is seen as anti-American and has close ties to the conservative religious establishment. The current government is kept alive with modern medicine denies Abdullah the full power he would have as King, and thus the rivalry between the senior members of the royal family contributes to the sense of unease about the future of the kingdom. These men are all in their 80s and it is unclear what will happen when this first generation of sons born to Ibn Saud finally pass away.

The discussion focused on two somewhat separate issues: the need for the United States to adopt a more radical energy policy to decrease dependency on foreign oil, including Saudi oil, and the more immediate political dilemma of how to deal with the regime given its importance as both the world’s largest oil producer and its strategic role in the Middle East. Several participants argued that the fact that Saudi Arabia is an unstable state reinforces the need for a reassessment of U.S. energy policy, and the United States should therefore diversify its energy by importing oil. Competitive alternatives to imported oil include clean coal, ethanol, and huge shale oil deposits in the western states. The U.S. must break its addiction to foreign oil and therefore its dependency on unstable regions of the world. Others were more sanguine and felt that the international market should be the primary arbiter of energy policy and energy prices. Some felt that our problems with Saudi Arabia have more to do with terrorism and ideology than energy security. Furthermore, the motives that had driven young Saudi men to commit atrocities against the U.S. were not poverty or oppression. Several of the 9-11 attackers were well educated and had lived in Europe for many years. It is vital that the U.S. address the appeal of extremist ideology that leads to violent acts against America and its allies.

Perhaps the most interesting new element in the discussion concerned the impact of the Iraq war on trans-nationalism in the region. With the weakening of the Saddam Hussein regime and the growing assertiveness of Iraq’s new leadership and the smaller Gulf States, the emerging empowerment of the Shiite communities throughout the region has important ramifications. The theory of Shiite dominance in the Eastern province, where all the oil is located. They have been oppressed and denied rights for many years. They now see the Shiites of Iraq as allies, as do the Shiites of Bahrain who are standing up to the Sunni minority that controls them. Likewise, Yemen’s Shiites have called on Iraq’s Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to help them in their fight for more recognition. Such trans-nationalism pays little attention to the formal borders drawn by Western colonial powers in the 19th and early 20th century, and it is not restricted to intra-Shiite activities.

Despite all the criticisms of the Saudi regime, a number of participants felt that the U.S. needs to engage more directly with the people in Saudi Arabia and try to work with reformers including those who were alienated by the royal family. The United States should address more forcefully the extremism expressed in the mosques and the discrimination in the education system. The U.S. should encourage and support reform in the Saudi education system. As in the case of Egypt, the dichotomy of trying to urge reform on a conservative regime while sustaining high, short-term dependency on regime that is high-lighted in the Saudi-Salaf. The image of the President of the United States holding hands with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia at the President’s ranch in Crawford may be jarring to many people but, so long as the U.S. is in Iraq and dependent upon foreign oil, such gestures with autocratic leaders will continue to be necessary.

The environmental problems of the Black Sea and the Bosphorus and the impact of the new Bakut-Tiblisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline were discussed in a session with Professor Nilufar Oral of Bilkent University. Oral described the vulnerability of these two bodies of water. The Black Sea is an isolated sea; five rivers flow into it. By 1999, the pollution levels had reached a critical state. The pollution began in earnest in the 1960s with the Danube, flowing through Eastern Europe, responsible for most of the trouble. The Bosphorus, the narrow strait that connects the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea, faces increasing threats from environmental disaster given its narrowness and the increase in ship traffic. By 2004 over 9,000 ships a year were passing through the Bosphorus strait which is at one point only seven football fields in width. Threats to this waterway are not only related to collisions and accidents; there have also been terrorist threats to tankers. Fortunately, the opening of the BTC oil pipeline that will bring Azeri oil and possibly Kazakhstani oil to the Mediterranean bypasses the Black Sea and the Bosphorus. This will relieve some of the pressure on these waterways. Other routes to bypass the Black Sea and the Bosporus are under consideration.

There is consensus across the region about the need to exert greater control over traffic in the Bosphorus. Although the Montreux Convention of 1936 guarantees the right of passage to ships of all nationalities, Turkey is permitted to charge fees for the use of the Straits if it chooses. It is widely assumed that the United States has enough influence to ensure a modicum of information on ship movements; however, Turkey cannot deny passage except in a serious crisis. In the discussion it was pointed out that the route of the BTC pipeline was taken for political reasons, including a wish to provide alternative pipelines that bypass Russia. Nevertheless, now that the pipeline is built, it has the capacity to expand its volume with additional pipelines. While this will not solve the dangers to the Black Sea and the Bosporus, it will, at least, reduce some of the volume of oil that would otherwise have to transit by sea.

The final day of discussion focused on the role of the Shiites in Iraq. The initial presentation was made by Yitzhak Nakash, Director of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Brandeis University. Unlike the rather pessimistic discussions about Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, Nakash offered a more upbeat prospect about the new politics in Iraq. Since the 2003 war that overturned the Saddam Hussein regime, two key groups have emerged with strength on Iraq’s political scene: the secular Kurds, who are strongly opposed to an Islamic government, and the religious Shiite parties who won 140 seats in the January 2005 parliamentary elections. It is not clear how far the Shiite parties will push for the inclusion of Shari’ah law in the proposed Iraqi constitution. There remain a great many uncertainties about the political future of Iraq’s Sunnis. A number of Sunni clerics have Islamic agendas and strong views about Iraq’s future government. The tragedy of the Saddam Hussein regime was that it eliminated all the civic elements needed to support a strong secular middle class. Today in Iraq, the Baath party has been replaced by strong community leaders in both the predominately Kurdish and Shiite regions.

In the context of the Shiite leadership, great importance must be attached to the role of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, a highly regarded Shiite cleric, not only in Iraq, but within Shiite communities throughout the region. Although Sistani has close ties to Iran, his philosophy of government is very different from that of Tehran’s mullahs. He believes in government accountability. While he argues Islamic law should be included in Iraq’s constitution, he does not believe clerics should govern. He has not called for the replacement of Iran’s Guardian Council, an elite group of clerics who are the final arbiter of political actions.

There are several important implications of Sistani’s power for American policy. The U.S. must lower its expectations for the imminent coming of secular democracy in Iraq. In view of the close ties between Iran and the Iraqi Shiite population, and for broader strategic reasons, the United States needs to reach out for an understanding with Iran and try to resolve major differences between the two countries. The Iranian revolution has lost its fervor: its population is restless; the mullahs are on the defense. In return, Iraqi Shiites must show restraint and forego retaliation against the Sunni minor-
ity who oppressed them for so long. The Kurds must stop their efforts to unilaterally take over the city of Kirkuk. The best way to guarantee that Iraq’s emerging political system adheres to democratic principles is to work diligently to establish a strong representative assembly.

The discussion focused on U.S. policy and the continuing military presence in Iraq. While there were differences in opinion as to how explicit the U.S. should be about an exit strategy, there was an agreement that any hasty U.S. withdrawal would be disastrous. Some felt that many of the current problems derived from the failure of the U.S. to provide security to Iraq following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. Others urged that there be a reappraisal of current U.S. policy and that the administration adopt a more transparent approach with the American people. In light of the continuing insecurity in Iraq, there has to be admiration for the forbearance of the Shiite majority in the face of continued provocative acts of violence by insurgents. This is further evidence of the importance of Sistani’s moderating role. But no one can guess how long this forbearance will last. One cannot take Shiite support for granted. The political costs of bringing the Sunnis into the political process may be too much for the Shiites. Some felt that despite the many setbacks in Iraq, and the reality that the U.S. mission will take longer and be harder and more costly than originally thought, it will be worth it in the end.

There was agreement that Iran is a key player both in the context of Iraq as well as Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf, and that its capacity for challenging the American presence is considerable. However, few participants were prepared to endorse a U.S. initiative to engage the mullahs at this point in time. However, it would be wise to examine how and under what circumstances countries like Iran and Turkey could do more to support the new Iraqi government. As far as initiatives that the United States could take at this time, a much clearer indication by the administration about its strategy for achieving stability in Iraq is necessary. There is also a need for much closer Congressional oversight of American policy in this critical part of the world.

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**Egypt: The State and Islamist Militancy**

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Egypt had a relatively recent experience with Islamist militancy. During the years extending from 1992 to 1997, it witnessed a major wave of insurgency launched by two militant Islamic groups (MIGs), namely, the Islamic Group and the Jihad Organization. The objective of these groups was to destabilize the regime in order to seize state power. Different from the assassination of President Sadat, this was a sustained campaign to eradicate what they considered to be an un-Islamic and anti-Islamic regime. Those who launched such campaigns realized that unleashing one dramatic act, like gunning down one leader, is not sufficient to undo the existing state order. They had a different and more elaborate strategy in light of their learning from past experiences and they embarked on it with zeal and determination to make it a reality and expedite the Islamization of the state and society and create the "Islamic Republic of Egypt."

My objective here is to analyze the cluster of strategic choices adopted by these militant groups and to examine how and why they failed, which requires in turn an examination of the state strategy, the efforts made by the Muslim Brothers (MB) to gain from these confrontations between the state and the Islamist militants to achieve their objectives, lessons that should be learned from this case, and the implications of these factors for U.S. policy.

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**Militant Islamist Groups (MIGs)**

There is a vast body of writings on the insurgency wave launched by militant Islamist groups in Egypt that escalated at the beginning of the 1990s. If they were to succeed in toppling the regime, the implications of the radical creation of the "Islamic Republic of Egypt" were expected to have been greater than those that resulted from the emergence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Linguistic, religious and cultural differences between Iran and Arab societies limit a militant Islamist "fever" or "contagion" in a way that may not apply to Egypt.

The ideology of the MIGs had a programmatic guide for action. For them, pursuing individual redemption, social reform, or peaceful means to attain power result from a false consciousness and misguided leadership. When it comes to Islamist action, there is no alternative to a confrontational or combative approach. In other words, the MB deviated from the correct path of Islam when they bestowed legitimacy on a state that claims that 70% or 80% of its laws are in accordance with *shari'a*. *Shari'a* is an indivisible package that must be implemented in its entirety. The MB are naïve to think they can Islamize society from within existing systems.

Thus, the MIGs justified their action under the category of the absence of alternatives to militancy. They insisted the Egyptian state would never respond to any peaceful marches, legal petitions, political practices, humanitarian
appeals or eloquent statements. Dominant forces would have to be eradicated thoroughly via an insurrectional approach. Acting on the basis that a menu of choices exists is both deviant and delusional. The resort to violence reflects a logic of time adopted by the MIGs and marked by a sense of urgency. This sense can be found in the beliefs of well-known Egyptian activists such as Omar Abdel Rahman, the religious leader of the Islamic Group; Ayman al-Zawahiri, one of the leaders of the Jihad Organization; and Sayyed Qutb, the theoretician of the Muslim Brotherhood.

In essence, this is the image of "five minutes to midnight" in which Islam, as the MIGs have argued, faces a great danger from within and without—cultural invasion, identity distortion, and multi-dimensional subordination to Western powers (economic and political, as well as military). Under these conditions, "true Muslims" have become a tiny minority. Working from within the existing system cannot address these dangers. Launching a war of attrition against the state to overthrow its structures is not only ideologically correct but is also necessary.

The MIGs were not only confronting the Egyptian state through a strategy based on violence, but were also delegitimizing their Islamist rival, the MB, on the ideological level as well. Not only did they differ with the Muslim Brothers in terms of strategy but they also clashed with them regarding the logic of time. The MB have a different reading of the time dimension in their strategic choices. In fact, they believe time works in their favor and that any reliance on violence in Islamist action is unwarranted and counter-productive. As they see history, Nasser in Egypt, Bourghiba in Tunisia, the Shah in Iran, and Ataturk in Turkey tried very hard to weaken the social and political influence of Islam but they failed drastically.

The protracted violent campaign by the MIGs had three fundamental components sought by their leaders:

The first was a concerted effort to undermine the key foundation of the state, namely its lphyl or sense of invincibility, which the state strives to cultivate and maintain in society. To erode this lphyl, MIgs tried to demonstrate that the Egyptian state was a paper tiger because it could not safeguard its leaders and its most important installations. President Sadat was assassinated while reviewing a small number of cadets in a parade in a restricted area and protected by many security agencies. The well-protected Interior Ministers, a Prime Minister, a speaker of the Parliament, and a prominent journalist close to Mubarak were targeted for assassination in the middle of Cairo. Mubarak was also the target of at least one assassination attempt while he was in Ethiopia. In Upper Egypt, the police stations and police officers were attacked to achieve the same objective. The main message by the MIgs was that symbols of the state were vulnerable to the long arm of the group. Other Islamists and the Egyptian society at large should not fear the coercive power of the state.

Second, another important strategic choice by the MIGs was a resort to violence that undermines the extractive and resource generating power of the state. The strikes by MIgs against the tourism sector, when its importance to the Egyptian economy and national income has increased significantly, illustrates that strategy. They did not have to launch many operations to attain their intended objective. The spillover effects of a few well-publicized operations like that of Luxor could have a significant negative impact on the flow of tourists to Egypt and revenues generated from tourism in general. The MIgs also launched a number of violent attacks in Egypt against state-owned banks in an attempt to make depositors withdraw their funds in a hurry, thus possibly causing the collapse of the financial system.

Third, in light of the militant assault on the coercive and extractive arms of the state, the MIgs worked to provoke those at the top of the pyramid of power to strike back massively and indiscriminately through emergency laws, widespread arrests, restricting movement in society, and creating strong grievances and resentment. Moderates and militants alike were likely to become targets of state repression. Thus, according to MIgs, societal opposition to the state should ultimately increase.

If these were the objectives of the MIGs, we should also identify the "how" dimension behind their organizational challenge to the state. They rely on a small number of cadres of whom they identified in the tradition of Sayyed Qutb as a "believing minority" or "Quranic generation of a new type." Accordingly, they resort to a selective recruitment strategy along the lines of kinship, friendship, and worship, the types of association that get established over a long period of time, hence they are useful for building confidence in a setting marked by pressures from state security agencies. Members were linked along regional lines. Finally, they pursued a strategy to privatize their funding by relying on financial remittances from their members and sympathizers in oil producing countries in the Middle East region and beyond.

However, the insurgency by the MIGs seems to have dissipated and reached its end. By mid 1997, their leaders offered and implemented an unconditional ceasefire and issued fataw justifying the shift in their position for their cadres to follow, which they did shortly. By July 2002, imprisoned militant leaders characterized their aforementioned strategy as a great sin that cost many innocent people their lives without valid religious reasons. The leaders of the group—Kareem Zuhdy, a leading cadre; Najih Ibrahim, a ranking figure in the group; Safwat Abdel-Ghani, the key figure in the assassination of the Parliament Speaker; Ali al-Shafiri, another prominent cadre; and the rest of the members of the Shura Council and the military wing—produced at least four books that denounced extremism and Takfir or the excommunication of Muslims. Zuhdy has also promised to issue a public apology for all the grave crimes his militant group has committed.

Some think this shift came as a function of expediency on the part of imprisoned leaders, a change in tactics and posture rather than in doctrine and beliefs. According to such a view these leaders were defeated, their Jihad did not produce any of the intended results, and thus they did not have an alternative to suspending violence unconditionally. They hoped to persuade the regime to release them and thousands of imprisoned members. Others argue unequivocal failure often triggers an interest in policy reassessment by many groups and movements, including Islamist ones. Prisons are common locations for such a reassessment as was the case with communists in their relations with Nasser’s regime in the early 1960s.

Among the reasons behind the failure there are some that can be attributed to the MIGs themselves. By that I'm referring to their serious divisions and fragmentation. Islamists often accused each other of serving the interests of the state. In addition, conflicts between the MIgs have been so sharp that each group refused to recognize the legitimacy of the others. No single group could seize power by itself or was willing to build an effective alliance with the others. Each tended to be centered around one leader and controlled to a loyalty among his followers, a personality cult of sorts that discouraged cooperation across lines. The resort to violence as a strategy nourished dreams of despotism among leaders of the MIgs and led to a violent loyalty to the Amr. A cult of leadership has prevailed in the MIgs and a cruel elimination of anyone considered to be non-conformist became common. The regime managed to portray them as addicted to indiscriminate violence.

State Strategy

After initial confusion about how to deal with the challenge of the MIgs, the state gradually developed a set of strategic choices that had the promise of settling the confrontation with militants in its favor or at least depriving its challenges from a chance of prevailing. The main features of the state action were as follows:

First was a strategy based on massive repression. The state used a specialized force known as Qand al-Ann al-Markazi, or the Central Security Forces, against locations where militants were
suspected of hiding and those who might have sheltered them. An example of that was the large operation in Imbaba, a poor district in Cairo that was dominated by militant Islamists during the first half of the 1990s. The regime was determined to demonstrate to everyone that it had sharp teeth that it was prepared to use against the MIGs. Under conditions of crisis or potential crisis, the operative principle was to resort to massive repression. Mild repression was thought only to threaten radical opponents without undermining their ability to strike back.

The Egyptian regime did not feel a need to exert the levels of coercion reached before by the Syrian regime a decade earlier, primarily because its threat perception was not as acute. However, Mubarak threatened to rely on the army if confrontations with MIGs became more threatening. Reportedly, the army got engaged in training paramilitary terrorist squads affiliated with the Interior Ministry after it was found out that militant cadres received advanced training in Afghanistan. Field Marshal Tantawi, Minister of Defense, testified before the National Security Committee in Parliament about the need for coordinating the efforts of all ministries, including his own, to counter the escalation of violence by MIGs. Some called for a greater role by the army in counter-terrorism. While the regime used repressive measures, it was hinting that an escalation against militants was likely. This was helped by cooperation with other states in the Arab world to exchange information about mili-
tants or returnees from Afghanistan.

Second was a strategy to isolate the MIGs. Aware that total reliance on repression was not sufficient, the state had strived to build a de facto coalition with groups that shared its hostility towards Islamists. Under threats from Nasserists and leftists in the early 1970s, Sadat built tacit alliances with the Islamists. Under Mubarak, the main threat facing the regime had become the Islamists themselves so the regime has engaged in what may be described as "licensed infiltration" of Nasserists in the media to counterbalance Islamists. This was basically Sadatism in reverse. The battle over minds and ideas was quite important. Confronted with the insurgency, the state media was used to transmit images and information to the public about the cost of militancy.

Instead of assuming that the state was responsible for their difficult economic conditions, the responsibility was put squarely at the MIGs’ doorsteps. The state media used the grievances about living conditions, making them among the foundations of its counter-terrorism strategy. The state also used the media to demonstrate to society how indiscernible were MIGs in their violence and how they tried even to murder Nobel Prize winning Egyptian novelist, Naguib Mahfouz.

Third, the state increased its religious orientation to prove to society that its policies were congruent with the principles of Islam. Its tactics included portraying the president as pious and adherent to the faith, interrupting radio and television programs to broadcast the calls to prayer, banning alcoholic beverages on national airlines, and forming committees to revise legal systems so they would conform with shari’a.

However, the regime’s utilization of Islamic institutions and messages to legitimize itself might have increased the religious influences in the media and educational system. Pursuing this strategy strengthened the bargaining position of religious institutions, making them seek more concessions from the state in return for their support. This led to an increase in pressures by these institutions to censor books and films considered not Islamic enough.

Fourth, a strategy of tightening state control over al-tas’addudiya al-siyasa al-musiriyaa al-mugyppyada or the restricted political pluralism. The regime has pursued a managed liberalization on the understanding that it would retain the ability to curtail any undesirable outcomes brought about by exploiting religious symbols for political purposes. It was inclined to see MIGs and the Muslim Brothers as linked in a division of roles. While confronting the MIGs who resorted to violence, it attempted to restrict the role of the MB in the professional syndicates. Activists against the regime were referred increasingly to State Security Courts or military tribunals. Under these conditions, state control, not political inclusion, was the name of state strategy.

Islamist militancy has declined in Egypt. The regime has given a priority to putting an end to the operations of MIGs where the state’s nerve centers are located and has followed a gradual strategy to pursue the militants in upper Egypt. In retrospect, it seems that the Luxor attack against European tourists in 1997 has rather quickly accelerated the demise of militant Islamist groups in Egypt.

The State and the Muslim Brothers

The state interaction with the MB has been different. Leaders of the MB have stressed since the early 1970s the primacy of a peaceful and gradualist approach. For them, while seeking power is an Islamic duty, doing so should not be equated with resorting to the force of arms. From such a perspective, power has three levels. The first is doctrinal and takes the form of strong religious faith. The second is organizational as reflected in group cohesion. Only at the third level can military strength be used. To start the struggle by resorting to military means is not only imprudent, but also disregards the example of the prophet. The MB insisted that they were in prisons for years, while militants lacked a true Islamic example of the MB. Allowing the MB to function within the boundaries of legality would have a moderating effect on militants.

However, the regime continues to deny the MB the right to form a political party and insists they are an illegal group despite the fact they are widely considered the most important opposition group in Egypt and have their members in Parliament. They have their own network of social and educational services in society, yet the regime continues to refuse giving political concessions to the MB and to question the notion that any major differences may exist between them and militant groups. While the confrontational strategy of the regime against MIGs who resort to violence has succeeded thus far, its strategy against the MB who did not engage in violence for decades has been much less successful on domestic and international levels as well. The wave of arrests of MB members and other activists in the aftermath of demonstrations in large urban centers should be brought to an end. A serious effort must be launched to start a national dialogue to provide those who wish to participate peacefully in politics with real freedoms of assembly, multiple candidates in elections, free access to mass media, and credible opportunities to form political parties. Without the success of such efforts, there is no guarantee whatsoever that violence could not be resurgent once again.

Both internal and external actors who are interested in the stability of Egypt should play a role in making that outcome possible.

U.S. Options

What can the U.S. do in this situation, and can it influence the political outcomes? Egypt’s well-known writer Mohammad Heikal argued during the violent confrontations between the state and militants that the U.S. could not afford to let the regime collapse or be overthrown. Regional security is important for American interests in the Middle East, and a friendly regime in Egypt is quite important for maintaining that security. However, it is not self-evident what the U.S. can do to achieve that objective.

Signs of political restlessness in search of an end to the emergency laws and restrictions on the formation of political parties have multiplied lately. A stone has fallen into water that has been stagnant for a long time. More and stronger demands for reform expressed by a movement for change appeared under the name jirfah or enough authoritarianism. A full-fledged Cairo Spring is not exactly looming around the corner. In addition to a swiftly growing resentment of authoritarianism, various political activists can detect important differences between Washington and Cairo regarding issues pertaining to political reform.

The cases of two well-known human rights activists, Saad Eddin Ibrahim and Ayman Nour,
illustrate the differences between the U.S. and the European Union on one hand and the regime on the other hand. These differences seem to have encouraged greater assertiveness and activism on the part of the political opposition. For the U.S. to repeat the slogan that "the country that led the road to peace should really lead the way to democracy in the Arab world" is not enough. One possible course of action for the U.S. and the EU is to explore a link between external debt relief and more reform in Egypt, or some sort of conditionality for political liberalization. Providing material and political support to civil society organizations in a transparent way to monitor elections may be another course of action.

The U.S. should act on the basis that a regime threatened by militant Islamists is likely to refuse giving political concessions under pressure. After getting a clear sense of security, it may consider options it had rejected before. Now may be the right time to explore adequate political reforms in Egypt. These reforms should not be seen as contemplated for the sake of the U.S. but as a cautious investment in the stability and viability of the regime. Improving the political record of the regime, not restructing it as a whole, should be the objective. To do that, reformers must be encouraged to improve state-society relations and to rise above what is known as the "Algerian complex," which refers to a tendency to see Islamists as intrinsically violent believers and exclusionary. Otherwise violence may reemerge again. A calculated risk should be considered by the state and encouraged by the United States. If stability is to be maintained, political reform is unavoidable and must entail a reduction of inflated state power.

The regime has its own reading of the considerations that may influence, if not determine, the policy of the United States in that regard. It seems to think that the U.S. pays more attention to the imperatives of order, domestic and regional, at the expense of the requirements of political participation. It also thinks that even if Washington opens a dialogue with Islamists such as the MB, they remain unpopular in Washington. The regime seems to think that, especially after 9/11, adopting repressive measures against the Islamists may be less costly than before. A meaningful dialogue between Washington and a range of Egyptian political forces, including the Muslim Brothers, should help break the political deadlock in Egypt and change some of the assumptions of the Egyptian regime.

Pakistan and Afghanistan: Islam and Democracy

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In 2001 Operation Enduring Freedom replaced the axis of Islamic militancy that stretched from Kabul to Islamabad with a new political order, promising freedom from religious radicalism, democracy and economic growth. Some four years later concrete steps have been taken to fulfill those promises, but the specter of Islamic radicalism and instability continues to haunt Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the post-9/11 order faces serious threats with broad implications for the region and U.S. interests. Success in Afghanistan and Pakistan will continue to depend on U.S. engagement, and increasingly on adoption of new policy perspectives. The U.S. policy has so far been narrowly focused on the Karzai and Musharraf regimes. In the coming years that approach will likely yield less dividend and conversely even imperil U.S. interests.

This brief will examine what comes next for the two regimes and what policy options are available to the United States.

Pakistan

Pakistan today faces a serious threat to its stability from a combination of resurgent Islamic activism, economic inequality, authoritarian fatigue, and rising ethnic tensions. All this is occurring at a time of strategic insecurity owing to the country's regional isolation, the A.Q. Khan affair, and the weakening of democratic institutions and personalization of President Musharraf's rule.

Escalation of attacks on Shia places of worship in Baluchistan and Karachi since 2003 concerns for security of the country's leaders after bold assassination attempts against the President, the Prime Minister and Corp Commander of Karachi; emergence of radical Islamic cells in the military; and growing unrest among Pashtoons following military operations in South Waziristan and among Baluch tribesmen in southwestern Pakistan all underscore the nature and severity of the challenges facing Pakistan. The greatest threat to Pakistan will come from the possible convergence of two or more of the challenges mentioned above.

Since 2001 the Musharraf regime has followed a two-tier strategy vis-a-vis Islamic forces. It has on the one hand facilitated the rise to prominence of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) Islamic coalition, consisting of mainstream Islamic parties that control around 20% of the seats in the parliament and the governments in the province of Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP); and on the other hand has taken measured steps to combat some but not all radical Islamic groups. The result has been that Islamic activists continue to operate in Pakistan. Mainstream Islamic parties are taking advantage of the weakening of secular civilian parties and popular unhappiness with military rule to expand their influence among new social groups. Some radical Islamic groups continue to operate in the open and even receive tacit support from the security
forces. Others are adopting strategies to survive the war on terror, developing new networks of recruitment and operation that are outside of the military's control. Islamic activists are also more effectively relaying their radical ideologies to socioeconomic and ethnic conflicts that have reemerged in the country.

Although in 2001 General Musharraf made a personal commitment to reign in radical Islamic forces in Pakistan, his government was slow to uproot the radical outlaws. It distinguished between "good" jihadists (those fighting in Kashmir) and "bad" jihadists (al-Qaeda). Some radical groups were allowed to voluntarily disband, and then to apply for new charters and operate under new names. The Lashkar-e-Tayba (L.T., active in Kashmir) was in 2004 permitted to purchase land and expand its recruitment and education efforts. Similarly, between 2002 and 2003 Sipah Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)—one of Pakistan's most murderous extremist groups that is responsible for the bombing and assassination of many Shias and participated in the Taliban massacre of Shias in Afghanistan in 1997-98—was General Musharraf's closest Islamic ally.

Although sources of funding for madrashas and jihadi groups were disrupted, there was little done to disrupt the power and influence of madrashas which continue to produce radicals. Whereas the funding for madrashas has declined since 9/11, their numbers, and social and educational influence have remained unchanged.

The reason for the military's ambivalence in clamping down on Islamic activism is that while it feels compelled to cooperate with the U.S. in the war on terror, it has not viewed the American policies in the region in Pakistan's strategic interest. Operation Enduring Freedom eliminated Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan, opened Afghanistan to Indian influence, and brought to power a government in Kabul that Pakistanians view as hostile. In the absence of any security guarantees from the U.S., Pakistan has viewed the post-9/11 balance of power in the region as inimical to its national interest. Pakistanis believe that they have a tactical relationship with the U.S. that has no strategic depth to it. Although recent approval of the sale of F-16s will assuage some of the anxiety Pakistanis feel about the U.S.'s commitment, there are no illusions in Islamabad that the U.S.'s long-run strategic interest lies with India. As a result, the military is fully aware that the U.S. is unlikely to abandon its support for Islamic groups, which it has in the past viewed as an effective strategic weapon in managing regional conflicts—protecting Pakistan's position in Afghanistan and keeping India engaged in Kashmir. The reasons why Pakistan used jihadists in the 1990s to achieve domestic and regional goals have not changed significantly.

Islamabad would like to limit Kabul's influence in Southwestern Afghanistan and prevent India from gaining a foothold there. To achieve these goals Pakistan is likely to continue to rely on extremists to alter the status quo and promote its position while waiting for the U.S. to tire of Afghanistan and leave the region.

Second, in order to legitimate military rule, the Musharraf regime is compelled to negotiate with Islamic parties, which means making concessions on the autonomy of madrashas and the ability of Islamic parties to expand their influence. General Musharraf has always been more concerned with reducing the influence of secular civilian parties—Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP)—than with containing Islamism. Far from the baluwark against Islamism, the military uses Islamists to marginalize civilian parties. Under military rule, Islamic representation in the parliament rose to 20%, up from 1% in 1997-99 period. Whereas the U.S. is most concerned with Islamic activists, the military is most concerned with the civilian parties.

Third, many in the military, especially junior officers and soldiers, are sympathetic to Islamic extremism and hold anti-American attitudes. This makes it more difficult for Musharraf to suppress extremism without risking a breach within the military. It is for this reason that the military has proved reluctant to aggressively pursue extremists in South Waziristan.

The military's dealings with Islam find particular significance in light of the economic and political challenges facing the Musharraf regime. General Musharraf set out to restructure Pakistan's economy, and recently appointed his finance minister Shaukat Aziz as prime minister to boost economic reform. At first glance, it is evident that Pakistan's economic outlook has improved in recent years. U.S. aid and inflow of funds from abroad owing to post-9/11 financial controls and the Patriot Act have buoyed the economy, and reforms have encouraged investment. However, economic reforms have so far benefited the private sector elite but not the urban middle, lower middle and lower classes who have lost their subsidies and whose purchasing power has been eroding. Growing conspicuous consumption at the top is in stark contrast with economic pressures elsewhere in society. Economic change has also widened the gap between the provinces, as Punjab has benefited more than other provinces (which partly accounts for the insurgency in Baluchistan). All countries that undertake restructuring have to endure a critical period of economic disparity, social tensions and political discontentment. However, since in Pakistan these developments are occurring under an undemocratic military regime, and in a climate of growing ethnic tensions and Islamic activism, they can prove explosive.

Since the 2002 elections the Musharraf regime has faced nagging demands for restoration of democracy. His tepid promises of eventual return to democracy or periodic overtures to the PML and the PPP have so far failed to change public opinion. The population is wary of the military's systematic dismantling of democratic institutions and proletization of secular civilian parties. Pakistan has always had more open politics than most other Muslim countries. As a result, authoritarianism is creating discontentment in a time when the rest of the Muslim world is moving toward democracy. It is not clear when this discontentment will pass a tipping point, but it is clear that it is destabilizing Pakistani politics. This is in turn compelling the military to backtrack on a host of issues of concern to the U.S. such as war on terror and the A.Q. Khan issue. As we move closer to the 2007 presidential elections this trend is likely to accelerate.

Another area of concern is the resurgence of ethnic tensions, especially in Baluchistan and among Pathoons in Northwestern Pakistan. Baluch tribesmen are unhappy with their share of gas revenue from the Sui gas fields as well as with plans to develop a deepwater seaport in Gwadar, which they believe will become a U.S. naval base. A more serious ethnic problem is the one involving Pashtoons. Anger over the fall of the Taliban, the perceived disenfranchisement of their brethren in Afghanistan, the Pashtoon unrest, reached a boiling point with the military's invasion into South Waziristan. That operation enraged Pashtoon passions and created tensions with Punjabis. Since Pakistan's creation Pashtoons have been allies of Punjabis in ruling the country. Today some 15% of Pakistan's officer corps is Pashtoon. The Pashtoon unrest is a serious threat to the stability of the Musharraf regime and that of both Afghanistan and Pakistan (which has more Pashtoons than its neighbor to the north).

All this is occurring in a climate of insecurity in Islamabad. Operation Enduring Freedom down-sized Pakistan as a regional power, ended the Saudi-Pakistani-Taliban axis that formed the basis of the country's strategic outlook, and extricated Pakistan's influence from Afghanistan. In fact, Afghanistan quickly went from being Pakistan's secure back yard to becoming a security vulnerability and a potential India ally. The A.Q. Khan affair has placed Pakistan in the crosshairs of the U.S., leading many in the country to expect that, after Iran, Pakistan will inevitably come under pressure to give up its nuclear weapons. The insecurity is placing pressure on the Musharraf regime, which has for now relied on the U.S. to shore up Pakistan's strategic position, but which cannot guarantee the U.S.'s continued commitment to Pakistan's security.

For the United States, the key issue in the short run is the war on terror and regime stability in Pakistan. The U.S. has so far relied on
Musharraf to achieve those goals. In the coming years he will likely be increasingly less capable of delivering and the cost of sustaining him (or a similar regime) in power will increase. U.S. interests must be based on a more broad-based regime that will be less vulnerable to internal upheaval. That would mean a civilian government that enjoys political legitimacy. In fact, freed from political demands of ruling Pakistan, the military can do a far better job in the war on terror. The zero-sum choice between democracy and security that Musharraf has imposed on the U.S. is one that has so far benefited the Pakistani military, not Pakistani politics or long-run U.S. interests.

**Policy options:** The United States must push the Musharraf regime to commit to real democratization as a part of its campaign against Islamic extremism and instability. The U.S. policy here must be consistent with its policy in the Middle East. To gain the confidence of the Pakistani military the U.S. also should work to integrate Pakistan into the larger South Asia strategic initiative that Washington is pursuing with New Delhi—through economic cooperation as well as constructive engagement. U.S. policy should be based on commitment to both stability and democracy in Pakistan, and it should view these goals as inseparable from one another and as necessary for creating a stable regional order in South Asia.

**Afghanistan**

Since 2001, U.S. policy in Afghanistan has been driven by three interrelated objectives: security, state-building, and economic reconstruction. To achieve these goals in the past four years the U.S. has funded development; and American and NATO troops have provided law and order, fought war lords and remnants of the Taliban, and trained Afghan security forces. A successful presidential election and adoption of a new constitution has given much needed support to the flailing Afghan state and the Karzai government. However, although the record is for the most part positive, Afghanistan continues to face serious threats to its stability. These threats come from:

- Rampant poverty
- The drug trade
- Islamic militia, anti-regime and anti-western elements, and ethnic tensions
- Militias that control large swathes of the country
- Uncertainty caused by the postponement of the parliamentary elections
- The fact that Iran and Pakistan have no stake in the success of the current Afghan political order

The Karzai government’s control over Afghanistan has improved but is still tenuous. Security at all levels remains a concern for ordinary Afghans as well as the U.S. The slow pace of economic reconstruction and state-building has imposed improvements in security. Security problems have in turn made progress in economic reconstruction and state-building difficult. A recent United Nations Human Development report has warned that poverty alleviation has lagged behind expectations; and, at its current pace, economic reconstruction will not address required health care, education and social services needs. Gains made to date are in danger of dissipating as the economy and the society have begun to backslide into anarchy, crime, and instability. In the absence of a national economy or indigenous basis for development Afghans are increasingly relying on the drug trade and local war lords for sustenance. The report concludes that poverty poses the single most significant threat to stability in Afghanistan.

In 2004 optimism in Afghanistan reached a record high, sharing the limelight with gains made in state-building. The drug trade is a regional threat, and it can corrupt the central government in Afghanistan and even turn the country into a "narc-o-state." It can also reignite ethnic tensions and Islamic radicalism—funding insurgencies and militias—and threaten the stability of the central government in Kabul. The drug trade will also impact the region as a whole from Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan in the north to Iran and Pakistan in the south. Combating the drug trade requires a comprehensive approach that extends beyond interdiction to include more effective economizing and state-building.

The task of strengthening the Afghan state received a much needed boost from the presidential election. The election was free from violence and irregularity and was endorsed by most Afghans. The turnout was 70% and Hamid Karzai received 55.4% of the vote—avoiding a divisive run-off election. Karzai did well across Afghanistan, but was particularly strong in Pashtoon areas. His hold on Pashtoon politics is, however, still tenuous—he is not viewed as a spokesman for Pashtoon nationalism, and if the economic and political situation deteriorates, his position among the Pashtoons could be easily challenged.

Immediately after the elections Karzai was able to use his newly gained political capital to assert his control. He renewed his campaign against war lords by removing Isma’il Khan from the governorship of Herat and marginalizing the Tajik commander, General Amin Fahim. Still, the continued threat of regionalism and ethnic divisions was underscored by the fact that the Hazara, Uzbek and Tajik presidential candidates carried their community’s votes. The new constitution and the presidential election have given Afghanistan the framework for a state, but it is as yet too weak to deliver on demands for security, jobs and services, or to keep the ethnic tensions at bay. Ethnic politics in Afghanistan is also tied to interests of the country’s regional neighbors, Uzbekistan, Iran, India and Pakistan. Iran and Pakistan, in particular, have no vested interest in a strong state in Afghanistan and favor working with regional strongmen.

The parliamentary elections will likely serve as a test for the extent to which Kabul can resist ethnic pressures. The constitution envisions a two-chamber parliament. The Wolesi Jirga will have 249 seats, 215 of which will be elected at the provincial level and will reflect the relative population size of the various provinces. This will likely intensify ethnic posturing. The Meshrano Jirga will have 102 seats, two-thirds of which will be elected through a complex process by provincial and district councils, and one-third will be appointed by President Karzai. Parliamentary elections will pose new challenges to Afghanistan as the country and its new government will have to overcome the tribal, religious and ethnic complexity of Afghan society. The election will also face a number of challenges, ranging from demarcation of provincial boundaries, and updated census numbers, to security threats.

State-building and economic reconstruction will continue to demand extensive investment of resources from U.S. and NATO allies. For it to succeed it will have to be multi-programmed effort that is both more aggressive and better coordinated. State-building and economic reconstruction is currently heavily dependent on the U.S. for funding and support. It does not enjoy the backing of either regional powers or various social and ethnic forces within Afghanistan. The investment in state-building will be less taxing on the U.S. and more likely to be successful, and more quickly, if the U.S. would not be the sole buttress for the Kabul regime, and if Afghanistan’s neighbors would have a stake in the country’s stability.

**Policy recommendations:** The U.S. must increase the pace of economic reconstruction, and ensure that it is carried out in a more coordinated manner to benefit the entire country. The U.S. must also work more effectively with provincial leaders—especially after the parliamentary elections—to ensure that development reaches its target, and to secure the commitment of local forces to stability and the U.S.’s investment in it. Afghanistan may well work better as a federation on the American model than as a centralized state modeled after European states. The U.S. must also find ways to include Iran and Pakistan in discussions of development, security and stability in Afghanistan.
Reform, Security, and Oil in Saudi Arabia

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The legitimacy of the Saudi state is based on two pillars: Islam and oil. For decades, it has been oil money that has paid for the fatwas issued by Wahhabi clerics—the de facto co-rulers of Saudi Arabia—that legitimize the regime. Oil has also inspired America to accept the Saudi regime as it presents itself, ignoring its failures and fractured foundation. Indeed, turning a blind eye has been the core element of United States policy toward Saudi Arabia since its founding.

Until recently, the great achievement of the Saudi ruling family, the al-Saud, was to maintain a balance between oil, relations with the outside world (especially the U.S.), and Saudi Arabia’s role as the custodians of Mecca and Medina and defenders of Islam. But what once appeared to be a harmonious strategy is now riddled with contradictions, and its constitutive elements are coming together in potentially explosive ways.

The al-Saud face their most serious challenge in the new generation of radical Islamists, who reject their custodianship of both oil and the holy places. Since its founding, the Saudi regime has attempted to control and propagate its specific version of Wahhabi Islam, but the legitimacy of this model has become increasingly discredited. Indeed, domestic radical Wahhabi Islamists now openly challenge the regime.

Fatwas issued by the highest Wahhabi clerics of the old generation have lost their authority because they are associated with the economic inefficiency and widespread corruption that characterize Saudi rule. So now we are witnessing the hijacking of Islam by angry and disillusioned young men—the ideological children of Bin Laden—who are to be found in every social class and geographic region of the Kingdom.

Bin Laden’s command in his December 2004 message to attack oil installations in Iraq and Saudi Arabia in order to prevent “the biggest theft in history” resonates with this alienated generation. An attack on the Saudi oil infrastructure would not only be dangerous for the global economy but could cause deep damage, and perhaps inflict a mortal blow, to Saudi Arabia’s already strained relationship with the U.S.

To be sure, the realities of American dependence on Saudi oil mean that America still continues to prop up the Saudi regime. As long as the Saudis continue to pump oil, and provide assistance in the “war on terror,” the U.S. does not appear to be prepared to look for alternative rulers. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, America has, at long last, awakened—at least in the abstract—to the regime’s flaws.

But has the U.S. thought through the implications of its loss of faith in the regime? Is it prepared to truly push the regime to reform? Does it plan physically to defend the oil wells and pipelines that are the heart of the world oil industry? Just what balance is it willing to strike between its dependence on imported oil and its interest in ridding Saudi Arabia of its propensi-
ty for terror and reliance on Wahhabi clerics? The only thing that seems clear at present is that America remains suspicious of Saudi Arabia’s potential counter-terrorism ability and views the Saudis as only passive supporters.

REFORM

The success of the regime’s strategy for maintaining domestic legitimacy depended on patriotism based on oil revenue, with the royal family providing a very generous welfare system. The state paid for everything and avoided taxing the population. To paraphrase a slogan from the American Revolution: no taxation, so no representation.

The regime clings to this strategy still. Yet even with today’s record-high oil prices, population growth and falling per capita income are eating away at the fabric of the regime, fueling domestic economic and political pressures for reform. Moreover, the distribution of the wealth has been uneven, owing to corruption and a policy of discrimination based on sect, region, tribe, and gender. In reality, therefore, the recent economic revival has only highlighted the gap between rich and poor, while conspicuous consumption by the royal family’s 22,000 members heightens the resentments.

High oil prices alone cannot solve the problem of unemployment in the Kingdom, because the education system is so heavily based on religious instruction that it impedes young people from joining the modern global economy. Combined with the regime’s lack of openness to global trade—Saudi Arabia cannot meet the criteria for World Trade Organization (WTO) membership, mostly because of a lack of transparency—the result is a society that remains inward-looking and defensive.

Yet the world cannot be kept at bay. Exposure to the outside world through travel, satellite television, and the Internet has increased the public’s demands for economic and political rights, including the democratic representation that state paternalism has historically sought to keep in check. The regime knows that these demands are growing, but security threats have weakened any impulse it might have to embark on reform.

The types of reforms that would have an effect on security, such as freedom of expression and assembly, competitive elections, acceptance of minority rights, modernization of the education system, and even establishment of social amenities like cinemas and youth clubs, are ignored in the name of defending the state and the faith. The regime’s new focus on the domestic “war on terror” has thus been used to justify inertia, thereby reinforcing the old forms of social exclusion as well. The dilemma is that economic decay and the lure of radical Islam have strengthened regional, tribal, and sectarian sentiments at the expense of the national identity that the regime has historically sought to promote in order to legitimize its power.

These sub-national identities reflect divisions among Saudi Arabia’s population that have existed since the state’s founding in 1932. By the end of the oil-rich province, are the Shi’a. Politically emboldened since the fall of Saddam’s regime and the resurgence of their brethren in Iraq, the Shi’a demand an end to their exclusion from Saudi politics and to their demotion as apostates by the Wahhabi religious establishment. Their message to the rulers is that it will no longer suffice to equate being Saudi exclusively with being Wahhabi and from the dominant Najd region.

Meanwhile, the Hijazis, who originate in the western region that includes Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah, hold long repressed resentments due to the regime’s refusal to ensure their full inclusion in Saudi politics. Although the Hijazis, who are Sunnis but not Wahhabis, are not regarded as heretics in the same way as the Shi’a, they are marginalized because they deviate from the Wahhabi doctrine. Educated Hijazis have asked for modest reforms of the judiciary and freedom of expression. Yet even this moderation has been dismissed by the al-Saud.

Finally, the tribes of the Asir region, which have a mixed sense of identity due to their close ties to Yemeni tribes, feel alienated from both the political and the economic center, a sentiment shared by the population of al-Jawf in the north.

For the regime, the language of inclusion is thus reduced to that of security rather than political, economic, and social integration. The rulers do not see any link between terrorism and inclusive reforms. They do not recognize that the underlying cause of alienation and the security problems that arise from it is the lack of social justice and repudiation of demands for constitutional monarchy—or even merely reform of the corrupt judiciary.

Instead, the regime perceives the threat to the Saudi state in only two dimensions: violent Jihadis on the one hand, and liberal reformers on the other. Strangely, despite the violence of the Islamists, the rulers seem to be more afraid of the reformers than they are of the terrorists. Criminals can be killed, but ideas of popular accountability and democracy are difficult to extinguish, and thus are perceived as posing a greater threat of the regime’s absolute power. As a result, liberals and moderate Islamists have been sidelined or jailed for demanding reform.

This suppression of peaceful pro-democratic advocates is ultimately shortsighted, for it undermines alternative bases of support for the regime. Indeed, it puts before the population a stark choice: support the regime as it is, or back the Islamists.

Although non-Wahhabi Saudis such as the Hijazis and the Shi’a continue to resist the state dogma, they have not yet joined the camp of absolute opposition. “Yet” is the operative word here. They seek equality, including recognition of the legitimacy of their beliefs and cultures, not overthrow of the regime. But, should the regime continue to suppress their rights, faiths, and cultures, some may join the radicals, with the majority simply becoming passive bystanders, indifferent to the regime’s fate. America must begin to understand that Saudi Arabia is much more than the Al-Saud and the Wahhabi co-rulers. It is a mosaic of significant but little-known communities that are demanding recognition.

What little reform has been undertaken so far is entirely inadequate to meet such demands. Most prominently, the regime seemingly followed the regional trend for a real democratic opening by staging municipal elections to consultative bodies between February and April 2005. The Saudi government, however, described the elections as heralding the dawn of a “new political era.” But how new is it when half the members of the consultative bodies were already appointed? Moreover, only one-quarter of the population participated, with women excluded outright, despite the attempt of several to participate, owing to the regime’s embrace of the Wahhabi religious authorities’ definition of the “nature of women.”

Even among those eligible to vote, interest in the elections was strikingly low, despite a series of campaigns led by Crown Prince Abdullah to boost turnout. In fact, it is far from clear that the government genuinely wanted a high level of participation, as this could lead to the development of an electoral culture. Although low turnout might be embarrassing, it could provide a justification of the regime for Western audiences by suggesting that widespread public indifference to the elections, despite the Saudi state’s best efforts, indicates that the population is satisfied with the status quo.

Indeed, the candidates who won in Riyadh, the capital, were Wahhabi Islamists, a victory tailor-made to worry the U.S. about pushing for more democracy. It is widely believed that the rulers encouraged a number of Islamists to participate in order to propagate the idea that fully competitive elections carry the threat of an Islamist takeover: “We have controlled elections in order to protect the country; ask for more and you don’t know what you’ll get.”

But this is a myth. Most Saudis are not Wahhabi extremists; in fact, the Wahhabis have always been a minority in the country and, indeed, as I argue in my recent book Cradle of Islam, the Hijazi tradition is tolerant and moderate. Saudi intellectuals explain the limited interest in the recent elections in general, and the prominence of the Wahhabis in particular,
as direct results of the lack of freedom of expression and assembly that frustrates real political participation. Reformers were discouraged and even silenced, so that they could not mobilize. Thus, low interest in the vote does not imply disdain for democracy, but realism among the moderate majority about the government’s real agenda. Elections cannot be separated from constitutional reform, despite the government’s efforts to uphold such a distinction. The most crucial question here concerns reform of the majlis al-shura (consultative council). Can it become a real parliament? Will it be elected, and, if so, who will do the electing?

At present, the King appoints all of its members, who do not legislate and rarely even propose legislation. The King proposes and they discuss. The council cannot debate the budget or military deals, nor can it question the financial allocation to the princes from the state budget. The King announced that the members of al-shura will be increased from 120 to 150 in April 2005, but the responsibilities that they will hold remain vague. In the absence of constitutional reform, the fact that 30 more people get to sit in a room and talk without consequence will not bring political or social peace.

America claims to want democratization throughout the Arab world. Yet, so far, the Bush administration appears prepared to accept the Saudi regime’s sham democratic reforms; it seems as if oil still trumps democracy. But a successful long-term U.S. strategy must begin to recognize the fact that Saudi Arabia is not a homogenous society; it contains powerful factions, sects, and ethnic groups that will no longer tolerate their oppression in the name of a form of Islam (Wahhabism) in which they do not believe. Just as America found ways to meet and cultivate “civil society” groups in the communist world before 1989, it must begin to connect with Saudi Arabia’s alienated majority. If not, U.S. policy is doomed to failure.

SECURITY

But democratization is not enough. A free society is a secure society. The challenge for Saudi Arabia, therefore, is to find ways to address its legitimate security needs without foreclosing a democratic opening.

The historic connection between the political and the religious establishment is integral to understanding the new currents of the jihadists in the Kingdom. Al Qaida is a creation of Saudi Wahhabi ideology and financial support. Year after year, the regime has turned a blind eye to the threat of radical Wahhabis. As a result, the Saudi government’s inaction has been viewed as passive support.

America’s ability to influence Saudi Arabia’s counterterrorism capacity is limited. The U.S. has offered military assistance, training of security forces, and support in bolstering Saudi intelligence capability. But until domestic alienation is addressed, a simple fight against terror will not be sufficient, because new terrorists will simply replace those who are captured or killed.

How strong is the extremist threat? Is it an immediate danger to the viability of the regime? Saudi Arabia is not in immediate danger. There is nonetheless a real danger, not to be dismissed lightly, that the Jihadis could consolidate networks with counterparts in neighboring countries, and that Jihadis returning from Iraq could launch an insurgency in the Kingdom.

The problem has become more complex, because the regime appointed or relied upon a number of younger clerics to serve as interlocutors with the violent Jihadis. Twenty-six prominent clerics issued a fatwa in November 2004 legitimizing jihad in Iraq. While embarrassing for the princes, especially in their relations with the West, some believe that this fatwa suits the desire of Prince Naif ibn Abdul Aziz al-Saud, the Minister of Interior, to facilitate the export of jihadis to Iran in order to ease the violence at home. This seems to be a continuation of the policy pursued in the 1980s, when the regime exported dissent to Afghanistan. But we all now know how that boomeranged; with well-trained and experienced fanatics forming a global movement to radicalize Islam after the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, propaganda campaigns continue. The Grand Mufti, Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Sheikh, condemned the jihadis as deviant Muslims. But, at home, most radical Wahhabi clerics have not been jailed (unlike the reformers), nor have their inflammatory websites been shut down, only because they remain a key part of the establishment and the official religious system.

OIL

In March 2005, Saudi Arabia’s total capacity was 11.5 million barrels per day, with current production standing at 9.5 million barrels per day. Both figures are the highest in the world.

But this leadership position makes Saudi Arabia a target. America knows this, as does the regime. The oil installations themselves are said to be secure; Jazan, Ras Tannoura and Jubail are all heavily guarded. The pipelines are more difficult to secure because they are located over huge distances in a country that is 1/3 the size of the United States—Petroleums, for example, connects the Eastern province to the Yamun in the Western Province. However, the fact that the pipelines are underground and highly maintained makes them harder targets for terrorist attacks.

Attacks since May 2003 and today show Saudi Arabia as an increasingly central theatre for terrorist operations, but these have been largely on soft targets—the industrial compound in Yamun, the attack on the western compound in the oil city of Khorab and other western compounds especially in the capital Riyadh. Attacks then widened to target the Ministry of Interior, the police headquarters in Riyadh and the U.S. consulate in Jeddah. This shows a change in both the philosophy and tactics of the terrorists. The taboo surrounding attacks on oil installations has been broken since Bin Laden’s December 2004 speech calling on attacks on the regime.

Nevertheless, the regime also knows that America’s insatiable oil consumption serves as a blatant announcement that, in the end, it will always opt for secure oil deliveries now, postponing to another day concerns about the viability of Saudi Arabia’s regime in the absence of reform. So long as America is blinded by oil, its policy toward Saudi Arabia will be myopic. In the long term, this will be dangerous for Saudi Arabia, for America, and for the world.

1 Wahhabism, a Unitarian movement, emerged from the teachings of Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahbah (1799-1892). It advocates God’s oneness and unbridled almighty and proved to be a potent force in the expansion of Al Saud rule, providing religious legitimation for the conquest of the Arabian peninsula while isolating the population with a uniting belief system. Abdul Wahbah’s aim was to abolish all innovation following the 3rd Islamic Century. His teachings are based on the idea that Islam has sunk into impurity, and a return to its supposed former purity remains Wahhabism’s basic tenet. Anything that departs from the oneness of God as defined by the Wahhabis is guilty of idolatry, and implies disbelief.
The Environmental Impact of Bringing Caspian Basin Oil to the International Market

Remarks by Nitufer Oral, J.D.
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Rutgers University

During the nineteenth century the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits were an important trade route between Europe and the Russian Empire, particularly for wheat. Today, with the rapid development of oil and natural gas resources in the neighboring South Caucasus and Caspian regions, both have become important transport routes for oil and natural gas. The Turkish Straits being the critical link between the isolated Black Sea and the rest of the world. For centuries the Turkish Straits have played a pivotal role in both commerce and security between Russia and the West. The passage of time has not diminished that role, but the increase in both traffic and dangerous/hazardous cargo being transported through this risky waterway has augmented the dangers associated with navigation.

Under all circumstances the transportation of hydrocarbon products by sea presents environmental risks for the marine environment. However, these risks are enhanced in the case of the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits. The Black Sea has been declared to be an "environmental catastrophe" by many experts. Once a sea rich in biodiversity, over the past three decades it has watched its commercial fish species plummet from twenty-six to six.

Ninety percent of the causes of the environmental degradation of the Black Sea are not related to shipping. Land-based pollution, particularly brought by the Danube River, is by far the major source of pollution in the Black Sea. However, although comparatively less in its impact, oil pollution is an important threat to the ecosystem of both the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits, particularly as the amount being transported has more than doubled in less than a decade. Furthermore, the Prestige (2002) and Erika (1999) tanker accidents in Europe demonstrated the serious consequences of an oil spill on both the ecosystems and the economies of countries.

Particularly vulnerable are the Turkish Straits whose narrow twisting path—as narrow as 700 meters—presents significant navigational challenges with currents that can reach a powerful 7-8 knots. These factors create a natural limitation on the number and size of tankers that can navigate at any one time. Since 1946 the Turkish Straits have witnessed over 500 ship accidents. The 1979 Independence, which has been ranked as the 11th worst oil spill in the world, and the 1994 Nistria tanker accidents have tragically demonstrated the very real dangers of navigation through the Turkish Straits. Just recently, on 17 May 2005, a Cambodian flagged dry cargo carrier lost engine power and, caught in the currents of the Straits of Istanbul, rammed five meters into one of the many seashore mansions lined along the waterway.

Caspian oil: how much?

During the early 1990s the estimates of Caspian oil ranged from a high of 200 billion barrels, rivaling the Persian Gulf, to the more modest amount of 30 billion barrels. According to the United States Department of Energy the proven...
oil reserves for the Caspian Sea range between 17-33 billion barrels. The main fields discovered to date are the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli field (Azerbaijan), estimated to hold proven reserves of 5.4 billion barrels of oil; Tengiz (Kazakhstan), which is considered to be one of the world’s largest fields and estimated to have 69 billion barrels of recoverable oil; Karachaganak (Kazakhstan), estimated to hold 2.4 billion barrels of proven reserves of oil; and Kashagan (Kazakhstan), the largest oil field in the Caspian region and ranked as one of the biggest oil discoveries in the past 34 years, is the world’s fourth or fifth largest oil field with total proven reserves of 13 billion barrels of recoverable oil.

The combination of Russian oil-together with the reserves of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan—must be included to complete the overall regional oil transport profile. Russia has been a major source of oil for many years. The Soviet Union during the height of its oil production in the mid-1980s was the leader in terms of global output. However, after 1991 output fell to later recover at a significant rate. In 2002 Russia was responsible for nearly 11 percent of the global oil production with 238 metric tons annually (mta). In 2003 this amount increased to 421 mta. In 2004 Russia produced 458.8 million tons of oil, 8.9% higher than in 2003. According to the December 2004 issue of the PSU Oil & Gas Monitor, production is expected to continue to increase.

For purposes of the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits, both Caspian oil as well as Russian oil will have an impact on it. And one of the main points of impact concerns transport of the oil. The geographic reality makes the Black Sea one of the main hubs for the transfer of this vast supply of energy both within the region itself as well as by export to western markets. Transportation of energy may include non-maritime routes, such as rail and overland transportation as well as pipelines, but the bulk of the burden will fall on the sea itself.

Currently, Russia’s southern ports handle a majority of its overseas trade. The main ports in the Black Sea for the export of oil are Novorossiysk, Tuapse, Odessa, Supsa, and Batumi. The Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, one of the 10 largest in Europe, has seen a steady increase in export of Former Soviet Union (FSU) oil: 49.6 metric tons annually (mta) in 2004; 47.6 mta in 2003; 47.7 mta in 2002; 44.3 mta crude in 2001 and 40.5 in 2000. In parallel, oil and oil products transported from the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits have steadily increased from 60 mta in 1996 to 143.5 mta in 2004. The total amount of production is expected to increase to approximately 211 mta by 2010, with 154 mta actually going through the Black Sea and Turkish Straits. The oil industry itself predicts a major increase in oil production in the region by 2010: five-fold increase for Azeri oil production, 50 percent increase for Russian oil output and double for Kazakh. However, in 1999 the International Energy Agency (IEA) had estimated that the combined Black Sea oil exports were “unlikely to exceed 97.1-115 mta by 2003.” Whereas, in 2003 approximately 140 mta of Black Sea oil and oil products was shipped from the Black Sea ports through the Turkish Straits representing a significant increase from 1999 and significantly more than the original estimate. One cannot help but wonder whether the estimates provided today will also prove to be low?

State of the Black Sea environment and the Turkish Straits

The Black Sea can be described as a sea of masts. It is the most isolated sea, it is the most anoxic sea, it is the most heavily eutrophicated sea; it was once one of the most productive seas. Scientists studying the environmental degradation of the Black Sea have employed adjectives such as disaster,10 doomed,11 crisis12 and catastrophic.13 Despite the attention garnered by the Mediterranean, much to the efforts of the renowned oceanographer Jacques Cousteau, in reality the Black Sea is in much worse condition. This view was voiced by the renowned Russian scientist Professor Zaitsev who observed that the Black Sea was “much more” polluted than the Mediterranean Sea. The contrast is quite startling: one cubic kilometer of Black Sea water receives annually about 20,000 kg of pollutants while the same amount of water for the Mediterranean Sea is only 5,775 kg.14

The Turkish Straits serve as a vital biological corridor particularly for the migration of fish and mammals. Indeed, just recently the Marmaray Channel project was halted to allow the seasonal migration of fish from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. Shipping brings pollution through both operational and accidental discharges, with negative consequences on the marine living resources. The volume of shipping traffic in the Turkish Straits had reached 50,000 by the year 2000 from 4,500 in 1930. This increase in traffic volume has brought with it increased vessel-source pollution having a negative impact on the ecosystem.

Table 1. Accidents/Incidents in the Turkish Straits in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Vessel</th>
<th>Incident Type</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Countrie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1.2004</td>
<td>MARIJA</td>
<td>170 meter carrying fertilizer. Grounding, Ship draft of 10.5 meters in 10 meter deep waters.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2.2004</td>
<td>LUPIN I</td>
<td>Due to weather conditions lost control and grounded</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2.2004</td>
<td>STRONSTI</td>
<td>Due to weather conditions lost control and grounded</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.2.2004</td>
<td>HERA</td>
<td>Sank due to fierce storm at mouth of Turkish Straits. 19 deaths.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.2.2004</td>
<td>SOUTH STAR</td>
<td>Near miss-engine failure. Istanbul Straits.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2004</td>
<td>DEFLIN I</td>
<td>16 tons of explosives. Grounding in Canakkale Strait.</td>
<td>Canakkale Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.5.2004</td>
<td>M/T MARIO</td>
<td>178 meters fully laden. Grounding in Istanbul Straits.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.5.2004</td>
<td>YUSRA</td>
<td>Grounding off Maltepe. Marmara Sea.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.5.2004</td>
<td>LONGOBARDA</td>
<td>Engine fire. 1 death on board. Marmara near Pendik.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.6.2004</td>
<td>TULINE</td>
<td>Grounding Verniko.</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.7.2004</td>
<td>JOYVAL DUCKLING</td>
<td>236 meters. Liquid bulk carrier grounding due to engine failure Canakkale Strait. Engine failure. Shipwrecked</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.1.2004</td>
<td>SUMURAI 1</td>
<td>Dry bulk carrier at Bebek</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8.2004</td>
<td>BARACUDA II</td>
<td>Container ship at Sarpayr</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9.2004</td>
<td>ALINTERI 9 / SÖNDÜREN 6</td>
<td>Ro-Ro collision in Canakkale Strait</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9.2004</td>
<td>MUSTAPTA TOTAL</td>
<td>Dry bulk carrier Black Sea</td>
<td>Canakkale Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.9.2004</td>
<td>KAPTAN ALI OSMAN</td>
<td>Dry bulk carrier Prince Island</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.12.2004</td>
<td>BRITISH ENTERPRISE</td>
<td>Tanker Istanbul Strait entrance</td>
<td>Istanbul Strait.</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Black Sea proper, remarkably, has not experienced the level of maritime accidents that have left their mark in maritime history, such as the Titanic (1912), the Torrey Canyon (1967), the Independent (1979), the Exxon Valdez (1989), the Estonia (1999) and Prestige (2002). Nevertheless, experts in shipping all recognize that the risk of such an accident exists and precautions must be taken to both prevent maritime incidents and to be prepared to respond in the case of one occurring. Recent maritime incidents in the Black Sea include the collision on May 2, 2003 of the 160,000 deadweight tonnage (dwt) Suzmar, the Nuestra Torpia, with the 85 dwt Javora M just 75 miles from the Turkish coastal city of Sinop. The Nuestra Torpia was in ballast en route to Novorosyisk. The Javora M sank after the Nuestra Torpia was able to rescue all 20 of its crew. The accident clearly could have been a tragedy. On February 13, 2004, during a storm of record magnitude, the Cambodian flagged and Bulgarian owned Hema disappeared into the stormy Black Sea waters, taking its crew of nineteen men and a cargo of coal with it. On the same day, during the same storm, the Korean flagged Lusia H with its 16 crewmembers and the Russian flagged Shostak with its eleven crewmembers were grounded in the Strait of Istanbul. Of course, accidents are not exclusive to oil tankers. While emphasis tends to be on oil tankers, the input of oil pollution from non-tankers, including tanker oil, should not be underestimated.

More serious accidents, however, have taken place in the Turkish Straits, and in particular the Strait of Istanbul which connects the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. The two most serious accidents involved oil tankers. In 1979 the Independent, a tanker carrying 94,000 tons of crude oil collided with the Skibrooke, a dry cargo vessel, causing one of the worst oil spills on record. The impact was explosive and deadly. The Independent accident has been ranked eleventh in terms of the volume of oil spilled, yet in terms of physical impact and loss of life, it may take first place. Forty-three crewmembers tragically died in a fire that burned for weeks and 96,000 tons of crude oil spilled into the sea and burned into the air.

The quality of shipping in the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits is also of concern. Port State inspections in the Black Sea under the 'Memorandum of Understanding, in effect since 2000, only require that 15 percent of ships visiting Black Sea ports be inspected. Whereas, according to the Paris Memorandum of Understanding, in effect in the European Union, the minimum inspection rate is 25 percent.

Security

The issue of security has gained even greater prominence as a market factor in the aftermath of the tragic September 11, 2001 terror attacks against the United States. In 2004 a ship carrying 19 tons of undeclared explosives was discovered in the Turkish Straits only after it had grounded in the Straits of Guanakale. Such incidents acquire enhanced importance especially recalling that just one year before September 11th the USS Cole, a U.S. military ship was attacked by a small, unidentified boat off the coast of Yemen on October 12, 2000. Two years following the USS Cole incident a similar attack took place against a French oil tanker, the 334-meter long Lomburg, while in the Port of Mina al-Dhabah in Yemen. Both attacks involved the use of small boats, loaded with explosives, ramming into the targets. An attack in the Turkish Straits would undoubtedly result in the closure of the waterway, if not to all sea traffic, certainly to vessels carrying dangerous and hazardous cargo.

Are pipelines an alternative?

The transportation of oil from the offshore fields of the Caspian and Southern Caucasus to market has required the construction of new oil pipelines as well as expansion of existing ones. The extant oil transport infrastructure was clearly inadequate to meet the impending oil boom. One of the great controversies that endured during the latter part of the 1990s was over the use of the Turkish Straits as an oil export route and the feasibility of constructing an alternative route via a pipeline from Baku to Ceyhan, a port on the Turkish Mediterranean coast. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (BTC) project is scheduled to open May 25, 2005 and, when fully operational, will be able to transport at least 50 mta of oil.

The Turkish Straits have created a bypass market for their own and various projects vying for the approval of governments and oil from the big energy companies. One of the more controversial projects was the 195-kilometer and 50-60 mta capacity Trans-Thracia (Trans/Trika) pipeline, proposed by Transit as a bypass alternative to the Turkish Straits. The pipeline would connect the Black Sea fishing village of Kuykoy to the Bay of Saroz in the Aegean Sea, by bypassing the Turkish Straits by a parallel route through Turkish Thrace. It was an attractive route in terms of cost and distance and favored by Russia. However, this project generated strong opposition from local environmental groups and the media. The delicate ecological balance of Saroz Bay, which is known for its unique ecosystem would come under the pressure of an estimated 1,200 oil tanker (both ways) visits per year.

Competition with the Trans/Trika project was the Ignasida-Saroz project, another Trans-Thracia pipeline. This was a U.S.-Turkish-Kazak enterprise similar in length (198 kilometers) and capacity to the Kuykoy-Saroz pipeline project. Both were opposed by Turkish environmental groups and appear to have fallen into disfavor with the Turkish Government.

An alternative Turkish bypass pipeline project to the proposed TransThracia pipeline is the 55 mta Samson-Ceyhan pipeline project. It would transport oil from the Turkish Black Sea port of Samson to the Mediterranean Sea port of Ceyhan. The primary advantage of this by-pass route is that it would utilize existing port and loading facilities at both ends. Whereas, the TransThracia project would require construction of new port facilities in both the Black Sea and Saroz Bay, both of which are virgin territories for oil tankers and international shipping. On the other hand, there is also the view that Ceyhan is already going to be saturated with BTC oil.
Other pipeline projects that could be by-pass alternatives to the Turkish Straits include a 910 kilometer-37.5 mta capacity pipeline from Burgaz (Bulgaria) to Viro (Albania); the 260 kilometer-30 mta capacity Burgaz (Bulgaria) to Alexandroupolis (Greece) and the 1400 km Constanta-Omija-Trieste pipeline. Russia, Bulgaria and Greece have announced that an agreement for the construction of this pipeline (TransBalkan pipeline) will be signed April 15, 2005. One possible by-pass alternative which was already completed in 2002 is the 674 kilometer Odessa-Brody pipeline with a 14.5-45 mta capacity and is also the first of the European Union (EU) Inagote pipeline projects. The project was originally designed to link an oil supply from the Black Sea to the oil refinery in Plock, Poland and eventually extend to the Baltic Sea port of Gdansk, Poland. However, in 2004 the Russian-British joint-venture company BP-TNK with support from Russian authorities, was able to push through a decision to reverse the flow of the pipeline thereby bringing more oil (9 mta for three years) into the Back Sea, and consequently through the Turkish Straits.

The EU has also adopted an official policy in favor of pipelines over sea transportation that:

In the oil sector, increasing international concern is being expressed over the threat of maritime accidents and the ensuing significant environmental damage caused by the resulting oil spills. Given the increasing density of the maritime traffic in the waters around the EU and in the enclosed Black Sea, it is of utmost importance to give a higher priority to considering, where economically and technically feasible, the alternative of transporting oil by pipelines. This is considerably safer and more environmentally friendly.

Conclusion

The volume of oil production and export from the Caspian and Caucasus by way of the Black Sea region and the Turkish Straits has more than doubled in less than a decade. Tanker traffic plying the dangerous waters of the Turkish Straits has likewise more than doubled. Past and recent history has shown over time that the risk of an accident is not "whether" but "when." The Black Sea and the Turkish Straits are two interrelated sensitive ecosystems with dwindling marine life biodiversity. The increase in oil transport and concomitant risks of an oil spill and resulting pollution is very real. While measures have been taken by the Turkish Government to reduce such risks, so long as oil continues to be transported in tankers the risk too shall continue. The Black Sea countries should also give greater attention to improving the quality of ships that are navigating the Black Sea. Port State control is an important tool that can have positive effects in promoting safer quality shipping in the region.

Pipelines are one alternative, although they should not be viewed as panaceas as they too have associated risks. Nevertheless, a system of environmentally sustainable pipelines would constitute a viable alternative to the use of the Black Sea and the Turkish Straits as the primary route of oil transport. However, such bypass alternatives must not create an environmental hazard to existing ecosystems such as the case with the TransThacia pipeline and potentially the Bourgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline. In this regard serious consideration should be given to establishing a commonly agreed-upon set of guidelines for oil pipelines.

Oil is an essential fuel for the world. But so is the health of the environment vital for our survival. The loss of living marine resources in the Black Sea is a serious threat that cannot be underestimated. The challenge for all stakeholders in the region is to be able to provide sustainable transport of oil. This in turn requires genuine cooperation and commitment.

1. www.aerco.com
7. Provided by the Turkish Foreign Ministry
9. OSPI (Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative Caspian Sea-Black Sea-Central Eurasia) Briefing paper. OSPI was established by the major oil companies operating in the region.
12. M.T. Gomor, "The Romanian Black Sea Coast" in V. Kolybasky, M. Uppensbrink and V. Metreveli (Eds), Conservation of the Biological Diversity as a Precaution for Sustainable Development in the Black Sea (Kluwer 1998). The author states that during the 1980s the Black Sea was known as one of the most productive seas having a bountiful development of the pelagic and benthic life, a vast distribution of Phyllophora red algae, abundance of bottom filter-feeders (Mytilus modiolus and other species) and being an ideal feeding ground for many commercial fish. p. 79
Secularism and Islam in Iraq

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Britain, the mandatory power, created Iraq in 1921 following the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. Until the U.S. invasion of 2003, a Sunni minority elite, constituting some 17 percent of the population and based in central Iraq, held sway over the Shiite majority of 60 percent spread over southern and central Iraq, and over a Kurdish minority of 20 percent in the north. Unlike the Kurds, who constitute a distinct ethnic group aspiring for autonomy in a loosely federative Iraqi state, Sunnis and Shites are predominantly Arabs and they envisage a unified Iraq. Moreover, while the Kurds have largely been secular in their orientations, Islam has played a great role in shaping the identity of Arab Shites and Sunnis in modern Iraq, both before and after the U.S. invasion. These differences are at play today in the debate between and among Kurds and Arabs over the meaning of federalism, as well as in their struggle over the role of Islam in the Iraqi constitution and over the relations between religion and politics in post-Ba‘th Iraq.

Monarchic and Ba‘thi Iraq

Under the Ottoman Empire, religion was the major category by which the government classified people and by which people identified themselves. In Iraq, Islam was the predominant religion. The rise of an Iraqi nation-state led to the emergence of secular concepts, namely, nationalism and communism, which challenged Islam as the main framework of identity.

The rise of nationalism in Iraq dates back to the 1920s, the early years of the monarchy, when government ideologues began developing a model of a secular modern Arab country, thus attempting to undermine the power of religion and detach the lay population from the influence of clerics. Members of the Sunni minority were on the whole receptive to the idea of Pan-Arab nationalism promoted by successive governments in modern Iraq. But the Shites were not comfortable with Pan-Arabism, both during the monarchic period and under the Ba‘th, and instead emphasized their Iraqi identity. At the same time, the frustrations of young Shites with their exclusion from the political process led many to embrace communism, particularly in the late 1940s and during the 1950s. Shites constituted the majority of the rank-and-file of the Iraqi Communist Party, which also attracted Kurds and members of other minorities. The massive attraction of Shites to communism in the 1950s in particular reflected their search both for a political framework that would enable them to play a role in national politics, and for a vehicle through which they could change the political order in Iraq.

If communism was one form through which Shites sought to change the political realities in Iraq, Islam was another. After four decades during which Shiite clerics withdrew from politics, and the lay population embraced secular ideologies, Islam has been making a comeback. The revival of Islamic ideology may be traced to
the late 1950s, the last years of the Iraqi monarchy. In its early stages the movement reflected both the fear of Shiite clerics of the impact of communism on the young generation of Shiites, as well as government attempts to foster religion in order to curtail communism. Clerics began identifying communism with the government in Iraq only after the 14 July 1958 Revolution, which brought 'Abd al-Karim Qasim to power. An army officer, Qasim lacked a strong political power base, and as Prime Minister he relied mainly on mass popular support, meaning, the Iraqi Communist Party. As the communists made their political support indispensable to Qasim, their influence in the country increased. This produced a strong reaction from Shiite clerics. By 1960 a significant anti-communist movement had developed in Najaf, Karbala, and Hilla in southern Iraq, embodied most notably in the Islamic Da'wa Party. The tension between the clerics and the government was further fueled by the introduction of the Personal Status Law of December 1959, which accorded women equal rights with men in matters of intestate succession. The clerics regarded the law as an indication of the power of communism in Iraq, and as a government measure aimed at diminishing their influence over their Shiite followers.

It was in the period of instability between the revolution of 1958 and the Ba'th second seizure of power in 1968 that Islam began attracting lay Shiites in significant numbers, thanks in part to growing disillusionment with the influence of communism in Iraq. The gradual decline of communism was evident in the fact that the Shiite slums of Baghdad (known today as Sa'd City), where the communist party had deployed much of its strength in the 1950s and early 1960s, became the major sources of support of the Da'wa in the latter part of the 1960s and during the 1970s. The surge in Islamic radicalism symbolized the response of Shiites to the assault of the Sunni Ba'th elite on their very identity as Iraqis. While the affairs surrounding the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution served as a major catalyst for stimulating Iraqi Shiite anti-Ba'thi and anti-Saddam Hussein feelings, it is doubtful whether there existed a genuine Islamic revolutionary frame of mind among the Iraqi Shiite masses, let alone the socioeconomic infrastructure necessary for carrying out an Islamic revolution. Moreover, the concept of the jurist rule as developed by Ruhollah Khomenei in Iran did not gain ground among the large majority of lay Iraqi Shiites affiliated with the Da'wa.

The power of the Da'wa in Iraq was largely broken following the Ba'th campaign against the organization during the 1980s. Subsequently, Iraqi Shiite Islamists became divided among several opposition groups. Whereas the Da'wa and its offshoots, as well as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), became the largest Islamist groups in exile, the movement of the cleric Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr (Muqtada al-Sadr's father), evolved into the most organized Shiite opposition within Iraq in the period leading up to the U.S. invasion.

Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr emerged as a dominant cleric after his release from prison in the wake of the 1991 Shiite uprising. Initially, the Ba'th tolerated, probably even encouraged, his rise, seeking to use him both to placate Iraqi Shiites and as an alternative to the preeminent and al-Ali religious leadership in Najaf led by Abu al-Qasim Khoei (until his death in 1992) and Ali Sistani. At the same time, the Ba'th allowed the organization of Sunni Islamist groups, including Muslin Brothers and Salafis with Wahhabi inclinations, seeking to use them to destabilize the Shiites. In so doing, the Ba'th set the stage for the emergence of Islam as a potent force following the U.S. invasion, both among Shiites and Sunnis. Islamization within the Shiite community is evident in the case of Muqtada al-Sadr. During the 1990s, this energetic figure succeeded in reconnecting the Najaf world of clerics and seminaries with the rural communities of southern Iraq as well as with the Shiite urban poor in Baghdad. Sadr believed in clerical involvement in all areas of life. His strategy built on grassroots politics and on the function of the religious leader as a field commander. Sadr disapproved of the quietist approach of the leading clerics in Najaf, arguing that clerics should be outspoken or lose the right to lead. He pursued a policy of indirect confrontation with the Ba'th, refusing to bestow political legitimacy on the regime in exchange for freedom of religious activities. Yet his goal of becoming an independent cleric commanding popular support was cut short when unidentified gunmen shot him to death in Najaf in 1999. His movement, made up mainly of Shiites of poor background, many of whom were veterans of the 1991 uprising, remained intact under his son Muqtada, who went underground. The Sadr movement reemerged with vigor in the power vacuum that followed the collapse of the Ba'th in 2003.

Post-Ba'th Iraq

The events surrounding the U.S. invasion underscored the fact that secularism remains strong among the Kurds, as evidenced by the fact that the Kurdish Islamic Block won only 2 seats in the 2005 elections to the transitional national assembly compared with 75 seats won by the largely secular Kurdish Alliance. Moreover, Kurdish leaders have been very outspoken in their opposition to Islamic legislation and to the idea of Islamic government in Iraq ever since 2005. Yet at the same time, the U.S. invasion reinforced the surge in religious expression among Arabs in Iraq and led to the emergence of clerics as community leaders, both among Shiites and Sunnis. Within the Shia community, this trend is evident in the composition of the United Iraqi Alliance, which includes the Islamic Da'wa Party and SCIRI, and which won 140 of the 275 seats in the assembly. The Shi'ite religious bloc has more seats won by smaller Islamist parties, and its leaders have advocated the introduction of Islamic sharia law into Iraq's legal codes, especially where it concerns family matters and women's status. Sunnis by and large boycotted the elections. Still, like the Shiites, their members have expressed their identity primarily in religious terms ever since the U.S. invasion, albeit with greater militancy than the Shiites.

Islam plays an important role in shaping Iraqi society and politics today. But it has manifested itself differently among Shiites and Sunnis. This is evident from a comparison of the Sunni insurgency centered in Falluja and the Shiite rebellion led by Muqtada al-Sadr during 2004. Washington's decision in April 2004 to hand Falluja over to former officers of the Ba'th Republican Guard failed to pacify the city, turning it instead into a safe haven for former Ba'thists and Sunni Islamic extremists, primarily Iraqis but including some foreign jihadists. By August, the Islamic militants overshadowed the secular Ba'thi elements, establishing a city council of "holy warriors" and working in alliance with the militant Unity and Jihad organization of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian with links to al-Qaeda. Falluja had become a hub for Iraqi Sunni resistance fighters and for terrorists determined to undermine the U.S. reconstruction effort, expel Westerners from Iraq, kill Iraqis who cooperated with the U.S., and block the rise of Shiites to power. A U.S. military assault on Falluja in November reduced much of the city to rubble, but failed to end an insurgency that has expressed Sunni discontent and disenfranchisement from the politics of post-Ba'th Iraq. In Najaf, by contrast, the presence of Sadr's fighters irritated the senior religious leaders and the merchants, and eventually led Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani to impose his will on the young rebel leader in order not to risk Shiite political opportunities. Sadr's supporters subsequently participated in the January 2005 elections, in stark contrast to the Sunni rebels who renounced the political process.

The emergence of clerics as community leaders, particularly within the Shiite community, carries implications for Iraq's future and for the future of the larger Middle East. In post-Ba'th Iraq, clerics have taken the lead because there is hardly any form of secular civil society in the country today that can act as the nucleus of an Iraqi democratic system. In its thirty-five years of rule, the Ba'th wiped out all forms of civil organization not controlled directly by the
Party. To make things worse, the twelve years of sanctions that preceded the U.S. invasion, reinforced by an unemployment rate of some 50 percent in its wake, have reduced the Iraqi middle class to bare subsistence. It will take years before a viable secular middle class can reemerge and balance the power of the religious groups, who are now the most vocal, organized, and politically mobilized force in Iraq. In the absence of a viable secular Arab middle class, the Kurds have emerged as a force that could, to a degree, mitigate the power of the religious groups through political participation in the national assembly.

While the participation of Shiite clerics in Iranian politics during 1978-79 resulted in a theocracy, clerical participation in Iraqi politics today may give birth to a strong parliamentary system in the country and to an elected government accountable to the voters. In this regard, the statements and actions of Ali Sistani thus far have been encouraging. Although Sistani has a vision of what an Islamic government should be, he is not inspired by Khomeini. Sistani has accepted the political reality of a modern nation-state led by lay politicians. He considers Iran's theocracy as a departure from centuries of Shiite thought, and does not advocate that clerics should be the final arbiters in state affairs. Sistani's emphasis is on ensuring government accountability and protecting Islam. Hence his repeated calls for direct elections to a national assembly—an institution that would check the government and the process of legislation in Iraq. Moreover, in a break with the current political system in Iran, Sistani has not called for a council of guardians to scrutinize the bills that would be introduced in the assembly. If he continues to adhere to this pragmatic line, Sistani will in effect be recognizing the complex social reality of Iraq with its substantial Sunni and Kurdish minorities, and tacitly acknowledging that there should be limits on clerical participation in state affairs. Indeed, an Iraq that ends up with a strong national assembly capable of checking the executive will be a radical departure from the current political models in both Iran and the Arab world where rulers have imposed their will on the legislature and have disregarded human rights.

The surge in religious expression in post-Baath Iraq carries implications for U.S. policy in the country. The U.S. government would need to reduce its expectations for the flowering of secular democracy in Iraq. As the 2005 elections demonstrated, the first manifestation of any decent government in Iraq would be influenced by religious figures. The U.S. needs to come to terms with this reality, accept the notion that not all Muslim clerics are al'ik, and to engage the moderate Islamists as part of the solution in Iraq. The U.S. government also needs to allow the development of a strong national assembly in Iraq where Islamists and secularists could cut political deals and practice the art of compromise. It ordinary Iraqis could feel that through the assembly they can put pressure on the government to address their concerns, the political process will gain legitimacy. A strong assembly may indeed be the key to the development of a legitimate government and to achieving long-term stability in Iraq.

Political Islam: Challenges for U.S. Policy

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May 30-June 5, 2005

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CONFERECE AGENDA

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Radical Islam: Egypt's Experience
Ibrahim Karawan, University of Utah

Discussion Questions
• Has the Egyptian government successfully contained radical Islamic threats to the regime?
• What is the current agenda of Egypt's Islamists? Is it compatible with democratic principles advocated by the West?
• How should the U.S. approach the government of Egypt on the matter of political reform?

Pakistan and Afghanistan: Islam and Democracy
Vali Nasr, Naval Postgraduate School

Discussion Questions
• Is the Islamic challenge to the Musharraf government under control?
• How tough should the U.S. be with President Musharraf on the issue of democracy in view of the ongoing war on terrorism?
• How secure is the Karzai government given an ongoing insurgency and the growth of the narcotics trade?

U.S.-Turkey Relations
Discussion led by U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Eric Edelman

Reform, Security, and Oil in Saudi Arabia
Mai Yamani, Royal Institute for International Affairs

Discussion Questions
• Do the security threats to the Saudi regime strengthen or weaken the case and pace for reform?
• How secure are Saudi oil supplies and how much spare capacity do they have?
How forcefully should the U.S. advocate a reform agenda to the current Saudi regime?

The Environmental Impact of Bringing Caspian Basin Oil to the International Market
Remarks by Nilufer Oral, Istanbul Bilgi University

Secularism and Islam in Iraq
Yitzhak Nakash, Brandeis University

Discussion Questions
- Can the elected Shia majority in Iraq’s parliament prevent the introduction of shari’a law into the new constitution?
- How relevant are Sunni fundamentalists and their own religious agenda?
- How far should the U.S. nurture and support Ayatollah Ali Sistani?