ARAB, ARAB-AMERICAN, AMERICAN:
HEGEMONIC AND CONTRAPUNTAL REPRESENTATIONS

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Acknowledgments

Next the statesmen will invent cheap lies, putting the blame upon the nation that is attacked, and every man will be glad of those conscience-soothing falsities, and will diligently study them, and refuse to examine any refutations of them; and thus he will by and by convince himself that the war is just, and will thank God for the better sleep he enjoys after this process of grotesque self-deception.

Mark Twain, posthumous in *Harper's Monthly,* 1916

Columbia,
My dear girl,
You really haven't been a virgin for so long
It's ludicrous to keep up the pretext.
You're terribly involved in world assignations
And everybody knows it.
You've slept with all the big powers
In military uniforms,
And you've taken the sweet life
Of all the little brown fellows
In loin cloths and cotton trousers.
When they've resisted,
You've yelled, "Rape,"
At the top of your voice
And called for the middies
To beat them up for not being gentlemen
And liking your crooked painted mouth.
[…………………………………..]
Being one of the world's big vampires,
Why don't you come on out and say so
Like Japan, and England, and France,
And all the other nymphomaniacs of power […]?

Langston Hughes, "Columbia," *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*

Contents

Introduction

> [...] questions of culture and of representation, of
> cultural production, and of aesthetics, politics and
> power are of absolute centrality.
>
> Stuart Hall, *The House That Race Built*, 290

The Palestinian writer Muna Hamzeh notes that with the outbreak of the second Intifada, sparked off by the visit of then Knesset member Ariel Sharon to al-Aqsa Mosque on September 28, 2000, Israel responded with devastating military force and imposed closure on Palestinian territories that prevented thousands of people from going to their workplaces. Hamzeh, who thought that it would be safer to stay at her house in Dheisheh (the largest of three Palestinian refugee camps in Bethlehem) given its location in the so-called Zone A area controlled by the Palestinian authority, found out to her dismay that she and her people are still easy prey to Israeli high-tech militarism. She writes:

> The Israeli-made Merkava tanks and US-made AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters were the answer. If Israel couldn't send in soldiers to the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority, then it would simply bomb the hell out of our towns and villages. To reward Israel, the US Defense Department signed a letter of offer and acceptance with Israel in February 2001 to sell Israel an additional nine Apaches, which will be manufactured by Boeing in Mesa, Arizona.[1]

In the fictional world woven by the Palestinian novelist Sahar Khalifeh, the narrator of *Wild Thorns* recounts what is poignant reality for the Palestinians: "The American Secretary of Defence had made a new statement about arms shipments to Israel. Phantom jets. More and more Phantoms. Billions of dollars flooding into Israel's treasury. The old men muttered grim prayers […]. The young men cursed and blasphemed […]. Arab oil revenue turned into Phantoms! So much for Arab unity!"[2] The lack of Arab unity, or even more important the absence of the will to turn Arab wealth into political clout in order, for instance, to free the Palestinians from the yoke of Israeli occupation reveals the unfortunate reality of Arab (especially Gulf) regimes, that have firmly tied their own survival and their own interests with the United States, the undisputed leader of world capitalism. In this regard, Arab regimes are

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[1] Muna Hamzeh, "Notes from Dheisheh," *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel's Apartheid*, ed. Roane Carey, (London: Verso, 2001) 223-24.
[2] Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns*, trans. Trevor LeGassick and Elizabeth Fernea (New York: Interlink Books, 2000) 179. The novel was originally published in Arabic as *Al-Subar* in 1976.

at heart a continuation of the Arab-façade system that has a stake in running oppressive police states and tolerating no serious opposition. Saadi Youssef, a well-known Iraqi Poet, who left his home country shortly after Saddam Hussein took over power in 1979, wrote in the same year from his exile in Beirut:

> A quarter of a century since then
> And we arrive to find
> That Ibn Tammiya[3] has become
> The head of a bludgeon
> And al-Muwafaq[4] is still cleaving
> Rebellious slaves
> From the womb of the earth.
> The police of Damascus kick us
> And the police of Iraq
> And the Arabs' American police
> And the English
> And the French
> And the Persian
> And the Ottoman police
> And the police of the Fatimid Caliphs […]
> Our families
> kick us,
> Our Naïve, good-hearted families,
> Our murderous families.
> We are the children of this madness.
> Let's be whatever we wish.[5]

Yet, while failing to put pressure on successive US administrations to stop, at least, supporting and financing the Israeli occupation of and expansion onto Palestinian territories, several Arab regimes hastily rallied behind the first Bush administration's plan to correct the wrong committed by Saddam Hussein by "bombing Iraq back to the Middle Ages!"[6] Nuha al-Radi, a Western-educated Iraqi artist, bitterly asks in her diary on the 13th day of the US led "Desert Storm" (that is after having gone through only the beginning of the massive bombardment of her country): "Twenty-seven thousand air raids on us so far. Is the world mad? Do they not realize what they are doing? I think [George H. W.] Bush is a criminal.

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[3] Ibn Tammiya (1263-328) was a leading Sunni scholar of the Hanbali school, known for its ultra-orthodox interpretations of the religious texts. Muhammed Ibn Abdul Wahab (1703-92), the founder of Wahhabism, which is Saudi Arabia's official state religion, was heavily influenced by the teachings of Ibn Tammiya.

[4] "Al-Muwafaq acquired the reputation as the most ruthless Abbasid military commander. It was he who crushed the slave revolt in the southern marshes of Iraq. The revolt of the Zanj, an epic struggle without precedent in the annals of slavery, lasted fourteen years (869-883) till it was savagely crushed by al-Muwafaq. Many of its leaders were publicly flogged and executed in Basrah." Tariq Ali, *Bush in Babylon: The Recolonisation of Iraq* (London: Verso, 2003) fn. 5, 21.

[5] See *Without an Alphabet, Without a Face: Selected Poems by Saadi Youssef*, qtd. in Ali, *Bush in Babylon*, 21-22. Another example is the autobiographical writing of Kamal Ben Hameda that captures so well the continuity of the structure of repression from the colonial times to today's regime in Lybia. See his *Le Mémoire de L'absent* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

[6] The declaration of "bombing Iraq back to the Middle Ages" was made by President Bush during the buildup for the operation "Desert Storm." "Long Term Security," *Iraq Notebook* Winter 2000: 12.

This country is totally ruined. Who gives the Americans the license to bomb at will? I could understand Kuwait doing this to us, but not the whole world. Why do they hate us so much?"[7] In the updated edition of her diary, al-Radi wrote in the postscript on March 21, 2003 (one day after the US launched its attack on Iraq): "What's the difference between Iraq invading and occupying Kuwait in 1990 and America invading and occupying Iraq in 2003? The most powerful nation in the world with the latest weapons of mass destruction is attacking a small country that has been pre-emptively stripped of its defenses."[8]

The Arab voices above address a complex reality that runs the gamut from US double standards, violence, and recent colonialism to Arab regimes' complicity with US imperialism and even, in an indirect way, with Israeli occupation. Indeed, the voices of the Iraqi and Palestinian writers above ground their anger and outrage in the grim reality of literally being on the receiving end of state-sponsored violence, be it Arab, Israeli or American. That's why one of the first questions asked by the majority of Arab people is the very question a large number of US citizens have been understandably asking after 9/11, namely "why do they hate us?" In the Arab context the burning questions that have been asked for more than a decade are, more specifically: why does the US finance Israeli occupation and expansion and veto UN resolutions against Israel while it hastens to destroy Iraq in the name of reversing its aggression on Kuwait? Why do our opinions and lives not matter to the US policymakers and the US media? Why this demonization of Arab culture and Islam? Why are we such an easy target?

Naturally the question that arises immediately here is who are "we?" Certainly the "we" in this context are not the Arab shareholders in the Carlyle Group, who have a stake in the business of war, nor the enablers of the empire, and that involves most Arab regimes and a large chunk of the Arab business class that benefits from the current system.[9] Nor does the "we" include the Islamists, like bin Laden, who speak in a language similar to the drafters and executors of the Project for an American Century and divide the world into the abodes of good and evil. These Islamists, who claim to hold a God-given knowledge about the bitter enmity and deadly fight between Muslims and the "crusaders," inscribe their "Project" within

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[7] Nuha al-Radi, *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman's Chronicle of War and Exile* (New York: Vintage, 2003) 21.
[8] Al-Radi 216.
[9] The Carlyle Group is a well-politically connected private equity firm that specializes in buying defense companies that are on sale at depressed prices, and thanks to its political connections, it manages to find for these companies billions of dollars of military contracts, thereby turning its political connections into vast amounts of equity. Carlyle's political connections are not only US top officials but also the Saudi monarchy. Craig Unger's research on that company makes him conclude that "a look at the many defense companies Carlyle has bought and sold shows that the investment firm has had a long and lucrative history with the Saudis. The Carlyle Group was not just the most prominent outpost for Bush and his allies in the private sector, it was also where the House

the essentialist framework of "holy war" against the "infidels." The "we" I referred to above are the masses of angry people, those who bear the brunt of home-made injustices as well as the fatal injustices resulting from the imperialist system and its neoliberal network. In fact, the average Arab person has a fairly complex attitude about the United States: the polls conducted in 2002 by James Zogby in eight countries (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia) confirm this view. With regard to Arabs' opinion of the United Sates, Zogby notes that "Arabs who were polled […] had strong favorable attitudes towards American 'Science and Technology,' 'Freedom and Democracy,' 'Education,' 'Movies and Television,' and also had largely favorable attitudes towards the American people. However, they had extremely negative attitudes toward U.S. policy vis-à-vis the Arab world, Iraq and most especially toward Palestine."[10]

Yet, a large number of American academic and popular experts on the Arab world, especially those with easy access to the chambers of power in Washington, as I will show, prefer to dissect Arabs' "mentality" and graft what they call Arabs' "rage" onto Islam. By proscribing the irrationality of Islam that necessarily, they argue, clashes with the rationalism of Judeo-Christian civilization, these experts' essentialist discourse manages to disregard the main facts. And these are not only the US made bombs that speak louder than any constellation of words, or the US dominated International Financial Institutions, but also the unusual alliance between Saudi fundamentalism and US liberal democracy. In short, these clash-of-civilizations theories elide the reality of US imperialism or neo-imperialism whose goal, the perpetuation of the Third World's economic dependency, drives it to resort to war and violence. By positing Arabs' irrationality and rage, these writings position US interventions and wars within the context of "national defense" and "national security," thereby circumventing the core issue of what is after all rational about a market economy that fosters unemployment, poverty and the continual dependency of underdeveloped nations? What is indeed rational in turning the military into a standing army that acquires a vested interest in the pursuit of wars?

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of Saud and the House of Bush *really* did business." *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties* (New York: Scribner, 2004) 165-67.
[10] James J. Zogby, *What Arabs Think: Values, Beliefs, and Concerns* (Zogby International/ The Arab Thought Foundation) 63. See also Karen DeYoung, "Arabs' Opinion of West: Yes and No," *International Herald Tribune* 8 Oct. 2002: 3.

Imperialism Without Colonies?

My research on the validity of the clash-of-civilizations thesis took me straight to the US and Saudi Arabia alliance, that has proven, by examining the mechanisms of the industrial structure and the dynamic elements of economic behavior, to be spectacularly fruitful for the maintenance of the imperialist system headed by the US.[11] The method I have pursued then is to set the writings of the experts on the "Arab mind" and the advocates of clash of civilizations onto the context of the classic dynamics of empire which, thanks to its local enablers in the periphery, revolves around perpetuating a system that ensures and aggrandizes its power and world reach. If, however, that system which is about control of natural resources and the unfettered expansion of global capitalist markets is unable to proceed smoothly, the empire finds itself compelled to resort to military conquests. I am following, thereby, the Marxist view that argues,

> imperialism occurred not simply through the policies of states but also through the actions of corporations and the mechanisms of trade, finance and investment. It involved a whole constellation of class relations, including the nurturing of local collaborators or comprador elements in the dependent societies. Any explanation of how imperialism worked thus necessitated a description of an entire system or monopoly capitalism. [12]

Indeed, in the post-World-War-II era, George Kennan, State Department Policy Planning chief under President Truman, wrote in 1948 the document that reflects the thinking of US foreign policy for much of the Cold War and beyond:

> The U.S. has 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which permits us to maintain this position of disparity […]. To do so we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming, and our intention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives […]. We should cease to talk about vague and unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts.[13]

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[11] See Unger, 263, and Laton McCartney, *Friends in High Places. The Bechtel Story: The Most Secret Corporation and How it Engineered the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989). For a critical view on the alliance between liberal democracy and Islamic fundamentalism, see Fatima Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy," *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, eds. Emran Qureshi and Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 51-67.

[12] Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism Without Colonies* (New York: Monthly Review Press) 15.

[13] State Department Policy Planning Study, February 23, 1948 qtd. in "Is This Our 'Objective' in Iraq," *Iraq Notebook* Winter 2000: 10. See Also Henry Kissinger's and the French President Georges Pompidou's discussion in the wake of détente that raised the question of what the US's attitude would be "to a 'camouflaged' Soviet advance, one that came, that is, 'without recourse to force but […] as a 'progressive tide.'" Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1982) 167.

Let's recall that at the time Kennan was formulating the State Department policy planning, Latin America was already pacified, via punitive wars, for US corporations.[14] Moreover, in the aftermath of WW II, the United States was no longer self-sufficient with respect to natural resources. In fact, in 1951 President Truman established a Materials Policy Commission, whose task was to study the raw materials problem of the United States and its impact on its leadership of the non-communist world.[15] One of the natural resources that was already declared by the State Department Report in 1945 as "a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history" was Middle East oil.[16] In this regard, the world's wealth Kennan speaks about and takes for granted can be enjoyed by the United States only by assuming the leadership of the entire imperialist system in the wake of the disintegration of European empires after WW II. Eugene V. Rostow, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs baldly states in 1968, "[…] in many ways the whole postwar history has been a process of American movement to take over positions […] of security which Britain, France, the Netherlands and Belgium had previously held."[17]

In this context, Third World nationalist movement that aimed at making their countries benefit first and foremost from their resources which had hitherto been monopolized by colonial powers were seen to threaten the feasibility of US foreign policymakers' ambitions. For the maintenance of Kennan's "disparity" can work only via preserving the imperialist system: that is keeping control over natural resources wherever they are, access to foreign markets, and securing foreign investment opportunities. As Harry Magdoff points out:

> With the end of the Second World War, the expansion of the Socialist part of the world and the break-up of most of the colonial system intensified the urgency of saving as much as possible of the imperialist network and reconquering the lost territories. Conquest in this context takes on different forms, depending on the circumstances: military and political as well as economic.
> While the imperialist powers did not give up the colonies gladly or easily, the main purposes of colonialism had been achieved prior to the new political independence: the colonies had been

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[14] In fact, Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler wrote in 1935: "I spent 33 years in the Marines, most of my time being a high-class muscle man for big business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for Capitalism." See his *War Is a Racket* (Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2003) 23-26.

[15] A 1954 report by the Staff of the President's Commission on Foreign Economic Policy states: "This transition of the United States from a position of relative self-sufficiency to one of increasing dependence upon foreign sources of supply constitutes one of the striking economic changes of our time. The outbreak of World War II marked the major turning point of this change. Both from the viewpoint of our long-term economic growth and the viewpoint of our national defense, the shift of the United States from the position of a net exporter of metals and minerals to that of a net importer is of overshadowing significance in shaping our foreign economic policies." Qtd. in Magdoff, 54-58.

[16] Qtd. in Joel Beinin, "Origins of the Gulf War," rec. 30 Nov. 1990, audiotape, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

[17] Qtd. in Magdoff, 48.

intertwined with the world capitalist markets: their resources, economies, and societies had become adapted to the needs of the metropolitan centers. The current task of imperialism now became to hold on to as many of the economic and financial benefits of these former colonies as possible. And this of course meant continuation of the economic and financial dependency of these countries on the metropolitan centers.[18]

In fact, the post-World-War-II era shows the advanced capitalist countries, headed by the US, keen on perpetuating an international economic order wherein they are the main beneficiaries. Hence well-intentioned Woodrow Wilson's celebrated principle of self-determination or Harry Truman's and his Secretary of State Dean Acheson's view to win over poor Third World countries by showing them that the United States is their true friend necessarily clash with the imperial network that spectacularly benefits industrial countries by perpetuating the economic dependency of underdeveloped nations.[19] That is why the doctrines espoused by several US presidents were dealing in "straight power concepts" and formulating the policy of the United States' readiness to take over the responsibility of imposing the international economic order that frequently did not serve the interests of the newly independent states. In this regard, the Middle East, with its vast oil and gas reserves, had to be integrated into world capitalist markets. Hence the Truman Doctrine (1948) and the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957) are about containing not only the challenge of the socialist/communist system, but also Third World national liberation movements that aspired to pull their countries out of the imperialist network.[20] Historian Howard Zinn observes:

> Quietly behind the headlines in battles and bombings [in WWII] American diplomats and businessmen worked hard to make sure that when the war ended, American economic power would be second to none in the world. United States business would penetrate areas that up to this time had been dominated by England [...]. That is what happened to the Middle East and its oil. In August 1945 a State Department officer said that "a review of the diplomatic history of the past 35 years will show that petroleum has historically played a larger part in the external relations of the United States than any other commodity."[21]

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[18] Magdoff, 46.
[19] See Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror* (New Jersey: John Wiley, 2003) 86, Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1981) and Eduardo Galeano, *The Open Veins of Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).
[20] See Abbas Alnasrawi and Cheryl Rubenberg, eds., *Consistency of US Foreign Policy: The Gulf War and the Iran-Contra Affair* (Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1989) 64-5. See also Naseer H. Aruri, "U.S. Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives*, ed. Hooshang Amirahmadi (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993) 89.
[21] Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present* (New York: Perennial, 2001) 413.

Indeed, a couple of years after the end of World War II and during the Eisenhower administration the CIA, for the first time overthrew a foreign government, namely the Iranian government of the democratically elected Mohammad Mossadegh on August 19, 1953. Stephen Kinzer, who reconstructs the CIA coup in his *All the Shah's Men*, depicts Mossadegh as a nationalist leader whose entire political career was shaped by two ideas: bringing Iran onto the path of democracy and establishing Iranian control over Iran. "In his time," Kinzer writes, "Mohammed Mossadegh was a titanic figure. He shook an empire and changed the world. People everywhere knew his name. World leaders sought to influence him and later to depose him. No one was surprised when *Time* magazine chose him over Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and Winston Churchill as its man of the year for 1951."[22] Yet, Mossadegh's challenging the system even in the name of democracy and Iran's right to control its destiny was not tolerated.[23]

The CIA overthrow of Mossadegh achieved what appeared at that time to be a huge success for US corporations. In fact, after the coup the British-owned Anglo-Iranian company obtained 40 percent of the oil instead of its previously held 100 percent before Mossadagh nationalized the oil industry. Five US firms—Standard of New Jersey, Socony, Standard of California, Texaco, and Gulf—obtained 40 percent of Iranian oil, while the remaining 20 percent were distributed between French and Dutch oil companies. Yet, while US foreign policy directly worked for the expansion of oil companies, the coup, as Kinzer points out, sent a clear message to the Iranians that the US was not interested in democracy but in a "strong man rule."[24] Moreover it sent a clear warning to other nationalist movements and governments in the region. The significance of the overthrow of Mossadegh was spelled out by the *New York Times*'s editorial that stated on August 6, 1954:

> Underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their members which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism. It is perhaps too much to hope that Iran's experience will prevent the rise of Mossadeghs in other countries, but that experience may at least strengthen the hands of more reasonable and more far-seeing leaders […]. [25]

It is significant that the *New York Times*'s editorial does not speak of a Mossadegh going berserk with communism, superimposing thereby the coup onto the Cold War

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[22] Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men,* x.
[23] Stephen Kinzer reports that Mossadegh wanted the nationalization of Iranian oil to proceed according to British law at a time, Kinzer points out, when Britain itself was nationalizing its own strategic industries, namely coal, steel and transport.
[24] Kinzer, "Iran: The 1953 American Coup," rec. 17 Sept. 2003, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.
[25] Qtd. in Noam Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy* (London: Vintage, 1992) 50.

framework, as it later went down in several histories including the writing of the CIA agent Kermit Roosevelt, who was sent to Iran with the assignment to overthrow its Prime Minister.[26] On the contrary, in a tone that echoes the colonial discourse and its racist underpinnings, the *Times* presumes to know which form of nationalism befits Third World leaders. It is small wonder then that the reign of terror implemented by the CIA-restored Shah, who craved above all US weapons and who energetically complied with the regional "cop-on-the-beat" role, has been celebrated as an "enlightened" and "modern" ruler.[27] In fact, the Shah, according to Joel Beinin, was instrumental in successfully suppressing various regional liberation movements, such as his intervention in Oman against a popular Guerrilla movement.[28]

The issue in the *Times'*s mode of thinking as well as the Eisenhower administration's, which recalls colonial reality that denied the Orientals the right to choose their governments freely, boils down to the fact that Third World countries are not allowed to take their countries out of the imperial system that allocate them the subservient role of supplier of natural resources. In this regard, from the perspective of the powers that aim at keeping the disparity between advanced capitalist countries and underdeveloped nations, Mossadegh's project to nationalize Iranian oil is not acceptable, despite the fact that Mossadegh was going to implement it in accord to the British law.[29] It goes without saying that the majority of Iranians, who passionately and fervently supported nationalization of their oil, as Kinzer reports, believed that Mossadegh did the most reasonable thing for their country. Their thinking is actually very simple: why should their oil be to the British, as Prime Minster Churchill put it, "a prize from a fairy land beyond our wildest dreams!" instead of its being a prize from a real land for Iranians' dreams. Yet, like in blunt colonial times where colonials' aspiration and views were dismissed for the sake of a grand imperialist design, the overthrow of Mossadegh that thwarted Iranians' dreams of a nationalized oil industry points to imperialism at work. Here is, indeed, one of the real clashes between the industrial countries imposing their economic system and the Third World movements that resist them (in the mid-1950s resistance was manifested in nationalist and leftist forces; today they take the form of

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[26] See Kermit Roosevelt, *Counter Coup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

[27] The expression of the "cops on the beat," coined by Melvin Laird, President Nixon's Defense Secretary, is based on the Nixon Doctrine that advocated developing regional surrogates, namely Iran under the rule of the Shah and Israel, to police the Middle East. See Chomsky, *Deterring Democracy,* 55. On the celebration of the Shah as a "modern" ruler by both US administrations and the US media, see Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage, 1997) 116-17.

[28] Beinin, "Origins."

[29] In fact, Prime Minister Winston Churchill used to refer to Mossadegh as the "elderly lunatic," while the British government perceived Iran as "a bizarre far away country." Kinzer, "Iran: the 1953 American Coup."

anti-globalization or anti-neoliberalism movements). Magdoff's observation addresses the intricacies of that clash:

> Significant economic developments, whether under socialist economic planning or as a breakthrough in a capitalist framework, are inimical to the interests of the dominant classes in the advanced capitalist nations. The task of imperialism in our times [post World-War II] is therefore to slow down and *control* economic development. In place of the white man's burden and the introduction of "civilization," economic development guided by the metropolis becomes the rationalization of today's imperialism. The claws behind this liberalism appear when a country takes off under its own steam toward economic development, sometimes only when the first baby-steps are taken.[30] (His emphasis)

From the perspective of a US foreign policy that serves economic imperialism, the Arab icons of reason and modernity who became US allies are fundamentalist Saudi Arabia and obedient dictators, such as the Saddam Hussein of the '80s who inaugurated his takeover of power by purging the Ba'ath Party, imposing the deportation of 150,000 Iraqi families of so-called non-Ottoman citizenship, besides his invasion of Iran.[31] Former Secretary of Defense and CIA chief James Schlesinger revealed nothing new when he asked:

> whether we seriously desire to prescribe democracy as the proper form of government for other societies. Perhaps the issue is most clearly posed in the Islamic world. Do we seriously want to change the institutions in Saudi Arabia? The brief answer is no: over the years we have sought to preserve those institutions, sometimes in preference to more democratic forces coursing throughout the region.[32]

In effect, President Carter's State of the Union Address in 1980 (after the loss of the Pahlavi regime as a regional "surrogate") reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's importance to the US and declared that any attempt to take control of the Persian Gulf would be dealt with as an assault on the vital interests of the US.[33] Yet, President Carter's declaration remained at the level of words only, since the "Rapid Deployment Force" his administration sought to establish for the purpose of protecting Saudi Arabia, never materialized into anything serious.[34] The Reagan

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[30] Magdoff 33.

[31] On the deportation and the ensuing plight of the 150,000 Iraqi families, see the diary of the Iraqi political prisoner Rif'at al-Jadraji and his wife Balqis Charara, *Gidar Bayna Dholmatayn* (A Wall Between Two Darknesses) (London: Al Saqi, 2003) 219-20. My translation. See also Ali, *Bush in Babylon,* 21.

[32] Qtd. in Yahya Sadowski, "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate," *Political Islam: Essays From Middle East Report*, ed. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997) 33.

[33] Beinin, "Origins." See also As'ad AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia: Royalty, Fundamentalism, and Global Power* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004) 194-95.

[34] Nevertheless, according to Beinin, the failure of the "Rapid Deployment Force" project led President Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, to encourage Iraq to invade Iran, thinking that secular Iraq would be a bastion against Radical Islam, which might pose a threat to the stability of the Gulf oil states. See Beinin, "Origins."

administration, however, solved the dilemma by stepping up arms sales to Saudi Arabia. In fact, Beinin points out that "nearly $50 billion worth of equipment [was sold to Saudi Arabia] to construct a Gulf wide air defense system. One of the key elements in this system was the five AWACS aircraft which were sold to the Saudis in 1981."[35] The AWACS sale, vehemently opposed by the pro-Israel lobby, was, indeed, the Reagan administration's means to "build surrogate bases in Saudi Arabia, equipped and waiting for American forces to use."[36] Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 proved to be the catalyst event that put the Saudi/American military bases into use.

Why does the Saudi family with its extremist radical Wahhabism deserve the protection of successive US administrations, which stretches from the historical meeting between King Abdul-Aziz and President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the USS *Quincy* in the Suez Canal on February 14, 1945 to the close relationship with the Bush family, one of whom is the current US President? After having unearthed several kinds of ties between the US and Saudi Arabia, investigative journalist Craig Unger observes: "for nearly two decades [end of '70s to mid '90s], America had quietly served as the military guardian of Wahhabi Islam."[37] It is very important to stress, however, that the ties between the two countries have consisted not only in US military protection in return for Saudi Arabia's pursuing a politics of moderate oil pricing and recycling its petrodollars into the US economy, but also in Saudi Arabia's participation and finance of US covert operations, such as Afghanistan's Moujaheedin, Angola's anticommunist guerrilla group, and Iran-Contra scandal, to name a few examples.[38]

Reviewing the various linkages and the nature of the relationship that exist between US's liberal democracy and what she calls Saudi Arabia's "palace fundamentalism," the feminist sociologist Fatima Mernissi points out: "The internationally overwhelming role of Saudi Arabia as promoter of a kind of aggressive 'petro-fundamentalism'—with its primitive messages of obedience (*Ta'a*), intolerance, misogyny and xenophobia—is inconceivable without the liberal democracies' strategic support of conservative Islam, both as a bulwark against communism and as a tactical resource for controlling Arab oil."[39] Mernissi then asks:

> Here we see one of the most puzzling marriages of the century: the bond between a fanatical creed and the most modern liberal states. How is this possible? How can liberal democracies oppose democratization in the Arab world? How can liberal democracies support authoritarianism and tyranny? This brings us to the

[35] Beinin, "Origins."

[36] Qtd. in Abbas Alnasrawi, "U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East," *Consistency of US Foreign Policy,* 70.

[37] Unger, *House of Bush,* 172.

[38] See Unger 15; 61. See also AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia,* 195-97.

[39] Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism," 52.

almost unthinkable question: Can liberal democracies be irrational?[40]

The imperialist network answers Mernissi's query: fanatical Wahhabism proved to be a stabilizing force for a superpower adamant on maintaining the pattern of relationships that ensures its domination. In Mernissi's terms, the US is able to assume the role of an "interventionist" state that initiates "planetary strategies" because on the other side there are "initiative-deprived states," which thanks to the paralysis or non-existence of civil society, can limit themselves to implementing these strategies even at the expense of their citizens. In this context, the nexus of recycling petrodollars, huge expenditures on arms sales and fundamentalism feeds into the perpetuation of this profitable structure. That is why even with the end of the Cold War, US arms corporations, bolstered by their government, were anxious to go on selling their products to Saudi Arabia whose yearly arms purchases remained between 3.5 to 4 billion dollars.[41] According to *The No-Nonsense Guide to the Arms Trade* by Gideon Burrows, who relies on information released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) of June 2001, "Taiwan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and South Korea were the biggest buyers of arms over the last 10 years."[42] Since Saudi Arabia and other Arab oil states primarily buy arms from the US, Britain and France, Mernissi hits the mark by observing that in the difficult times, after the Gulf War of 1991 and the long embargo imposed on Iraq, when millions of Arabs have been avidly looking for employment, Arab money goes to the creation of jobs in Los Angeles and France rather than Cairo and Casablanca.[43]

In fact, Chalmers Johnson, who conducts extensive research on US militarism, which he defines as no longer the defense of the country but as a vested interest in the standing army, writes:

> One of the things this huge military establishment also does is sell arms to other countries, making the Pentagon a critical *economic* agency of the United States government. Militarily oriented products account for about a quarter of the total U.S. gross domestic product. The government employs some 6,500 people just to coordinate and administer its arms sales program in conjunction with senior officials at American embassies around

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[40] Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism."

[41] Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism," 56. See also AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia*, 113-15.

[42] Gideon Burrows, *The No-Nonsense Guide to the Arms Trade* (London: Verso, 2002) 17.

[43] Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism," 55. Edward Said also observes: "I think that almost every one of the 500 congressional districts in this country has a defense industry of some sort. The selling of arms abroad, which is a major U.S. export, has now become a jobs issue not a defense issue. That's on the one hand. On the other, the Middle East spends more on arms than any other area in the world. Saudi Arabia is one of the largest purchasers of U.S. arms." *Culture and Resistance: Conversations With Edward Said.* Interviews by David Barsamian (Boston: South End Press, 2003) 150.

the world, who spend most of their "diplomatic" careers working as arms salesmen. The Arms Export Control Act requires that the executive branch notify Congress of foreign military and construction sales directly negotiated by the Pentagon. Commercial sales valued at $14 million or more negotiated by the arms industry must also be reported. Using official Pentagon statistics, between 1990 and 1996 the combination of the three categories amounted to $97,836,821,000. From this nearly $100 billion figure must be subtracted the $3 billion a year the government offers its foreign customers to help subsidize arms purchases from the United States.[44]

Since imperialism necessarily involves militarism, the US did not demobilize after the end of the Cold War. On the contrary, the 1992 "Defense Planning Guidance" and the Project for a New American Century, some of whose signatories occupy top positions in the second Bush administration, openly talk about the world domination and thereby commit the US to maintaining its global empire. Chalmers Johnson, who describes himself as having been a spear-carrier for the American empire during the Cold War, writes: "Not so long ago, the way we garrisoned the world could be discussed far more openly and comfortably because the explanation seemed to lie at hand—in the very existence of the Soviet Union and of communism." However, the fact that American military forces were not withdrawn from foreign bases after the end of the communist threat indicates, according to Johnson, that "Washington […] is doing everything in its considerable powers to perpetuate Cold War structures, even without the Cold War's justification […]. They [US foreign military bases] have become striking evidence, for those who care to look, of an imperial project that the Cold War obscured."[45] And it is here where the manufacture of another enemy to shore up the old Cold War structure becomes a necessity.

My view, in light of this evidence in the public record, is that US foreign policy is not based on misguided or confused perceptions but is very rational and above all very consistent: economic imperialism has been a crucial motivating force in driving US foreign policy. The question here is, as Cheryl Rubenberg has posed it: "how much longer can a nation that proclaims a set of universal values including self-determination, democracy, and human rights as natural rights to life, liberty, and prosperity, continue to pursue foreign policies whose explicit effect is to deny those same values to two-thirds of the world's peoples?"[46] For the time being, as in the last 60 years, US foreign policy in the Arab world has been very

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[44] Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Cost and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001) 87.
[45] Johnson, *Blowback*, 5.
[46] Cheryl Rubenberg, "Reflections on the Continuity of American Foreign Policy," *Consistency of US Foreign Policy*, 29.

successful in maintaining its dominance, thanks to its local allies and enablers. Yet, it could be that the latest US "adventure" in that part of the world will lead to what Johnson calls "imperial overstretch and the probable long-term decline of the United States."[47] Another crucial element that informs my writing is that US foreign policy in the Middle East has appeared acceptable to the majority of US citizens, not only because of their relative inattention to international affairs, nor only because of the recent 9/11 attacks, but because of the (mis)representations of Arabs in American popular culture and the mainstream media.

Constructing the Muslim Enemy

In her research that looks at one hundred years of *National Geographic*'s representation of the Arab world (from 1888 to 1988), Linda Steet argues that the magazine is steeped into the discourses of primitivism, Orientalism and colonialism.[48] One of the key tropes the magazine has been propagating, according to Steet, is the representation of the Arab person as a dweller in a land of mystery and enchantment that ultimately renders him/her out of step with time. The Arab-as-an-anachronism trope highlights the European and later American (neo)colonizing project's attempts to pull Arabs into history by hooking their nations to the wagons of "civilization" and "development."[49] Another recurrent key trope, Steet identifies, is the violent, dagger-wielding man whose religious creed is reduced to "frenzy and fanaticism."[50] In her concluding remarks, Steet writes:

> A century of so little change regarding the representation of the Arab world in *National Geographic* is disturbing […]. Orientalism has always been made up of a large and contradictory repertoire of tropes that allow for its chameleonic character while remaining its essential self—timeless, violent, erotic, and primitive—and constructing Arabs within its very own characteristics […]. The discourse's nature is turned into the Arab's nature. Thus, Orientalism's rhetorical contortions can leave the *National Geographic* reader wondering "What *do* Arabs want?" rather than wondering what the text or the visual image wants from us? It is always the Arab who is strange or ridiculous, never the discourse.[51] (Her emphasis)

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[47] Johnson, *Blowback*, 141-42.
[48] Steet imputes her choice of the magazine to its being one of the most popular educational media that has been one of the "foremost producers and transmitters of popular Orientalism on the American educational scene." Linda Steet, *Veils and Daggers: A Century of National Geographic's Representation of the Arab World* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000) 155.
[49] Steet 54-57.
[50] Steet 79-80, 124.
[51] Steet 154.

In fact, the orientalizing of Arabs did not only occur in popular magazines, but was also produced at the turn of the twentieth century by missionaries, travelers, and businessmen who had direct contact with Arabs. Moreover, powerful cultural sites, such as world fairs, circuses, and early as well as contemporary Hollywood cinema have generally portrayed the Arab world as an "outcast" world.[52] Edward Said notes in *Orientalism* that since the 1950s and particularly in the United States, "[s]o far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of the 'mysterious Orient.' This is nowhere more true than in the ways by which the Near East is grasped."[53] In the updated edition of *Covering Islam* (1997), Said points out that Muslims seem to be the last people whose reduction to cliché-ridden images is still accepted and is received without much shock or rejection. In fact, Arabist scholar As'ad Abukhalil observes: "The same clichés and stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims that one read in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works and travelers' accounts are widely read in U.S. newspapers and officials' speeches in Washington, D.C."[54]

Certainly one of the major events that sharpened the anti-Muslim consciousness was the 1973 oil crisis, which created the erroneous perception that the Arab world could determine the economic future of the industrialized countries. Similarly the Iran hostage incident in 1979 and the suicide attacks on the US embassy and the US Marine Corps barracks in Lebanon in 1983 rendered Islam (already linked with frenzy and fanaticism) as the religion of violence and terrorism.[55] Yet, let's recall that while Islam was covered as "traumatic news" to the US citizens and while a large number of influential experts were equating Islam with irrationality and terrorism, the Reagan administration and the Saudi monarchy were organizing and funding a vast extremist Islamic network with the view to "giving to the USSR its Vietnam war."[56] In fact, this is the very network around which coalesced the Reagan Doctrine, but from which rose bin Laden's al-Qaeda that would later

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[52] Constance Fenimore Woolson, for instance, writes: "The American […] perhaps when he was a child he attended […] the circus, and watched with ecstasy the 'Grande Orientale Rentrée of the Lights of the Harem' —two of these strange steeds, ridden by dazzling houris in veils of glittering gauze. The camel has remained in his mind ever since as the attendant of sultanas; though this impression may have become mixed in later years with the constantly recurring painting […] of a camel and an Arab in the desert, outlined against a sunset sky […]." *Mentone, Cairo, and Corfu* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896) 166-8. For a critical study of representational practices, see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994), Edmund Ghareeb, ed., *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media* (Washington, DC: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983), Jack G. Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture* (Washington, DC: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, 1997).
[53] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 26.
[54] AbuKhalil, *The Battle for Saudi Arabia*, 38.
[55] See Mariano Aguirre, "Un Nouveau Ennemi Total," *Manière de Voir* Dec. 2004-Jan 2005: 15.
[56] That was said by Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Adviser to President Jimmy Carter. See William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000) 4-5.

come back to haunt numerous countries, including the US and Saudi Arabia.[57] Yet, despite the tragic impact of the Afghan war (more than a million Afghans were killed and one-third of the population was driven to refugee camps), besides the disastrous consequences of the US support of extremist movements and tyrannical governments in the Middle East (and beyond), this political imperialism could still be dismissed as the realpolitik that the Cold War context dictated.[58]

The end of the Cold War could have been an opportunity for the US to shift its policy-making from the hands of military planners and from the powerful profit-driven industrial-military complex. The US, as the only Superpower, could have geared its global role to seriously promote human rights and democracy and similarly proceed to dismantle the very structures that turned militarism into a "critical economic agency." In other words, the United States' elected politicians could have made use of President Eisenhower's warning about the military-industrial complex getting out of control. In his farewell speech on January 17, 1961 Eisenhower declared:

> […] we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.
>
> This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every Statehouse, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications […].
>
> In the councils of governments, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.
>
> We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic process. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.[59]

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[57] In fact, aid to and support of the Afghan rebels came to be called the Reagan Doctrine. Craig Unger explains that "[t]he intention of the policy [to support the Mujahideen] was to make Soviet support for third world governments too costly to be sustainable." *House of Bush*, 98.

[58] On the number of casualties caused by the Afghan war, see Larry Everest, *Oil, Power, and Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004) 89-90.

[59] Qtd. in Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2003) 292.

As is well-documented by Chalmers Johnson, the demise of the Soviet Union did not stop the huge drain of money from the treasury for defense. Indeed, the "economic agency" of US militarism has become all the more enhanced, with the US topping the list of arms exporter to the Third World. Johnson writes that "[b]y 1995, according to its own Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the United States was the source of 49 percent of global arms export. It shipped arms of various types to some 140 countries, 90 percent of which were either not democracies or were human rights abusers."[60] Johnson adds that "[t]en years after the end of the Cold War, the Pentagon monopolizes the formulation and conduct of American foreign policy."[61] In fact, US policy-making that sought to consolidate its power and expand it to all corners of the world under the heading of neo-liberalism became more amenable to the Pax-Americana goal of the Project for a New American Century. One of the studies issued by the Project in September 2000, was entitled "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century." According to Larry Everest, the study "called for a major military build-up and vast extension of U.S. military deployment around the world. Significantly, it singled out Iran, Iraq and North Korea as immediate targets nearly two years before George W. Bush labeled them an 'axis of evil' […]."[62]

As Edward Said's *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism* demonstrate, the knowledge produced by scholars and cultural workers was crucial in providing the rationale and legitimacy to European conquests in the past centuries. The present work, which deals with the US's intervention in the Arab world since WW II, with a special emphasis on the 1990s, explores the geopolitical function of the Muslims as enemy in its justification of the dominance-driven US policy that culminated in the occupation of Iraq in March 2003. In this regard, I argue that the clash-of-civilizations thesis, put forward by Bernard Lewis, one of the most influential Orientalists in the United States, nicely dovetails with the US foreign policy that is focused on running the world like an empire. The core argument of Lewis and later Samuel Huntington, who used the term for a *Foreign Affairs* article and a book, is that Muslims can only be the "West's" total enemy on the grounds that their religion and way of

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[60] Johnson, *Blowback* 88. In fact, the numbers and the year, given by Johnson, reveal that President Clinton's foreign policy was also committed to enhancing US militarism. Historian Melvyn P. Leffler, who argues that President Bush's foreign policy does not constitute a radical departure from his predecessors', points out: "What is striking about President Bill Clinton's foreign policy is that it actually increased U.S. military preponderance vis-à-vis the rest of the world. During the late 1990s, U.S. defense spending was higher than that of the next dozen nations combined […]. The last strategy paper of the Clinton administration spelled out the nation's vital interests. 'We will do what we must,' wrote the Clinton national security team, 'to defend those interests. This may involve the use of military force, including unilateral action, where deemed necessary or appropriate.'" "Bush's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Policy* Sept./Oct. 2004: 24.

[61] Leffler 93.
[62] Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 216-17.

life, steeped in irrationalism and violence, are irreconcilable with that of the "West." With Muslims bent on destroying the non-Muslim world, especially the Superpower, these scholars imply it is either "us" or "them." The positing of Muslims as the old-new enemy conveniently fulfills the recently vacant place of the "evil empire." As Emran Qureshi and Michael Sells argue:

> East-West rivalry had been used as a framework for the cold war, with the West defined as liberal capitalism and the East as communism. Rather than having to construct a new paradigm, the clash theorists could simply redefine the East of the cold war as the older Orientalist East, as Islam and/or Confucianism […]. The self-definition of the West and its military, economic, and ideological investment in the defense against communism need not be dismantled but could be directed toward the threat of this newly configured East. The same West (defined as individualistic, enterprising, egalitarian, peaceable, and tolerant) is pitted against an East now embodied by Islam and characterized as fundamentalist, reactionary, terrorist, static, and oppressive of women.[63]

The first chapter, which follows closely Lewis's writing from the 60s to today, also deals with two other academic experts on Islam who perpetuate the clash-of-civilizations model, namely Daniel Pipes, who lectures at several prestigious universities, and Fouad Ajami, the director of Middle East Studies at the school of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. I have chosen these particular scholars not only because they are highly visible in the mainstream media but also because they are well-connected to policymakers, especially to the current Bush administration. Indeed, Pipes, for instance, was appointed to the board of the federally funded US Institute of Peace by President Bush in August 2003. Given the fact that since the '80s Pipes has been calling for a grand war to subjugate all Muslims whose Islamicate legacy, he claims, compels them to hate and seek the destruction of the "West," his appointment to such a position in the Institute of Peace reveals the Bush administration's needs and expectations. I agree with the view of Salama Ni'mat, the Washington correspondent for the London-based *Al-Hayat* newspaper, that Pipes's appointment, strongly supported by the neo-conservatives in the Republican administration, clearly shows who dominates the making of US foreign policy.

The second chapter focuses on the popular experts' journalistic discourse on the Arabs and looks at the works of Robin Wright, Milton Viorst, Judith Miller and Thomas Friedman. Via their institutional affiliations with liberal mainstream newspapers, such as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, these experts, who have authored

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[63] Emran Qureshi and Michael A. sells, "Introduction: Constructing the Muslim Enemy," *The New Crusades*, 12.

books, sometimes bestsellers, on their "encounter" with the Arab world, undoubtedly represent highly influential voices. It is then disheartening to find out, as I will show, that their dealings with the Arabs were based on a blind faith in US political and cultural superiority, a conviction that explains their taking for granted the US self-appointed right to intervene and shape the present and future of the Middle East. Their authorial voices and arrogant attitudes thereby naturalize academics Lewis's and Huntington's clash-doctrine and assume a position of power over the people under study. It is, indeed, remarkable that these experts, who urge Arabs to exercise self-criticism and free themselves from the shackles of tradition or subservience to tyrannical power, remain subservient to Washington's consensus.

In fact, reformulating George Kennan's strategic planning for maintaining disparity in power and wealth (see above), Huntington writes half a century later:

> The West is attempting and will continue to attempt to sustain its preeminent position and defend its interests by defining those interests as the interests of the 'world community.' […] Hypocrisy, double standards, and 'but nots' are the price of universalist pretensions. Democracy is promoted but not if it brings Islamic fundamentalists to power; nonproliferation is preached to Iran but not for Israel; free trade is the elixir of economic growth but not for agriculture; human rights are an issue with China but not with Saudi Arabia […]. Double standards in practice are the unavoidable price of universal standards of principle.[64]

Here is, indeed, the real clash, not between civilizations, but between US/Northern corporations bolstered by the United States as the leader of its imperialist system that claims universal principles and the majority of the populations in the rest of the world that aspires to a fair and just world order. Nevertheless, even though the experts I deal with sometimes touch on these intricacies, their total belief in US "universalist pretensions" helps them to condemn in others what they indulge in themselves. One thing these experts allow themselves is to disregard, maybe thanks to their being holders of some universal principles, Arab public opinion that looks unfavorably at US foreign policy. In fact, Wright, Miller, Viorst and Friedman, despite their differences, fail to see what should have been obvious in different circumstances: that the majority of Arabs, as any people would, resent occupation, US militarism and their local governments that do not represent their basic needs. The experts, with the exception of Friedman, prefer to read Arabs' resentment as the manifestation of Islamic symptoms that force them to hate and defy the Judeo-Christian civilization. That is why the second chapter argues that these experts acted like plantation overseers to a culture

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[64] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon Schuster, 1997) 184.

and people they believed ought to show respect and obedience vis-à-vis US foreign policy and the system it stands for. In this case troping, reviving colonial discourse and attack on Islam handily further the experts' position as believers in US benevolent imperial design. Interestingly, Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, which is not about the Arab world but globalization, argues that nation-states must either hook themselves to the wagon of globalization and adhere wholeheartedly to free-market principles or have the US military machine, which he calls "the hidden fist," on their backs.

The third chapter, which deals with US mainstream media coverage of the 1991 Gulf War, focuses on a CNN documentary on the anniversary of that war in 2001. In this chapter I do not only address the built-in biases and prejudices that typifies the mainstream media, but also the ways in which they advance the values of the corporate world of which they are a part. In fact, the US media, which, like US politics, is supposed to held under constant check, is in the service of the Pax-Americana imperial project. In this context, the concept of an enemy becomes instrumental in rationalizing dominance and aggression. Moreover, this chapter will show that the web of dehumanizing ideology and political imperialism is so deeply embedded in American culture and attitudes that an extremist documentary like *Jihad in America* is marketed as knowledge and serious analysis.

The fourth chapter explores how Hollywood, as a powerful entertainment institution that shapes and reflects the dominant thinking of American culture, largely perpetuates the dehumanizing ideology vis-à-vis the Arabs. This chapter will look closely at two Hollywood films, namely Edward Zwick's *The Siege* and David O Russell's *Three Kings*, that deal with Arab terrorism and the 1991 Gulf War, respectively. Yet, while *The Siege* wholly subscribes to the doctrine of Arab-as-total enemy, *Three Kings* scripts a critical view of US foreign policy, which is, however, softened via point-of-view editing, mode of address and focalization. This chapter also examines two Arab films, Youssef Chahine's *The Other* and Khaled Youssef's *The Storm*, that offer cinematic counter-tellings of terrorism and the Gulf Crisis of 1991, respectively.

Indeed, as in the chapter on films, a contrapuntal perspective, to borrow a Saidian term, extends across the texture of this study. My purpose in bringing in voices that counter the civilizational thesis and the agenda it represents is not only to allow Arabs to speak back, but also to show that oppositional voices can be Arabs, Israelis, or Americans. Another crucial perspective that informs this dissertation is Arif Dirlik's and Gayatri Spivak's critique of postcolonial criticism that made me aware of my own awkward position as an Arab who

left her home country hoping for "justice under capitalism," a point I will discuss in the following sub-section.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory made its formal inception with the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978),[65] after which several postcolonial critics set about the task of denouncing the Western regimes of representation and the ethnocentric cultural forms that enabled centuries ago the colonial discourse and the imperial enterprise. Its main concern was to demonstrate how Western textual and social practices have played a major role in colonial oppression and still today discourage any form of dialogue between cultures. Yet, postcolonial theory, as represented by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha, was attacked by Aijaz Ahmad in his book *In Theory: Classes, Nations and Literatures* (1992) for its institutional location in Western academe, which meant its inevitable complicity with, if not overtly servicing, the interests of hegemonic discourses it seeks to subvert (a point I will return to later). Additionally, postcolonial theory was also criticized for, on the one hand, its exclusive preoccupation with colonial discourse as the privileged object of analysis and, on the other hand, its drawing on modes of cultural analysis that are deeply Eurocentric, namely, post-structuralism. Hence, Diana Brydon's statement that "deconstructing imperialism keeps us within imperialism's orbit."[66]

However, cultural critics today who are concerned with the deconstruction of persistent Eurocentric discourses advocate the necessity of foregrounding subaltern voices, a task that consciously wants to elude the trap of dealing exclusively with hegemonic cultures and bring in a participatory knowledge of non-European cultures.[67] Hence Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, for instance, choose to call their approach "polycentric multiculturalism" whereas Spivak argues in "Teaching for the Times" for transnational literacy (a point I will go back to later) and Edward Said rejects the politics of blame and confrontation in favor of contrapuntal analysis by means of which the history and stories of formerly colonized societies should be told with the view to revising the versions imposed by dominant readings.

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[65] Bart Moore-Gilbert argues that although postcolonial theory and postcolonial criticism might constitute two different fields, both still show some parallels in their main concerns. Additionally, he explains that postcolonial theory owes several of its arguments and procedures to earlier critical theory. Moore-Gilbert, in fact, shows how earlier African criticism, for instance, Chinua Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*" (1976) anticipated the perspective which Said two years later explored in his widely read *Orientalism* (1978). See Moore-Gilbert, "Postcolonial Criticism *and* Postcolonial Theory," *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997) 152-184.

[66] Quoted in Moore-Gilbert 20.

[67] Shohat's and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism* is a formidable example of exposing narratives that operate within colonial discourse or contemporary texts that show vestiges of that Eurocentric discourse and placing them in dialogue with counternarratives they draw from Third-World cinema, writings and critical studies.

In the essay collection *Dangerous Liaisons*, the section devoted to postcolonial theory revolves around the privileged position of the postcolonial intellectual within the (privileged) Western academy. Kwame Anthony Appiah warns Third World intellectuals of the risk of becoming a mere "otherness-machine" that acts within the boundaries of an otherness that is granted privilege as long as it does not disturb the Western self-understanding as the all-knowing self. Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad see the postcolonials as cadre of intellectuals who seek prestige and power, which some of them successfully achieve via obtaining influential positions in the First-World academe.[68] The query that these critics seem to be posing is how to be a disturbing Other? Or to ask the question in a Saidian way, how to use one's intellect and otherness in the service of criticism, dialogue and moral sense?

Trinh T. Minh-ha defines what she calls the "inappropriate other" as a Third World critic who does not abide by the laws and interdictions of otherness; that is, he or she refuses the role of being a mere informant for the West about his/her own culture, for such a position entails that "'correct' cultural filmmaking, for example, implies that Africans show Africa; Asians, Asia; and Euro-Americans, the world."[69] Trinh argues that otherness can become empowerment if it transgresses understanding and refuses the limited position of total opposite of the Western self. She writes:

> The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. [70]

To be not quite an insider and not quite an outsider means for Trinh to understand one's subjectivity as a difference that can, however, comprise differences as well as similarities. Similarly, while exploring the articulations of the postcolonial and the postmodern, Kwame Anthony Appiah locates postcoloniality in the response of African intellectuals (ironically mostly educated at American or European universities) to the West in literary or artistic forms. He writes:

> Postcoloniality is the condition of what we might ungenerously call a *comprador* intelligentsia: of a relatively small, Western-style, Western-trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery. In the West they are known through the Africa they offer; their compatriots know them both through the West they

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[68] See Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat, eds., *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 415-528.
[69] Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Not You/Like You: Postcolonial Women and the Interlocking Questions of Identity and Difference," *Dangerous Liaisons*, 417.
[70] Trinh 418.

> present to Africa and through an Africa they have invented for the world, for each other, and for Africa.[71]

This dilemma arises from the fact that the "in-betweenness" and hybridity where Third World intellectuals rightly position themselves is nearly always "between the post*colonial* and the First World – never […] between one post*colonial* intellectual and another."[72] Certainly the conditions of hybridity forge abundant connections among postcolonial intellectuals, but they are unable to achieve visibility; the postcolonial critic can achieve institutional power only insofar as he or she experiences and articulates a hybridity that is subaltern/Western. In fact, Arif Dirlik links the emergence of the term postcolonial with the increased visibility of academic intellectuals of Third World origin in first world academe. He goes so far as to declare that the themes raised by postcolonial criticism:

> resonate with concerns and orientations that have their origins in […] what has been described variously as Global Capitalism, Flexible Production, Late Capitalism, etc., that has "disorganized" earlier conceptualizations of global relations, especially relations comprehended earlier by such binarisms as colonizer/colonized, First/Third Worlds, or the "West and the Rest;" in all of which, furthermore, the nation-state as the unit of political organization globally was taken for granted. It is no reflection on the abilities of "postcolonial critics" to suggest that they represent, have acquired respectability to the extent that they have answered to the conceptual needs of the social, political and cultural problems thrown up by this new world situation.[73]

Accordingly, while Dirlik restricts his usage of "postcolonial" to describe intellectuals of Third World origin, he maintains his contention about the complicity of postcolonial criticism with global capitalism. He observes, for instance, that "'postcolonial critics' have engaged in valid criticism of past forms of ideological hegemony but have had little to say about its contemporary figurations."[74] He, indeed, reads the Reagan Revolution

> not so much as a revolution heralding a new beginning as a revolution aimed at reorganizing the globe politically so as to give free reign to a Global Capitalism straining against the harness of political restrictions that limited its motions. The overthrow of socialist states was one part of the program. Another part was taming the Third World; if necessary by invasion, preferably by encirclement: economically, or by "Patriot" missiles.[75]

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[71] Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Is the 'Post-' in 'Postcolonial' the 'Post-' in 'Postmodern'?" *Dangerous Liaisons*, 432.
[72] Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO.: Westview Press, 1997) 65. The emphasis in the quote above is Dirlik's.
[73] Dirlik 53.
[74] Dirlik 76.
[75] Dirlik 74.

Dirlik's critique is certainly disturbing for postcolonial critics who think their work engages in critiquing today's ideological hegemony. Yet his position is, in my understanding, poignantly relevant when he points to postcoloniality's exclusive concern with cultural practices and its disregard of material forms of neo-colonial oppression which renders it, accordingly, incapable of showing real resistance to the political, military, and economic power of global capitalism. He writes:

> Without capitalism as the foundation for European power and the motive force of its globalization, Eurocentrism would have been just another ethnocentrism […]. By throwing the cover of culture over material relationships, as if the one had little to do with the other, such a focus diverts the task of criticism from the criticism of capitalism to the criticism of Eurocentric ideology, which helps disguise its own ideological limitation but also, ironically, provide an alibi for inequality, exploitation, and oppression in their modern guises under capitalist relationships [sic].[76]

Here postcoloniality appears to be an accomplice of Eurocentrism/global capitalism, serving its interests instead of deconstructing them, which it claims as its *raison d'être*. According to Dirlik, postcolonial intellectuals will remain unsuccessful and will find themselves consolidating and promoting what they intend to disrupt as long as they refuse to deal with the ubiquitous system that allows and tolerates their visibility, that is, global capitalism.

As an answer to how to negotiate our captivity in global capitalism, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offers the following alternative. She argues:

> since *we* are imprisoned in and habituated to capitalism, we might try to look at the *allegory* of capitalism not in terms of capitalism as the source of authoritative reference but in terms of the constant small failures in and interruptions to its logic, which help to recode it and produce our [postcolonial critics' and educators'] unity. "Allegory" here speaks out with the referential efficacy of a praxis. [77]

Spivak locates the praxis that can produce small breaches in capitalism in becoming "transnationally literate" and in introducing what she terms "transnational literacy" to the graduate curriculum, two strategies which enable us "to sense that the other is not just a 'voice'–others also produce articulated texts, even as they, like us, are written in and by a text not of our making."[78] Transnational literacy in Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999) presupposes a relentless process of unlearning, of refusing the role that compels postcolonial intellectuals in the West to masquerade as "native informants" for the West. For

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[76] Dirlik 68.
[77] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Teaching for the Times," *Dangerous Liaisons*, 483.
[78] Spivak, "Teaching," 483.

in doing so, postcolonial intellectuals cater to a dominant discourse's expectations and subsequently join the army of scholars who rationalize the situation of the world (as is the case of Fouad Ajami, whom I will discuss in the first chapter). Within this context, as Spivak rightly points out, "both the racial underclass and the subaltern South step back in the penumbra."[79]

Spivak rightly acknowledges the lures that face postcolonial intellectuals. Indeed, as a Third World migrant to the First World (Germany) and student of US cultural studies, I myself fully understand that the pressure to pose as a native informant and/or get immersed in a nostalgic investigation of the lost roots of one's identity is an irresistible and comfortable pitfall that, however, leads further away from any serious form of resistance. Pointing to what is wrong with postcolonial*ism*, Spivak blames the postcolonialists' repression of their real motive behind their migration to the First World: the non-acknowledgment of "the hope of justice under capitalism" is why "'we'—that vague, menaced, and growing body of the teachers of culture and literature who question the canon—are not *oppositional* any more."[80] Spivak recognizes that the power granted to the white male Eurocentric voice is diminishing and it is the postcolonial intellectuals who seem to be the "emerging dominant." Yet, she argues that this emerging dominant can be effective only "[i]f by teaching ourselves and our students to acknowledge our part and hope in capitalism we can bring that hope to a persistent and principled crisis, we can set ourselves on the way to intervening in an unfinished chapter of history that was mired in Eurocentric national disputes."[81] The task is definitely an onerous one, for the postcolonial migrant investigators are heavily imbued with vestigial colonial social formations and their identification with and hope in capitalism has been unspoken for a long time. But I agree with Spivak in her argument that:

> We cannot use "cultural identity" as a permission to difference and an instrument for disavowing that Eurocentric economic migration (and eventually even political exile) persists in the hope of justice under capitalism. That unacknowledged and scandalous secret is the basis of our unity. This is what unites the "illegal alien" and the aspiring academic. We can reinvent this basis as a springboard for a reading/writing/teaching that counterpoints these times.[82]

Hence, instead of scapegoating and muting the other by pretending to speak for him or her while clinging firmly to the lifeboat of hope in capitalism (and even arrogantly distancing

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[79] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 361.
[80] Spivak, "Teaching," 470.
[81] Spivak, "Teaching," 474.
[82] Spivak, *A Critique*, 395.

themselves from their countries of national origin), postcolonial subjects need to take up the work of vigilant self-reflection. Today, in the "New World Order" and under globalization with its ravaging effects on developing countries, the "new diaspora" should start considering the ways in which it is itself, Spivak argues, an agent of exploitation, rather than think in terms of the morally comfortable alliance with globalization's (Third World) victims.[83]. Postcolonial critique should operate reflexively and in explicitly material terms, so that essentializing moralism will be replaced by more sophisticated critiques of transnational capital, revealing the matrix of complicity that links postcolonials to capitalism through, for instance, forced competition.[84]

Another invisible trace Spivak's project attempts to make visible is the (im)possible perspective of the native informant; a figure whose perspective has been foreclosed in the Eurocentric strategies of narrativizing history and continues to be excluded.[85] Still Spivak's aim is not to recover the lost perspective of the native informants and tell us what their "real" stories were, because, as she emphasizes: "No perspective *critical* of imperialism can turn the other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always already historically refracted what might have been an incommensurable and discontinuous other into a domesticated other that consolidates the imperialist self."[86] Still Spivak wants us to learn to develop the native informant perspective[87] and proposes that a "different standard of literary evaluation, necessarily provisional, can emerge if we work at the (im)possible perspective of the native informant as a reminder of alterity, rather than remain caught in some identity forever."[88] Today this task is urgent because the native informant is increasingly appropriated in the name of development and at the same time silenced and rendered invisible by international financial institutions like the World Bank.[89]

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[83] Spivak, *A Critique*, 375-79.

[84] Spivak brings in some examples where forced competition under the aegis of globalization pits a developing nation against a minority in the First World. For instance, the case of "thousands of unskilled female Bangladeshi homeworkers in London's East End [were involved in] unwitting competition with thousands of unskilled female workers in the export-based garment industry in Bangladesh proper. The latter were 'winning' because they cost £500 less per head a year and could bear witness to 'women in development.'" Another example can be a Third World country getting privileges over another because this latter rests under the yoke of economic embargo. See Spivak, *A Critique*, 377-8.

[85] See chapter on "Philosophy" in Spivak, *A Critique*, 1-111.

[86] Spivak, *A Critique*, 130 (her emphasis). The best illustration of that argument is Spivak's reading of Western feminism that, she argues, invested in the marginalization of colonial women and sometimes instrumentalized them as the 'Other' in order to consolidate itself. See her "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12:1 (Fall 1985): 243-61.

[87] Spivak, for instance, worked on the story of the Rani of Sirmur to unravel how imperialism "freed" her to legitimize itself and how in the archives, she emerges only on call, when needed as coerced agent/instrument/ witness for the colonialism of capital. Spivak, *A Critique*, 207-311.

[88] Spivak, *A Critique*, 351-52.

[89] On a critical analysis of the World Bank's policies and their devastating effects on the majority of the Indian population, see Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001).

The unspoken thought that meanders through my reading of Spivak's critique of the postcolonial subjects in metropolitan countries is how to reconcile an "I" that is a Moroccan migrant who saw her move to Germany as a serious chance for a new beginning and an "I" that still wants to engage with the injustices whereby the First World, rather than acknowledge in a meaningful way its devastating historical gain from imperialism and today through its international financial institutions that keep the Third World nations more subjugated than ever, still prefers to see itself as the provider of economic and humanitarian aid to, and fostering democracy in, the Third World. Notwithstanding this inevitable aporia that will at times disclose the awkward complicity of this work, I do certainly feel tremendously anxious about collapsing my experience and story with a very heterogeneous Arab World, while holding on ambivalently to the lifeboat of what Spivak rightly identifies as "the hope of justice under capitalism."

Another hope, however, that I have nursed throughout the research and writing process is the possibility of other worlds between the US imperialism and the religious fundamentalism and Arab dictatorships. Although I do recognize the anti-imperialist character of the Islamist groups, I do not agree with their vision to impose their worldview and way of life as the only valid one, repressing in the process the palimpsestic complexity of Arab and even Muslim identity. The spirit in which I proceeded in writing is best captured in Said's remark that "[t]here is no longer much excuse for bewailing the hostility of the 'West' towards the Arabs and Islam and then sitting back in outraged righteousness. When the reasons for this hostility and those aspects of 'the West' that encourage it are fearlessly analyzed, an important step has been taken toward changing it […]."[90] What my analysis shows is that the reason for this hostility is not misunderstanding nor clashes between cultures but imperialism. And the means to move towards changing it are not only Arabs confronting their cultural, social and political deficiencies (certainly an urgent task), but also reaching out to other anti-imperialist movements in other parts of the world.

I should admit that I started paying attention to US foreign policy in the fall of 1991, when the first Bush administration was preparing for "Operation Desert Storm." That fall, the mood of the Casablanca faculty where I was studying American and English literature was seething with resentment against the looming-large war, which King Hassan II supported (indeed, Moroccan troops were sent to fight with the international coalition). Yet, even though I became aware since then of the gap between US rhetoric and acts and its double standards, I have found it hard to reconcile that with the country's democracy, its tremendous

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[90] Said, *Covering Islam*, 67.

achievements in the fields of information and technology, its religious and ethnic diversity and its rich tradition of dissent. (Moreover, as an adolescent, US popular culture like imitating Madonna or dancing like Michael Jackson was a means to protest and defy my parents' generation.) That is why when I addressed the questions of the reasons behind US's double standards, its support of dictatorial regimes and its foreign policy that treats Arabs as expendable, my admiration for US culture and its political system (especially in comparison with Arab oppressive regimes) often made me think that my critical stance must have missed something. Later the tragic events of 9/11 confused me even more about where to look in order to understand US foreign policy. Moreover, besides my own personal involvement, the current world events during my research for and writing the dissertation (the Intifada of 2000, 9/11, war on Afghanistan and Iraq, abu Ghraib etc.) have at times made it difficult to create the typical dissertation's impression of emotional distance. Indeed, this work remains an argument that attempts to show how the exposure of the government-corporate-military-intelligence nexus reveals the reality of the US capitalism as deeply anchored in imperialism. "Wars and violence" as Malaysian human rights activist Chandra Muzaffar reminds us, "are central to the maintenance of imperial power."

I.   Arabs: The New Old Enemy

> The job facing the cultural intellectual is […] not to accept the politics of identity as given, but to show how all representations are constructed, for what purpose, by whom, and with what components.
>
> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* 314

> Today new forms of orientalism flourish in the hands of those who equate revivalism, fundamentalism, or Islamic movements solely with radical revolutionaries and focus on a radicalized minority rather than the vast majority of Islamically committed Muslims who belong to the moderate mainstream of society.
>
> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 261

Orientalism, as the field that undertook the study of the Orient, has shown in most cases how knowledge's intricate relationship with power makes it more implicated with this latter than with the peoples and cultures it attempted to know. And if during the colonial period powerful European countries were craving land, markets and cheap labor while various discourses, in a concerted effort, produced the laziness, backwardness and violence of those who were expected to provide their lands and labor, should we not become alarmed today when we face this mentality that equates Islam with violence and terrorism? In other words, should it not be understood as dangerous that today in the US the writings that play down the diversity of the Arab world are very successful and highly influential? How does power today, in the form of both Western and Arab nation-states, gain from these sweeping generalizations that reduce the Arabs to a horde bent on destroying an imagined Western "us"?

I will answer these questions by looking mainly at the work of the Princeton historian, Bernard Lewis, who is undoubtedly one of the major political commentators on the Middle East. His books have gone into numerous editions since the 1950s and *Islam and the West* (1993) is still a must-read for students of Middle Eastern studies.[1] Moreover, his frequent access not only to the mainstream media but also to the ear of the policy makers render his ideas on Arabs and Islam very influential. Indeed, John Esposito points out that Lewis's famous article "The Roots of Muslim Rage" was initially a speech he gave as the prestigious Jefferson Lecture of 1990, the highest honor bestowed by the US government on a scholar for

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[1] As'ad AbuKhalil, *Bin Laden, Islam and America's New "War on Terrorism"* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002) 19.

outstanding contribution in the humanities.[2] Lewis "was recently brought back from retirement to serve as a consultant on the Middle East for the U. S. government," As'ad AbuKhalil writes, "and in November 2001 he was awarded a seat on NBC's widely watched *Meet The Press*."[3] Alain Gresh, editor in chief of the monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique* and author of several books on Israel and Palestine, describes Lewis as a political actor with close ties to President Bush's Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and to the neo-conservatives of the administration.[4]

This chapter will also look at Daniel Pipes's and Fouad Ajami's work on the Arab world. My choice of these two scholars is based on two points. First, my belief in the need to expose their hostility vis-à-vis Muslims and Arabs, a hostility which they still manage to represent in the form of "neutral analysis" and "objective scholarship." Secondly, I want to suggest that their establishment as authorities in the field of the Middle East studies is at heart a sophisticated articulation of the demands and needs of the American empire. Indeed, both Ajami and Pipes, like Lewis, work either officially or unofficially as advisors to the US government. The gist of their discourse is that the Arab world has become hopelessly decadent, capable of generating only more terrorism. The Arab world's reform or even liberation, they argue, can be achieved only by the US resorting to tough policies, such as conquest and total control.[5] Clearly old-fashioned orientalism and Islamophobia are doing well in the new American century, and so are colonialism and imperialism.

1. Bernard Lewis and the Practice of Orientalism

Bernard Lewis's practice of Middle-Eastern studies is mainly derived from the most biased and eurocentric part of the Orientalist archive, especially in his post-1960s writings which reiterate *ad-nauseam* the Arab Muslims' exclusive and congenital evil. Lewis, who describes himself in *The Middle East and the West* (1964) as a liberal who believes in peoples' will to achieve political and economic freedom, becomes obsessed with a monolithic Arab world that is hopelessly locked in some irrational hatred vis-à-vis a homogeneous bloc he calls the West. No wonder in his recently published book, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (2002), Lewis unhesitatingly calls on the West or even the East to take the toughest measures vis-à-vis the Arab Muslims who understand force very well.[6] It seems to

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[2] See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press) 219.

[3] AbuKhalil, *Bin Laden*, 18.

[4] Alain Gresh, "A L'Origine d'un Concept," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Sept. 2004: 23.

[5] See Hicham ben Abdallah Al Alaoui, "Le Monde Arabe au Pied du Mur," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Oct. 2003: 1+.

[6] See Lewis, What *Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) 159-60, and "Inheriting a History of Hatred," *International Herald Tribune* 12 Sept. 2002: 4. As to

me that Lewis was able to have, in his earlier works, a few words of praise for the Islam of the past and could approve of the people's struggle towards political and social freedom only because he thought Islam's power was receding.[7] The "Return of Islam," as he calls it, instead of being approached soberly and contextualized, appears to antagonize Lewis whose ideas become more and more a recycling of the most prejudiced, arrogant and ahistorical Orientalist lore. Like the nineteenth-century varieties of Orientalism that endowed the colonial enterprise with a much-needed moral sense, Lewis's current work that demonizes Muslims can also be seen in the context of knowledge/power equation. And one thing knowledge/power could blatantly enforce was its own interests at the expense of "their" legitimate grievances.

Indeed, Lewis's knowledge about the ancient history of the Middle East is undoubtedly immense (a point which is not going to be the concern of this chapter), yet once he reaches the present, research dwindles to dismissive statements, that unembarrassedly homogenize the whole Arab and Muslim world: the gist of the matter becomes the eternal clash between Judeo-Christianity and Islam because of this latter's vast reservoirs of hatred and intolerance. Interestingly, Lewis speaks of Judeo-Christianity as if there has never been a long history of anti-Semitism in Europe and later in the US. Similarly he does not deem it worthwhile to consider that the rapprochement of these two Abrahamic faiths, after centuries of antagonism, might augur well for a Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, since Islam also sees itself as a child of Abraham and does recognize its affiliation to both creeds.[8] Post-colonial studies teach us that when powerful nations foster and insist on maintaining dichotomies, it is mainly because conquest is still going on and the subjugation of unwanted people is not achieved yet. In this light, the contemporary expansions of Israeli settlements into Palestinian territories and the military as well as political power supporting the settlements—actions condemned by the UN but supported by the US—lead many scholars to brand Israel as a colonial aggressor. To Lewis, however, Israel is not the aggressor, but the besieged land on which Arabs like to blame their failures. And it is certainly not far-fetched to interpret Lewis's substituting the expression "Holy Land" for "Palestine" or "Palestinian territories" in

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idea of the Arab's understanding force, see his *The Middle East and the West* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1964) 69, 137.

[7] See Lewis, *The Middle East and the West*, 25,114. Apparently Lewis was not alone in holding the idea that Islam's power was receding in the lives of the Arabs. In fact, Gilles Kepel points out that most of the dominant analyses on the Arab and Muslim world in the 60s failed to see the ongoing importance of the Islamist movements. Kepel writes "Lorsque s'achève cette décennie [60s], la situation générale de l'islam est plus contrastée que ne le laissaient penser les analyses dominantes de l'époque, qui prêtaient principalement attention aux élites nationalistes et modernisatrices parvenues au pouvoir aux lendemains de l'Indépendance." Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: Expansion et Déclin de L'islamisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000) 86.

[8] See David Van Biema, "The Legacy of Abraham," *Time* 30 Sept. 2002: 52-61.

his updated edition of *The Middle East and the West*[9] as a gesture of solidarity with right-wing Israeli discourses that are dedicated to silencing Palestinian history.[10]

The fact that Lewis's essentialist thesis has become part of respected knowledge and an authority for generations of students of the Middle East and the Arab world validates Edward Said's observation that "[a]cademic work that advocated a policy line opposed to native Arab or Islamic nationalism had dominated professional and even journalistic discussion."[11] Yet, my aim in critiquing Lewis's work (and later Pipes's and Ajami's) is not a simple attempt to reverse his thesis by blaming it all on the "West" nor do I seek to exonerate the Arabs and deny their responsibility for violence, but as Said put it after the Gulf War "the absence of democracy and the culture of violence that now are prevailing in the Arab world are Arabs' responsibilities to rectify, but because the West has important even massive interest in the Arab world and as it regularly intervenes to protect those interests… a certain responsibility of what is taking place and continues to occur there must also be borne by the West."[12]

1.1. Arabs' Original Sin: "The Impact of the West"

Several historians depict the Arabs of the 18th century, who had at that time most of their lands under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, as living in isolation and believing that they were self-sufficient in no need of the outside world.[13] Yet, this system had to break down when faced with the changes that were taking place with regard to the nature of European trade with the Middle East wherein the Arabs became mainly suppliers of raw materials and buyers of finished products.[14] Moreover, the easy invasion of Egypt by Napoleon and his expeditionary force in 1798 marks an official turning point in the history of the Middle East:

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[9] Compare Lewis, *The Middle East and the* West, (1964) 22 and the 1994 edition which appeared under the title of *The Shaping of the Modern Middle East*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 17.

[10] See, for instance, Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996). In his richly detailed analysis of how biblical studies claimed the exclusivity of the past for the Israelites, Whitelam shows how the scholars were involved in muting Palestinian ancient and even recent history. One consistent feature Whitelam notices in these scholars' writings is that even though they used the term Palestine, they persistently avoided referring to the inhabitants of the land as Palestinians. Whitelam argues that such a terminological choice clearly shows how "[b]iblical studies is […] implicated in an act of dispossession which has its modern political counterpart in the Zionist possession of the land and dispossession of its Palestinian inhabitants. As a people without history—or deprived of that history by the discourse of biblical studies—they become unimportant, irrelevant, and finally non-existent. It is an act of interpretation presented as objective scholarship, carrying the full weight of Western intellectual institutions, which is intricately bound to the dominant understanding of the present in which the modern state of Israel has made an 'empty' and 'barren' land blossom"(46).

[11] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 261.

[12] Edward Said, "The Arabs and the West," rec. 12 April 92, audiotape, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

[13] See Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (New York*:* Harper and Row, 1966) 164-65. See also William R. Polk, *The Arab World Today* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991) 69, and Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1991) 258-62.

it made some leading figures in that region aware of their vulnerability and also directed their attention to the necessity to learn from this formidable adversary. In fact, these events that ushered in "the impact of the West" are described by historians Albert Hourani and William Polk as a process that thrust on the Arabs new ways of thinking, trading, fighting and governing; ways which certainly, one might add unfortunately, took a lot of time before they were absorbed, rethought, molded and adapted according to the Arabs' realities.

Arab history and politics Professor Hisham Sharabi of Georgetown University argues that instead of concentrating on rebuilding the society, both Arab westernizers and traditionalists aimed at "redressing the course of history," that is recovering the political power the Muslims used to have. Sharabi maintains that "[a]s the impact of Europe increased, neither the religious reformers nor the secular intellectuals appeared ready or able to cope with the real problems with which Muslim society was now confronted. Change outstripped analysis, and response lagged behind established fact."[15] Yet, it remains an established fact that the few leaders who rose to the opportunity to learn from and catch up with the West, especially France and Britain, were not really welcomed into the club of the rich and the powerful.[16] The barriers were certainly set up by the two sides: shortsighted politics of reforms that mainly craved political power and a longsighted imperialist project determined to keep its monopoly on power and wealth.

William Polk, for instance, writes about the ambitions of the governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali (ruled from 1805-1848), who, impressed by Napoleon's power, understood the necessity to modernize the military system, if he wanted to be ready for future challenges. In the words of Polk, Muhammad Ali, or Mehmet Ali, as he calls him:

> recognized that it was not simply a matter of numbers, or of the drill, or the style of uniforms, or equipment of troops which made power in the new sense. It was rather the control over the means of production both of modern weapons and of modern soldiers which differentiated him from his rivals […]. Mehmet Ali began quite early in his career to train his people abroad […] [he] created a new generation, which was to come to the fore in Egypt after his death, of men who had begun to learn about the inner nature of European civilization […].[17]

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[14] See Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 261.

[15] Hisham Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1966) 20.

[16] Polk, *The Arab*, 74-112, and Hourani, *A History*, 299-314.

[17] Polk, *The Arab*, 73-80. Similarly Eric Hobsbawm describes Muhammad Ali's modernizing project as "that process by which those conquered by the West have adopted its ideas and techniques to turn the tables on it: in the beginnings of internal westernizing reform within the Turkish empire in the 1830s, and above all in the neglected and significant career of Mohammed Ali of Egypt." *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848* (New York: Mentor, 1962) 20.

However, As Polk explains Muhammad Ali's ambitions to modernize his country and expand his power in the region (Syria came under Egyptian rule in 1832) were not tolerated by a newly industrial England that needed Egypt not as an equal but as a market.

William Polk, and even more Albert Hourani, tend to situate the impact of the West within the "contact zones" or within what Homi Bhabha identifies as the ambivalence of the colonial enterprise: natives should change, westernize but have to remain docile subjects and above all dependents ("*almost the same but not white*").[18] For this purpose, the Western rivals, France and Britain, came together whenever they sensed some serious threat posed by a native leader. As Hourani observes: "Even at best, the indigenous governments which tried to adopt new methods of rule and preserve their independence could act only within narrow limits. The limits were imposed first of all by the European states. Whatever their rivalries, they had certain common interests and could unite to further them."[19]

To Bernard Lewis, however, the impact of the West on the Arabs of the nineteenth century consists of the powerful France and Britain expanding into territories and peoples whose *disponibilité* renders colonialism a mere footnote in the margins of the grand events of the modern history.[20] Lewis explains:

> In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Western interest was chiefly in trade and transit […]. The interests of Great Britain, by now the most active Western power in the Middle East were served by the famous policy of "maintaining the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire."The second half of the nineteenth century brought important changes. The rapid modernization of transit routes, the growth of direct Western economic and financial interest in the area, and from the 1880s onward, the extension of German influence in Turkey led to a realignment of British policy. The occupation of Egypt, undertaken in 1882 for a limited purpose and a limited time, became permanent and was extended to the Sudan.[21]

Between what Lewis depicts as the smooth move from trade and the growth of Western interests to occupation lurks an imperialist project that enabled and was enabled by a zealous colonial discourse that in its turn justified the invasion, appropriation and exploitation of alien territories. It is, indeed, in the name of the British famous policy, Lewis refers to

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[18] The term of "contact zones" is Mary Louise Pratt's. See her *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992) 4. See Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 85-92.

[19] Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 274.

[20] Interestingly, in his book, *The Arabs in History*, first published in 1950, [my reference is the revised edition of 1966] Lewis's argument on the impact of the West was more in agreement with Hourani and Polk: he refers to Muhammad Ali's modernizing efforts that were frustrated by the Great Powers and the disappointment of the Arabs with those powers that promised them independence in return for their help in WW I but instead of that both Britain and France ushered in the mandate period.

above, that, for instance, Muhammad Ali's modernizing plans had to be thwarted. In this context of a powerful West keen on maintaining and aggrandizing its powers, the efforts of a weak East to discover its weaknesses and remedy them, in the process of emulating the West as Muhammad Ali and later the liberal nationalists in the beginning of the twentieth century tried to do, would not be an easy task.

Yet, according to Lewis, the failure of the Middle East in westernizing and modernizing itself was not due so much to the complex interconnections between Britain's and France's designs on the region, the complicity of the Arab elite and the dominant thinking at that time; rather, he explains it using the simplifying trope of the lazy and indifferent natives who are satisfied with sticking to the consumers' role and show no desire to assume responsibility and join in the industrializing spirit of the age.[22] In a metaphoric style Lewis explains their lack of initiative: "No less serious an impediment [to westernize] was the deep-rooted social attitude toward power, work, and status that often makes the Middle Easterner, even today, a bold and resourceful driver but a reluctant and unpredictable mechanic."[23] As one can expect, the natives' reluctance to have their own industry begets stagnation and more dependency on the West, a phenomenon that, according to the logic in Lewis's analysis, can be blamed only on "them." Lewis argues that "the disparity [between Arabs and Westerners in scientific knowledge, technological capacity and military power] was maintained and, indeed, aggravated by the reluctance or inability to make the social and cultural changes that are necessary to sustain a modern state of the Western type."[24] On the other hand, Lewis infers that the Arabs' incapacity to emulate the West made them resentful and hostile. Lewis claims that once the Arabs finally awoke to the power of the West in the nineteenth century:

> the mood of the Easterner began to change from ignorant complacency to anxious emulation. The West was great and strong; by study and imitation, it might be possible to discover and apply the elusive secret of its greatness and strength, and generations of eager students and reformers toiled in the search. They may not have loved the West, or even understood it, but they did admire and respect it. *There came a time* when many

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[21] Lewis, *The Shaping*, 32.
[22] Hisham Sharabi also makes the same point about the Muslims' failure to modernize their societies; yet, his reading of that failure is grounded in the circumstantial realities and dominant thinking of that time. Sharabi explains that in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the borrowing from Europe was based on the criteria of utility and compatibility, hence the rapid changes and development that took place at that time were in the military and administrative fields. "These were," he writes, "in large part measures of self-defense which were considered compatible with both the *shari'a* and the interest of the community." Later by the end of the nineteenth century, the criteria of compatibility, Sharabi points out, would be dropped and "the introduction of constitutional government [would be considered by the younger Muslim intelligentsia] the key to the solution of all the political and social ills of Muslim society." *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World*, 18-19.
[23] Lewis, *The Shaping*, 40.
[24] Lewis, *The Shaping*, 40.

of them did neither. The mood of admiration and imitation gave way to one of envious rancor.[25] (emphasis added)

Interestingly Lewis's statement admits the Easterners' willingness to learn from and their admiration of the West. Then without providing any explanation Lewis points to the radical change in the Easterners' attitude which now harbors resentment and rancor vis-à-vis that West. Indeed, the historian Lewis explains the rise of this mood of resentment only by his mystery-shrouded fairy-tale phrase: "there came a time!" What are the events that sparked off such a strong reversal of attitudes? What about the fact that since the beginning of European penetration of the Ottoman Empire and its provinces, Western Europe sought economic domination and control of the region, hence the installation of the very institutions that accelerated the process of integrating the "Easterners'" economies in the world economic system and thereby generated their dependency? To what extent was outright colonialism, that was a flagrant continuation of the plan to deepen economic integration and dependency, responsible in aggravating the feelings of resentment?[26] Although it seems understandable that any people living under the yoke of colonialism will try to resist their situation, especially if the colonial powers represent civilizations that teach the sanctity of human dignity and the inviolability of human rights, yet Lewis elides the contextualization of this significant change in Arab (and Muslim) popular sentiment. Indeed, the example of Egypt's growing disillusionment with its Western-inspired liberal regime as well as Europe throughout the first half of the twentieth century was shared by many Arab populations who became increasingly aware of the fact that Western principles of freedom were not extended to them. In the words of Ira Lapidus:

> World War I, the political strife of the inter-war years, the Great Depression, and finally, World War II exposed Egyptians to the failings of the constitutional and liberal governments of Europe, the ruthlessness of the powers, their indifference to principle in manipulating non-European peoples, and their contempt for their subjects. These events shook the confidence of many Egyptians that the future belonged to the West, and left others disappointed and alienated. Furthermore, the failure of the liberal regime […] to deal equitably with the country's political and economic problems also undermined faith in parliamentary regimes and in the value of individualism.[27]

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[25] Lewis, *The Shaping*, 42-43.

[26] In my view, the books that provide in-depth analysis of the creation of dependency mechanisms are Roger Own, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London: Methuen, 1981) and Abbas Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism, Oil, and the Political Economic Dependency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991) 1-28. A fictional account of that process is Abdelrahman Munif's trilogy on Iraq, *Ard Assawad* (The Land of Darkness) (Casablanca: Markaz Thaqafi al-Arabi, 2000) as well as his *Cities of Salt,* trans. Peter Theroux (New York, Vintage, 1989).

[27] Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies.* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 521.

Although the West in 1993, the date of the most recent edition of Lewis's popular history, had a vested interest in understanding the resentments of the so-called Arab street, Lewis does not really probe the various reasons that made a large number of the Arab populations, such as Libyans, Egyptians, Sudanese, Iraqis and Algerians, so resentful.[28] Moreover, what Lewis seems to minimize, even though he used to concede that this change in the mood was helped by "the West's lamentable political and moral failure,"[29] is the fact that the Western powers came to the East not only with their achievements in technology and sciences but also with the determination to enrich their nations and aggrandize their powers. In this regard, the political and moral failure Lewis once alluded to was inevitable and in a way the colonial discourse was a sophisticated attempt that both paved the way for those failures and at the same time encoded them as part of a successful and noble mission. That is why Britain and France, for instance, could supplant the promise of independence they made to the Arabs during WW I with the "Sykes-Picot agreement" of May 1916 wherein Britain divided the Arab heartlands with France and created neutral zones to appease Russia. Britain and France were able to get away with that lie not only because of their technological superiority and military might, but also because of the established-as-truth idea that these two powers were acting out of a genuine concern to civilize and modernize the East. In this context where France and Britain reached the Middle East brandishing not only their latest military inventions but also a solid discourse on their humane *mission civilisatrice* and the white man's burden, the natives' aspirations to learn from and become the equals of the West would be insidiously postponed. And, indeed, the powers saw to it that any earnest attempts at modernization and democratization that might pose a pressing threat to their hegemony would be sabotaged and uprooted.

The historian Albert Hourani, who does not ignore this crucial angle, writes:

> Defeat goes deeper into the human soul than victory. To be in
> someone else's power is a conscious experience which induces

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[28] See Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 65-66.

[29] Lewis conceded this point in his pre-mid 60s writings, see *The Arabs in History* (1950) and *The Middle East and the West* (1964). Indeed, in his later writings Lewis dismisses what he called "the West's lamentable political and moral failure" (and what others straightly call colonialism, racism, and ongoing exploitation) as "plausible scapegoating" that is irrelevant and not worthy to look at for the simple reason that phenomena, such as conquest, colonialism, slavery etc. have been practiced by human beings in general and belong therefore not to the Westerners, per se, but to the human race. However, according to this logic, Arab resistance, their failure to organize themselves or even their violence and terrorism are reactions that are not worthy of analysis since these phenomena of resisting intruders, feeling humiliated by injustice and revolting against those seen as the source of one's weakness, also pertain to the human race! Yet, Lewis's contention is that while the West's immoral attitudes are part of humanity in general, Arab resentment and violence is exclusive to the people who live in that part of the world. See his *What Went Wrong?* 153. See also "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic* Sept. 1990: 47-60.

doubts about the ordering of the universe, while those who have power can forget it, or can assume that it is part of the natural order of things and invent or adopt ideas which justify their possession of it. Several kinds of justification were put forward in the Europe of the nineteenth century, and particularly in Britain and France […]. Islam was seen as a danger, both moral and military, to be opposed […]. In the same way, memories of the crusades could be used to justify expansion.[30]

Similarly, the journalist and writer Sélim Nassib notes that the Sykes-Picot agreement and later Britain's declaration that it favors the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," clearly answer for the fact why Arabs marched toward the much desired modernity with a feeling of bitterness.[31] Lewis's deliberate ignorance of these crucial circumstances that severely disabled the Arabs under the yoke of colonialism and even after their independence seems to be a typical stance of the most renowned modern Orientalists. In fact, Edward Said rightly points out: "[t]he impact of colonialism, of worldly circumstances, of historical development: all these were to Orientalists [among whom he lists Bernard Lewis] as flies to wanton boys, killed—or disregarded—for their sport, never taken seriously enough to complicate the essential Islam."[32] And indeed, the point Lewis resorts to in order to explain his "there came a time" for Muslims' rage is to rectify it with his finding that "the time was always already there," for the roots of their rage go back to the Arab mind and Islam.

1.2. "The Arab Mind:" A Bottomless Well of Hatred

Since the "impact of the West" on the Arabs proved to be a disaster because of the Arabs' utter failure to live up to the task of catching up with the powerful Christian West, the attitude of hostility and the feelings of hatred nursed by the Arabs today are, according to this logic, rooted in the inevitable "clash between civilizations." In this line of reasoning, Muslims hate the "West" simply because the latter is Christian. Yet, what makes this hatred soar to uncontrollable heights is that Muslims today cannot afford to ignore the West; on the contrary, they have to learn from and even adopt Westerners' ideas and technology if they want to survive. And that is exactly what Lewis tracks as the source of their humiliation and frustration. His rhetoric in the following passage explains a historical situation using an analogy of an individual man, the "Arab" whose personal feelings are described as "his"

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[30] Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 300-301.
[31] Sélim Nassib writes: "[…] les Arabes se soulèvent […] contre leurs maîtres musulmans et participent à la chute de l'Empire ottoman. Mais le grand Etat arabe indépendant promis en retour n'était évidemment pas au rendez-vous, et la Grande-Bretagne aggravait son cas en promettant de favoriser la création d'un '*foyer national juif*' en Palestine. Grugés, vaincus, ulcérés, c'est avec un sentiment d'amertume que les Arabes se sont dirigés vers la modernité tant désirée." "Pour en Finir avec le Monde Arabe," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Mars 2003: 12.
[32] Said, *Orientalism*, 105.

primary motivator in Arab-Western relations. Yet the personal psychology Lewis describes only betrays his own position of narcissism: "they are just jealous." His self-celebratory stance reduces "them" into the now familiar impotent "he" against whom a bloated "us;" or, rather "I" pits itself as the source of "his" modern being:

> For more than a century and a half, Islam was subject to the domination of the West, a domination that was posed to the Muslim peoples, and continues to pose even after political control has ended, tremendous problems of readjustment […]. Even after liberation, the intelligent and sensitive Arab could not but be aware of the continued subordination of his culture to that of the West. His richest resource was oil, but it was found and extracted by Western processes and machines, to serve the needs of Western inventions. His greatest pride was his new army, but it used Western arms, wore Western-style uniforms, and marched to Western or Western-style tunes. His ideas and ideologies, even of anti-Western revolt, derived ultimately from Western thought. His knowledge even of his own history and culture owed much to Western scholarship. His writers, his artists, his architects, his technicians, even his tailors, testified by their work to the continued supremacy of Western civilization: the ancient rival, once the pupil, now the model, of the Muslim.Even the gadgets and garments, the tools and amenities of his everyday life were symbols of bondage to an alien and dominant culture, which he hated and admired but could not share. It was a deeply wounding, deeply humiliating experience.[33]

Certainly to Lewis the large number of Arab peoples that have looked to Western Europe and the US as a model (albeit they may at the same time resent their foreign policies) and craved their progress in science and technology, the students that flock to Western universities seeking knowledge because this is the surest ticket to high positions back home, and the masses of economically disadvantaged people who eagerly leave behind their hopeless situation at home and set out with the hope that the West might grant them the chance of a better life if they worked hard, all these are brushed aside as atypical meaningless encounters. Lewis's provocative profile of the "Arab" also turns a blind eye to the fact that "the history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowings. Cultures are not impermeable […]. Culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm."[34] But for Lewis, the Arab is the absolute "other" whose mind is congenitally tuned on the hatred of Christians; "he," therefore, can in no way be part of this universal norm. It is worth noting that since the events of September 11, 2001, reprinted studies, such as Lewis's and Raphael

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[33] Lewis, *The Shaping*, 158.
[34] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 217.

Patai's *The Arab Mind*, that homogenize and stigmatize the Arab peoples and cultures and treat them as if they are somehow separate from the rest of the world still find a thriving market.[35]

In the same vein, Lewis argues that the Arabs conflate both previous colonial powers, France and Britain, and the US under the same heading of infidels and villains. Perhaps for this reason he does not deal with the Arabs' different reception of the US, which John Esposito describes as unique: "America, in particular, enjoyed a certain pride of place, since it lacked the negative baggage of European colonial powers."[36] Indeed, Lewis ignores the complex developments of the early twentieth century, when the US entered the Middle East arena as a champion of independence and freedom. For instance, President Woodrow Wilson's *Fourteen Points*, where he called for the granting of self-determination to various national groups, as well as his King-Crane Commission, that reported in 1919 about the perspective of the Levantine Arabs on the Zionist program and the European colonial rule, made the Arabs believe that the US was actually opposed to the colonial policies of France and Britain.[37] Yet, by the end of World War II, the US took over the job of securing Western interests in the Middle East: hence in 1948 the Truman Doctrine, which granted military and economic aid to both Greece and Turkey so that they could function as a bulwark to stop a presumed communist threat from reaching the vast natural resources of the Middle East.[38] Understandably it did not take long for tension and misunderstandings to arise between Arab nationalist forces and the US, for the mainlines of American policy in the Middle East, as William Polk observes, "were inherited from Great Britain, transferred from other areas, or grew out of American domestic attitudes; only in small part were they adjusted to or in resonance with the hopes and fears of Middle Easterners […]. Too little did Americans

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[35] In fact, Raphael Patai, the expert on the Arab mind, explains to Lewis that the Arab people cannot tolerate learning from the West because of several reasons: their glorious history where they met the West and defeated it, their conviction of possessing a true religion and their thinking that the West "is a cultural upstart [in comparison to their culture], and to have to learn from it is for the Arabs a position verging on dishonor." *The Arab Mind*, Rev. ed. (New York: Hatherleigh Press, 2002) 316-18. See also US army colonel Norvell B. De Atkine's forward to *The Arab Mind* where he writes about his use of Patai's book as a map that deciphers Arabs' "seemingly irrational hatred" and "rejection of Western values" in his briefing of hundreds of military teams deployed to the Middle East (x-xviii).

[36] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 65.

[37] See Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983) 90-91; and Saïd K. Aburish, *A Brutal Friendship: The West and the Arab Elite* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) 30.

[38] See Leon T. Hadar, *Quagmire: America in the Middle East* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 1992) 38-45; and Naseer H. Aruri, "U.S. Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict," *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives*, ed. Hooshang Amirahmadi (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993) 91-92.

perceive the Arabs and too little did the Arabs perceive Americans […]."[39] Indeed, in that context of betrayal and mutual misperception, the newly independent Arab states of the 50s and 60s whose young populations aspired to equality gradually became disillusioned and resentful. And it is these factors that spawned a series of crises which John Esposito sees as paving the way for the resurgence of religious feelings and identity:

> Throughout the turbulent politics of the postcolonial, post-independence period, the roller-coaster relationship between the West and the Muslim world continued. On the one hand, Europe and America represented the example par excellence of modernization and development, of what it meant to live fully in the modern world […]. On the other hand, in the eyes of many, the Muslim world's relative backwardness and Sisyphean battle to build strong, stable societies were attributed to the bitter harvest of European colonialism. The Creation of Israel, the Suez crisis, and the politics of the Cold War were regarded as aspects of post-World War II neocolonialism, a hegemonic chess game between the United States and the Soviet Union which threatened the identity and integrity of the Muslim world […]. The failures of governments and national ideologies (liberal nationalism and Arab socialism), epitomized by the humiliation of 1967, precipitated a deepening sense of disillusionment and crisis in many Muslim societies and contributed to the political and social resurgenceof Islam.[40]

Regrettably none of these crucial events are taken seriously by Lewis, who, indeed, dismisses them by calling them an unconvincing attempt to transfer the so-called Anglo-French guilt onto America.[41] In his recently published book *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (2002), Lewis reiterates his contention: like the Middle Easterners of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who found it unacceptable to learn from the "infidels," the post-colonial Arabs would not forgive the Westerners for the fact that they have surpassed them and, even more than that, the West, today the US, has become the only available teacher and master.[42] Lewis then concludes that because of the deeply-rooted hostility of Islam vis-à-vis the West, especially the US as the most powerful and successful Western country, the Arabs, instead of working hard to take part in the current developments, chose to lag behind and engaged in a vicious "blame game" in which their failures are gratuitously grafted onto European imperialism and recently onto the US policies and Israel.[43] By doing away with any serious contextual analysis of the ongoing crises that permeate the

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[39] Polk, *The Arab World Today*, 383. It is important here to recall that in 1953 Secretary of State John Foster Dulles prophetically remarked that the Arab states were "more fearful of Zionism than of the communists." Naseer H. Aruri, "U.S. Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict," 92.
[40] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 73.
[41] See Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* 153.
[42] Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* 81.
[43] Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* 151-60. See also Patai, *The Arab Mind* 308-19.

Arab region, Lewis ends his 2002 book with a warning of a plausible re-colonialism of the Middle East.[44]

While it is true that there is a tendency among some Arabs to blame all their misfortunes on the US and Israel, Lewis's reductive statement about "their blame game" dismisses the possibility that those claims might have some relevance, just as he ignores the work of various Arab intellectuals who argue that the Arab world's catastrophic situation is the product of corrupt Arab regimes and Arab cultural deficiencies as well as the legacy of colonialism that still shapes the relations between the Western and the Arab worlds. Posing the question of what went wrong with the Arabs, the Moroccan historian Mohammed Abed al-Jabri argues that the Arabs' inability to develop their countries lies in two enormous paradoxes that characterize their current reality. First, while most of the Arabs do participate in the new civilization at the level of consumption, they are still far behind concerning the production of technology and scientific knowledge. This is a point which Lewis tackles although he does it in essentialist terms: "the Arab is a good driver but a poor mechanic," thus avoiding policy and politics in favor of personalizing and essentializing. Secondly, al-Jabri points out that while the Arabs' survival today depends on their working together for an Arab unity (be it in the form of the nation-states that devise a common strategy for promoting economic development or their moving towards the removal of the borders altogether); their reality shows nation-states that are heavily dependent on the industrialized West and fiercely compete with, and at times engage in conflicts or wars against, each other. In view of this sorry state of affairs in the Arab world, al-Jabri contends that the Arabs can fully enter the age of technology, participate in production, and aspire to impose their weight in the world only once they achieve a real Arab unity based on social justice and democracy and conduct a cultural revolution that combats illiteracy and spreads scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, al-Jabri points out that US imperialist hegemony, the role of Israel, and the strategic role of Arab oil for the West represent the other side of the coin of the Arabs' backwardness.[45]

Unlike Lewis, who recognizes the love-hate relationship that binds the Arabs to the West only in order to dismiss it as part of that irrationality typical of the Arabs, al-Jabri's view on this point has the benefit of providing a historical perspective.[46] Al-Jabri explains that

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[44] Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* 159-60.

[45] Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, *Ichkaliyat Al-Fikr Al-Arabi Al-Mo'asir* (Beirut, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1989) 131, 140-42. See also his *Arab-Islamic Philosophy: A Contemporary Critique,* trans. Azziz Abbassi (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999). See also, for instance, the colossal work of the Moroccan historian Abdullah Laroui and the Tunisian scholar Hichem Djaït, especially the latter's *La Personalité et le Devenir Arabo-Islamique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974).

[46] See Lewis, *The Shaping*, 158. For a critical response on Lewis's views, see also AbuKhalil, B*in Laden, Islam and America's New "War on Terror"*, 17.

since the earliest days of its impact on the Arabs, the West, in his case France and Britain, presented itself as the enemy and at the same time the model. It was the enemy because it represented aggression, colonialism, exploitation and dominance. At the same time, it was the model because it represented modernity, progress, technology, democracy and freedom. Whence the West became for the Arabs, according to al-Jabri, the enemy whose greed and dominance had to be resisted but whose progress and values were coveted. Today, in the post-colonial era, this dual pattern is still pertinent due to the West's, headed by the US's, support of dictatorial Arab regimes, a support that openly tells the people suffering the atrocities of these regimes that Western principles do not apply to them. This clarifies the big contradiction as to how the West, as al-Jabri maintains, holds dear the principles of democracy and freedom, spreads science and technology and defends human rights but at the same time does not wince from exploiting poor nations' resources, repressing freedom movements, blocking the development of weak nations, dominating international trade, monopolizing science and technology and turning a blind eye on human rights when its interests are in jeopardy.[47]

1.3. "The Clash of Civilizations:" Muslims as Eternal Aggressors

The journalist David Lamb writes in *The Arabs: Journeys Beyond the Mirage* that after Israel's invasion of Lebanon on June 6, 1982, and its wreaking havoc on that country, the UN Security Council met on June 8 to demand an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. The meeting came to nothing because the US, as usual, used its veto, which was the only one cast against the UN demand. Later Lamb recounts a story, that has been lived by a lot of people in Lebanon.[48] He says:

> In the Palestinian shantytown of Chatilla an old man hobbled up to me. He said six members of his family had been killed the night before in an Israeli aerial raid. "*Why* are *you* doing this to us?" he asked, half pleading and half in rage. He even knew about the United States' veto at the U. N. I could offer him no explanation and mumbled something like No, of course, Americans had no argument with the Palestinian people. I looked around at the rubble of stone and brick, at the swath of destruction our bombs had cut through this slum neighborhood, and for the first time in my life I felt embarrassed to be an American.[49]

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[47] Al-Jabri, *Ichkaliyat*, 129-42. See also his reading of the Arab intellectual movements at the turn of the twentieth century, that came to be known as the "Arab Awakening" and the role of Western direct colonialism in rigidifying and radicalizing these movements (176).

[48] See Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation. Lebanon at War*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[49] David Lamb, *The Arabs: Journeys Beyond the Mirage* (New York: Vintage, 1987) 175.

From this anecdote, we can see that Lamb understands why the old man who, being bombarded by Israeli soldiers, asks about the US's reasons for supporting the massive destruction and killing of his people; for it is public knowledge (and it is bitter knowledge in the Arab world) that the US arms Israel, finances its settlements and consistently vetoes UN resolutions against Israel. Israel is a military power and can use this power at will even if it defies international laws because the US allows it. Yet, Bernard Lewis, the historian, would have explained the man's anger with his familiar apolitical leitmotif: these Muslims are enraged at "us" because "what is evil and unacceptable [to them] is the domination of infidels over true believers."[50] Because he believes that their anger is based on religious intolerance rather than political grievances, Lewis sees no need to address the US's unconditional support of the Israeli occupation from a point of view that considers the Palestinians' situation and suffering.

In fact, as I already pointed out, Lewis imputes the fact that the majority of the Arab populations are angry with the US to their indulgence in their "blame game." Their anger is never due to legitimate current causes and real grievances that we should look at carefully but essentially erupts out of a pristine hatred bequeathed from one generation to the other. In his popular article, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," he states:

> It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them [so no need to look at the policies and the governments]. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.[51]

The concept of the clash of civilizations was first introduced by Bernard Lewis in 1964 in *The Middle East and the West*, a book that has had several printings since then.[52] Later the idea of the clash was taken up by Samuel Huntington and elaborated in a whole thesis first as an article in the summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, then as a book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" identifies the new enemies of the West in a demographically growing Muslim world and economically strong China.[53] John Esposito observes that these two pieces, Lewis's

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[50] Lewis, "The Roots," 53.
[51] Lewis, "The Roots," 60.
[52] Lewis, *The Middle East*, 135.
[53] Samuel P. Huntington claims: "With the challenger civilizations, Islam and China, the West is likely to have consistently strained and often highly antagonistic relations. Its relations with Latin America and Africa, weaker civilizations which have in some measure been dependent on the West, will involve much lower levels of conflict, particularly with Latin America." *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1997) 184-85.

"The Roots of Muslim Rage," and Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations," have been foundational texts in drawing the mainlines of debate on the relationship between the Arabs and the West. Esposito points out that:

> Because of Lewis's international stature as a scholar and political commentator on the Middle East, his topic, and its prominent public platform, "The Roots of Muslim Rage" received widespread coverage nationally and internationally. It has had a significant impact both on Western perceptions of contemporary Islam and on Muslim perceptions of how Islam and Muslims are viewed in the West.[54]

So what perception does "The Roots of Muslim Rage" construct? And if we take into consideration the quote above from the same article, why does Lewis speak of an "us" facing a Muslim mood and movement, which he describes as an irrational but historic reaction, that is not related to the world of policies and governments? The *Atlantic Monthly* which published "The Roots of Muslim Rage" had the front cover showing a scowling, turbaned and bearded Muslim whose fierce eyes are filled with the Stars and Stripes. The article itself is accompanied by three pictures. One shows a serpent marked with the American flag crossing the desert and in the second and the third illustrations we see the serpent creeping into a tent and approaching another turbaned and bearded Muslim who seems to be immersed in his reading of a book, probably the Koran. Like these provocative illustrations that reduce the diverse reality of the Arab world to turbaned, bearded and enraged men who live in the desert and think Americans are some creeping dark forces that are adamant on their destruction, Lewis's text follows suit. As usual Lewis begins his article by referring to the greatness of Islam and the Islamic civilization only to hastily move to the core issues that boil down to the inevitable clash between Christianity and Islam, a clash in which Islam is cast in the role of the eternal aggressor, as Lewis's reading of history concludes.

Drawing upon ancient Islamic jurisprudence which Lewis sees returning to popularity, he argues that "the world and all mankind [for Muslims] are divided into two: the House of Islam, where the Muslim law and faith prevail, and the rest, known as the House of Unbelief or the House of War, which is the duty of Muslims ultimately to bring to Islam."[55] To some extent, this contention might help us understand Iran and its ambition to export its Islamic revolution in the beginning of the 1980s,[56] but it certainly does not explain, for instance, why

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[54] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 219-20.

[55] Lewis, "The Roots," 49.

[56] Concerning Iran's ambition to export its Islamic ideology, see Esposito who remarks that Iran's Islamic foreign policy was basically more pragmatic than ideological, despite the rhetoric of the ruling class. Hence Iran's maintaining close ties with the Islamic Republic of Sudan but its distancing itself from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. *The Islamic Threat*, 121.

the fundamentalist Saudi Arabia did not hesitate long before permitting the United States to manage the Gulf War (1990-91) from within the very territories where such views, as "the house of Islam" and "the house of war" are very much in vogue. Moreover, Lewis's explanation alone could not begin to come to grips with the issue of how the secularist regime of Saddam Hussein, renowned for its brutal suppression of Islamic movements, had such a long bitter conflictual relationship with the US. Neither does it shed any light on the fact that the majority of Arabs, while they resent US foreign policy, still admire its democracy, science and technology. Evidently, these recent developments call into question the over-simplified binary that Lewis seeks to perpetuate, yet once again Lewis casts a cursory look at ancient history and the present and here is what he sees:

> The struggle between these rival systems [Christianity and Islam] has now lasted for some fourteen centuries. It began with the advent of Islam, in the seventh century, and has continued virtually to the present day. It has consisted of a long series of attacks and counterattacks, jihads and crusades, conquests and reconquests. Christendom in retreat and under threat […][yet] since the failure of the second Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683 […] Islam has been on the defensive, and the Christian and post-Christian civilization of Europe and her daughters has brought the whole world, including Islam, within its orbit. For a long time now there has been a rising tide of rebellion against this Western paramountcy, and a desire to reassert Muslim values and restore Muslim greatness […]. It was also natural that this rage should be directed primarily against the millennial enemy and should draw its strength from ancient beliefs and loyalties[57]

The way Lewis organizes his words tells the whole story, as Esposito also observes.[58] The relationship between Christianity and Islam is portrayed as if it only consisted of (rather than included) clashes in which Islam takes the exclusive role of instigator. Islam started the "attacks, *jihads* and conquest" and Christian Europe had to respond with "counterattacks, crusades, and reconquests." Today the diverse grievances simmering in the Arab world, whose sources are not always the West or the US, are seen by Lewis as simply "the return of Islam"[59] with its millennial hostility that urges it to attack Christianity in the West, albeit this time the Muslims have chosen to pour their rage and direct their attack on "Europe's daughter," the US. Clearly the implication in describing the US as Europe's daughter is that Europeans and Americans are in the same boat, since they share the same fundamental values, some sort of Occidental universalism. It is remarkable, from a scholarly perspective, that for Lewis, the Princeton historian, economic interests, national and international politics,

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[57] Lewis, "The Roots," 49.
[58] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 221.
[59] See Lewis, "The Return of Islam," *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 133-54.

hegemony and power have never played a role in Arab-Western relations throughout the centuries. These crucial factors are simply absent from his analysis. This is why I find As'ad AbuKhalil right when he says that "For Bernard Lewis, there is an advanced, humane West, and then there is 'Islam,' which includes religion, law, civilization, geography, and history. In his mind, Muslims and Islam have not changed over the centuries; for him, studying a 9th Century Arabic manuscript is useful methodologically to explain the political behavior of Palestinians in 2002."[60] This kind of over-simplification would never be acceptable coming from a nationally recognized expert in any other discipline, or even any other historical specialty.

However, any keen observer, let alone a historian, who inquires into the complicated and diverse reasons for anti-US sentiment in the Arab world, will find out that the waves of anger swelling in that region are the result of decades of foreign policies and private agendas enacted with the primary emphasis on "American interests" which often conflicted with the interests of the majority of the Arab populations. It is true that Islamic movements have been on the rise since the end of the 60s; yet, Lewis's argument about the eminency of the "Islamic threat" totally fails to look at the diverse backgrounds and agendas of the Islamic movements and organizations that have a tremendous appeal to both the educated classes and the illiterate masses. While Lewis's view pinned it down to the fatal resurgence of "the clash of civilizations" in which Islam is adamant about crushing Judeo-Christianity where it is most armed to the teeth, John Esposito who studied the various Islamic movements within the Arab nations comments:

> Such descriptions [Lewis's] prevent readers from realizing that the majority of so-called fundamentalist organizations functioned effectively within the political system because they are urban-based, led by well-educated leaders who attract students and educated followers, are well placed in the professions (engineering, science, medicine, law, education, the military), and organizations provide social and medical services. The selective approach of most analyses of Islamic activism omits, downplays, or dismisses the reasons given by activists (and indeed many Arabs and Muslims) for their criticism and rejection of the West: imperialism, America's tilt toward Israel, Western governments' support for oppressive Regimes (the Shah's Iran, Tunisia, Nimeiri's Sudan, Lebanon). The reader is never challenged to consider the reasons behind the attitudes and actions of activists rather than simply dismiss them as the product of a clash of civilizations or a blind, irrational clinging to faith.[61]

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[60] AbuKhalil, *Bin Laden*, 18.
[61] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 221-22.

So what is wrong with Lewis? Why is he unable to see the legitimate causes that are espoused by most of the Islamic movements as well as, for that matter, secularist organizations? Esposito makes the accurate observation that Western scholars of the Islamic world, holders of secular presuppositions, tend more often than not to fail to appreciate the diversity of Islamic movements. The religion of Islam is according to their world view, retrogressive, prone to fundamentalism and fanaticism, hence their tendency to treat political Islam as some free-standing phenomenon rather than "the product of faith-in-history." In this regard, like extreme Islamists who tend to idealize and romanticize their past by simply refusing to see the dynamism and degree of change in that past, "so too a Western secular tendency to pit modern change against a fixed tradition has obscured the degrees of difference and change in modern Islam and modern Muslim societies."[62] As a result Esposito identifies the real threat not in Islam, as such, but in the superior position assumed by those who analyze the Muslim world. Considering their secular world view as self-evident truth, these analysts' interpretations and representations generally tend to lump together all Islamic movements, and even all the Muslim world, with the result of producing knowledge that feeds on the now prevailing stereotype of equating Islam with violence and terrorism.[63] In Esposito's words: "the demonization of a great religious tradition due to the perverted actions of a minority of dissidents and distorted voices remains the real threat, a threat that not only impacts on relations between the Muslim world and the West but also upon growing Muslim populations in the West itself."[64] Interestingly, as Esposito also concurs, such scholars sometimes sound like mullahs and extreme Islamists. In fact, Lewis and Huntington, who profess the inevitability of the battle between the "West" and "Islam" and the clash of civilizations, often sound like extreme Islamists, such as Bin Laden and his followers.[65]

But is it only secularism that prevents a historian like Lewis from noticing the diversity of the Muslim world and makes him ignore historical circumstances when dealing with the Arab-Western relations, or is the matter something more than that? Whatever his reasons are, Lewis's selective reading of history, his neglect of Arabs' perspective(s), and his representation of Islam as an inherently violent religion that continues to represent a menace to the West resembles the stance of some prominent nineteenth century Orientalists. Today thanks to several studies that unravel the political, cultural, ideological and institutional

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[62] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 260-65.
[63] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 262, 282.
[64] Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, xiii.
[65] Bin Laden's speeches wholeheartedly adhere to the clash theory. In one of his highly mediated speeches after September 11, 2001, he claimed "these events have split the entire world into two abodes: an abode of belief where there is no hypocrisy, and an abode of unbelief, may God protect us and you from it." Qtd. In Abukahlil, *Bin Laden*, 84.

affiliations of the Orientalists' texts, we have the advantage of knowing that their ontological limitations contributed to the formidable task of deflecting the attention from the brutality with which the colonial powers pursued their interests by distorting and oversimplifying the Arabs and Muslims with a theory of gratuitous violence and cultural inferiority.

Certainly the Arab world today has changed dramatically. It is also obvious that its current catastrophic situation is to a large extent the result of the mismanagement of the Arab decision makers, who are essentially concerned with conserving their powers and privileges at whatever cost. Yet, to perpetuate unchallenged an attitude that homogenizes the whole Arab world and reduces its inhabitants to enraged fanatics and terrorists is to take part in the (neo)colonial task of cornering them in the sorely needed enemy position. Their lives remain expendable and their grievances unheard. No wonder Lewis could predict in his latest book (2002) a return of colonialism:

> If the peoples of the Middle East continue on their present path, the suicide bomber may become a metaphor for the whole region, and there will be no escape from a downward spiral of hate and spite, self-pity, poverty and oppression, culminating sooner or later in yet another alien domination; perhaps from a new Europe reverting to old ways, perhaps from a resurgent Russia, perhaps from some new, expanding power in the East.[66]

Similarly in one of his articles in *The Washington Post,* Lewis persists in recognizing only "their" violence (the attack on American military quarters in Khobar in Saudi Arabia and the two US embassies in East Africa), whereas "our" attacks are boldly dismissed as merely a "few misdirected missiles."[67] Lewis implies that the US government will "sooner or later" be justified in some future "domination" of the Middle East, perhaps to "protect" it and the rest of the world from a dangerously powerful Russia or China.

By recalling the ways in which Lewis's rhetoric repeats the nineteenth-century Orientalists' dual emphasis of altruism and inevitability, and the fact of ongoing interchange between area scholars, such as Orientalists, and government departments of foreign affairs (Lewis works as advisor to the US government), it would not be an exaggeration to consider his writings as issuing the academic warrant for increasingly aggressive US military and economic intervention in the Arab world, a warrant that dovetails neatly with the Bush administration's radically revised approach to foreign policy.[68] Lewis's query "what went wrong in the Middle East?" is at heart a systematic revival of the new old enemy, so that US

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[66] Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* 159-60.
[67] Lewis, "Inheriting a History of Hatred," *International Herald Tribune* 12 Sept. 2002: 4.
[68] On the interchange between area studies and government departments of foreign affairs, see Said, *Orientalism*, 343. See also Karen DeYoung and Mike Allen, "Bush Shifts Strategy from Deterrence to Dominance," *Washington Post* 21 Sept. 2002: A01.

foreign policy can use, for some time at least, "the clash of civilizations" and "their inveterate hatred" as the clarion call that justifies aggression and warfare.

2. Daniel Pipes and the Business of War

At the end of August 2003, President Bush made a recess appointment of Daniel Pipes, popular for his anti-Muslim views and open call to war, to the board of directors of the federally funded US Institute of Peace.[69] Like Bernard Lewis, Pipes has lectured at several prestigious universities, is an established media presence and enjoys close ties with the top officials in the current Bush administration. Indeed, Pipes is a signatory of the Project for the New American Century and currently serves on the "Special Task Force on Terrorism and Technology" at the Department of Defense. Additionally, one of his most influential institutional affiliations is his work in several think tanks. He serves as adjunct scholar and analyst for the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy (Winep), which is connected to like-minded organizations such as the Middle East Research Institute, Richard Perle's American Enterprise Institute and the Philadelphia-based Middle East Forum, whose founder and director is Daniel Pipes. One of the recent projects of the Middle East Forum has been the establishment of Campus Watch, a web site that claims to watch over and inform on American universities and academics that are seen to spread disinformation and incite ignorance. Campus Watch posits itself as an organization that "mainly addresses five problems: analytical failures, the mixing of politics with scholarship, intolerance of alternative views, apologetics, and the abuse of power over students."[70]

2.1. The Muslim as Total Enemy

So what are Pipes's views on Islam and Muslims that have made him so popular in the inner circle of Washington's decision makers? *In the Path of God*, originally published in 1983, then republished in 2002 with a second reprint in 2003, recycles the representation of Islam as essentially violent and dangerous. In the 1983 edition, Pipes contends that the Islamic revival

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[69] See Salama Ni'mat, "The Appointment of Pipes settles the course of US Foreign Policy," *Al-Hayat* (Arabic) 21 Aug. 2003: 7. See Alan Cooperman, "Pipes to Be Named to Think Tank," *Washington Post* 22 Aug. 2003: A04. Cooperman explains that by resorting to the appointment of Daniel Pipes while Congress is in recess, President Bush avoids a confirmation vote.

[70] See http://www.campus-watch.org. Daniel Pipes's biographical information are taken from Dominique Vidal, "Croisés, de Père en Fils," *Le Monde Diplomatique* March, 2003: 17; Joel Beinin, "Surveiller et Informer," and "Un 'Think Tank' au Service du Likoud," *Le Monde Diplomatique* July 2003: 12-13. Beinin explains that the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, founded in 1985, which has become the most influential think tank on American administrations and the media concerning the Middle-East issues, has openly espoused the Israeli Likud government's policies since the second *Intifada* in 2000 and especially after September 11, 2001. Some internet sites that carry information on Pipes are <http://danielpipes.org/bios>. <http://rightweb.irc-online.org/ind/pipes/pipes/php>. <http//en.wikipedia.org/w/wiki.phtml?title=Daniel_Pipes&printable=yes>.

was enabled by the oil boom in the 1970s, hence his predicting its downfall once oil prices began to plummet. However, in the 2002 publication, that is, after 9/11, he refined his thesis about the Islamic revival and made it include what he calls "the interaction of identity and circumstance."[71] What Pipes has in mind when he refers to that interaction is a fact that he apparently alone can access: Pipes affirms that today's Islamic terrorism seeks the conquest of America and its conversion to Islam! He writes:

> The aggressiveness and ambition of militant Islam have greatly increased since the late 1970s. Back then, the goal of militant Islam was seen as merely the infidel's expulsion from Muslim lands; today, the goal is his conversion. Note that the great act of violence in 1979 (the seizure of the U.S. embassy) occurred in the Iranian capital; in 2001 its counterpart occurred in New York and Washington, the twin capitals of the United States.[72]

Pipes goes on asserting that "Jihad, offensive in Dar al-Harb, defensive in Dar al-Islam, takes many forms: insurrection, invasion, aid to neighbors, self-defense, or guerrilla action […]. Jihad, Muslims believe, should continue until they take control of the entire planet and all mankind becomes subject to Islam's law."[73] Yet, before dealing with Pipes's writings in the 1990s, I will concentrate first on his 1983 *In the Path of God*.

Revealingly, Pipes states in the beginning of *In the Path of God* his intention to exclusively rely on the Orientalist lore, part of which was produced while most of the Orient was under the yoke of colonialism. He writes:

> I approach the subject of Islam and politics from within the Orientalist tradition of European and American scholarship […] [since] the fact remains that the Western academic study of Islam provides the only basis for an analysis of the religion in relation to political life. Certainly, the Orientalist tradition cannot be replaced by the recent profusion of writings by social scientists and journalists, few of which have the vision or profundity of the works by observers such as the Dutch Scholar, traveller, and colonial administrator, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje; the Austrian humanist Gustave E. von Grunebaum; the British Arabist Sir Hamilton A. R. Gibb; the French social and economic historian Claude Cahen; the Canadian religious historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith; and the American historians of Islam Marshall G. S. Hodgson and John Obert Voll.[74]

Besides the fact that Pipes clearly does not consider Arab or Muslim intellectuals as a valid, possibly contrapuntal, source of knowledge, ironically what he takes from the prominent

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[71] Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003) x.
[72] Pipes, *In the Path*, xi.
[73] Pipes *In the Path*, 44.
[74] Pipes, *In the Path*, 24.

names displayed above is neither their "vision" nor the "profundity of their works."[75] As I will show later, Pipes likes to quote them when their statements are neither visionary nor profound, but simply reductive and patronizing. No wonder the only writer outside the Orientalist tradition Pipes cites is V. S. Naipaul whose travel accounts in several Muslim countries are but crude recycling of colonialist and racist scholarship.[76]

In fact, Pipes explains his disregarding of Muslim writers on Islam and politics on the grounds that these latter lack critical analysis. Similarly non-Muslim writers who have questioned the apparatus of knowledge he intends to rely on are all dismissed either as apologists who are "Jews, anti-Semites, and disaffected intellectuals especially [who] take up Islamic causes as a way to express their own discontent" or writers seeking personal profit especially during the oil boom of the 1970s.[77] While this statement-in-reverse would also include him as making a career out of lambasting Islam and disparaging Muslims, it is certainly preposterous to condemn all antithetical knowledge, which questions and recontextualizes the orthodox view on Islam, as the product of deranged minds or greedy intentions. According to Pipes what all these "Western apologists' writings" have created was a split in their societies in which "while a few Westerners at the top praise Islam for personal reasons (be it alienation or profit), the masses, still swayed by the old hostility, despise and fear Islam."[78] Judging from his choice of sources and his authorial voice, it appears that Pipes's purpose is to whip up the contempt and fear he claims the masses nurture vis-à-vis Islam. His personal selection for the Orientalists' statements admirably lends itself to this task.

Pipes portrays the Muslims' response to "the impact of the West" at the turn of the twentieth century as falling in three categories: reformism, secularism and fundamentalism. Drawing on Hamilton Gibb, Pipes describes the reformists' attempt at the end of the nineteenth century to make Islam fit modernity "a misdirected enterprise."[79] "Reformism," he argues, "with its hesitations, empty rhetoric, false promises, misrepresentations, sleights of hand, tortured logic, and flights of fancy, wins by default. It demands the fewest commitments

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[75] Indeed, one of Edward Said's contentions in *Orientalism* is that European Orientalists looked at the Orient not as "an interlocutor, but its silent other." Concerning the writers, Pipes wants to rely on in explaining Muslims, my point is not to belittle their knowledge. See, for instance, Abdallah Laroui's reading of Von Grunebaum's work. While critiquing Grunebaum's methodology in studying Islam and the Muslim society and showing how this methodology already determines the results and the findings reached by the research, Laroui still shows the richness of Grunebaum's work and what today's scholars of Islam can learn from it. Nevertheless, what Pipes takes from Grunebaum are some reductive, racist statements. See Laroui, *Al-Arab wa al-Fikr a-tarikhi* (Arabs and Historical Thought) 4th ed. (Casablanca: Markaz a-Taqafi al-Arabi, 1998) 117-45.
[76] See Eqbal Ahmed, *Confronting Empire. Interviews with David Barsamian* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) 107-11.
[77] Pipes, *In the Path*, 14.
[78] Pipes, *In the Path*, 15.
[79] Pipes, *In the Path*, 118.

and tolerates the most contradictions, offering a vacuous but optimistic middle ground for Muslims unable to decide on fundamentalist or secularist programs."[80] As an example of the inherent contradictions and unsatisfactory compromises of reformism, Pipes refers to its clashing with Western ideal of equal citizenship, whereby non-Muslim minorities today "may enter the government and the military but not become head of state."[81] Needless to note that it is misleading to ascribe such an example to the tortured logic of Muslim reformism since the exclusion of minorities from the position of head of state is by no means restricted to the Muslim world. Moreover, in the Arab world, both majorities and minorities still await enfranchisement, since political power is either inherited, wrenched by coups d'etats, or, as lately, directly imposed by the USA.

The Muslim Secularists, whom Pipes refers to as "brave souls" and likens their political approach to either "the conservatives or the reform branch of Judaism," are, however, hastily passed over. Then Pipes comes to his subject-matter: Islamic fundamentalism that is reduced to the act of ranting and raving at the West. By relying primarily on Martin Kramer and V. S. Naipaul, Pipes's Islamic fundamentalism stands out as resenting the "West's power and cultural leadership" out of a kind of mental disorder, or what he takes from Naipaul as "Muslim disturbance:"

> Hoping to explain this "disturbance," Naipaul undertook a seven-month visit to four Muslim countries […]. Driving through Tehran, he heard Qur'anic readings on the radio and saw Mullahs make speeches on television, and he wondered how religious men who delighted in cursing Western culture could allow themselves to depend on two of its most characteristic innovations […]. For Fundamentalists, cars, radios, and televisions "were considered neutral; they were not associated with any particular faith or civilization; they were thought of as the stock of some great universal bazaar."[…] Fundamentalists thought modernization to be much narrower than it is. Their attempt to import the fruits of technology but nothing more–the railroads without John Locke, as it is sometimes put–failed […]. Until Muslims renounce evasions and squarely confront what Naipaul calls the West's "great new encircling civilization," their psychological, social, and economic travails will continue.[82]

Besides his talk about a homogeneous fundamentalist entity that stretches from Morocco to Indonesia and loathes all that is Western without, however, refraining from using its

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[80] Pipes, *In the Path*, 197.
[81] Pipes, *In the Path,* 197.
[82] Pipes, *In the Path*, 133-35. Yet it seems with computers, Muslims show a different attitude. Pipes notes, as usual without stating what kind of Muslim realities made him form his opinion, that "[a]dopting computers to a business is a straightforward financial decision in the West; in the Middle East, it also involves many social and emotional factors […]. A computer is not just a technical instrument in Islamdom, but a cultural outpost of the West; buying one has many implications." (194). The quotes within Pipes's text above are from V. S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981).

technology, Pipes finds that Muslims, whether fundamentalists or not, are all bearers of the legacy to reject the West. And that is exactly the thesis of his research on the Muslim world. Pipes contends that it is not Islam as such which is to blame for Muslims' backwardness and irrationality but what he calls the Islamicate legacy, whose essence seems to be about some eternal hostility vis-à-vis the Christian West. He maintains that "even when they [Muslims] disavow the Shari'a and try to technicalize, Islamicate elements remain, holding them back from fully westernizing."[83] If China or Turkey had made the breakthrough to modernity, Pipes explains, Muslims would not have problems adjusting themselves to the new realities. But since modernity comes from Christian Europeans, Muslims have tremendous problems learning from "the eternal fiend." As with Lewis's, Pipes's reading of Christian-Muslim historical encounters consists only of clashes and rejection on the part of the Muslims.

Moreover, the problem with this argument is that it takes the modernization/ westernization theory for granted, that is it does not investigate its mechanisms of perpetuating and enhancing political and economic privileges and power for a small portion of the people, most of whom reside in the North at the expense of the remaining majority. Secondly, Pipes's generalizing statements blot out the fact that Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, looked at Europe as the model at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, the Arab Renaissance movement amply testifies to how Western European liberalism inflected the writings of major Arab thinkers at that time.[84] More troublesome with Pipes's argument is that it dismisses diverse political, economic and social realities in the Arab world for the sake of an Islam or an Islamicate legacy that determines the act of each Muslim from Rabat to Jakarta.

However, for Pipes, Muslim societies which in the last century experienced the rise and fall of different modes of thinking do not need any elementary form of historicizing. Indeed, Pipes states that the fundamentalists'

> conspicuous devotion to Islam makes [them] a natural focus of attention whenever the topic of Islam in politics arises; yet their activities must not obscure the other, equally important, aspects of the Islamicate political legacy which apply to all Muslims, regardless of personal inclination. Autonomism, pan-Islamic solidarity, hostility to Europe, disdain towards dhimmis, and a host of other Islamicate features continue to play a vital role in the public life of every Muslim people.[85]

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[83] Pipes, *In the Path*, 196-97.
[84] See Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* 299-314. See also Philip Hitti, *History of the Arabs,* 10th rev. ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 745-55.
[85] Pipes, *In the Path*, 141-42.

Once he has reduced the diverse Muslim world to the features he listed above, that is autonomism, pan-Islamic solidarity, hostility to Europe and disdain for non-Muslim minorities, Pipes comes up with examples that clearly force themselves on a very complex reality.

For instance, the Islamicate political legacy becomes the only source of instability in the region, excluding the actions of Israel and other countries with a strong presence in the area. Thus, according to Pipes, the Middle East, which constitutes the heart of the Muslim lands, is permanently in flux: "it is probably the only portion of the globe where hardly a single border is mutually and permanently accepted. The combination of Islamicate and nationalist loyalties made Middle Eastern politics perhaps more intricate than anywhere else in the world."[86] While some of Pipes's statements on Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism are to the point, the fact, however, that the State of Israel has still never declared its borders so that it can continue to expand does not emerge in his narrative. On the contrary, for Pipes it is "the Islamicate legacy" and "Arab nationalist loyalties" that have "forced" Israel into the position it is in today. What comes up through Pipes's obsession with the Islamicate legacy and his selective reading of Arab politics is, in my view, a discourse that posits "their" total difference, "their" abhorrent ways because of "their" religion and its legacy, all of which pose a deadly threat to "us."

For the purpose of bolstering his thesis, Pipes unreservedly makes use of whatever sources he can find, even dubious ones. "Muslims," Pipes claims, "avoid distressing reality," because the Islamicate legacy, as he maintains, urges them to blame *all* that has gone wrong on Westerners. As he explains: "This effort usually entails two steps: shifting responsibility for Muslim troubles onto Kafirs [Infidels], then praising everything connected with Islam. One process involves conspiracy theories, the other apologetics."[87] To enhance such a sweeping statement Pipes uses an unverifiable source that would be unacceptable in any serious research: Israeli intelligence data. Indeed, he refers to how, soon after Israel destroyed the Egyptian air force, Gamal Abdel Nasser took the phone and called King Hussein of Jordan. Thanks to "an Israeli interception of the call" Pipes knows that the "two leaders agreed to hold the United States and Britain responsible for what happened, accusing them of sending planes to help Israel–a claim that was at the time widely believed in the Arabic-speaking countries."[88] Following Pipes's thesis, then, the fact that Abdel Nasser announced his resignation and took full responsibility for the defeat should be understood as a posture

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[86]Pipes, *In the Path*, 155.
[87] Pipes, *In the Path*, 183.
[88] Pipes, *In the Path*, 183-84.

that is in line with the Islamicate legacy whose gist is to avoid distressing reality, and seeks to assuage insecurities and reduce humiliation. Moreover, the fact that 1967 provoked a significant amount of Arab writings that probed the deficiencies of Arab culture and attacked Arab leadership does not provide, in Pipes's eyes, any solid material worth looking at. Here is, for instance, an excerpt of what Nizar Qabbani, one of the most popular poets in the Arab world, wrote in his poem "Footnotes to the Book of Setback" right after the 1967 war:

> Friends,
> The old word is dead.
> The old books are dead.
> Our speech with holes like worn-out shoes is dead.
> Dead is the mind that led to defeat.
> [……………………………]
> If I knew I'd come to no harm,
> And could see the Sultan,
> This is what I would say:
> "Sultan,
> Your wild dogs have torn my clothes
> Your spies hound me
> Their eyes hound me
> Their noses hound me
> Their feet hound me
> They hound me like Fate
> Interrogate my wife
> And take down the name of my friends.
> Sultan,
> When I came close to your walls
> And talked about my pains,
> Your soldiers beat me with their boots,
> Forced me to eat my shoes.
> Sultan,
> You lost two wars.
> Sultan,
> Half of our people are without tongues,
> What's the use of a people without tongues?
> Half of our people
> Are trapped like ants and rats
> Between walls."
> […………………….]
> We want a new generation
> That does not forgive mistakes
> That does not bend.
> We want a generation of giants….[89]

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[89] The whole poem, which is made up of 20 verses, can be found in Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, (London: Verso, 2003) 117-122. Ali, who visited the Middle East in July 1967 on behalf of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation in order to inspect and report on the conditions in the Palestinian camps, observes that Qabbani's poem unleashed heated debates at that time, and that several stanzas of it were commonly recited by Palestinians, Jordanians, Lebanese and Syrians he met. *The Clash* 122-23. Some of the books that appeared after the six-day *Blitzkrieg* of 1967 include the works of the Syrian Sadiq al-Azm, *al-Naqd al-Dhati Ba'd al-Hazima* (Self-Criticism after Defeat) 1968; *Naqfd al-Fikr al-Dini* (Critique of Religious Thought) 1969. See also Abdallah Laruoui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976).

Yet, Pipes's essentialist and reductive approach ignores altogether the heated intellectual debate that followed the 1967 defeat and which was highly self-critical. In fact, Pipes persists in seeing the Islamicate legacy as the only formula that reveals and explains every action of the Arab and Muslim world. In this vein, Arab states, as well as Muslim ones that joined the non-alignment movement cannot be seen as part of the Third World countries' attempt to challenge the dominant ideology of the Cold War. In the Muslim world, it is the Islamicate background which explains their hostility vis-à-vis both the US and the USSR. Indeed, locating only homogeneity in that part of the globe, Pipes claims that there is no difference between nonaligned nations and the aligned ones, since all Muslims are fundamentally hostile to the West. "Although nonaligned nations exist everywhere," Pipes writes, "only in the Middle East do *even the aligned nations hold back,* unwilling to aid the United Sates or the USSR more than minimally."[90]

In Pipes's narrative, "wars against Kafir governments" or "the return to Islam," epithets common in some Orientalist circles in the 1970s, are stretched to include the PLO's struggle for independence and the Lebanese civil war. He writes:

> Wars against Kafir governments do feel proper, being part of a Millennial struggle […]. For example, the predominantly Muslim faction in the Lebanese civil war espoused a leftist ideology inimical to the Shari'a, yet an autonomist spirit pervaded its conflict with the Christians for control of the country. The same spirit inspired the leftist Muslim rebels in Chad, Eritrea, the Ogaden, Afghanistan, Thailand, and the Philippines, as well as the Marxist Muslims of the P.L.O. It made little difference who the non-Muslim enemy was: Christians aroused the most widespread hostility, but so too on occasion did Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians, and animists […]. For many years, posturing against Israel served this function throughout the Arab countries; in more local ways, Ethiopia and India filled the same role; and the United States and the Soviet Union provided an external target anywhere the need was felt […]. Farfetched as it sounds, there is some sentiment to reclaim Spain, lost to Isabella and Ferdinand in 1492 by the society of the Return of Islam to Spain.[91]

In this cosmic framework of inherently aggressive Muslims vs. every non-Muslim, Pipes does not need to look at historical, political and social factors when dealing with Muslims. The only prism for evaluating the PLO struggle for self-determination is, in this line of reasoning, the fundamentalist revival of the 1970s and the Islamicate legacy.

In fact, what is going on here is that Pipes reiterates the clash-of-civilizations thesis wherein Muslims, via "holding onto their Islamicate legacy," have to be hostile to all non-

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[90] Pipes, *In the Path*, 161. (Pipes's emphasis).
[91] Pipes, *In the Path*, 163.

Muslims. Accordingly, Pipes contends that Muslims' subjugation is the only means to prevent them from being hostile. In fact, Pipes insists that their subjugation can be achieved only by resorting to a tremendous use of force, since Muslim minorities or Muslims under colonial rule have proven to be "politically indigestible."[92] While, for instance, he points out how Filipino pagans accepted Spanish control in the sixteenth century and even adopted Christianity and took the Spanish language and institutions, Filipino Muslims did not. It took the US military to crush the Filipino Muslims at the beginning of the twentieth century. He writes: "When the United Sates took control of the country in 1898, it inherited the Moro [the name given to Filipino Muslims by the Spaniards] problem … and two years later launched a full-scale assault on them. At last, in 1913, General John Pershing of World War I fame subjugated them, using the full array of modern technology, including steamships, the .45 caliber revolver, and dumdum bullets. After three and a half centuries, the Muslims had finally been vanquished."[93]

Edward Said rightly points out that Pipes's *In the Path of God* "is wholly at the service not of knowledge but of an aggressive and interventionary state—the US—whose interests Pipes helps to define." In fact, Said considers the core of Pipes's book is "its highly expedient sense of its own political relevance to Reagan's America, where terrorism and communism fade imperceptibly into the media's image of Muslim gunners, fanatics and rebels […]."[94] No wonder throughout his book where Pipes makes a point of showing how Muslims were successfully defeated in the past and how they can be subjugated in the future (maybe starting with Lebanon where US troops were part of a multinational force for a "peace mission" at the time of his writing), he does not pay attention to the fact that vanquished communities will not accept their defeat and subjugation forever. Hence what Pipes praises as General John Pershing's total victory over a difficult enemy is in reality, as history has shown, the act of sowing the seeds for future unrest and rebellions.

2.2. In the Path of Imperialism

To his dismay, Pipes points out that right after WW II, that is after the independence movements, "Muslims had resumed their historic role as a peril for the West," while the latter has failed to properly react to stave off their danger.[95] His examples of "their peril for us" are Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the PLO's armed struggle, and the Arab oil

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[92] Pipes, *In the Path*, 167.
[93] Pipes, *In the Path*, 170-71.
[94] Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-84*, ed. Francis Baker et al.(London: Methuen, 1984) 218.
[95] Said, "Orientalism," 175.

embargo of 1973, acts he reads as mere defiance of the West. Moreover, he explains that the Islamic revival of the 1970s has to be understood as the result of the West's declining power and prestige, the end of colonialism, failure of Arab nationalism and disillusionment about pan-Arabism.[96] Yet Pipes's thesis is that all these factors pale into insignificance before the two major factors, which are oil money and the West's silence. Oil money, according to Pipes, not only supported the surge of fundamentalism in Muslim countries but also the rise of autonomism in countries where Muslims make up the minorities, such as Uganda, Bosnia and Albania, and the Moros' rebellion in the Philippines. "The great oil boom was an event so profoundly and broadly influential," he writes, "that it provides the key to understanding the surge of Islam as a political force during the 1970s […] petro-wealth redirected Muslims to Islam as a source of ideals and bonds."[97]

Since Pipes does not deal with the existing links between, for instance, Saudi petro-wealth and their recycling a substantial part of it in the US corporate economy or the US administrations' and Saudi joint-ventures in financing and training several Third World movements that advance their common interests, he becomes concerned by what he sees as the West's non-reaction to the threat of Islam as he perceives it.[98] He contends that:

> Oil wealth gave Muslims the power to raise or lower oil prices, to buy telephone systems from this company or helicopters from that country, to give aid or withhold it. Against all this, the West hardly reacted at all. It made no serious effort to form a consumer's cartel nor did it threaten military action. This passivity heightened the perception among Muslims that a momentous shift in power had occurred, and they were exhilarated by it. Roles were dramatically reversed as the Sheikhs dictated terms to past colonial masters and present industrial giants, and the West's homage and even obsequiousness… was seen to symbolize a change in the international order, as well as an opportunity to indulge long-held resentments.[99]

The economist Abbas Alnasrawi who deals with the effect of oil wealth and what came to be called the Arab oil "weapon" points to a built-in failure. Indeed, the Saudi plan that called for oil production cutbacks until Israel agreed on total evacuation of its forces from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the restoration of the legitimate rights of Palestinians was never taken seriously. Saudi Arabia started giving up on these demands right after they were

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[96] See Pipes, *In the Path*, 282.
[97] Pipes, *In the Path*, 286-87.
[98] For the links between Saudi Arabia, corporate America and US foreign policy, see Laton McCartney, *Friends in High Places. The Bechtel Story: The Most Secret Corporation and How it Engineered the World* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), especially his chapters "Saudi Arabia," and "Company Troubles" 81-93; 208-18. See also Abbas Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism, Oil, and the Political Economy of Dependency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).
[99] Pipes, *In the Path* 291.

adopted by the oil ministers, save Iraq, on October 17, 1973.[100] Alnasrawi explains that the oil embargo measures served only to accentuate the dichotomy between Arab oil and non-oil states: while the former states became busy with how to dispose of their surpluses, the Arab non-oil states, like several other Third World countries, became increasingly dependent on the international financial institutions, to which part of the OPEC surplus was diverted.[101] Assessing the impact of the embargo measures on Arab states, Alnasrawi observes,

> The rise in oil exports, oil revenues, and the emergence of balance-of-payments surpluses had the effect of deepening Arab dependency on the international economic systems along three distinct lines. First, the mere quantitative rise in oil exports and oil export earnings caused the economies of these countries to be more dependent on one sector to the exclusion of other goods-producing sectors […]. Second, the availability of foreign exchange induced the oil countries to expand their imports of consumer goods, services, capital goods, and arms at accelerated rates for both public and private sectors […]. Third, the placement of petrodollars in industrial country financial markets meant that the purchasing power of these funds was subject to currency fluctuations, inflation, and interest rate changes over which oil-producing countries have no control nor do they have any recourse for compensation in case of loss in purchasing power.[102]

All these crucial facts are disregarded by Pipes in favor of reiterating the Muslims' fundamental hostility vis-à-vis the West. Yet, at another level, Pipes's accusations are not mere whimsy, as they might at first appear. Pipes's irritation by the fact that an OPEC country has become able to choose between a Canadian or an American telephone company as well as his resenting the fact that the oil states have acquired leverage on deciding over oil prices, reveals his writing from a firm grounding within the perspective of the right-wing think tank strategists who call for more US dominance and a total subjugation of the Middle East's

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[100] Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism*, 90-98. Alnasrawi writes that besides an earlier modification of the Saudi plan adopted on October 17, 1973 "A more serious and significant change in Arab oil strategy was the December 8 resolution by the oil ministers that […] committed the oil-producing countries to lift the embargo measures in exchange for an announced program of withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Arab territories. The resolution, in other words, made it clear that restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people ceased to be an objective of the oil strategy […]. A few weeks after the December 8 meeting Arab oil ministers met again and decided to introduce more modifications of their oil policies, which in turn diluted the effectiveness of the embargo measures by enabling oil companies to ship more non-Arab oil to the American market" (94). The text of October 17 that was drafted by the oil ministers can be found in Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism*, 91-92.

[101] Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism*, 103-105. Alnasrawi points out that "close to 84 per cent of the surplus found its way to industrial economies in the form of financial investment in Eurocurrency markets, bank deposits, and government securities. Another 13 per cent of the surplus went to developing countries in the forms of loans and grants, with the balance being channeled to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to be used in the lending operations of these institutions" (103). See also Stephanie Black, *Life and Debt* (2001), a documentary that poignantly catches the impact of the Arab oil embargo on Jamaica and reveals how this embargo was, in reality, part of the mechanisms of increasing Third World dependency on the international financial institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund.

[102] Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism*, 106.

economy to US interests and control. Underlying this view is that "global dominance," which they feel the US is entitled to embrace, "is impossible without Middle East dominance."[103] This is why Pipes does not pay attention to the fact the Saudi oil embargo never translated into any political clout and all it achieved was more dependency on the highly industrialized countries. Thinking in strict terms of master/subject relationship, for Pipes, Saudi Arabia's "defiant" behavior is unacceptable.

Moreover, Pipes worries that such defiance might prove to be infectious, hence his remark, "[t]he establishment of oil power cheered not only the nations directly involved but the whole Umma [Muslim community]"[104] This explains why the '70s, supposedly the decade of gloating Arabs, saw Egyptians protesting the rise of food prices in 1977. This explains why the victorious *Umma* saw years of tensions in Egypt which culminated in Sadat's ordering the arrest of more than a thousand of Egypt's top intellectuals (September 1981), the Great Mosque seizure in 1979 to protest the Saudi monopoly of power and money (1979), and the Iranian revolution.[105] The good news announced by Pipes's research is that the *Umma*'s cheer and the Islamic revival which was enabled by oil money and the West's silence would eventually end once oil prices plummeted. "In retrospect," he writes, "the revival will appear as a curious aberration [...]. Islam's revival was inappropriate because it resulted in such large part from freak circumstances, not Muslim achievements.... Buoyed by unexpected good fortune, Muslims allowed themselves to imagine that they had solved their basic problem, the inability to come to terms with the West."[106]

Since the fall of oil prices did not in fact bring about the disappearance of militant and radical Islam, Pipes's writing shifted its thesis and pinpointed that their danger is still relevant regardless of oil. In his 1990 article in the far right magazine, the *National Review*, "The Muslims Are Coming! The Muslims Are Coming!" he identifies the Muslim threat not outside but "within the gates of Vienna" (a reference to the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1683). Certainly this historical allusion seeks to obliterate all that happened from the eighteenth century to today and aims at resurrecting Islam as an obstinate conqueror: if in 1683 the

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[103] See Larry Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004) 235. Certainly the occupation of Iraq is the embodiment of the vision of the right wing think tanks and the neo-conservatives, who make up top officials in the current Bush administration.
[104] Pipes, *In the Path*, 292.
[105] On the arrest of Egyptian intellectuals, see Mohammed Hassanein Heikal, *'Am mina al-Azam:, 2000-2001* (A Year of Crisis: 2000-2001) (Cairo: al-Misrya li a-Nashr, 2001) 135. Heikal was one of those taken to prison in the mass-arrest of intellectuals. He recounts the anecdote of a prison guard who could not hide his surprise at having under his custody so many famous personalities and intellectuals that he said: "I have enough prisoners to fill in five or ten ministries!" Heikal, 135.
[106] Pipes, *In the Path*, 334.

Ottoman soldiers gave up and went back home, they have now come back in the form of immigrants. Their aim, his reference implies, is still pillage and destruction of Christianity.

Given that their real goal is conquest in a new form, which Pipes's writing concentrates on "proving," the bombing of Libya and the preparation for war on Iraq in November 1990 are right and good responses. In fact, he warmly greets what he calls "a great improvement over the supine policies [of] many Western states, especially European ones […]. It is better to exaggerate the danger of Libyan thuggery than to lick Qaddafi's boots […]."[107] But now, since hostile Muslim states are being taken care of thanks to American tough policies, Pipes notes that they no longer pose a serious threat to the West. The real danger, his article contends, comes from Muslims within the West. He writes: "Fears of a Muslim influx have more substance than the worry about Jihad. Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene […]. Put differently, Iranian zealots threaten more within the gates of Vienna than outside them."[108]

In fact, in his 2002 book *Militant Islam Reaches America*, Pipes reiterates his thesis about their congenital hostility which now has adopted the ambitious agenda of converting all non-Muslims and replacing the American Constitution with the Koran. Having seen through Muslims' plans in the US, Pipes asserts after September 11 that "[t]he Muslim population in this country [the US] is not like any other group, for it includes within it a substantial body of people—many times more numerous than the agents of Osama bin Laden—who share with the suicide hijackers a hatred of the United States and the desire, ultimately, to transform it into a nation living under the strictures of militant Islam."[109] Since their agenda is no less than "the conquest of America" which they are pursuing by converting naïve American people, Pipes warns that "[t]he preservation of our existing order can no longer be taken for granted; it needs to be fought for." The West, according to Pipes, can win this war if it shows resolve to "adopt a tough line" against "the ultimate enemy in the war on terrorism," the Muslims.[110]

Pipes's latest writing might seem at first a mere description or elaboration of American people's legitimate fear vis-à-vis Muslim terrorists. Yet close attention to his way of reasoning shows him reflecting and pushing forward the current administration's agenda: war on Iraq and the reshaping of the Middle Eastern economies in US interests. Accordingly,

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[107] Pipes, "The Muslims Are Coming! The Muslims Are Coming!" *National Review* 19 Oct. 1990, Vol. 42, Issue 22. Database: Academic Search Premier.
[108] Pipes, "The Muslims."
[109] Pipes, "The Danger Within: Militant Islam in America," *Commentary* (Nov. 2001).
<http://www.danielpipes.org/pf.php?id=77>.
[110] In Pipes's introduction to the 2002 edition of *In the Path of God,* xi.

even though Pipes lumps together Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Muslims in the US, and so on as all being fundamentally hostile to the West and thereby deserving preemptive attack before they organize themselves and acquire weapons of mass destruction, some of his statements reveal that the core issue is something else.[111] It is not about the Muslims' so-called destructive tendencies and their rejection of modernity as he also maintains, but about American "credibility" and the perpetuation of its uncontested power. Indeed, in Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post,* he bluntly spells out the reason behind the 2003 invasion of Iraq: "WMD was never the basic reason for war. Nor was it the horrid repression in Iraq. Or the danger Saddam posed to his neighbors. […] The campaign in Iraq is about keeping promises to the United Sates or paying the consequences. […] Keep your promises or you are gone. It is a powerful precedent that U.S. leaders should make the most of."[112] Pipes can afford to utter such a statement, that unfortunately forms the gist of the Bush administration foreign policy, since he directly draws on this latter's very premises. In fact, Pipes is President Bush's candidate for the government-sponsored US Institute of Peace and the Pentagon's man for the "Special Task on Terrorism and Technology." Yet, one word still needs to be put in context. What does Pipes mean with "promises?" The most thoroughly documented answer to that question is undoubtedly Larry Everest's *Oil, Power and Empire: Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda* that meticulously probes into the economic and political roots of the US (and UK) policy towards Iraq. As Everest puts it:

> A key element of the new Bush doctrine is leveraging current U.S. military supremacy into economic supremacy and dealing with various difficulties confronting the global economy […]. In other words, the U.S. seeks to use its military power to secure favored access to markets, raw materials, and human labor across the planet […]. That Hussein's regime had neither weapons of mass destruction nor links to Osama bin Laden was irrelevant to those in charge of the empire. For them global power and greater hegemony were in play.[113]

The "promises" in this light are about accepting the permanent status of client-state, because doing differently would undercut US credibility, and surrendering to the emerging reality of American imperial hegemony.[114]

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[111]See for instance his preface to the 2002 edition of *In the Path of God* where he states that: "the United States [after 9/11] is tasked with the indirect burden of bringing Islam into harmony with modernity" (xii).

[112] Qtd. in Mark Engler, "Hawks Say the Darndest Things," <http://www.tompaine.com/feature2.cfm/ID/8270>

[113] Everest, *Oil* 249-62.

[114] See Everest, *Oil*, 218. See also Tariq Ali, *Bush in Babylon: The Recolonisation of Iraq,* (London: Verso, 2003) where the author argues that the US war on Iraq was not motivated by oil only, "but was essentially a war to assert imperial hegemony" (143).

3. Fouad Ajami: A Case of the Native Informant

Another favorite of the current Bush administration and the media is the Lebanese-American Fouad Ajami, the director of Middle East Studies at the school of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. Indeed, Ajami publishes in *The New Republic*, *US News and World Report* and frequently contributes to the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, besides his regular writing in prestigious journals, such as *Foreign Affairs*. Moreover, Ajami's frequent appearances on CBS News, *Charlie Rose* and the *NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer makes him the most recognized Arab-American expert, who has garnered more prime time airplay than any other commentator on Arab issues. In 1983 he became a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, which added him to its prestigious board of advisors in 2002.[115] During the US preparation to the 1991 Gulf War, Ajami became a high-paid consultant to CBS where he routinely advocated that the US should go for the most unrestrained military attacks against an Iraq he reduced to "a brittle land, a frontier country between Persia and Arabia, with little claim to culture and books and grand ideas."[116]

As to the world of the policymakers, Ajami seems to exert some influence in that area as well. In the current Bush administration, for instance, he is quoted by Dick Cheney, praised by Paul Wolfowitz and consulted by Condoleezza Rice.[117] Undoubtedly Ajami's ethnicity (a shi'ite Lebanese), his scholarly affiliation and his mimicking Washington's official line on the necessity of its reshaping the geopolitical map of the Arab world, are all factors that granted him access to the ears of the policymakers. Here is what Ajami writes in the January/February 2003 issue of *Foreign Affairs*:

> An American expedition in the wake of thwarted UN inspections would be seen by the vast majority of Arabs as an imperial reach into their world […]. America ought to be able to live with this distrust and discount a good deal of this anti-Americanism as the "road rage"of a thwarted Arab world […]. Above and beyond toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein and dismantling its deadly weapons, the driving motivation of a new American endeavor in Iraq and in neighboring Arab lands should be modernizing the Arab world […]. No great apologies ought to be made for America's "unilateralism." The region can live with and use that unilateralism.

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[115] See Adam Shatz, "The Native Informant," *The Nation* 28 April 2003.
< http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?I=20030428&s=shatz>.
[116] Fouad Ajami, "The Summer of Arab Discontent," *Foreign Affairs* Winter 1990/91: 1. On the experts that were granted a large space in US mainstream media prior to the 1991 Gulf War, see Edward Said, "Ignorant Armies Clash by Night," *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 287-94.
[117] See Shatz, "The Native Informant."

Ajami's case exemplifies the scholar-combatant (Said's term) and the native informant (Spivak's) whose views are really indistinguishable from those of the policymakers and whose easy access to the mainstream media is due to his "mouthing for us the answers that we want to hear as confirmation of our view of the world."[118] The "we" here can be the news network CBS that was interested in voicing views supportive of the policymakers. And it is also that of senior top officials such as Vice President Dick Cheney who told his audience at a reunion of Korean War veterans in August 2002 that they should not worry about a unilateral, pre-emptive war against Iraq. Then he points out: "As for the reaction of the Arab street, the Middle East expert Professor Fouad Ajami predicts that after liberation in Basra and Baghdad, the streets are sure to erupt in joy."[119]

What are Ajami's views on the Arabs, which seem to swing between "ignore them" (when he prepares American policymakers for "their congenital rage") and "lie about them" (when he claims that Iraqis will be happy about the invasion)? How does he deal with the US involvement in the Arab world and the Middle East region since WW II? How does he read the connection between Arab dictatorial regimes and the US foreign policy, premised on ensuring control of the Middle East and its oil? How does he look at the Arab people's actions and reactions in the midst of these repressive local and foreign forces?

3.1. In the Beginning Arabs Were Human

Interestingly, Ajami's early ideas on "the Arab street" were seriously involved with what was taking place in the Arab world in his 1981 book with the title *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*. At that time, Ajami perceptively pointed out that the polarization between the reigning elite and the rest of the populations in the Arab world was enshrined, not in some congenital "road rage" as he later claimed, but in political dictatorship and economic monopoly. Relying on progressive Arab thinkers and critics, like the Syrian Sadeq al-Azm, the Lebanese Adonis, and the Moroccan Abdallah Laroui, Ajami argues that "[t]he [Arab] regimes had robbed their people of initiative and spirit and so overwhelmed them with authority that submission and obedience had become second nature. There was no living, dynamic relation between the citizen and the state, between the individual and society. The most that individuals could hope to do in a culture of that kind

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[118] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 342. See also Said, "The Intellectuals and the War," *The Politics of Dispossession* 304-19.
[119] The meeting of Korean War veterans took place in San Antonio, Texas. Cheney's statement is cited in Adam Shatz, "The Native Informant."

was simply to look after their own safety."[120] Yet, from the point of view of citizens who live under terror and poverty, Ajami explains that most of them resort to "that one thing that the elites cannot monopolize: religious devotion doubling as piety and as a political instrument."[121] Ajami then points to the example of how Sadat's "open door" policy, his dialogue with the US that turned to complete embrace and surrender and most importantly his ordering the arrest of 1536 opponents of the regime, all constituted the cause for his downfall. He writes:

> Sadat's murder was not a verdict on the Egyptian-Israeli diplomacy he has undertaken. It was not because of Camp David and the Israeli-Egyptian treaty that Sadat had been struck down. The incautious ruler had been struck down because he hemmed in his own country with the massive wave of arrests before his death; because he manipulated forces—Muslim fundamentalism—whose fury he underestimated; because the man who had once appealed to his country's desire for safety […] had lived to become too controversial and erratic […] [and] came to lose touch with his own world […]. [Moreover] This new vocation—America's ward in the Arab-Muslim realms, a "strategic partner" of Western interests—would call forth its nemesis: a militant yearning for authenticity, a frightened kind of nativism.[122]

In the same vein, Ajami situated the rebelling Iraqi and Syrian Islamist movements, both of which were brutally repressed by the Ba'ath regimes in the two countries, in the context of people's resentment of their respective states' abuse of power and wealth. He points out that "Sunni Islam thrives in Syria as a mode of protest against those who have used the power of the state to restratify class relations, to accumulate fortunes unimaginable to those who have to work for a living, to obtain sexual liberties and prerogatives that tantalize and outrage those without them."[123]

Ajami, moreover, makes the shrewd distinction between what he calls "the rulers' Islam" and "Islam of the ruled" wherein this latter resorts to Islam to contest the rulers' monopoly of wealth and power, as illustrated in the radical Islamist movements.[124] The rulers' Islam, on the other hand, Ajami argues, functions as a political instrument to divert attention from excessive wealth and complete dependency on the West. Hence his contention that "the seeming contradiction between the reassertion of Islamic fundamentalism—all the tradition

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[120] Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, update ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 37.
[121] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 214.
[122] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 160-61. On the mass arrest of dissident intellectuals and opposition groups, see 155.
[123] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 216. See also 214-19.
[124] See Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 134, 213.

mongering of the Saudi era, all the insistent talk about authenticity—and the unprecedented integration of the Arab world into the world economy and the extensive political and cultural advances of the United States into the region is no contradiction at all. The two phenomena are twins."[125] Indeed his point sheds some light on the case of Saudi Arabia, which has opted for an extremist and intolerant form of Islam while it has displayed subservience to the functioning of the world economy in the form of its recycling the largest part of the oil money back to the industrial countries, particularly New York and London private banks and US corporations.[126] In this context, the Saudi talk about Islamic brotherhood and its concern for the Palestinian question are mere rhetoric, Ajami logically infers. Indeed all that the Saudi and other Arab oil states managed to achieve with their wealth is more dependency on the US and Western European industrialized countries rather than working hard to convert the Arab wealth to real power, which could have, for instance, enabled them to solve the Palestinian question.[127]

Taking all these seemingly contradictory issues into consideration, Ajami brushes aside some experts' contention, such as Bernard Lewis's, about the "return of Islam" in the 1970s. He argues instead:

> The Islamic world is no more Islamic today than it was a decade or a quarter century ago. It only seems more so, because mobilization has succeeded in bringing into the political arena classes and individuals traditionally cowed by political authority and convinced that power is the realm of people other than themselves […]. Fewer and fewer people in the Muslim world today are convinced that Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, the prime secularizer who served as an example for the Shah in Iran and for Abdul Nasser in Egypt, was the genius he was once perceived to be.[128]

Putting his finger directly on the core problematic in Arab political life, Ajami argues for a continuity between medieval and contemporary leadership. He rightly points out that all created systems in the Arab world of today, whether liberal, Marxist, Islamist, or whatever, perpetuate the centralism of power. He writes:

> The shackling of society at the behest of the exalted leaders had confirmed the traditional style of authority; the modern veneer given that leadership [like the Shah of Iran, Sadat and Habib Bourguiba], either through its command of a foreign language or

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[125] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 173. Ajami's distinction between the rulers' Islam and Islam of the ruled parallels Fatima Mernissi's differentiation between what she calls "palace fundamentalism" and "street fundamentalism." See her "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy," *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi and Michael Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 57-59.
[126] See Ajami's quote of the US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, in *The Arab Predicament*, 147-48.
[127] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 196-97.
[128] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 224.

> through the steady cultivation of a progressive image was put on
> more for export than for home consumption. At home the
> leadership continued to relegate the citizenry to a marginal place.
> The infallible leader was but an extension into today's world of
> the infallible Imam (as in Shi'a thought), the official government
> line an extension of religious orthodoxy (as in Sunni
> orthodoxy).[129]

This is why Ajami reads, probably correctly, the struggle over power in Algeria in 1991 between the Islamists, who won the ballots and the army that came out to crush them with bullets as "one form of despotism versus another."

However, despite Ajami's perceptive analysis of the political and cultural failings of the Arab world, he remains silent on US role in aggravating the already deep national, social and class divisions running through the Arab societies. Although I find most of Ajami's 1980s views on the Arab world are the very ideas Arabs need to be confronted with and need to digest in order to start the urgent process of correcting their political, cultural and social failings, it is unfortunate that he shies away from the same relentless dissection with the US and the State of Israel. The US role emerges in his writing as if its actions in the Arab world stem from a fit of absent-mindedness. On the tragedy of Iran-Iraq war and the US double-dealings with Iran (Iran-Contra affair) and Iraq (agricultural credits and spying), Ajami pins it all on Saddam Hussein. He writes: "Saddam had implicated much of his world (Gulf Arabs, Egyptians) and powers beyond (Americans, French) in his anti-Iranian and anti-Shia drive, in the cruelty of what he did at home."[130]

3.2. A Scholar Combatant: Intellect at the Service of Power

In fact, with regard to the US actions, Ajami's silence in the 1980s turned into a loud support of US policies in the Arab world. Hence in the familiar stance of several experts, Ajami meticulously lists the cruelties of Saddam Hussein while leaving out information that would have shown that cruelty is not a monopoly of Hussein. While Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran and later his invasion of Kuwait are seen to illustrate the threat he posed to his neighbors, the US intervention and its devastating military operation of 1991 looks more like an inevitable clinical operation, that cannot be subject to discussion and contest. Ajami writes: "That distant power [the US] was not ready to divide the Arabian Peninsula and share it with the Iraqi claimant [the notion of the US control of the Peninsula does not need discussion].

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[129] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 227.
[130] Ajami, "The Summer of Arab Discontent," *Foreign Affairs* Winter 1990/91: 13. As to what the air campaign really broke, see Geoff Simons, *The Scourging of Iraq: Sanctions, Law and Natural Justice* (New York: Palgrave, 1998).

Saddam's bid would be smashed with remarkable ease by an American-led military coalition. An air campaign of six weeks launched in January of 1991 broke the back of the Iraqi army. Then came a swift ground war which lasted one hundred hours."[131] Ajami who wrote critically in the 1980s of the Arab intellectuals who put their intellect at the service of power and the Arab regimes that were disconnected from their citizenry, became himself an outspoken proponent of Pax-Americana. The Arab people, in whose name he castigated the Arab regimes, do not seem to figure in his analysis anymore, once they have become a direct target of American military machine. What matters in Ajami's later work is the ambitions and calculations of the American policymakers.

In this vein, Ajami makes the typical move of considering the pro-US Arab regimes as moderate, that is those who took part in the US-led war against Iraq. Accordingly, during the Gulf War of 1991, Ajami admits that not all Arab regimes marginalize their citizens via their one party-system or their theocracy, and not all Arabs blame their failings on the West. Indeed, he neatly divides the Arabs into the poor, greedy, resentful and dangerous vs. the wealthy, "successful" and generous Arabs. Like with what Lewis and Pipes call Arabs' "blame game" vis-à-vis the US and the state of Israel, Ajami asserts that "the societies of the gulf states are now convenient scapegoats for the failures of the larger Arab world around them. A militant theory of Arab nationalism, and a discourse about the 'haves and have-nots,' mask the greed of the world around these sparsely populated states with no great military power."[132] Hence, while in the original version of *The Arab Predicament*, Ajami recognized that extreme disparity in wealth and abuse of power breeds resentment, now he is grateful to the Saudi businessman who draws his attention to the crucial fact that: "[w]e are wealthy people in a neighborhood of paupers. The world around us is getting poorer and poorer and more resentful to us."[133] Yet, what illustrates that Ajami has stopped any kind of contextual analysis of the crises permeating the Arab world and became a direct propagandist of the open alliance between Saudi Arabia and the US is his contention, against all evidence, that:

> [t]he historical experience of the Peninsula and the Gulf has left in that area a benign view of the West. No bloody anticolonial struggles have been waged in the region. The neurosis with which the people of the Levant and North Africa approach the West […] is alien to the temperament of the Saudis and other gulf Arabs […]. Rage against the West does not come naturally to the gulf Arabs. No great tales of betrayal by Western powers are told by the Arabs of the desert. These are Palestinian, Lebanese and North African tales, told in those parts of the Arab world where the West made promises, and where people convinced themselves

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[131] Ajami, updated edition of *The Arab Predicament* of 1992, 13.
[132] Ajami, "The Summer of Arab Discontent," 19-20.
[133] Ajami, "The Summer of Arab Discontent," 16.

that they had been let down and betrayed […].[134]

Besides Ajami's rhetoric that naturalizes the Saudi temperament and misstates the history of conflict with Britain, he leaves hanging the questions as to why these neurosis-free gulf Arab states supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1980 and why they run their "republics of fear" exactly like Hussein's Iraq, oppressing any form of dissent and political opposition. These queries became irrelevant in the Gulf War of 1991 once the gulf states positively responded to the US plan to base its military forces in the region.[135] Unlike his earlier work that was grounded in history and recognized Arab populations' aspiration to better forms of government, his writing since 1990 openly joins the experts of the "Arab mind" and the clash of civilizations theorists. His intellectual task, like Pipes's, has become to dehumanize and demonize the people who are seen to "defy US credibility."

Continuing with that approach throughout the decade of the 1990s, Ajami understandably went after the threat of Iraq as well as Palestinian terrorism while Saudi Arabia remained the showcase of a "benign political order" and the US was a mere "walk-on" in the region. Indeed, even the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, by 15 Saudis out of 19 Arab hijackers did not seem to put any doubt in Ajami's opinions about the Saudi-US connection. Ajami kept writing, in distinctly archaic terms that recall the language and tone of nineteenth-century colonialism, of "the land of Araby," with "their unfathomable and impenetrable world" vs. "our struggle" and "our burden to save it from itself." In fact, speaking as if he was the one who ran the war on Arabs, he explains on the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal* of October 16, 2001, the reasons behind "our struggle against Osama bin Laden […]. Although we control the sea lanes and skies of that Arab Muslim Land, he appears to hold sway over the streets of a thwarted civilization." In the same issue he goes on saying: "We were 'walk-ons' in this political and generational struggle playing out in Araby. America and Americans have a hard time coming to terms with those unfathomable furies of a distant impenetrable world." Yet, after outlining the roots of the bin Laden/al Qaeda attacks on "the streets" of "Araby," known today as the nation of Saudi Arabia, the country he insists on seeing as the source of everything that went wrong in the region and which he consequently advocates attacking with the view to changing its regime, is Iraq. Ajami has clearly enlisted in carrying out Defense Secretary Donald

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[134] Ajami, "The Summer of Arab Discontent," 16-17.
[135] Indeed, even Syria's President, Hafed al-Assad, whose name in Ajami's previous writings is mainly connected with brutal repression of Islamists, intervention in Lebanon and monopoly of power becomes a man who "possessed some scruples" in comparison to Saddam Hussein, according to Ajami. See his "The Summer of Arab Discontent," 11.

Rumsfeld's order after 9/11 to "Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not."[136] The wanted result was to link Iraq to the terrorist attacks on the US.

In fact, when the Bush administration was making the case for what it labeled "Operation Iraqi Freedom," Ajami went along and wrote of "Tommy Pasha [Gen. Tommy Franks] delivering the land [Iraq] from its historical furies. It is an odd and ironic outcome: Eight decades after Britain's 'imperial moment' in the modern middle East, after the states of that region were put together by administrative fiat, we are now at another historical watershed."[137] Then describing US's devastating war on Iraq in 1991, its maintenance of a harsh regime of sanctions and its continual bombing of that country for twelve years as "walking away from any imperial burden," he therefore calls upon the US to steer away from its reluctant and at times innocent approach and to assume its "new calling" in the Middle East.[138] Ajami's rationale in advocating the invasion of Iraq in 2002 and 2003 was no more than resurrecting one of the classical colonial tropes: they are unfit to govern themselves. He writes with Iraq in mind: "Where Britain once filled the void left by the shattered Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of the First World War, now the failures—and the dangers—of the successor Arab states are drawing America to its own imperial mission."[139]

Following Ajami's logic, in which the US invasion of Iraq, is represented as an inevitable and benevolent mission to save the region from its "furies," Iraqis' resistance becomes a confirmation of their guilt of being congenitally violent. Indeed, after the Bush administration went ahead with the plan of invading Iraq on March 20, 2003, and Iraqi resistance ensued, Ajami wrote on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* of August 25, 2003 that "[a] battle broader than the country itself, then, plays out in Iraq. We needn't apologize to the other Arabs [and Iraqis?] about our presence there and our aims for it [...]. We must put Iran and Syria on notice that a terrible price will be paid by those who would aid and abet terror in Iraq." Understandably Ajami does not deem it worthwhile to even think of possible grounds or justifications for Iraqi resistance. Since when, after all, did the colonizers (and their supporters) call the violence against them by the people they brought under their control resistance?

In fact, in a pattern played out innumerable times in the huge archive of colonial writings in which the native under the yoke of colonialism is "always presumed guilty," Ajami notes that Arab people are a hopeless lot who "had succumbed to a malignant, sullen

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[136] Quoted in Everest, *Oil*, 7.
[137] Ajami, "Hail the American Imperium," *US News and World Report* 5 Nov. 2002. <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles>.
[138] Ajami, "Hail the American Imperium."
[139] Ajami, "Hail the American Imperium."

silence."[140] In another instance, Ajami does not hesitate to treat a Palestinian youngster's feelings vis-à-vis the US as metonymic to the Arabs' way of thinking. He writes: "you can't reason with his worldview. You can only wish for him deliverance from his incoherence […]."[141] This projection of the Arab people as some deficient species not only demonizes them and renders them a suitable target for American imperialist ambitions, it also seeks to remove any causality between the widely-held critical view in the Arab world vis-à-vis US foreign policy and this latter's performance.[142] Indeed, Ajami dismisses the Americans or Europeans who "go there [Middle East], questionnaire in hand, and return with dispatches of people at odds with American policies" as simply some "anti-Americans" who make Arabs voice what they want to hear.[143] Apparently for Ajami the Arabs have no voice worth listening to and are not entitled to an opinion about US foreign policy since his expertise has diagnosed their fundamental irrationality, which can be extracted only via a benevolent colonial operation that tries to deliver them from their incoherence and their land from its ancient furies.

Claiming absolute knowledge about the Arabs, rulers and ruled, Ajami knows that they need American imperialism. Hence his advice to the Arab rulers, whose consent, to keep running their police states as usual, is crucial at that point, that since they "can't deliver to us these sullen, resentful populations," it is now the US role to take over and go ahead with the mission of disciplining these irrational enraged populations. As he puts it in the January/ February 2003 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, "It is cruel and unfair but true: the fight between Arab rulers and insurgents is for now an American concern."[144] What is striking about this statement is that what it posits as a new configuration in the power relationships between the US policy makers, Arab rulers, and Arab insurgents goes, in reality, as far back as the "Truman Doctrine," the "Eisenhower Doctrine," and the "Baghdad Pact" of 1955.[145] Hence

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[140] See Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1967) 41. Ajami, "Arabs Have Nobody to Blame but Themselves," *Wall Street Journal* 16 Oct. 2001: editorial page.
[141] Ajami, "The Anti-Americans," *Wall Street Journal* 3 July 2003.
<http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/the_anti_americans>.
[142] See, for instance, Karen DeYoung who writes: "A comprehensive survey of attitudes and opinions in the Arab world has found that Arabs look favorably on U.S. freedoms and political values, but have a strongly negative overall view of the United States based largely on their disapproval of U.S. policy toward the region." "Arabs' Opinion of West: Yes and No," *International Herald Tribune* 8 Oct. 2003: 3.
[143] Ajami, "The Anti-Americans."
[144] See also Ajami, "Arabs Have Nobody to Blame but Themselves."
[145] The Baghdad Pact, which included Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and Britain, was a military alliance between these States, approved by the US and whose aim was to keep the Soviet Union at bay and ensure control of the Middle East. The historian Hanna Batatu explains that the Baghdad Pact was a crucial factor in intensifying Iraqi feelings against their King Faisal II, and especially Crown Prince Abdullah and Premier Nuri as-Said. He points out: "The spirit of opposition [in Iraq] increased when, in 1955, in utter indifference to public feeling, Nūrī as-Saʿīd sponsored the Baghdad Pact and in the process, while closely tying the country to Western policies, unwittingly isolated it from the rest of the Arab world […]. The attack upon Egypt in the autumn of 1956 by the

the series of US interventions in order to uphold the status quo when it is favorable to its interests. Some examples, just in the context of Iraq, are Washington's opposition to, and threats of war against, the new Iraqi republic that ousted the Hashemite monarchy in a revolutionary movement on July 14, 1958 that was embraced by the majority of the Iraqi people and various political parties.[146] To this can be added Washington's helping the Ba'ath party gain power in 1967, its double-crossing Iraq's Kurds in the 1970s in favor of strengthening Hussein's regime, and abandoning the Shi'ite and Kurd rebels after "Desert Storm" again in favor of keeping Hussein and his people in power in March 1991.[147]

Ignoring this long tradition of the US support of dictatorial Arab regimes and its thwarting the egalitarian aspirations of different popular political movements, Ajami's reading of Iraqi resistance are tailored to the needs and calculations of those in charge of the empire. Indeed, Ajami sometimes writes that Iraqis will be grateful about the US invasion. Other times he warns that "[w]ars of liberation are never simple; gratitude is never guaranteed."[148] In other words, the US should go ahead with its righteous mission regardless of the peoples' wishes. As indicated above, he also does impute Iraqi resistance solely to Iranian and Syrian elements, a claim that seeks to perpetuate the fantasy that Iraqis welcome the US invasion and occupation, apparently only their troublesome neighbors are disrupting their relations with the US forces.[149] Later, however, when it became obvious that the resistance is mainly run by Iraqis, Ajami put forward the implausible argument that people are resisting to deflect attention from the allegedly humiliating fact that they didn't oust Saddam Hussein themselves. In his attempt to explain the uncomfortable reality of Iraqi resistance, he

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English in league with the Israelis put Nūrī and the regime he epitomized further out of countenance." *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq* (1978; London: Saqi, 2004) 766. Yet, typically, Henry Kissinger observes that "On November 29, 1956, the U.S. government, hailing the recent Baghdad Pact summit […] declared: 'a threat to the territorial integrity or political independence of the members would be viewed by the United States with the utmost gravity.'" *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) 548-49.

[146] In fact, Waldemar J. Gallman, then US ambassador to Iraq, refused to accept the popularity of the 1958 Free Officers coup and described the one hundred thousand demonstrators who poured out on the streets to support the coup as "not representatives of Iraqis but hoodlums recruited by agitators." Later Allen Dulles, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, described the situation in Iraq of 1959 as "the most dangerous in the world today," once the Iraqi Communist Party was trying to convince the regime installed by the Free Officers to open up the political representation in the cabinet. Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 806, 899.

[147] See Everest, *Oil*, 55-85. About the CIA-Ba'ath coup, see Saïd Aburish, *Saddam Hussein, The Politics of Revenge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001) 38-66, especially 59 where he quotes Minister of the Interior in the Ba'ath regime, Ali Saleh al-As'adi, "We came to power on a CIA train." About the doomed rebellion of the Iraqi Shi'ites and Kurds in 1991, see Colin Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine, 1996) 512-516.

[148] Ajami, "Hail the American Imperium."

[149] See "Beirut, Baghdad," the *Wall Street Journal* 8 Aug. 2003: front page magazine. See also his article "Iraq and the Arabs' Future" in the January/February 2003 issue of *Foreign Affairs* where he declares that "Iraq may offer a contrast, a base in the Arab world free of the poison of anti-Americanism. The country is not hemmed in by the kind of religious prohibitions that stalk the U.S. presence in the Saudi realm. It may have a greater readiness for democracy than Egypt, if only because it is wealthier and is free of the weight of Egypt's demographic pressures and the steady menace of an Islamist movement."
<http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/iraq_and_the_arabs_01.09.2004 >.

resorts to an argument that draws on the much propagated image of Arab culture as equivalent to shame-honor equation. Here are his words:

> If Mr. Bush and Tony Blair had dispatched a big military force in search of weapons of mass destruction only to end up with a humanitarian war that delivered Iraq from a long nightmare of despotism, the Iraqis will have turned out to be the prime beneficiaries of this campaign. They should not quarrel with their good fortune. In the course of a more normal history, Iraqis would have sacked their own despotism […] written their own story of rebellion against tyranny. They didn't, and no doubt a measure of their rage, over the last year or so, was the proud attempt of a prickly people to escape that unflattering fact of their history.[150]

Let's recall that at the time Ajami puts in ink this thought on June 29, 2004, the weapons-of-mass-destruction *casus belli* was proven to be unfounded, the pictures of Abu Ghraib's abused prisoners were circulating in the media, and mass popular movements, such as the one led by the Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, have been vocal against any American presence and declared their opposition to the US-installed "Governing Council."[151]

Perhaps the most appropriate rejoinder to Ajami's recent distortions is the Ajami of the 1980s who wrote that Arab people rebelled against the secularist ideologies of Nasser, and later against the Open-door economy of Sadat because they saw no benefits for themselves.[152] What they saw was the one-party rule, repressive regimes, accumulation of wealth in a few hands and the growing gap between the poor and the rich. Similarly today the majority of the Arab people, besides bearing the grim reality painted above, know that although the US speaks of freedom, human dignity and liberal values, its actions more often than not appear to be about outright violence, humiliation and exploitation, from which it is easy to infer that they cannot reap any benefits whatsoever. It is true that experts like Ajami, Pipes and others

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[150] Ajami, "Iraq's New History," *Wall Street Journal* 29 June 2004. <http://www.opinionjournal.com/forms/printThis.html?id=11000528>.

[151] As'ad AbuKhalil, "Iraq: Refuting the Bush Allegations," and "Today, Iraq. Tomorrow…?" Both interviews conducted by David Barsamian for *Alternative Radio* on Feb. 7, 2003 and April 22, 2003 respectively. See also Robert Fisk, "An Illegal and Immoral War, Betrayed by Images that Reveal Our Racism," *The Independent* 7 May 2004. <http://www.robert-fisk.com/articles400.htm>. See also Mike Davis, "The Ungrateful Volcano," <http://freemailng0306.web.de/online/logic/action.htm>.

[152] Ajami, *The Arab Predicament*, 224.

work hard to obfuscate the contradiction between words and deeds but the discrepancy is so glaring that no amount of "hearts and minds" campaigns, PR, or Middle East "expertise" can shore it up.[153] The crux of the matter is that the predicament is not only that of the Arabs who failed in freeing themselves from their homemade tyranny and injustice, but also of the US (citizens) that has accepted Empire as a way of life.[154]

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[153] See Amy Kaplan's commentary "Confusing Occupation with Liberation," *Los Angeles Times* 24 Oct. 2003.
[154] See William A Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

II. Experts on the Arabs or Overseers?

> […] much of what one reads and sees in the media about Islam represents the aggression as coming from Islam because that is what "Islam" is. Local and concrete circumstances are thus obliterated. In other words, covering Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what "we" *do*, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their flawed nature *are*.
>
> Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, xxii

> I suspect that is what journalism is about —or at least what it should be about: watching and witnessing history and then, despite the dangers and constraints and our human imperfections, recording it as honestly as we can.
>
> Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War,* x

In *Covering Islam*, Edward Said identifies three factors that inform the Western scholars' perception of the Oriental world. First, Said points out that the view of Islam today is still structured by vestiges of the historical encounter where knowledge was produced within a framework motivated by passion, prejudice and political interests.[1] Indeed, Christopher Columbus's letter to the Spanish Monarchs where he praised their war against Muslims and Jews and thanked them for providing him with the mission of converting the people of "India" to the holy faith seems to reverberate through today's experts' praise writings extolling the virtues of the US expansion in the name of modernization, globalization and war on terror.[2]

It is then small wonder that experts on the Arab world in the late twentieth century still invoke medieval imagery, whereby irrational bloodthirsty Arabs who come from plague-infested places are the quintessential evil adamant on destroying Western civilization. The journalist and writer Edmund Ghareeb comments on the American mainstream media coverage of the Arabs: "The media has continued to foster stereotypes by lumping Muslims and Arabs together and by making use of scholarly and pseudo-scholarly discussions about

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[1] See Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World,* (New York: Vintage, 1997) 24-25. For an example of the vestigial thinking that still permeates today's French perception of the Arab and Muslim world, see the article of Alain Ruscio, "Des Sarrasins aux Beurs, une vielle Méfiance," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Feb. 2004: 10. Drawing historical and discursive connections from the Middle Ages and today, Ruscio writes: "On étonnerait beaucoup la masse des Français de cet an 2004 en répondant que le racisme antiarabe remonte […] au Moyen Age, aux origines de la *Reconquista*, aux croisades, ou peut-être même avant. N'est-il pas remarquable que certains éléments constitutifs de la culture historique des Français soient intimement liés à des affrontements avec le monde arabo-muslman?" (10).

[2] On Christopher Columbus's writing, see Ella Shohat, "Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge," *Social Text* 20.3 (2002): 76.

the 'sham culture of the Arabs' and the Arab mind."[3]

The second factor Said levels against the mainstream discourses about Arabs is the ideology of modernization which posits that the Third World could be saved from its underdevelopment only if it accepts modernization. As the recent history of the US intervention in the Third World reveals, modernization has been primarily about promoting United States trade, backing pro-US native allies and fighting native nationalism.[4] In this context, Said argues that the discipline of eurocentric Orientalism and the ideology of modernization—and even today globalization—dovetail nicely for Orientalists and, indeed, experts often take the theory of modernization for granted and use it as the criteria to judge the performance of the country under study.

One example is the Shah's Iran that was celebrated as the modernization success story (the case of Robin Wright in this chapter), whereas the majority of dissatisfied Iranians and opposition groups, who understandably resented the Shah's enormous spending on arms and the brutality of his regime, were simply dismissed. Said writes:

> a very great amount of writing on the virtues of modernizing traditional society had acquired an almost unquestioned social, and certainly cultural, authority in the United States, at the same time that in many parts of the Third World "modernization" was connected in the popular mind with foolish spending, unnecessary gadgetry and armaments, corrupt rulers, and brutal United States intervention in the affairs of small, weak countries.[5]

Yet, the experts who considered the Shah as a modern ruler could explain the Iranian Revolution only as the Muslims' fundamental rejection of modernization because of their irrational religion to which they hastily returned once they felt threatened by the comforts of progress.

The third factor Said points out is the role of Israel in mediating Western and particularly US views of the Arab and Islamic world since its creation in 1948. Israel, even though an occupying power, is heralded as the "only democracy" in the Middle East. Its security in Americans' eyes has become interchangeable with "fending off Islam, perpetuating Western hegemony, and demonstrating the virtues of modernization."[6] Yet, while successive Israeli governments have incessantly stressed their invaluable role to the American interests in the region, Arab governments, whatever their stand vis-à-vis the US, seem to excel only in working against their peoples, in a fashion that respects neither ideology

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[3] Edmund Ghareeb, "A Renewed Look at American Coverage of the Arabs: Toward a Better Understanding," *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, ed. Edmund Ghareeb (Washington, DC: American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983) 160.
[4] Said, *Covering Islam*, 29.
[5] Said, *Covering Islam*, 30.
[6] Said, *Covering Islam*, 34.

nor political structure all of which in a way validates the contempt in which they are held in Western public opinion.

1. The Possibility of Challenging the Restraints on Covering Arabs

Robert Fisk, the British Middle East correspondent who covered the Lebanese Civil War (1975-76) as well as Israel's two invasions of Lebanon (1978 and 1982) for *The Times*, turned his eyewitness reports and investigative work into a book with the title *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War.*[7] In this book, Fisk does, in my view, more than explore the roots of violence permeating the Middle East; a task several American Middle East correspondents deal with as well; he also pays special attention to the activity of reporting itself and how it can become seriously one-sided if the reporter does not want to confront certain taken-for-granted attitudes. Fisk's willingness to speak about his feelings and sympathies reveals how these two components not only inflect the writing but govern what can be said and how it should be said. One good example Fisk refers to is being a European journalist, holder of a guilty conscience about the Holocaust and also an admirer of the Israelis' prosperity in their new home and their success in defending it against hostile neighbors.[8] How is this journalist then supposed to react once he comes face to face with an Israel that was deeply involved in committing atrocities in Lebanon?

Indeed, Fisk recounts that during the 1982 invasion in which the Israeli army reached Beirut in matters of days, he met with the Israeli soldiers who had just entered the Christian sector of east Beirut. Here is Fisk's description:

> Most of them were Ashkenazi Jews, many with blue eyes, some with New York accents, young men, almost boys, friendly, full of confidence. Could this truly be the same army that was terrorising the population of west Beirut, that had killed so many thousands of Palestinians, whose air force used such awesome, murderous power against soldier and civilian alike […] It was difficult not to feel a kinship with these Europeans, to search, however vainly, for ways to excuse the terrible deeds that were being committed in their name and by their army and air force.[9]

Fisk's identification with and sympathy for the Israelis are certainly feelings shared by the majority of European and American journalists. Nevertheless, his reports shows that while it might be difficult for these journalists to report on Israeli acts of aggression in the same way they do about the Arabs', it is still possible to challenge these internal constraints and try to honestly record the unfolding of history.

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[7] Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (1990; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[8] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 406.
[9] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 234-35.

Moreover, Fisk pays special attention to the uses of language and its potential in reinforcing double standards in reporting about the Middle East, hence reinforcing a dangerous distortion of events. In fact, Fisk points out that one of the tragedies of Lebanon is its reduction to a "series of code-words" which, consequently, produce a totally distorted explanation of what was happening there.[10] He writes: "I began to suspect that the clichés that governed so many reports and headlines about Lebanon actively hindered our task of telling the truth about what was happening there."[11] One of the many examples Fisk puts forward is how the Kalashnikov rifle was always preceded by the adjective "Soviet-made," like Syria whose military was "Soviet-backed." Fisk rightly comments:

> those clichés actively collaborated in a process of political bias. While Syrian tanks were "Soviet-made", the fact that many Israeli tanks were "American-made" was rarely deemed worthy of note. The "Soviet" in "Soviet-made" was a buzz word, warning the reader that the subject—the Syrian tank—was menacing […]. That a weapon made in the United States might be just as threatening—even more so—in the hands of the Israelis, did not occur to many reporters. And if Syria was "Soviet-backed"—which it assuredly is—how often were readers reminded in a similar epithet that Israel was "American-backed", as it is to an infinitely greater degree, both financially and militarily? Never on the wire services and rarely in radio or television reports.[12]

Another dangerous usage, which Fisk finds akin to legitimating the death of some people, is, for instance, the frequent use of the word "lunacy" to describe Lebanon. In pondering over the frequent use of that word, Fisk draws on the same arguments put forward by several analysts of colonial discourse. The use of "lunacy" to describe Lebanon captures the Lebanese people in a huge lunatic asylum; they become, by implication, a dangerous species in need of eternal control and confinement. In this regard, aggression against the Lebanese people and State will always be understandable and expected. In Fisk's words:

> The Lebanese, the phrase implied, were crazy, mad, perhaps not quite human. And if not human or sane—well then, can anyone blame other powers for invading their country or killing their people or referring to Lebanon—as George Shultz, the American secretary of state, did so arrogantly in February 1987—as "like a plague-infested place from the Middle Ages?" There it was: a "plague"—as in "kidnap-plagued" or "hijack-plagued"—the very cliché that had been used so often in the wire copy out of Beirut. Plagues have to be eradicated, wiped out.[13]

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[10] Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 234-35. See especially the chapter "Pandora's Box" 401-42.
[11] Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 430.
[12] Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 431.
[13] Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 432.

The astonishing resort to the medieval imagery in the above phrases certainly gives vent to the deeply rooted perception of the Arab world as an anachronism: out of step with time, and, in addition, an infectious disease which common sense calls for its eradication.

Yet, according to Fisk, it is the use of the word "terrorism" as a natural prefixing to Palestinians or Lebanese fighters, sometimes even civilians, which serves to distort completely what is going on in Lebanon, and for that matter in today's Middle East as well. After Fisk himself used the word terrorism when he first arrived in Lebanon, he came to recognize that "[t]o adopt the word means that we have taken a side in the Middle East, not between right and wrong, good and evil […], but with one set of combatants against another. For journalists in the Middle East, the use of the word 'terrorism' is akin to carrying a gun. Unless the word is used about *all* acts of terrorism—which it is not—then its employment turns the reporter into a participant in the war."[14] Hence Fisk's decision to stop using the word of terrorism altogether. Yet, the fact that most of the American or British correspondents are not bothered by reserving the use of the label "terrorism" for Arabs reveals their flagrant participation in the conflict, on the side of Israel's official policy that coincides with the official US postwar policy of containing communism and Third World nationalist movements.[15]

However, Fisk's reflection on all these factors that altogether help create a biased coverage of the conflict in the Middle East does not miss another crucial component, and that is Arabs' responsibility. He rightly points out:

> The cancer of dictatorship, repression and corruption has eaten deeply into the fabric of the Middle East nation-states which obtained their Independence after the Second World War. Not even the most liberal or pro-Western Arab regimes have been able to create an electoral democracy like Israel's; and while Arab leaders may believe that Western-style democracy is unsuited to their societies, they cannot provide a similar excuse for the lack of personal and political freedom which fetters the lives of their subjects […].[additionally] the long Arab flirtation with east European socialism—and the weird cocktail of tribal loyalties, pan Arab triumphalism and empty rhetoric that this

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[14] Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 441-42.

[15] Significantly even if some reporters become bothered by the discrepancies between what they experience in the Middle East and what gets reported in their countries, they find it very hard to make their voice heard. There is an informative example given by Fisk that I'd like to quote despite its length: "In June 1986," Fisk writes, "one of AP's Middle East staff—an American—sent a formal note to a colleague over the wire, complaining about a reference to Mohamed Abbas, whose Palestinian group had murdered an elderly Jewish passenger on board the Italian cruise liner *Achille Lauro*. 'It is racially offensive to many people in this part of the world, and to Arab-Americans in the United States, to sling about the cliché 'Palestinian terrorist' or 'Arab terrorist', the reporter wrote. […] 'Abbas certainly has engaged in acts that most people in [the] States would consider terrorism.… [Rabbi] Kahane has an American arrest record for conspiring to manufacture explosives […] we do not routinely refer to him as a terrorist […]' Back came the reply: 'Agree with you personally but fear losing battle, especially with copy which comes from WX [Washington] or NY [New York], where staffers influenced by administration propaganda, general anti-Arab climate, etc. […]'" Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 436-37.

produced—created distrust and sometimes downright hatred in the West. The impassioned demands for Arab unity and the contradictory but persistent proof that these regimes preferred to fight each other rather than Israel, further damaged the Arab cause.[16]

Yet, ironically the American journalists who understandably shun relying on the Arab governments' point of views and rightly critique their abusive rule do not generally extend their criticism to the Western regimes that provide them with protection and weaponry. In fact, what the experts this chapter deals with end up doing is the endorsement of the idea that not all Arab dictatorships are bad: hence, their fall in another double standard in reporting about Arab rule. In the '80s it was natural to denounce Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi, Hafez al-Assad, post 1983 Gaafar Nimeiri and the Islamic movements that threatened US allies. In the '90s, however, it was the secular regime of Saddam Hussein that was most castigated. Accordingly, what makes the experts' writings tick is not so much some universalist human-rights agenda as Washington's list of rogue states.

Fisk's intransigence vis-à-vis double-standards in reporting as well as his healthy skepticism towards some taken-for-granted concepts has enabled him to produce an unusually balanced book on Lebanon, and by extension on the issues at stake in the Middle East which bring in the triangle of Arab countries, Israel and the US. Unfortunately Fisk's case is rather among the rare ones, for the books that fill in the markets significantly bear titles such as *The Closed Circle, Sacred Rage, Militant Middle East, Sandcastles*, all of which make up the study of this chapter. Similarly, their contention is that Islam, Arab culture and Arab mentality answer for the several crises and even invasions Arabs go through. Like the clash theorists, the popular experts' discourse, this chapter focuses on, elides the contexts and circumstances in favor of grafting onto Arabs a theory of irrationality and gratuitous violence. Nevertheless, this chapter argues that the journalistic experts' discourse exposes their blind belief in the current global economic model headed by the United States. That is why I find their reporting on the Arab world resembles overseeing whether Arabs are complying with the demands and expectations of the empire's masters. It is small wonder then that Judith Miller and Robin Wright, who claim to care for women's and minorities' rights, as I will show, choose to dwell on Saudi Arabia's "strategic importance"/good performance as a US ally, and thereby except it from their otherwise generalized abhorrence of Islamic fundamentalism. Once they start dealing with an Arab government that is out of favor with the US government, that foreign government's practice of Islam, abuse of human rights and discrepancies

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[16] Fisk, *Pity the Nation,* 403-44.

between its rhetoric and acts come under strict scrutiny and are displayed as the source of Arabs' rage, irrationality and doom (as in Viorst's image of sandcastles). This kind of expertise becomes as Arundhati Roy puts it "the intellectual equivalent of a police baton charge," that abuses, intimidates and silences.[17] The crux of the matter, as Edward Mortimer of *The London Times* identified in 1979, is:

> It is easy to draw a picture of a Sheikh holding the world at ransom.I am not sure that we give enough thought to how to draw a picture of the stupidity of Western consumption policies and Western economic models or how to show, graphically enough, the kind of image that somebody like the Shah of Iran presented to his own people as someone willing to spend enormous sums on arms of no earthly use to the Iranian people. I think these are things that we need to be thinking about much more seriously.[18]

2. Closing in on Arabs: Reactivating Colonial Representation

David Pryce-Jones begins his book *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs* (1989) with the assertion that the colonial powers at the turn of the twentieth century failed in their project to civilize and introduce rationalism and Western values to the Arab world. He then imputes their failure to the fact that "[s]upposing themselves to be acceding to natural and popular demands, Britain and France had actually handed over whole populations to the tyranny of the ambitious few among them."[19] Dismissing with a stroke of pen obvious colonial realities that were about integrating the colonies into a world system favorable to the capitalist centers as well as the creation of an Arab elite class that would tie its interests to and identify with the West rather than with their native countries, Pryce-Jones admonishes the colonizers for pulling out too quickly from their colonies and naively thinking the Arabs were ready to govern themselves.[20]

In this vein, Pryce-Jones's writing authoritatively goes on recycling colonialist discourse. Writing from the 1980s vantage point, he, for instance, points out that Britain and France misunderstood the fundamental nature of the Arabs, whom he collapses in an equation of shame-honor component, and represents as amenable only to the language of force. He writes: "The reluctance of the Europeans as power holders to use force speaks well of them humanly; but there was no way around the fact that the implicit suggestion of weakness only

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[17] Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001) 27.

[18] Qtd in Edmund Ghareeb, "A Renewed Look at American Coverage of the Arabs," 187.

[19] David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs* (New York: Harper, 1991) 15.

[20] A good example of the colonial powers' investment in the modeling of an Arab elite or smokescreen behind which they can wield some or total control, see Tariq Ali, *Bush in Babylon: The Recolonisation of Iraq* (London: Verso, 2003), especially the chapter "An Oligarchy of Racketeers," 42-65.

invited further challenging."[21] No wonder that he dismisses, for instance, the tragedy of Umm Durman, where 11,000 Sudanese people were killed in a matter of six hours by the British weaponry in 1898, as the romanticized "Mahdi and his dervishes heroically throwing themselves at the thin red line […]."[22] Faithful to the fantasy that subjugation and colonialism was good for the Arabs, Pryce-Jones ignores the genocidal act committed by Britain and interprets it instead as an act of irrational Arabs dying defending their shame-honor.

In an act of naming the battle of Umm Durman for what it is, the novelist Ahdaf Soueif used it as the unspeakable, horrible event for the background of *The Map of Love*. Amal al-Ghamrawi, the main protagonist, pieces the story together from old issues of *The Times* of 1898 and the notes and diaries left by her British great-aunt. What she finds out is historical information typical to the colonial times: a relatively small group of colonizers, with the crucial help of the natives, in this case Egyptians, wreak havoc on a weak country, thanks to their military superiority. Amal writes:

> The papers are full of it: an army of 7,000 British and 20,000 Egyptian soldiers loses 48 men and kills 11,000 of the Dervishes and wounds 16,000 in the space of six hours. Winston Churchill promises to publish a book that tells how General Kitchner ordered all the wounded killed and how he (Churchill) had seen the 21st Lancers spearing the wounded where they lay and leaning with their whole weight on their lances to pierce through the clothes of the dying men and how Kitchner let the British and Egyptian soldiers loose upon the town for three days of rape and pillage.[23]

However, according to Pryce-Jones, Britain and France handled the Arabs in a humane way and thereby failed to understand the core of their nature that obeys force only. It is Israel, he asserts, which knows best how to deal with them. Indeed, he points out that the Israeli government's resort to extreme forms of violence during the first *Intifada* (1987): the use of live ammunition in crowd control, random deaths, curfews, and detaining without trial several thousands of Palestinian activists were effective measures which "in Palestinian eyes [were] not […] particularly untoward. On the contrary, force has the paradoxical effect of establishing yet again that in communal self-defense Israelis behave as the Arabs do. More

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[21] Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle*, 224. Pryce Jones finds that Arabs subject all their actions to some deeply-rooted feelings of shame and honor, he, for instance, writes: "Lying and cheating in the Arab world is not really a moral matter but a method of safeguarding honor and status, avoiding shame." Then he explains that what appeared to Westerners as Arab nationalism was Arabs' lying and cheating in accord to their honor-shame cultural code; in his words: "In the past, Europeans commonly misconceived shame-honor among Arabs as some sort of elusive national characteristic evolving out of history" (41-43).

[22] Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle*, 3.

[23] Ahdaf Soueif, *The Map of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) 34. For a historical reference, see Mahmoud Shakir, *A-Tarikh al-Islami*, vol. 13 (Islamic History) (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1991) 322. My translation.

than convergence, this is integration."[24] No wonder that he comments on the US buildup for "Desert Storm" in the 1991 edition of *The Closed Circle* that:

> [I]n accordance with custom, violent counterforce had to be organized forthwith, and so it was [...]. It is another disagreeable surprise to Westerners to be imposing law and order in any part of the world as a function of superior force, but readers of this book will note that Saddam Hussein is not the first Arab to have placed Westerners in this predicament. Dilemmas and paradoxes of this sort arise in any encounter between the Western system of government-by-consent and the Arab customary order.[25]

Pryce-Jones's views, which unembarrassedly disregard political realities, such as Israel's occupation and expansionism, and instead represent Palestinians and later Iraqis as some sort of "half-devil, half-child" who are brought back to their senses by the "West's" superior force and civilization, are part of the dominant discourse circulating about the Arabs in the '80s and '90s. After all the clash theorists do not read differently even the current US invasion of Iraq. The US, as Ajami and Lewis maintain, is again called upon to punish Saddam Hussein and install law and order.

To go back to Pryce-Jones's idea about the Arabs as holders of some immemorial shame and honor cultural code, he argues: "Everywhere [in the Arab world] and at all times, the solid achievements of colonialism, its good order, its material improvements and scientific benefits, were vitiated by the sense of shame provoked in the supposed beneficiaries. The shame-response long antedated the colonial powers, as it was to outlast them as well."[26] Hence, Pryce-Jones concludes that independent Arabs took revenge on their benefactors by reverting to their tribal ways typically based on tyranny, a rule to which the Arabs acquiesce because after all it corresponds to their culture of shame and honor. He states: "Honor is accorded to the man who succeeds in capturing the state because he has truly proved his mastery, he has displayed ruthlessness beyond imagination and capacity of ordinary man [...]. So it happens that the Arab masses come to accept and even to admire their oppressors."[27]

It is worth noting again that Pryce-Jones's arguments are not only a recycling of an outdated colonial discourse but the very fashionable ideas that circulate about the Arabs currently. As I mentioned above, the writings of influential Orientalists such as Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes propagate such views and use their discipline to canonize them in the

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[24] Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle,* 310.
[25] Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle,* xii.
[26] Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle,* 176-7.
[27] Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle,* 119. See also 14, 172.

cloak of objectivity and authority.[28] Similarly, writings of Middle-East correspondents and experts, as this chapter argues, draw more on this still-growing archive in their interpretation of the Arab world.

3. Robin Wright's Sacred Rage

Robin Wright, currently Global Affairs correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times,* has reported on the Middle East since the 1970s.[29] Her *Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam*, published in 1985, considers the Iranian Revolution as the turning point that ushered in a wave of Islamic militancy she ends up equating with terrorism. Wright begins her book by apologetically pointing out that "I am neither an Islamic expert nor an Arabist […]. I am merely a Western reporter who lived in the region during the fundamentalist explosion [that is, according to her, Khomeini's rise to power in 1979 and the following decade]."[30] Does her word choice of "Western" in her statement above reflect her awareness of having a given cultural background that will necessarily limit her ways of seeing and understanding some events, or is it a caveat that ironically reveals that she sees the world in terms of the West and the rest?

3.1. Good Export vs. Bad Export

Wright's approach to the militant Islamists' movement is seriously hampered by the way she has structured her book: a very complex history is tragically reduced to cliché-ridden titles. Indeed, the first Chapter which is entitled "The Crusade" uses a historically loaded word to describe the Iranian revolution and its impact. Moreover, as with the lunatic and plague-infested Lebanon, Iran handily lends itself to description in terms of infectious diseases. She writes: "after the 1979 Iranian revolution, the Middle East had begun witnessing a virulent new strain of terrorism that spread like an infectious virus."[31] Yet any global look at the region would show that the Iranian revolution's insistence on exporting its ideology is but one small current running against stronger currents, some of which have already flooded the area. These ran the gamut from the two superpowers' race to impose their opposing world views to Saudi Arabia's heavy investment in supporting the spread of its version of Islam and Israel's plans to annex more territories and emerge as a regional power.

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[28] See chapter I of this work, or Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 159-60.
[29] Robin Wright has been a foreign correspondent for *The Sunday Times*, CBS News, *The Washington Post* and *The Christian Science Monitor*.
[30] Robin Wright, *Sacred Rage: The Wrath of Militant Islam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986) 24-25.
[31] Wright, *Sacred Rage,* 18.

Wright's ideological positioning within the US/Western powers allows her to see only the Iranian "infectious virus." And certainly the Iranian revolution was seen as a virus by these powers, especially that it seemed, at least in its beginning, to pose a serious resistance to the capitalist system as well as the US interests in the region. The Islamic revolution's lending inspiration or sometimes direct support to the oppressed Arab Shi'ites strengthened its scope for expansion. Yet the vociferous rhetoric and the reactionary social measures taken by the clerics made the revolution look like what Tariq Ali described as "the anti-imperialism of fools."[32] Additionally, what Wright also failed to notice is how the Ayatollah Al-Khomeini was both scolded and supported by the US together with its regional allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia; one case of support is what came to be labeled as the Iran-Contra affair.[33]

"The Turning Point: Iran," the title of the second chapter, starts with a seminar held in March 1982 in Tehran where Shi'ites from different countries discussed the subject of "the ideal Islamic government." This seminar, Wright argues, was in reality about Iran's plan to export its revolution to its neighboring countries, a decision that essentially launched a wave of turmoil and terrorism.[34] Certainly the seminar is one of the important signs that can shed some light on the phenomenon of violence permeating the Middle East. And it is undoubtedly true that when a country, even if it is the United States, equates its foreign policy with the mission of "exporting its ideology," its covert and overt activities on the international arena can become easily entangled with terrorism. Yet, while Wright denounces Khomeini's plan in encouraging the making of foreign governments in Iran's image, she fails to do the same for the US's attempts to control and shape the future of the Middle East. In fact her praise for the Shah who willingly "imported the US's ideology" reveals her own blind spot about US interventions.[35] In what way is she then different from Khomeini's apologists? And if Wright considers the US to represent some "universal standards of principles," certainly the Iranian *'Ulama* who attended the 1982 seminar considered their revolution as universal as well. To what extent is then this universal really universal? Moreover, because Wright has such blind

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[32] Ali, *Bush in Babylon*, 137.

[33] See John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (London: MacMillan Press. 1997), especially chapter 6: "Reagan: The Waning of the Cold War and Iran-Contra" where he discusses the implications of the Iran-Contra scandal for democratic foreign policy (108-28).

[34] Ironically what the Project for a New American Century and President Bush's national security strategy are also pondering is how to mold the form of future Arab/muslim governments. But is this question only appropriate to the US? When Iranians and other Muslims ponder it, they are terrorists!

[35] See page 43 where she flatly states, "The Shah had been the police chief of the Gulf, his army the strongest by far in the region." Let's recall as Abbas Alnasrawi points out that "[t]he regional importance of Iran was underlined by the shah when he, with the backing of the United States and Britain, declared openly that he would not tolerate any revolution on the Arab side of the Gulf." *Consistency of US foreign Policy: The Gulf War and the Iran-Contra Affair* (Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1989) 66. Tariq Ali's *Clashes of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads, and Modernity* catches poignantly the point of pitting of one value system against another.

faith in the objectives of her country's foreign policy, then her "report" on the Middle East falls easilyinto the pattern of praising the States that support the Reagan Revolution and denouncing those who reject it as the source of trouble and terrorism.

Unfortunately this set of troubling questions does not emerge in Wright's narrative during her search for the roots of the turmoil besetting the Middle East. Indeed, Wright's choice to consider the Iranian revolution and precisely the 1982 Tehran conference as the turning point that unleashes the wave of violence lends credence to her inference that "their" violence has shocked "the West" into action. The rationale posited by such statements, in reality, is based on a selective chronology of events that presents the West, in this case the US, as being forced to react instead of exposing its role as an active participant in the Middle East turmoil. Moreover, this selective approach is buttressed by her reliance on two sources she uses without questioning, namely the White House officials' point of view and the Orientalists' theses which propagate a theory of modernization that back up the US's imperial interests and sustains prejudice towards Islam.

Two examples of this are, first, how Wright deals with the CIA coup that overthrew the democratically elected government of Mohammed Mossadegh in August 1953 and, secondly, the reasons she puts forward to explain the downfall of the Shah of Iran in 1979. Wright deals with these two seminal events in a way that dismisses their gravity not only for Iran at the level of politics, economy and culture, but for the whole Middle-East region. In fact, Wright situates those events, that could speak volumes of the US's (and Britain's) crusade, and the "US's export of its ideology at gunpoint" within the contrived and harmless context of a benevolent "West" that wants to "modernize" the Islamic world, while the latter, by rejecting the progress narrative of westernization/modernization, appears to prefer their "primitive" way of life.

Accordingly, Wright deals with the CIA coup by quoting an American diplomat, whose name she does not disclose, who understandably dismisses the issue by stating "whatever U.S. involvement actually was, it became an article of faith throughout Iran that the American participation had been critically important, and that therefore the Shah was a U.S. 'puppet.'"[36] Then Wright moves on to another topic, namely the Shah's efforts to modernize Iran after he got rid of his prime minister. In this way, what Wright does with the CIA coup is raise the issue, after which she dutifully quotes the US diplomat, drops the matter altogether and resumes her story of Iran's strides towards modernization. Unlike her interviews with the Islamists (a point I will return to later), Wright does not deem it

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[36] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 32.

worthwhile checking the diplomat's statement against other available information. For instance, Kermit Roosevelt's book, *Counter Coup: The Struggle for the Control Of Iran*, published in 1979, in which he, as the very architect of the coup, recounts the details about the Operation Ajax (the secret name of the operation to overthrow Mossadegh) and describes it as the project of the CIA in conjunction with Churchill's government.

Indeed, like the Iranian seminar that plotted, according to Wright, the destabilization of neighboring governments, there were other crucial meetings, held decades before by British and American intelligence services, which hatched crucial turning points for the region. The results of these meetings was the CIA sponsored coup that overthrew the Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, in 1953.[37] Indeed, Joel Beinin considers the coup as:

> the keystone for American policy in the region during the 1950s and the1960s; that is to say that the experience was meant to demonstrate that the US had the capacity and the will to overthrow any regime that poses too great a threat to its interest [which] were primarily those of preserving control of the oil […]. In the wake of the restoration of the Shah, the United States obtained control of 40 per cent of Iran's oil reserves. [38]

Yet, Wright's glossing over these crucial events indicates that her own position is clearly on the side of the US, as evidenced by her more lax research methods when dealing with the anecdotes of the diplomat as compared with her more assiduous fact-checking when she interviews militants (to be discussed later).

As to the causes behind the downfall of the Pahlavi regime, Wright attributes them solely to the Shah's efforts to modernize Iran, thus furthering her narrative that the Islamists were foolishly rejecting the only conceivable teleology of statehood; westernization and Americanization. Wright confidently writes that the father and son of the Pahlavi dynasty "changed the image and name of the nation, trying to convert underdeveloped Persia into a modernized Iran." She goes on explaining that "[t]he rapid influx of millions of dollars in foreign aid and investment made the Shah's Iran one of the best test cases for transforming a Third World country into a modern state. That model failed, and helped promote revolution."[39] Revolution, in this sense, erupts primarily as a protest against and a rejection of the modernity, which the Shah embodied, and not as a legitimate upheaval against a regime that was seen by its people as thoroughly corrupt. Indeed, Wright's thinking here reveals her uncritical reproduction of one of the Orientalists' conventional theses that reduces political

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[37] See Mark Gasiorowski, "Révélations sur le Coup d'États de 1953: Quand la CIA Complotait en Iran," *LE Monde Diplomatique* Oct. 2000: 11.
[38] Joel Beinin, "Origins of the Gulf War," rec. 30 Nov. 1990, audiotape, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.
[39] Wright, *Sacred Rage,* 31, 261.

Islam to a force that is merely opposed to modernization and secular politics. Yet, as Beinin and Joe Stork argue: "In discussing political Islam, we must move beyond the explication of texts and the biographies of intellectual figures to examine the local circumstances and historical particularities of each movement, which often turn out to be more substantial than a simple conception of 'Islam' in opposition to secular politics."[40]

Taking the Iranian local circumstances into consideration, Gilles Kepel explains that one of the reasons behind the success of the Iranian Revolution was the alliance between the clergy intellectuals, the pious bourgeoisie of the bazaar and the urban poor youth.[41] Similarly Beinin and Stork point out that the early stages of the Iranian protest and resistance against the Shah's regime were initiated by secular liberals, aided by Marxists and feminists.[42] Certainly what brought all these disparate groups together and made their alliance possible are facts such as, under the Shah's rule, "Iran emerged not only as a source of oil but as (by the mid-1970s) the consumer of over half of all American arms sales," at a time when the Shah was running a police state via his secret police, SAVAK, and was indicted by Amnesty International as having the worst human rights record in the world.[43]

Similarly, Tariq Ali's analysis of the outburst of politico-religious fervor in Iran is grounded in events that were directly having nefarious impact on peoples' lives, and not as Wright shrouded it in an abstract idea of all Iranian's loathing the modernization of their country. Ali writes:

> The crisis of the Iranian economy in 1975-6 indicated the failure of the shah's much lauded "reforms." A parasitic state structure was consuming much of the oil wealth. Expenditure on armaments was particularly high at a time when a million people were unemployed and inflation had risen to 30 per cent. The bazaar traders felt victimised by the restriction of bank credits and the relaxation of import-controls. They decided to back the clergy with funds to overthrow the regime.[44]

All these worldly, complex factors of the Iranian revolution are elided in favor of the Orientalist's model of modernization theory against which congenitally enraged Muslims are waging their crusade of terror. In fact, Wright makes a connection between what she considers the current terrorism of Muslims and their long tradition of terror in the region, employing one of the most common generalizations advanced by experts after the Iranian

[40] Joel Beinin and Joe Stork, eds., *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997) 7.

[41] See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: Expansion et Déclin de l'Islamisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000) 159.

[42] See Beinin and Stork, *Political Islam,* 10.

[43] Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy,* 34, and Nafeez Mossadeq Ahmed, "Behind the War on Terror," Interview with David Barsamian, rec. 29 March 2004, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

[44] Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms,* 132.

revolution: namely, the "Shi'a penchant for martyrdom."[45] Drawing on Bernard Lewis's *Assassins*, she states that the tradition of terrorism goes back to the hashashin Shi'ite sect of the eleventh century, whose members took drugs (hashish) in order to carry out dangerous assignments, such as suicide attacks:

> The word "assassin" actually originated with a Shia sect, the Hashashin, murderous suicide attackers who launched daring raids against both Christian Crusaders and Sunni Muslim opponents throughout the Middle East […]. The first Assassins can be traced to the year 1090 and to a man named Hasan al Sabbah […]. By the thirteenth century, "assassin" no longer referred to a devotee, but to a trained professional killer. Thanks to terrified Christian Crusaders, the word became commonplace in Western usage […]. But the tales of their power were often dragged out of history books in the early 1980s—after a wave of bombings, hijackings and kidnappings began. The comparison of their tactics with those of the Islamic Republic of Iran were sometimes falsely and sometimes accurately described.[46]

Even though Wright informed her readers that she is neither an Islamic expert nor an Arabist, she seems to have no qualms about suggesting a cultural and religious legacy of suicide attacks and terrorism in Shi'ite Islam.

Once that point is established, Wright describes the Iranians' fighting against the invading Iraqis as imbued by that assassin cultural residue: "terrorism became honorable in the war against Satan [here Iraq is meant]."[47] Yet these statements reveal not so much the cultural legacy under which spell the Iranian or the "Shi'ite mind-set" operates, but Wright's adherence to an US agenda which officially labeled Iran as a state that sponsors terrorism and officially opted for tilting towards Iraq. Indeed, Dumbrell points out: "As part of the US's official pro-Iraqi policy, Saddam Hussein's Baghdad government was removed in 1982 from an official State Department list of nations furthering state terrorism. In November 1984, full diplomatic relations—broken off in 1967—were restored with Baghdad. US trade with Iraq, including high technology transfers, rose to a value of over three and a half billion dollars by 1989."[48] Wright's condoning attitude vis-à-vis Iraq's offensive and her representation of Iran as the sole source of terrorism, regardless of the fact whether Iran invades or is invaded, seem to echo the Reagan administration's decision, a decision whose consequences are not subject to analysis or study.

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[45] See Said, *Covering Islam*, 15.
[46] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 38-41.
[47] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 36.
[48] Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy*, 86.

3.2. The Twenty Thousand Lebanese Deaths and Seventy Days

Tracking down what Wright calls the export of Iran's terrorism, her narrative moves from Iran to Lebanon where the Shi'ites make up the majority of the population. Interestingly, even though Wright's narrative obsessively squeezes her interpretation of current events into the dichotomous framework of the ideology of modernization versus the assassins' mentality, the statements she quotes from her interviews with Shi'ite Islamists tell a different story. In fact, as opposed to an abstract anti-modern sentiment, her Lebanese interviewees situate their actions within the context of Israel's 1982 occupation and their political marginalization. Expressing the feelings of the majority of the Shi'ites who live in a country without any serious political representation, an interviewee rhetorically asks: "What does the [Lebanese] government expect? What does it expect except rage and except revolution?" Instead of analysis, Wright, ever faithful to her conceptual framework, states: "For hundreds of Shia youths, this was an official call to war. It was no longer a political or social struggle, but one sanctioned by their precious faith."[49] Naturally, Wright does not reveal the criteria according to which a struggle stops being political or social and becomes exclusively religious. The point I am making here is not to say that there is no religious component, for the manipulation of religion by extremists is a fact for sure; yet what Wright is doing is simply collapsing the social, political, religious and economic factors into the "Shi'ite mind-set" and Islam.

Indeed, Wright starts her chapter on Lebanon with the story of a plane hijacking by a Shi'ite fighter, Hamza Akl Hamieh, after which she attempts to investigate his background and his political activities. Wright's several interviews with Hamieh reveal her as a journalist who will not swallow all what she is being told by her interlocutor. Wright keeps weighing his statements against his deeds or against his opponents' views, a tactic she does not resort to when she speaks to American, English, Israeli or pro-US Arab officials. The implication is clearly that the Islamists are bound to lie and prevaricate; whereas those who endorse or speak for American policies are not. In fact, while Hamieh was talking to Wright about his fighting to achieve equality, she claims that she already knew that his purpose was different. As she writes: "when pressed, Hamza [Hamieh] also admitted that he favored Islamic rule in Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world […]. Indeed, to be a true Muslim was to be a militant and a fundamentalist, as Islam was originally propagated."[50] Once that revelation of wanting an Islamic rule is extracted, Wright links it to her thesis that uprisings in the Muslim Shi'ite world are in reality about expanding terror. Wright's oversimplification of the Shi'ite plight

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[49] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 58.
[50] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 62.

and the reduction of their rebellion to religion allow her to disregard the issue of their marginalization and above all the occupation of Israel.

I can understand Wright's concern about the expansion of the Islamic rule given the extreme fundamentalism it imposes on countries where it seized power such as Iran. However, what is deeply disturbing is her total blindness vis-à-vis other forms of fundamentalisms and expansionist movements, such as at that time, the Likud government in Israel whose foreign policy is openly based on what historian Avi Shlaim identifies as the goal of a "Greater Israel." In fact, Shlaim writes that "[a]ccording to this ideology [Greater Israel], Judea and Samaria, the biblical terms for the West Bank, were an integral part of Eretz Israel, the Land of Israel. The Likud categorically denied that Jordan had any claim to sovereignty over this area. Equally vehement was its denial that the Palestinians had a right to self-determination there."[51]

Regrettably, the notion that the Greater Israel policy is a kind of religious extremism and fanaticism with deadly results and a destabilizing effect on the region is of course too taboo for many American commentators. In fact, instead of making that connection, Wright's language on the role of Israel in the Middle East and its occupation of Lebanon reverts to the hygiene trope which counters the discourse of the primitive, the plague and the terrorist. Nowhere will she make use of her favorite descriptions of fanaticism, extremism, or terrorism. In her narrative, Israel, like the US, only reacts to violence done to its sovereignty; she points out that "Israel prompted another challenge in 1978 by briefly [sic] invading Lebanon, its powerful army storming up to the Litani river to *clean out* pockets of Palestinians firing artillery across the Lebanese-Israeli border"[52] (my emphasis). This rendition of Israel's 1978 invasion borrows verbatim from the statement of Ezer Weizman, the Israeli Defense Minister, who declared in a press conference shortly before the invasion his country's decision "to clean up once and for all terrorist concentrations in southern Lebanon."[53]

When an invasion becomes a brief but powerful storm with the name "Litani operation" that purports to surgically "clean out pockets" or "clean up terrorists," then the calamities caused by this war neither stand as deserving of notice nor as harbinger of more violence in the future. Avi Shlaim describes the Litani operation as a disaster since "[m]ost of the PLO fighters fled to the north, and the civilian population bore the brunt of the Israeli invasion. Villages were destroyed, some war crimes were committed, and thousands of

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[51] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001) 352.
[52] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 58.
[53] Qtd. in Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 123.

peaceful citizens fled in panic from their homes."[54] Wright's sanitized language provides her narrative a leeway to avoid in-depth analysis of the so-called Litani Operation and thereby ignore Israel's sacred wars in terrorizing their neighbors.

In another chapter also dedicated to Lebanon, Wright, significantly, begins with the suicide truck bomb attack on the US Marine Corps barracks in Beirut on October 23, 1983. She also records other suicide attacks, first, on the French military headquarters in Beirut on the same day and, second, on the occupying Israeli forces in Tyre, South of Lebanon.[55] Then the chapter runs the course of providing the reason behind the attacks and reporting the American as well as the Israeli intelligence agencies' investigations about the mastermind behind them. The structure of the chapter clearly reveals that it is mainly concerned about losses that occur among the multinational force and Israel; "their" losses, even though much larger, are diluted with the firmly established trope of a chaotic Lebanon where "violence was almost endemic."[56] Like her sanitized description of Israel's 1978 invasion, Wright depicts their re-invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 in a way that clearly focalizes the Israelis as the subjects to identify with:

> within seven days, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) had surrounded Beirut. Almost *twenty thousand Lebanese deaths and seventy days* later, "Operation Peace for Galilee" accomplished the goal: the PLO had lost all its front-line bases in south Lebanon and the operational headquarters in Beirut. […] PLO guns firing on the Biblical Galilee had been silenced. What the Israelis did not realize was that the war was far from over.[57] (My emphasis)

The paragraph above presents the Israelis as the subjects whereas the phrase that refers to twenty thousand deaths, most of whom were Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, stands aloof like a minor event of no consequence in the grandiose setting of the "Biblical Galilee" regaining its peace. Indeed, Wright finds that 1982 was a year "of comparative calm," because in "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict […] targets were obvious."[58] What Wright calls targets are obviously the disproportionate twenty thousand casualties killed during the invasion. Moreover, Wright's reference to "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" above instead of using

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[54] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 369-70.

[55] The US military force came as part of the Multinational force, which included the French and Italian troops as well, to assist in the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut, which was one of the Israeli demands once they besieged west Beirut. Once the PLO departed, the American forces left before the end of the time they planned to stay. France and Italy followed suit. Shortly afterwards the Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gemayel was assassinated, after which the Christian Phalangists massacred hundred of civilians in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatilla under the eyes of the Israeli occupying forces. The Multinational force returned first with the mandate to protect the remaining Palestinians. See Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 319-400.

[56] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 18.

[57] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 219.

[58] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 76.

Israel's occupation of Lebanon shows her consistency in using different languages: Shi'ites and Palestinians are by definition fanatics and terrorists; Israelis only conduct cleaning operations and aim at clear targets. By simplifying the complex context of that war and dehumanizing Lebanese and Palestinian deaths, the issue of Israel's state-sponsored terrorism becomes irrelevant.

In fact, the offensive and expansionist character of the war launched by Begin's government in 1982 was for everybody there to see, let alone a correspondent whose job is to seek all available information about an event she wants to report. And a variety of information was, indeed, available. Fisk, for instance, writes that Western journalists who generally preferred to cover the Middle East from Israel in order to avoid Arab regimes' censorship had a totally different experience in Lebanon, which was too weak to control the movements of the journalists. He writes:

> The reporting from Lebanon—first in 1978 during the first Israeli invasion, and then in 1982—was a new and disturbing experience for the Israelis. They no longer had a monopoly on the truth. Israeli official statements were denied by journalists who had witnessed the suffering of civilians under indiscriminate bombardment. The Old terminology—of "pre-emptive strikes" against "terrorists", of "surgical precision" bombing, of "pinpoint accuracy" bombardments, of "mopping-up" operations— was no longer accepted by reporters who could see for themselves what these phrases really meant.[59]

However, writing a couple of years after the fact, Wright still chooses to confine her description of the war's aim to the very announcements made in Tel Aviv to the press shortly before the invasion, which spoke about "limited aims" of the war, namely to push the PLO and its artillery out of range of the frontier and the northern Galilee area of Israel.[60] By dismissing the more complicated and less sympathetic aim behind the Israeli invasion, which was to redraw the map of the region to Israel's benefit and establish its political hegemony in the Middle East,[61] Wright's language remained faithful to the "old/sanitized terminology" and could quickly pass over the usually high price such conquests incur.

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[59] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 407. In fact, Fisk writes that the American press, which usually covers the Israeli-Arab conflicts from the official Israeli point of view, recorded the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon "with a detail and accuracy that the Israelis would have preferred the world not to hear about." (288). From an Israeli dissenting point of view, see Amos Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon,* trans. Maurie Goldberg-Bartura (New York: Vintage, 1989).

[60] see Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 200-201

[61] The invasion, according to Israeli public records, was about crushing the PLO so that the Israeli government can secure its control over the Palestinian occupied West Bank and Gaza. In this context, Avi Shlaim writes: "By dealing a mortal blow to the PLO in Lebanon, Begin hoped not only to achieve peace for the Galilee but also to defeat the Palestinian claim to statehood in what he and his party regarded as the Land of Israel. Once the PLO had been crushed in its stronghold in Lebanon, so the argument ran, all effective Palestinian resistance to the imposition of permanent Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza would come to an end." *The Iron Wall*, 422. See

The 1982 conquest was no different; the Israeli army employed heavy air strikes, cluster bombs, phosphorous shells on civilian areas, perpetuated massacres in Sidon, all of which culminated in the massacres of Sabra and Chatila committed by the Christian Phalange militias under the eyes of Israeli soldiers and with the knowledge of Ariel Sharon, the Defense Minister at that time.[62] It is the massive scale of force adopted by Israel which explains why there were 20,000 deaths in seventy days. Indeed, Fisk writes that "[o]f all Beirut's sieges–by the crusaders, by Saladin in the twelfth century, by the Anglo-Turkish fleet in 1840–none were on such a scale as the city's twentieth-century encirclement by the Israeli army."[63] Taking the Arab perspective into account, Avi Shlaim points out, "[t]he massive force that Israel deployed in Lebanon, the scale of the suffering it inflicted, the siege of Beirut, and the massacre in Sabra and Shatila stunned the entire Arab world […]."[64] All of this was left out of Wright's narrative which, by minimizing the damage inflicted on Lebanon, erases the context that could have provided an explanation of the rise of revolutionary groups such as Islamic AMAL and Hizbullah, both of which make up the study of her book.

Yet, Wright does resurrect the context when, for instance, she tackles the American presence in Lebanon and their support of the Christian groups in that country. In fact, she refers to two crucial events that preceded the suicide attacks on the US Marine Corps attack, namely the US training of the Lebanese army that was "dominated by minority Christians, many with loyalties to the Phalange."[65] The second event is about the Marines shelling the Druze militia in Souk al Gharb (above Beirut) on behalf of the Phalange militia, losing in the process their neutral attitude vis-à-vis Lebanese internal affairs.[66] Interestingly Wright's explanation of the US decision to side with the Phalange militia was imputed not to a given mentality or to some "forms of sacred rage" as is the case of the Shi'ites in her book. Wright identifies the culprit as "the trouble-shooter Robert McFarlane," who pushed for the firing on the Druze only to recognize later it was a major miscalculation, since it was found out that the Christian militia's appeal for urgent help was highly exaggerated. Yet, while Wright points out that an American official made a major mistake in assessing the situation and thought it right to support one Lebanese group against another, she does not deal with the Shi'ites with the same even-handed, logical examination of motivations and miscalculations. The point is that while reporting about what Wright considers an "American mistake," she attributes the

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also his subsection on "Ariel Sharon's Big Plan," 395-400. See also Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 199-242; especially 231.
[62] See Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 222, 252-54.
[63] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 278.
[64] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 418.
[65] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 76.
[66] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 75-79.

mistake to the person who issues the order and brings up the reasons that made him believe why his decision at that time was right. Why then does Wright not keep to that very approach when she deals with the Shi'ites in Lebanon? Why does she go back to the assassins in order to explain the hijackings and suicide attacks in Lebanon? Why overstress the Iranian link and minimize the Lebanese daily circumstances? All these needless detours reveal what Sheila Carapico rightly identifies as follows:

> The Orientalist mind-set attributes political struggles in the Middle East to culture, not social, economic, or individual factors. For instance, while lynchings, hate crime, and family violence in America are but individual exceptions to a sound social ethic, "Islam*ic* terrorism" is portrayed as if it were a religious expression. Most social scientists look to the humiliations of Versailles and the depravations of the Great Depression to explain the "escape from freedom" into a violent, chauvinistic, exclusivist, right-wing European movement —fascism—in the 1930s. But how often do we look to military defeat and economic crisis to explain Middle Eastern extremism? Rarely, although these factors are clearly present. Instead (at least when comparing the West to the Orient), Westerners typically view Western experiences with slavery, fascism, and individual brutality as cultural anomalies in a tolerant, humane, egalitarian Judeo-Christian civilization. Yet comparable phenomena in the Muslim world, widely "covered," appear to be indicators of a civilization that valorizes violence, book-burning, capital punishment, and chauvinism.[67]

3.3. Good Islamic Fundamentalism vs. Bad Islamic Fundamentalism

Wright's narrative not only equates the Shi'ite political struggle with an anti-modernization stance due to their assassin mentality and culture, but also reflects American foreign policy in the Middle East. Indeed, like the revolutionary Shi'ite Iran, the Saudi regime also adheres to a strict application of Islam. Similarly it also contributed in the ideological export of *Jihad*, albeit on a different front, towards Afghanistan.[68] These facts should have created a moment of aporia in Wright's narrative given that it has already indicted the Iranian fundamentalist regime and its export of its Islamist ideology to its neighboring countries. However, her narrative praises the fundamentalist Saudi Arabia and called it moderate whereas the fundamentalist Iran is castigated and called a state of terrorists. Wright explores the discrepancy between *Jihad*-sponsor Saudi Arabia and terrorism-sponsor Iran by positing Saudi Arabia as a country that tries to tone down its fundamentalism and move toward modernization; yet, this only renders it easy prey to threatening Islamic movements, such as

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[67] Sheila Carapico, "Introduction to Part One, "*Political Islam*, ed. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997) 30.
[68] See Eqbal Ahmad, *Terrorism: Theirs and Our* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) 32-35.

the one headed by the Shi'ite clergy in Iran. In fact, in Wright's line of reasoning the Saudi regime has more affinities with the "modernizing" Shah of Iran, who was ousted by the "sacred rage" of the "primitive" and "terrorist" Islamic government of Khomeini. Hence, Wright understands the dilemma of the Saudi monarchy and its cautious ways of modernizing.

Nevertheless, Wright claims that Saudi Arabia is moving in the direction of modernizing the country. The point she finds adequate to illustrate her argument was the Saudi monarchy outlawing the Shi'ite religious rites, because, she maintains, they "were considered primitive by leaders trying to modernize their nations [her use of the plural is an allusion to other Arab countries such as Iraq, which also banned the Shi'ite religious rituals]."[69] In another instance, Saudi Arabia emerges as a champion of human rights whose government "was deeply worried about the impact of strict Islamization in a land [the Sudan] of mixed religions and traditions."[70] Even though Wright recognizes the similarities between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic government of Gaafar Nimeiri in the Sudan or the post-revolutionary Iran, she still insists on describing the US-allied Saudi government as "moderate and modernizing." In this regard, all the Saudi groups that have come to challenge or resist the Saudi regime receive the epithet of "religious fundamentalists […] who felt that the strictest Muslim state in the world, at least theoretically, had already gone too far in liberalizing and diluting Islam."[71]

In fact, Wright enhances her point by consistently referring to the Saudi monarchy as the ruling family, the House of Saud, or the government or simply Saudis who are challenged by the "violent Sunni Fundamentalists," the "alien Shia," "Saudi Shia fundamentalists," "Shia radicals," "Shia extremists," and "Shia crusaders."[72] In this construction of the good fundamentalists versus bad fundamentalists dichotomy, Wright avoids analyzing the complexity of the Saudi movements that have sought to change their society for better or worse. By doing so, Wright reduces the Saudi society to the government vs. the extremists and again resorts to the argument that in the Arab culture, every source of trouble goes back to Islam. Hence, even when she points out that the "troublemakers" in Saudi Arabia were

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[69] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 149. Certainly, Saudi Arabia did not remain totally aloof from the strong current of modernity; yet, Wright's example about banning Shi'ite rites rather illustrates how the Saudi regime oppresses the Shi'ite minority. For a more serious argument on the attributes of modernity in Saudi Arabia, see Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New York: Yale University, 1979), especially the chapter "The Modernizing Monarchies" (165-82) where he points out, for instance, how the kingdom's oil wealth has transformed the country into an advanced welfare state. Similarly, the staffing of its central government with trained civilians and military professionals is part of the Saudis' effort to cope with the changing times.

[70] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 206.

[71] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 152-53.

[72] See Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 146-72.

mainly concerned about the nature of their country's relationship with the US, she writes: "[t]he connection [between Saudi Arabia and the US] was seen at home, by Sunni and Shia, as a dependence inconsistent with Islam."[73] Does one have to be a Muslim in order to see and dislike the connection? How then will Wright deal with secularist people, such as the writer Abdelrahman Munif, who also indicts the nature of this connection, not in the name of Islam, but because he sees it as based on protecting dictatorial and corrupt regimes, which in return for their survival become too compliant and submissive vis-à-vis their protectors' demands.[74] (How will she categorize American intellectuals who also have a problem with the nature of this connection?) That is, indeed, the gist of the modernizing ideology, as Wright's narrative obliquely testifies to in linking both Saudi Arabia and the Shah's Iran with modernization: it is the acceptance of the status of client state, use of petro-wealth for savage consumerism and enormous arms purchases, all of which serve to perpetuate the mechanisms of economic dependency. Whoever rebels against this configuration in the Arab world, be it Islamists, secularists, Christians etc., they become automatically "primitive" and "terrorists."

3.4. The Icons of Modernizing Ideology in North Africa

The chapter where Wright deals with the "sacred rage" of the Islamic movements in North Africa clearly reveals her inability to differentiate between one Islamic movement and another. By defining them as primarily religious, Wright insists on locating social, political and economic matters only at the level of Arab regimes. For her it suffices to say that there is an Islamic movement, which poses a real challenge to a regime that is a US ally, so that she condemns the movement as violent, Khomeini-influenced and anti-modern. In Tunisia's case, Wright describes the country as: "an island of pro-Western moderation […] [where] French is more common than Arabic. A predominantly Sunni Muslim nation with a Christian minority and no significant Shia population, Tunisia seemed an unlikely place for avid fundamentalism to erupt."[75] Significantly, Wright locates the fundamentalism's eruption in 1981, that is after the Iranian revolution, and depicts it as launching a crusade to take the country back to its pre-modern times.

Yet, John Esposito argues that in the case of Tunisia's major Islamic Organization, namely the Islamic Tendency Movement (ITM), its development was shaped by events going back to the end of the sixties. He writes:

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[73] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 167.
[74] See Abdelrahman Munif, *A-Dimoqratiya Awalan: A-Democratiya Daiman* (Democracy First, Democracy Forever) (Beirut: Al-Moassassa al-Arabiya Li-Dirasat wa a-Nashr, 1992) 216- 23. My translation.
[75] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 193.

> The causes and influences were many: fallout from the defeat of 1967 and the discrediting of Arab nationalist ideas; high unemployment and food shortages resulting from the failure of the government's planned socialist economic development program [...] the nationalist strikes and food riots of 1978; the reemergence of Islam and of Islamic organizations such as the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan in Muslim Politics; the use of oil revenues by Saudi Arabia and Libya to promote their influence in the Muslim world; and the Iranian revolution.[76]

Typically all these crucial factors are ignored by Wright for the sake of emphasizing, to the extent of distortion, Iran's intent on spreading its revolution.

Indeed, in Wright's narrative, demonstrations and riots in Tunisia and Morocco are not so much the result of desperate economic conditions as the Iranian plot that has infiltrated even far away and modernizing North Africa. Economic factors do not seem to apply on what moves Moroccans and Tunisians, most of whom are young, poorly paid or unemployed, to protest the rise of food prices. It is remarkable to miss this flagrant reality especially since at the time of her writing these food protests were sparked off right after Tunisia and Morocco embraced IMF structural adjustment programs (SAP). Moreover, anti-IMF and anti-SAP riots were not confined to Arab states only, but took place in several countries such as Venezuela and Nigeria.[77] Certainly for Wright, Third Worlders cannot figure out, let alone protest the workings of the current economic system. If they, a lumped homogeneous entity, take to the streets it is because they want to "return to Islam," their primitive way of life. In fact, as a believer (and winner) in the very economic system, that is failing so many people around the world, Wright's oversimplifications rationalize poverty and the IMF programs that work in concert with US foreign policy.

Ironically, when Wright quotes members of the Islamic Tendency Movement in Tunisia, her painstaking construction of Iranian involvement crumbles without her noticing. Indeed, in one instance, she quotes one ITM official who was clearly indicting the IMF menu: "Our economy is based on producing things that we don't need, with cheap labor, for the West, and on tourism." She also quotes another ITM member saying "We must first modernize our agriculture to meet our own needs and then start industries to produce for us. We must stop exporting our phosphate cheaply and export [sic] it as fertilizer at twenty times the price."[78] Besides the economic injustices these ITM members speak about, there is also

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[76] John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 162.
[77] See Yahya Sadowski, *Political Vegetables? Businessman and Bureaucrat in the Development of Egyptian Agriculture* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1991) 196, and Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalization of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* (London: Zed, 1998) 36.
[78] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 195.

the group's aspiration to become a legal party. Wright quotes their spokesman as saying "if the government continues to outlaw us, torture and beat us in prison, there's nothing we will not do. We refuse to die."[79] Nevertheless, Wright sees these comments as demonstrating "how *side issues* [economic and political reforms], unrelated to Islam, could be exploited by fanatics [ITM]."[80] Wright seems to have seen through the Islamists' plot, hence her conviction that economic and political injustices are merely "exploited" by the religious fanatics to manipulate the masses. Whereas Esposito's research on some Islamic movements, including ITM, led him to the following conclusion:

> Islamic movements in the Maghreb, as in most of the Muslim world, have developed a new or modern Islamic form of organization […]. [which] have a lay rather than clerical leadership, are urban-based, and thrive primarily among students and educated professionals while also attracting members of traditional occupations […] most advocate working within the system rather than using violence to come to power […]. Islamic movements [in the Maghreb] have come to function as modern social movements and participatory political parties or organizations that espouse populist causes like political liberalization, jobs, better services, integrity in government, human rights, more equitable distribution of wealth, and greater emphasis on Arab-Islamic cultural identity.[81]

Wright's narrative does not touch on any of these vital issues because she has decided they are but "side issues" of no relevance to the fanatic and backward Islamic movements. Even though some Islamist organizations such as the ITM seem to be concerned about the flagrant injustices in their society and strive to break the unhealthy monopoly on power which the one party-system creates, Wright insists on knowing better. Indeed, she states: "[t]he two men [Habib Bourguiba and Hassan II] who had spent most of their reigns—among the longest of all leaders in Africa or the Middle East—struggling to bring their people into the twentieth century suddenly were being challenged by those who wanted to revert to ways of life dating back to the seventh."[82] Since for Wright the Tunisian and the Moroccan leaders embody modernity and progress, how can anybody else, especially the Islamists, claim to stand for these concepts as well? A simplistic conclusion from a writer who is familiar with the system of having several political parties which all claim to speak for the well-being of their country and contend for power so that they can carry out their programs.

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[79] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 200.
[80] Wright, *Sacred Rage*,196. My emphasis.
[81] Esposito, *Islamic Threat*, 160-61.
[82] Wright, *Sacred Rage*, 200.

The crux of the matter is that Wright, who avows she is not an Arabist, authoritatively recycles the trope of Islam as a threat. Since her book contends that the Iranian revolution was the turning point in unleashing the wave of terrorism, she limits her quest to proving the Iranian link, which for her, once it is proved or suspected, serves to immediately discredit all Islamic movements and enlist them as a form of "sacred rage" that is screaming for a return to the seventh century. Her book illustrates what Edward Said calls the orthodox coverage of Islam, a mode of writing "whose affiliations with power give it strength, durability, and above all presence."[83] In fact, after September 11, 2001, Wright updated her book which was published in December 2001 with two additional chapters that reiterate the notion of the continuity of their "sacred rage" and their "fundamental irrationality."

4. Judith Miller: Overseeing the Arab World/Plantation

As a Middle East correspondent for *The New York Times* since 1977, Cairo Bureau Chief from 1983 to 1986 and later special correspondent to the Gulf War for the same paper, Judith Miller understandably turned her long-amassed expertise on the region into books that handled some of the hottest topics. Her 1996 book, *God Has Ninety Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East*, claims to deal with different Islamic movements as well as the response of their respective countries to them, for as she remarks about the Arab world of the post Gulf War, "even secular leaders have increasingly relied on Islam to shore up their rule. Thus, the power struggles are no longer between the defenders of the 'secular' order and advocates of religious rule but, rather, over who will rule in the name of Islam."[84]

Miller declares at the beginning of her book that she sets out with her writing well-armed with the advice of the Arab English historian, Albert Hourani, who urged her to pay special attention to the crucial differences that exist between different Islamic groups. Moreover, she claims that "while I have tried to keep an open mind about traditions and cultures that differ from my own, I make no apology for the fact that as a Western woman and an American, I believe firmly in the inherent dignity of the individual and the value of human rights and legal equality for all. In this commitment," she insists, "I, too, am unapologetically militant."[85] Leaving aside Miller's assumption that belief in human dignity and human rights is inherently a Western and American quality, I will only concentrate on what such solemn declarations should have more or less entailed at the level of research. In fact, with such commitments, a

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[83] Said, *Covering Islam*, 157.
[84] Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) 13.
[85] Miller, *God Has*, 18.

journalist would be expected to contextualize the rise of militant Islam, investigate the economic and political situations that have relegated the majority of the Arab populations to the ranks of the voiceless and powerless, and make the crucial connections about who benefits from the lack of democracy and a vibrant civil society and how this sorry state of affairs can but augur ill for the future.

Unfortunately, what Miller presents as expertise on the Arab world and what she claims as knowledge production based on respect for human rights and legal equality for all is in reality a crude knowledge/power equation. Indeed, Miller enters the Middle East armed with the State Department's document of blacklisted countries, and in the introduction produces the official knowledge that has become axiomatic to several experts: namely, on the one hand, Saudi Arabia, the US staunchest ally, understandably resorts to extreme measures to repress rebellions. On the other hand, the neighboring Sudan commits appalling crimes via its application of the Shari'a and oppression of its people, horrible facts that made Miller hope "that one day the Sudanese would rise up, that they would pour into the streets […] to rid their country of these vile rulers [the regime of Omar al-Bashir and Hassan al-Turabi]."[86] Similarly, Hizbollah, in Miller's view, is a violent Islamic group with no reference to their major role in resisting the Israeli invasion, Syria is involved in state terrorism and Iran supports international terrorism.[87]

My argument, as I mentioned above, is not so much to debate whether Syria, Sudan and Iran are innocent of these claims, but to expose that what Miller presents as objective analysis of the Arab world in accord with some human-rights agenda is but a narrative of the most simplistic generalizations about Islam. Thus Miller knows that Islamists are inveterate liars and cheaters; Muslims are irrational and violent, whose perspective and knowledge do not count unless they consent to perform the role of native informants who corroborate her prejudices. In the fashion of nineteenth-century women travelers Gertrude Bell, who wrote on British Iraq, and Marise Périale, who wrote on French Morocco, Miller moves freely in the Arab world to sound the performance of Arab governments vis-à-vis the US expectations and Israeli pacification.

4.1. The Geopolitical Guidelines of Lives' Expendability
Indeed, Miller's chapter on Syria focuses on the Syrian regime's massacre of the Islamic brothers and a large number of civilians in the city of Hama in February 1982. Robert Fisk, seemingly the only foreign journalist who entered this ancient city at the very time the Syrian

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[86] Miller, *God Has*, 14, 166-67.
[87] Miller, *God Has*, 15-16.

military troops were busy slaughtering their own people, puts the figure of the fatalities up to 10,000 people.[88] Obviously Miller is right when she identifies and condemns the regime's act as a form of state terrorism. Yet Miller's indictment of the massacre of Syrian Islamists is not so much out of concern with the thousand deaths it entailed but is a means to highlight the cruel side of the Syrian regime, she dislikes, because, in her view, it refused to make peace with Israel. This may be why she has no problem with other massacres committed with other Arab heads of states. Indeed, Miller depicts King Hussein's exaggerated military crackdown on the Palestinians in 1970 as a "strategic decision" and comments "[i]t seemed natural that the king, or any ruler, would try to survive."[89]

In the same vein, Miller depicts the seizure of the Great Mosque at Mecca in November 1979 as a "traumatic event for the [Saudi] family's authority." Miller has no qualms about referring to the "nervous" family's resort to French paratroopers and poison nerve gas to suppress the rebellion and notes it took "the death of 127 security officials to evict the rebels […]."[90] That the seizure of the Great Mosque might have been the result of the Saudi family's abuse of power is not subject to analysis in Miller's narrative. The very fact that it is the Saudi Monarchy that claimed the seizure to be the work of fanatic Islamists should have made her investigate more about what happened that day. Obvious questions like who were the people who took over the mosque and what their motives were and what happened to them are not raised at all, instead the whole issue is dismissed by producing the sweeping reference of Islamic fanaticism and the Iranian link.

An illuminating comparison can be made between the *New York Times*' correspondent and Judith Caesar's personal narrative that records her own experience as an American teacher of American literature in Saudi Arabia and Egypt in the 1980s. Caesar states that before she obtained her teaching position in Saudi Arabia, her knowledge of the Arab world was confined to *National Geographic*, *Exodus* as book and film, and American expatriates' warnings upon her arrival to Riyadh that "Arabs hated women and they were narrow minded and irrationally violent."[91] Caesar's narrative had all the ingredients to go on corroborating

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[88] Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 182-87.
[89] Miller, *God Has*, 340-41.
[90] Miller, *God Has*, 112-14.
[91] Judith Caesar, *Crossing Borders: An American Woman in the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997) 5. According to As'ad AbuKhalil, the 1979 rebellion was headed by Islamist radicals, such as Ibn Muhammad al-'Utaybi and Ibn 'Abdullah al-Qahtani. Yet here is how he reads this event after putting it in the context of the contradictory policies followed by the Saudi Monarchy: "The AL-'Utaybi movement signaled a growing trend. Young Saudi-educated men who were brought up on the teachings of Wahhabiyyah could not reconcile their faith with either the corruption of the royal family or the foreign policies of the Kingdom that were—and are—in contradiction with the religious codes of Wahhabiyyah. These forces would later produce the likes of Bin Laden and has deepened the royal family's crisis of legitimacy." *The Battle for Saudi Arabia: Royalty, Fundamentalism, and Global Power* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004) 107-11.

the received ideas about Arabs and Islam; yet, hers became a journey that exposed cracks in her sense of understanding the world. For instance, before leaving for Saudi Arabia, Caesar read in the US media that the 1979 Mecca rebellion was the work of fanatics. Yet, her conversation with a Saudi couple who told her that that event was a coordinated effort of Leftists, dissident tribesmen, Shi'ites and religious leaders, who sought to challenge the monarchy's monopoly on power and oil money started her searching for more information. Then Caesar writes that her own checking and some other events confirmed the couple's version.[92]

This incident and others, such as the bombing of Libya, changed Caesar's attitude vis-à-vis the American media coverage of international issues. In the case of the attack on Libya, Caesar writes that in the beginning she was unable to formulate any opinion about it and was willing to accept President Reagan's justification. Yet, Caesar observes, while Egyptians, and indeed the majority of Arabs, tended to regard the bombings either as an indiscriminate and disproportionate retaliation or as terrorism, American media celebrated it. Indeed, the expert Miller, for instance, flatly states that the raid achieved its mission: "Qaddafi was chastened, if only for a while."[93] Caesar's reaction to such a gleeful tone was as follows: "I was shocked by the reporters' and commentators' total lack of moral questioning, indeed, by their assumption that the raid had not been merely justifiable, but brave and noble."[94] With regard to the Arabs, Caesar concludes, both American foreign policy and major media outlets acted on the assumption that their lives are expendable, hence her quandary:

> I began to wonder why I was teaching American literature to Arab students, trying to show them the America of Twain and Thoreau, an America that was morally aware and self-critical, when non of this seemed to show in America's dealings with Arabs. Lines and images and ideas from Twain echoed in my mind during my next three years in the Middle East [1987-1990] and after. In my most bitter moments, I felt that my Mansoura student's joke that everybody south of Cairo was crazy seemed to have become a geopolitical guideline in the industrialized north's view of the underdeveloped south; the lives of everyone south of the Caribbean or Mediterranean had become expendable.[95]

In a similar way Miller's narrative, which boldly reduces Libya to its leader and avoids investigating the Saudi rebellion against the Saudi monarchy, rationalizes their expendability. In fact, instead of looking at Arab grievances vis-à-vis their own governments' dictatorial rule or US military interventions, Miller dismisses them on the grounds that Arabs are used to

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[92] Caesar, *Crossing Borders*, 18-24.
[93] Miller, *God Has*, 232.
[94] Caesar, *Crossing Borders*, 109.
[95] Caesar, *Crossing Borders*, 110.

subjugation, as in her concept on the nature of Egyptians. Besides, in her overseeing activity, the public opinion of Arabs is irrelevant.

4.2. The "Subject Race" and Its Tough Government

Miller, indeed, does not disavow the Egyptian regime's flagrant abuse of human rights; she herself quotes the Human Rights Watch and the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, without however, condemning the regime with the same strong words she used for Syria. In the case of pro-US Egypt, Miller conveniently adopts the Egyptian State's propaganda. John Esposito writes in this context that "[t]hrough out the 1990s, the Egyptian government identified 'Islamic terrorism' as the major threat to state and regional security. In the post-Gulf War period, Egypt projected an image abroad of a close U.S. ally playing a supportive and constructive role in the Middle East peace process and at home as a moderate government beset by religious revolutionaries."[96] Drawing exactly on that made-for-the-Western-consumption image, Miller regards Mubarak's "war on Islamists" as a just war against militant Islamic terrorism.

Interestingly, before Miller reaches that conclusion, she recounts several interviews she has with Husni Mubarak, some Egyptian senior officials as well as the family of Ahmed Farouq, an Islamist killed under torture. One would have expected that Miller the journalist would use her interviews and investigative reporting in order to supply her readers with some hard facts that can enable them to formulate their own opinions about what is going on in Egypt. Yet, Miller, in the tradition of Gertrude Bell, flatly states that despite Mubarak's growing tyranny and unpopularity with his own people, "I still liked him and considered him a patriot who wanted only the best for Egypt. And I still found his candor disarming."[97] Clearly Miller's personal predilection matters more than in-depth analysis.

When Miller paid a visit to Ahmed Farouq's family, who lived in Bulak al-Dakur, one of the poorest districts in Cairo, she did perceive a connection between the family's extreme poverty and their resentment against their own government. Indeed, Miller depicts the quarter where they lived as a place "where some fifty thousand Egyptians were crammed into an area no bigger than three football fields. Bulak's unpaved, garbage strewn streets were so narrow and the buildings so close together that the sun was barely visible at noon." During her interview of Farouq's widow, Miller was rather taken aback by her interviewee's vehement critique of the Egyptian regime. After asking the widow why actually she was talking that openly to a foreign journalist, Miller received the following answer: "I know I must protect

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[96] John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 98.
[97] Miller, *God Has*, 44.

my daughter. But I'm so tired of being afraid." Yet Miller does not find the widow's candor disarming; she instead shrugs off the family's plight, on the grounds that "Ahmed Farouq and his friends must have known when they tried to kill a minister that this ancient, tough state would do whatever was necessary to preserve its power [certainly a reference not only to Ahmed's murder but also to the police terrorizing his parents and wife] and that many Egyptians, given their history, would sanction such methods."[98] From this example, it is clear that this is not analytical journalism, but straightforward resurrection of colonialist discourse such as Lord Cromer's notion of "subject races."[99]

Miller in Egypt is in such total collusion with the official point of view that she devotes several pages to the Egyptian government's alleged discovery of some documents that reveal how the "moderate" Muslim brothers work together with radical Islamic groups such as the Gama'a Islamyya and the New Jihad. Even though Miller acknowledges that neither she nor any human rights worker, lawyer or diplomat has seen these documents, she states: "But I was willing to believe that government supporters believed in their authenticity."[100] Miller's reporting here reveals how a government sentences its people on the basis of documents it does not even bother to show, a practice that a Western journalist with a commitment to human rights might be expected to find suspicious, at the very least. Yet she neglects even basic fact-checking and investigative skepticism, instead condoning the government's unorthodox practice of justice, perhaps because Egypt is "our" ally, and implying that, after all, who cares about injustices inflicted on "subject races?"

Moreover, Miller seems to find this unfounded allegation interesting, because it "proves" her personal quest to conflate all Islamic movements into one homogeneous entity, hence her conclusion, on the basis of these never-seen documents that "the Brotherhood and the fanatics were 'two sides of the same coin.'"[101] With that breathtaking leap of logic, Miller levels criticism at scholars of Islamist movements, such as John Esposito, whom she critiques for failing to see through the Islamists' real plans: gaining power, establishing an Islamic state, destroying Israel and defying the West. Hence her condemnation of all Islamic states or movements, with the exception of Saudi Arabia because as she points out: "Saudi Arabia had long been rich enough [she should have added 'and obedient enough'] to afford its fanatical ways."[102]

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[98] Miller, *God Has,* the interview section is in 35-40.
[99] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994) 36-41. See Also David Pryce-Jones who quotes Lord Cromer's statement on Egypt: "A long enslaved nation instinctively craves for the strong hand of a master rather than for a lax constitutional regime." *The Closed Circle*, 119.
[100] Miller, *God Has*, 66.
[101] Miller, *God Has*, 65.
[102] Miller, *God Has*, 110.

4.3. Arab Public Opinion or Fanaticism and Irrationality

For Miller, one instance which reveals the true face of the so-called moderate Islamic movements in Egypt is the Gulf War where they wholeheartedly supported Saddam Hussein despite the fact that he was after their long-time benefactor, Saudi Arabia. She writes, playing down some crucial attitudes taken by these Islamists, "[a]fter the 1979 attack on Mecca's Great Mosque, the Saudi government and the Egyptian Muslim Brethren made a pact to insulate the Sunni kingdom from further mayhem […]. Only after the Egyptian Brotherhood supported Iraq in the Gulf war did this cozy relationship end."[103] Yet, attention to the details behind the Brotherhood's attitude reveals more than just blind support of Saddam Hussein.[104] Gehad Auda explains that the Egyptian Brotherhood at first condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; yet the heavy American military presence in the Gulf made them fear that this would only strengthen US's control of the region as well as benefit Israel, thus their demand to deal with Israel's occupation in the same way as Iraq's.[105]

Moreover, Auda's contextualization of the Egyptian Brotherhood's position in the Gulf War indicates how their indictment of the war was a means to voice their resentment vis-à-vis US policies in the region as well as their own regime that hastened to support that war. He observes:

> Starting from a position of condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Brotherhood ended with virtual support for the governing regime in Baghdad. The growing involvement of the United States accounted for this change. Indeed, the Brotherhood has long viewed the United States with suspicion, arguing that it has consolidated its influence over world affairs as its control of the United Nations Security Council clearly demonstrates. What is more, the United States and Zionism could not have been successful in penetrating the Islamic world and subjecting it to their will without the help of authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Struggling against American imperialism and Zionism thus means struggling against these political regimes as well. The massive air bombardment of Iraq and the preparation for the ground offensive led the Brotherhood to join other Muslim groups in their second declaration from Pakistan on 17 February

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[103] Miller, *God Has*, 119.

[104] Indeed, Yvonne Y. Haddad remarks that "while many Muslims in general and Islamists in particular saw Operation Desert Storm as waged for the ultimate purposes of the 'Zionist Crusaders,' they did not seem to buy into the claim of Saddam Hussein that he was the new Salah ad-Din (Saladin), the Muslim leader who was victorious over the crusading forces of Christendom in the 12th century." Haddad, "Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm: The Islamist Perspective," *Beyond the Sotm: A Gulf CrisisReader*, ed. Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991) 254-60.

[105] Gehad Auda, "An Uncertain Response: The Islamic Movement in Egypt," *Islamic Fundamentalisms and the Gulf Crisis*, ed. James Piscatori (Chicago, IL: The Fundamentalism Project and American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1991) 118.

1991, in which the war was depicted as an assault against Islam and its civilization.[106]

Moreover, Auda underlines how the Brotherhood's position was beset with uncertainties over definition of terms, such as *Jihad*, and over the strategy that best served their purpose of opposing the war without endangering their margin of freedom granted to them by a government that clearly would seize the first opportunity to outlaw them. Auda, for instance, refers to the Brotherhood's vague call for *Jihad* against the war without, however, making it include the Arab states involved in the international alliance, such as Saudi Arabia. Hence his describing their position as "[a] posture of selective radicalism on the issues of the crisis and the war [which] made it appear that the Brotherhood's overall frame of reference was rather vague and shallow."[107] Equally, Yvonne Haddad points out that the majority of the Egyptian Islamic movements, despite their sympathy with the Iraqi people, reached, nevertheless, "no general consensus as to what policy to pursue vis-à-vis the occupation and [had at their disposal] no means of dealing with it."[108]

It is worth mentioning that the Brotherhood's demands to make the principle of self-determination valid in all cases and respect UN resolutions, were by no means exclusive to the Brotherhood but were voiced by the majority of Arabs. Yet Miller did not heed what the majority of the Arabs were saying, for she had already dismissed Arafat's raising the same point as "whining in a familiar refrain" and declares: "It was pointless reminding Arafat that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and Israel's seizure of Arab land in response to repeated Arab aggression was hardly comparable events."[109] In this context, Miller's power to dismiss this crucial point is backed by no less than Washington's coming up with the term "no linkage" during its preparation for the Gulf War, thereby rendering common sense, and in this case Arab public opinion as well, irrelevant. As Edward Said writes: "Things that belong together by common association, sense, geography, history, are sundered, left apart for convenience' sake and for the benefit of U.S. imperial strategies […]. That Arabs might see a connection between Saddam Hussein in Kuwait and Israel in Lebanon, that too is futile. That the U.S. itself is the linkage, this is a forbidden topic to broach."[110]

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[106] Auda, "An Uncertain Response," 118-19. Regarding the point of the Islamists' indictment of the unpopular decision of the Arab regimes to participate in "Desert Storm," see Haddad, "Operation Desert Shield," 252-55.
[107] Auda, "An Uncertain Response," 127.
[108] Haddad, "Operation Desert Shield," 249.
[109] Miller, *God Has*, 357.
[110] Edward Said, "Foreword: Thoughts on a War: Ignorant Armies Clash by Night," *Beyond the Storm*, 2. With regard to the dominant Arab perspective, see in the same book also Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "The Politics of Linkage: the Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Gulf War," 183-90.

Miller's preference to brandish the Washington term of "no linkage" and stand by Israeli occupation of Arab Land made her brush aside one of the crucial issues that adds constant fuel to Arabs' simmering anger during and after Operation "Desert Storm." In fact, Miller, who is not at all concerned with Arab people but with the performance of Arab governments vis-à-vis US expectations, becomes indignant to see Jordan's King Hussein, on whom she bestowed the label of an "enlightened ruler," not endorsing the American war on Iraq. She writes: "I could no longer contain my disappointment in a man whom, until the Gulf crisis, I had admired with few reservations."[111] In fact, by not endorsing the American war on Iraq, modernizing Jordan suddenly appeared primitive to Miller's eyes: "The country I had always thought of as Western, moderate, and pragmatically entrepreneurial was suddenly alien, radical, and hostile—unrecognizable. How could I have so misjudged a country I had visited so often?"[112] After sprinkling some economic factors that allude to a vague recognition of economic realities, Miller hastens to highlight the strains of an alien culture, in which "Arabs traditionally respect age and position, often more than wisdom or ability."[113] The no longer enlightened ruler, who dared oppose US noble mission in Iraq, was according to Miller foolishly under the impression that he could survive if he bent "to popular rage."[114] Clearly Miller uses the phrase "popular rage," instead of "public opinion" since the former perpetuates the myth of Arabs' irrationality while the latter would show Jordan like any other country where people might share a general opinion about a given issue. And as Miller has already stated, Jordan in 1990-1991 was an abnormal country, that is explainable only by Fouad Ajami's expertise who explains the whole issue as a King losing his mind for the second time (the first being his joining Nasser in the 1967 war) and taking a "ride with the mob."[115] More revealing is that Miller's attitude, totally in collusion with the demands of the empire rather than a universal human right's agenda, takes for granted that Arab heads of states must not bend to the demands of their peoples/mobs (whom they are supposed to keep under control) but to the US imperial designs.

4.4. Maronism and Zionism Under Siege

Clearly, Miller who is neither concerned with details nor context when it comes to the Arabs, puts forward another argument that seeks this time to conflate Arab Leftists and Islamists as both after the destruction of Israel. Indeed, she points out that "Egypt's secular leftist

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[111] Miller, *God Has*, 356.
[112] Miller, *God Has*, 352.
[113] Miller, *God Has*, 349.
[114] Miller, *God Has*, 377.
[115] Miller, *God Has*, 377.

intellectuals were accommodating Islamists, their ostensible foe. Leftists claimed that their objections to peace differed from those of the Islamists. For leftists […] opposition to Israel was the result of Israel's 'expansionist' policies, its denial of 'Palestinian national rights,' and its 'illegal confiscation and occupation of Palestinian Land.'"[116] Miller, who has at her disposal a well-documented history of ongoing Israeli abuse, which might, at least to a certain extent, legitimate these grievances, dismisses them as having no basis whatsoever. They reflect merely an extreme Arab point of view which is divorced from reality, hence her use of the quotation marks that emphasize her distance vis-à-vis the speaker's statement. Indeed, she states that: "In practice, however, the hostility of leftists and Islamists to peace with Israel […] was indistinguishable. Even after Israel made peace with the PLO and Jordan, Egyptian leftists continued to denounce Israel and boycott Israelis. Parroting the militant Islamist line, the leftist opposition said that the new peace agreements failed to guarantee the restoration of Palestinian land, rights, and Arab dignity."[117] The implication of this statement is that the Oslo Accords ended the conflict and gave back to the Palestinians their national rights.[118] Accordingly, if Egyptian leftists continue to criticize Israel, then they are acting out of sheer hatred, and not because of valid claims about Israel's expansionism, its ongoing denial of Palestinian rights and illegal expropriation of land.

Amira Hass, an Israeli journalist who moved to the Gaza strip in 1993 where she covered Palestinian lives for *Ha'aretz* for a couple of years, describes the withdrawal of Israeli troops in 1994 from the military governor's building in Gaza, which, in her words, served as the heart of the Israeli occupation in the Strip, as simply "moving buildings." She states that "the IDF battalion headquarters, with the same officer in charge, simply moved north a few kilometers and set up near the Jewish settlement of Nisanit. Other Israeli military bases relocated to the vicinity of the Jewish settlements in the Katif bloc, which effectively cuts the Strip in half. And legally and politically, the IDF continued to have the final say in the Strip."[119] Depicting the Oslo agreement from the Palestinians', especially the Gazans', point of view and from what she herself experienced daily, Hass writes:

> In Gaza, "Oslo" and the "peace process" are now synonymous with mass internment and suffocating constriction. It is impossible to understand developments in Gaza since the beginning of Palestinian self-rule in 1994 without considering the grinding daily ramifications of keeping the Strip closed. On and off since 1991—but for increasingly longer periods since 1994—

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[116] Miller, *God Has*, 72.

[117] Miller, *God Has*, 72.

[118] Indeed, Miller states "[b]y October 1994, Israel had withdrawn from Gaza and Jericho."*God Has*, 394.

[119] Amira Hass, *Drinking the Sea at Gaza: Days and Nights in a Land Under Siege*, trans. Elana Wesley and Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta (New York: Owl Books, 1996) 15-25.

some one million people have been confined to the 147-square mile Strip.Twenty percent of that land is restricted to Jewish settlements and barred to Palestinians. For most Gazans, most of the time, there is no exit, not to Israel, not to Egypt, and not to the West Bank […]. Supposedly, peace had come, and the sound of congratulatory backslapping drowned out the evidence that the spirit of occupation was alive and well and basic human rights were being violated even more than before.[120]

Even the historian Avi Shlaim, an enthusiast of the Oslo Accords, which he considers a breakthrough in the Palestinian-Israeli relationship, points out that the way Israel went ahead with the implementation of the Oslo agreements reveals that it seeks to "repackage rather than end its military occupation." Shlaim also argues that despite some positive sides to the Oslo Accords of 13 September 1993 and later in the agreements of 28 September 1995 that came to be called Oslo II, there were several serious shortcomings. Here is his assessment of the post-Oslo reality:

Worst of all, Israeli settlements continued to be built on Palestinian land in palpable violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the Oslo accord. In the Gaza Strip, home to only five thousand Jewish settlers, Israel controlled a third of the land and most of the scarce water resources desperately needed by its one million Palestinian inhabitants. In the West Bank, Israel retained control over the water resources and over three-quarters of the land. The building of settlements throughout the West Bank and especially in East Jerusalem continued unabated, and a network of bypass roads seemed designed to preempt the possibility of Palestinian statehood. In all these different ways, the Oslo process actually worsened the situation in the occupied territories and confounded Palestinian aspirations for a state of their own.[121]

All these pieces and fragments of facts are disregarded by Miller for the sake of validating her thesis that Arabs' sham grievances are but the result of a religion and culture that incite hatred and intolerance. In fact, like with the Egyptian leftists and Islamists, Miller finds out that the Lebanese, save the Christian Maronites, are in reality after the destruction of Israel. Drawing on the large repertoire of the *idées reçues* that presents Lebanon as a "plague-ridden" and "lunatic" place, where "slaughter is a way of life,"[122] Miller declares that

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[120] Hass, *Drinking the Sea*, 234, 243.
[121] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 530. On the issue of settlements see also Hass, who points out that "between the peak years of the Oslo negotiations and implementation of the agreements, 1992 to 1996, the Labor-led government allowed a 50 percent increase in the number of Jewish settlers in Gaza and the West Bank, from 100,000 to 150,000 (which does not include the Settlements in East Jerusalem)." *Drinking the Sea*, 346.
[122] See Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 432. Amos Oz also writes that the Israeli media was generally euphoric about their country's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. As to the "handful of left-wing pictures of burning cities, maimed children, and weeping women," they were largely received in complete indifference, since the underlying thinking, as the newspapers worded it, "[t]hey [Lebanese] 're used to that sort of thing over there… Why, up there in Lebanon, slaughter is a way of life." *The Slopes of Lebanon*, 21.

"Lebanon specialized in acts of wanton destruction."[123] The victims of this wanton destruction, according to her, are "Maronism and Zionism" which she depicts as:

> both doctrinal responses of embattled peoples who saw themselves as beleaguered outposts in a hostile Islamic "Orient." Both believed they had a covenant with the land and with their kinsman. Both had sacred geography—the Qadisha (holy) Valley of Mount Lebanon for Maronites, "Eretz Israel" for the Jews. And both were determined to infuse whatever land they held with their own traditions and Western values.[124]

Indeed, Miller speaks of (the Maronite) Bashir Gemayel's election in 1982 as if he was chosen by the majority of Lebanese people: "Bashir was elected president by Lebanon's Parliament in 1982, having promised to establish a cantonized, federal country like Switzerland in which each of Lebanon's denominations would be able to live in accordance with its culture and heritage."[125] The impression such description conveys is one of a leader, whose election was legitimate and who was anxious to respect the different confessional communities in Lebanon. In reality, however, it is common knowledge that the Phalangist candidate, Gemayel, was Israel's choice and he was brought into power while the Israeli army was still in West Beirut. In the words of Amos Oz, "Bashir Gemayel was elected president of Lebanon by the vote of a phony parliament ringed by Israeli tanks."[126] All these points that might lead Miller to address Israel's expansionist plans and its use of its military power to impose friendly regimes are conveniently left out in her writing. The Maronites and Israelis are represented as peoples who strive for building ideal and peaceful societies; Syria, however, tramples on that perfect setting and murders Gemayel because it felt, according to Miller, "[t]hreatened by the prospect of a truly sovereign Lebanon."[127]

To buttress the image of "Maronism and Zionism" as besieged outposts in a "hostile Islamic Orient," Miller's narrative concentrates on putting a face to the threat lurking in Lebanon awaiting the propitious opportunity to attack all Western-values holders, that is Maronites, Israelis and Americans. Indeed, Miller kept encountering dangerous Muslim leaders in Lebanon, such as, Sheikh Fadlallah who "railed against Israel, the 'cancer' in the region that Shiites had a religious duty to destroy." Or Sheikh Ragheb Harb, with his "self-satisfied smirk at the mention of the dead American Marines" and delight at "the Shia's Jihad against Israel."[128] Another dangerous person is Hussein Musawi, whom American and Israeli

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[123] Miller, *God Has*, 247.
[124] Miller, *God Has*, 266.
[125] Miller, *God Has*, 245.
[126] Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon*, 17. See also Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 339-41.
[127] Miller, *God Has*, 245.
[128] Miller, *God Has*, 256-58.

intelligence officers identified as, "engaged in kidnappings, hijackings, murders of Westerners […] and terrorist operations."[129] Other "hostile Islamic" elements in that "Orient" comprise Iran and Syria, states she declares are the backers of the 1983 car-bomb attack on the US Marine Compound in Beirut.[130]

In the same vein, Hizbollah, Miller knowingly points out, "*had used* Israel's continued occupation and bombing raids to sink roots in the South, although most of the senior Hezbollah activists came from the Bekka Valley, a far rougher and even poorer region in eastern Lebanon."[131] Typically, Miller's statement on Hizbollah's rise de-emphasizes the direct and logical connection with the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and totally leaves out the larger political context, which goes back to the colonial legacy in which the Shi'ites were marginalized and excluded from political and economic power.[132] Later when Hizbollah decided to run for Parliament as a political party, Miller describes their decision as merely a ploy to conceal their sacred goals of imposing an Islamic state and destroying Israel. Her source of knowledge here is the remark of Western intelligence officials that leader Sheikh Fadlallah "lies the way we breathe."[133] Indeed, drawing on similar sources, that is, Western and Israeli intelligence officials, she concludes that "given America's current military strength, its resounding defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War, the disunity among Arabs and Muslims, and Israel's military superiority and political cohesion, the goal would have to be deferred. But it could never be discarded, at least not rhetorically."[134]

In her dichotomous representation of (western) value holders "us" and evil "them," Miller does not see Israel's design on Lebanon and its several invasions of that country as another crucial component in the violence permeating the region. Once she mentions the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, she explains that it was a legitimate act since Israel, according to her, was only responding to "repeated Christian pleas for intervention." Moreover, she adds, reiterating Israeli's official version, the occupation was a retaliation against the PLO Lebanese-based attacks that "had emptied northern Israeli Kibbutzim and villages."[135] In the scenario of a good and legitimate invasion, resistance to it becomes a form of terrorism. This is why an alarmed Miller is unable to understand why Sheikh Mohammed Mahdi Shamseddine, whom she describes as "then the deputy president of the Supreme Shiite Council, usually known for its centrist views," issued an "ominous *fatwa*" that "denounced

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[129] Miller, *God Has*, 273.
[130] Miller, *God Has*, 225.
[131] Miller, *God Has*, 262. My emphasis.
[132] See Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 555-6, and Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, 148-59.
[133] Miller, *God Has*, 276-79.
[134] Miller, *God Has*, 279.
[135] Miller, *God Has*, 251.

Israel and urged fellow Shiites to engage in active civil resistance against the occupation."[136] Miller's blending the phrase of "ominous *fatwa*" with resistance against the occupation deflects from the natural and worldly connection between occupation and resistance. Indeed, one of Sheikh Shamseddine's calls for civil resistance was the result of Israel's threatening to close the Awali River, the only road the Shi'ites of the South could use to reach Beirut.[137]

Similarly, the Shi'ite Sheik Ragheb Harb tells Miller in an interview: "Mark my words carefully. As long as Israel stays here as occupier, it will have no peace. And as long as your country helps them, neither will you." Interestingly, Miller's narrative dilutes Harb's legitimate resentment he voiced in his statement by concentrating on her own feelings of fear: a young Western woman "in trousers with a borrowed head scarf" in the presence of a threatening Islamist, whom she has already described as a person who finds pleasure in the death of American GI's and Israeli soldiers. Indeed, Miller writes about her anxious glances at the window to make sure that her driver's battered taxi was still waiting for her, and how she "nervously stirred another lump of sugar into my already sweetened tea." At the end of the meeting, Miller renders her leaving the village of Jibsheit, where she conducted her interview, as if she is supplying the end of a rescue narrative. She writes "I was greatly relieved to leave sheikh Harb's office. I wanted to get away from him, from his Iranian 'minders,' from Jibsheit, and from southern Lebanon as quickly as possible."[138]

Interestingly, the Shi'ite village, Jibsheit, which Miller did not bother to see and was happy to dismiss is described differently by Fisk, who considered his visit to that town as "in itself an education in the future of Lebanon."[139] Indeed, after his frequent visits to Jibsheit to report on the civilian resistance to Israeli rule, Fisk states that this town "was becoming a Lebanese tragedy, a mirror of all that had happened there since the invasion." In Fisk's writing, Sheikh Harb emerges as the local Shi'ite Imam, who "had condemned the Israeli invasion and now he was urging his flock to refuse all cooperation with the occupation authorities." Fisk also documents how Harb was arrested by the Israelis and taken away to Tyre to be later released and how in February 1983 he was murdered in his town, "hit by three bullets fired from behind his garden wall," an incident that added fuel to the villagers' resistance to Israel. In Miller's writing, however, Sheikh Harb's assassination is seen from behind the bullets that shot him, she writes "Israel would soon decide that Sheikh Harb was more than merely an irritant."[140]

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[136] Miller, *God Has*, 256.
[137] See Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 541, 556-57.
[138] For the interview episode, see Miller, *God Has*, 255-56.
[139] On Jibsheit and Harb's resistance in Fisk's *Pity the Nation*, see 552-62.
[140] Miller, *God Has*, 255.

In fact, Miller, just as Robin Wright does in her work, so wholeheartedly adopts the Israeli military view of the conflict that she enthusiastically reproduces their very wording of attacks that entailed the death of Lebanese people. She, for instance, depicts the occupying army's killing a whole family, parents, child and their bodyguards, as a "dramatic attack" and reminds us that they were heading to Jibsheit, that nest of fanatics which she was relieved to leave. Moreover, Miller openly speaks about "Israel's efforts to crush Hezbollah by, in American spy parlance, 'neutralizing' its local leadership."[141] Why does Miller draw on the Hollywood glamor of "American spy parlance" to describe an occupation which uses its military power in the most brutal fashion to crush all kinds of resistance? Her adoption of the occupier's perspective is reminiscent of the height of colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century, in which "the native is always presumed guilty."[142] In Miller's narrative the Lebanese, save the Maronite Christians, are guilty, hence they deserve what happened to them. She recounts: "During Operation Accountability, much of the town [Jibsheit], including Sheikh Harb's tomb was flattened."[143]

In another instance the Israeli perspective requires the status of fact. Miller recounts, for instance, an incident where Israeli soldiers shot civilians celebrating Ashura in Nabatieh, the Shi'ites' spiritual center in Lebanon, by drawing on Israeli sources without stressing that this is the occupier's point of view. Starting with some historical information on Ashura, Miller writes:

> Ashura, the Shiite's holiest day, which commemorates the death of Hussein […], had fallen on October sixteenth that year [1983]. To mourn the seventh-century death in battle of the man who Shiites believe was the rightful leader of all Muslims, men took to the streets with whips and olive branches, beating themselves and one another until their shirts and Kafiyehs were shredded and wet with blood. Israeli soldiers had been ordered to avoid the city [Nabatieh] on this day [Notice Miller moves smoothly from history to a particular event, seen from a particular point of view, without mentioning who gave her that piece of information about Israelis ordered to stay away from the City].
>   But as some ten thousand Shiites were leaving the main square after prayers, an Israeli convoy had entered the town and encountered the frenzied crowd. The nervous Israelis [no mention of who saw or claims that nervousness] had opened fire, killing one civilian and wounding ten more.[144]

The Nabatieh incident, as with similar incidents, involves several versions, namely of all those involved, in this case Israeli soldiers, people from Nabatieh, eye-witness journalists

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[141] Miller, *God Has*, 274.
[142] See Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1990) 41.
[143] Miller, *God Has*, 274.
[144] Miller, *God Has*, 255.

etc.[145] Yet, Miller does not deign to compare the obviously Israeli version with any others. Actually, she does not even reveal her sources in her above description: she presents the historical origin of Ashura and the Israeli army explanation of shooting at civilians in a seamless tapestry that naturalizes this particular point of view which serves particular interests.

With the Arabs, however, especially those who voice points of views not to Miller's liking, her tactic in receiving information is not only to name the source that provides it but also use her authorial position to reveal it as mere lies and sheer fantasy. For instance, in her interview of the Syrian foreign minister, Farouk Shara'a, Miller insists on countering each statement made by her interviewee. When for instance, Shara'a declares that Syria was not a sponsor of terrorism, Miller interjects: "If Syria was not a terrorism sponsor, which nation was?" Miller then proceeds by listing several terrorist operations in which she thinks Syria was involved, and comments "[b]ut while terrorism had long been Syria's favored blood sport, I knew it was pointless to challenge Sharaa's assertion that Israel was terrorism's true sponsor of the region." Then moving from Shara'a's point of view to include all Syrians, she adds, "[t]his was *how Syrians viewed* the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict […]. *They believed*, as Sharaa and his boss [Hafidh al-Asaad] repeatedly asserted, that Syria had not provoked its wars with Israel, that Israel was aggressive and expansionist, and that Damascus itself was threatened."[146] The problem here is not that all Miller's views on Syria are fantasy but her critical analysis of Syria's role should have been extended to other major players in the region. The problem is that her selective criticism turns her expertise into an instrument that rationalizes US foreign policy and perpetuates the image of Islam as the main enemy.

The picture, indeed, which emerges from Miller's writing is that of irrational Muslims who live in a region she describes as "filled with such irrationality and bitterness."[147] No wonder they are committed to destruction; they bomb the peace keepers, vow to expel the "Great Satan," and nurse the dream to destroy Israel. And since destruction of Israel is their real goal, as her narrative never tires of foregrounding, they deserve all kinds of "counter-destruction."[148] Yet, the desire to destroy Israel, plausibly nursed by a tiny minority of Muslims, is in no way exclusive to them. Nevertheless, in the manichean world of Miller's

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[145] Compare with Fisk's talking to the people who were directly affected by the incident, where a father who lost a son told Fisk: "He was shot in the back by the Israelis. What can we do? I cannot talk about these things. We are under occupation forces. But our feeling is that of hatred for an occupation force." *Pity the Nation*, 558.

[146] Miller, *God Has*, 313-14. My emphasis.

[147] Miller, *God Has*, 332.

[148] Indeed Miller often repeats that Arabs' real intent is to destroy Israel. Besides the Egyptian Islamists and Leftists who are Israel's haters, Lebanese Shi'ites true purpose in resisting Israeli invasion is ultimately the

narrative where the readers are regaled with railing and enraged Muslims, one does not encounter fundamentalist Jews who explain the necessity to wipe out Arabs for the fulfillment of some divine design. One of many examples, is rabbi Dov Lior who considered the war in Lebanon as "a punishment from heaven for the sin of having handed over the Sinai Peninsula to the Egyptians, but at the same time it was the beginning of Redemption, since we had liberated the Land of Cedars, which, according to the Bible, was part of the inheritance of the Children of Israel who had gone forth from Egypt."[149]

Another glaring example is Menachem Begin's government itself, which looked at and depicted Lebanon as filled with some sub-human species named Palestinian Arabs. In fact, Begin announced his determination "to root out the evil weed of the PLO," a "part of a cancer" and a "terrorist organization" headed by a "two-legged beast" called Arafat.[150] No wonder the Israeli government could not take seriously peace plans that might have hampered its "weeding out" mission. Amos Oz, who is no friend of the PLO cause, records in the Israeli Newspaper *Davar* on June 6, 1982:

> Never before has Israel been assaulted by an almost daily bombardment of plans for agreements, suggested solutions, peace proposals: the Venice document, the Fahd plan, the Reagan plan, the Fez plan, the Hussein proposal, the Khawatme declaration, the Syrian statement […] The Begin government reacts to all of them as though to an evil barrage of Katyushas: sounding the sirens, urging the nation to go down to the bomb shelters, crying "foul"—and aiming a salvo of verbal declaration at the enemy's position.[151]

Why does Miller insist on ignoring all these important examples that reveal Israeli religious fanaticism, racism and their share of responsibility in the Middle East travails and choose instead to equate all Arab politics to the plot of seeking Israel's destruction? Such a representation is certainly motivated by what Noam Chomsky describes as the belief that "it is convenient to have one's enemies committed to the destruction of Israel and bloody fascist revolution, so they are, whatever the facts."[152]

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destruction of the Jewish state, Iran's true intent is to destroy Israel, the Ba'athists' raison d'être is the destruction of Israel, etc. See 319-24, 445, 471.

[149] In Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon*, 11.

[150] See Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 127, 388-89. See also his recording a serving Israeli officer who told him in Beirut: "Listen, I know you are recording this but personally I would like to see them all dead […]. I would like to see all the Palestinians dead because they are a sickness everywhere they go […]. Personally, I wouldn't mind seeing the Palestinians all dead and helping to do it" (240-1).

[151] Oz, *The Slopes of Lebanon*, 46.

[152] Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983) 150.

In fact, in a chapter Miller entitled "Israel," she deals exclusively with Palestinian Islamic movements, especially Hamas, which she depicts as racist, intolerant and committed to the annihilation of the Jewish state.[153] As to Israel's fundamentalism, Miller puts in, this should be the subject for another book. Yet, the crux of the matter is that any research that does not make the connection(s) between all forms of clashing fundamentalisms: be they religious, expansionist or hegemonic, in the sense of seeking monopoly over resources and markets, remains fundamentally flawed. Since events acquire meaning once they are put in context, how then can one deal with the rise of Hamas without connecting it, at least partly, with the occupation and Israel's expansionist policy in the region. It is my conviction that Miller ignores the other forms of fundamentalisms so that Islamism stands out as a free-standing phenomenon, the only thing that is responsible for the sorry state of affairs in the region, the number one threat.

4.5. Power at Work: Double Standards as Realpolitik

Indeed in her book's conclusion, when Miller briefly tackles US foreign policy, she refers to the gap between the US government rhetoric and its pragmatic concern with its own national interests. Unlike with Arab politics, where gaps and contradictions between rhetoric and action would be imputed to their alien culture, to cheating and lying and their utmost commitment to destruction, in the case of the United States, Miller asserts, this is realpolitik. Miller points out:

> In theory, at least, the United States supports those who take "specific steps towards free elections, creating independent judiciaries […] respecting the rights of minorities and guaranteeing individual rights." But policy is one thing; national interests are another. In practice, Washington is likely to continue supporting Saudi Arabia, the major source of its oil, and Egypt, the first Arab state to make peace with Israel, no matter how repressive their governments become.[154]

Her narrative, as I tried to show, does not concern itself with analyzing what the practice of this "realpolitik" means on the Arab grounds and how it is seen there. On the contrary, her narrative rationalizes US foreign policy vis-à-vis Arab governments. For that end she submitted Arabs' current histories and politics to the mechanism of manichean representation, reductionism, and elisions, dismissing Arabs' political and cultural agency and collapsing everything to Islam, Islamism and "their" alien mode of thinking. The logic according to which Arab heads of states are divided into acceptable and unacceptable to "us"

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[153] See Miller, *God Has*, 380, 388, 400.
[154] Miller, *God Has*, 473.

relies on the White House's attitude toward them. Recall that Arab states, targets of American bombs or suffering from sanctions or both, have "megalomaniac" presidents (Iraq's Hussein), vile rulers (Sudan's al-Bashir) or "incompetent" leaders (Qaddafi). The Arab regimes that receive American aid or protection or both are, in fact, unpopular yet led by a "patriot who wanted only the best for his country" (Housni Mubarak), an enlightened ruler (Jordan's Hussein until he sided with Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War), or the naïve Saudi family that is traumatized by Islamic fanaticism.[155]

Her narrative, in the fashion of what Said identifies as Western writings engaged in orientalizing the Orient, primarily displays and, at times, speaks with the power of the US over the Arab states. This is why her narrative *can* disregard the perspective of the Arab people, whose majority is bitter about a United States they come to know through the machinations of its multinational corporations, its military might, and its backing of despot rulers. In fact, her narrative relegates them to the "Arab street" "irrational mobs" or "public rage," a semantic register that disqualifies them as a source of knowledge. In the same vein, context does not apply for Arabs either: it is the so-called Arab tradition and mentality that explain their behavior. "A favorite Arab past time," Miller explains, is "shifting blame for what had happened by spinning elaborate conspiracy theories."[156] No wonder, Miller crowns her research by quoting Bernard Lewis and his favorite metaphor, according to which the conspiratorial-minded Arabs, who excel in asking the wrong questions, would lead themselves "to a role in world history aptly symbolized by the Suicide Bomber." Like with suicide bombers, Arabs are too dangerous to be left alone. As people who are mainly committed to destruction and terrorism, as Miller's narrative strongly illustrates, they become the perfect target of pre-emptive strikes.

5. Milton Viorst: The Boundaries of Skepticism

Milton Viorst, an author of several books and numerous articles for the *Washington Star* and *The New Yorker*, published *Sandcastles: The Arabs in Search of the Modern World* in 1994 as a sequel to his 1987 *Sands of Sorrow: Israel's Journey from Independence.* Viorst's book, which deals with seven Middle Eastern countries and the Palestinians, provides a large space for Arab voices, ranging from rulers, diplomats, to artists, writers, dissidents and people from different walks of life. His own observations on the available information and interpretations on the 1991 Gulf War reveal his reliance on consistency and common sense rather than an exclusive official point of view, whether Iraqi, Kuwaiti, Saudi or American.

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[155] See Miller, *God Has*, 44, 118, 166-67, 232, 343.
[156] Miller, *God Has*, 355.

5.1. The 1990-91 Gulf Crisis in Context

Indeed, the interviews Viorst conducted with several Kuwaitis expose a troubled society which has to come to terms with Iraq's invasion and Arabs' (indifferent) reaction to their plight; yet it has still more to do to face up to the autocracy of its ruler, flagrant discriminations against its minorities and even bearing some responsibility in the Gulf War. With regard to the last point, Viorst quotes at length Ahmed Sa'doun, a leader of the democratic opposition, who is highly critical of al-Sabah's autocratic rule and their provocative policy towards Iraq. Sa'doun says:

> In earlier times, the Sabahs were known as skillful diplomats, able to maneuver to keep the country's enemies at bay. These skills kept Kuwait free from more powerful neighbors—the Iraqis, the Iranians, the Saudis, and earlier the Turks […]. But the diplomacy of the early Sabahs was the product of an open society, when the public had some influence […]. The opposition [his party] doesn't challenge the right of the Sabahs to govern […]. But we do challenge its autocracy, its insistence on running everything alone [clearly a reference to the Emir's suspension of the constitution in 1986]. Two or three men make all decisions, and they inevitably make mistakes. If you provoke the Iraqis, you'd better figure out a way to diffuse their anger. I believe we could have avoided this catastrophe. Taking the Iraqis on was a bad mistake.[157]

All these issues present a Kuwait that is more than the synecdochical "plucky little State," which was saved by the US. After reading and listening to several versions about the Gulf War's causes, Viorst states: "A greater weight of evidence […] leads to [the] conclusion: that the Sabahs believed that, whatever they did, the United States would back them up. And so they were careless, offering pretexts to Saddam to do his dirty deed […]. America's military guarantees were crucial to Kuwait's negotiating posture."[158]

Moreover, unlike Judith Miller who could read Arabs' rejection of the War option only in terms of total endorsement of Saddam Hussein's invasion and subsequently explained it as part of that irrational hatred Arabs bear vis-à-vis the West, Viorst was able to see through the multiple lines in Arabs' stand. He observes, for instance, that the congress held by the Jordanian Arab National Democratic Alliance (Janda) was not anti-American, as the State

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[157] In Milton Viorst, *Sandcastles: The Arabs in Search of the Modern World* (New York: SyracuseUniversity Press, 1994) 256.

[158] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 277-79. The posture, to which Viorst refers, alludes to Kuwait's insistence on oil overproduction in violation of OPEC production quotas, a violation that badly hurt Iraqi shaky economy after nearly a decade of war against Iran. In addition to its oil policy, Kuwait did not show any interest in solving the dispute over the Rumaila oilfields and refused to consider forgiving Iraq's debt, granted at the time Saddam Hussein was waging war on Iran. See Bishara A. Bahbah, "The Crisis in the Gulf - Why Iraq Invaded Kuwait?" *Beyond the Storm: A Gulf Crisis Reader*, 50-54. For a critical reading of the Gulf Crisis that argues that the

Department announced, but was in favor of an Arab solution.[159] And as to why the Jordanian people, the Janda and the Monarch as well were in favor of an Arab solution, one does not need to search in the Arab mentality for an answer; as Judith Miller did. Their position becomes understandable if, for instance, one takes into consideration the cost of the war to Jordanian economy. And that is exactly what Viorst does:

> From the day Saddam invaded Kuwait, Jordanian analysts recognized that the crisis could lead, quite literally, to the country's economic collapse […]. In 1978, after Egypt withdrew from the struggle against Israel, Jordan's Arab neighbors in the Gulf agreed to give it an annual subsidy of $ 1.25 billion in recognition of its services as a "front line" defender […]. But they never paid more than a fraction of the pledge, and in recent years have paid nothing at all.What saved Jordan was the export of its skilled Palestinians, three hundred thousand of whom worked in the Gulf, who sent home more than a billion dollars a year, out of the total national income of $4 billion. The Gulf crisis was expected to cut these funds at least in half. In addition, the UN embargo on exports to Iraq—which Jordan honored despite its reservations—cost the country several hundred million a year, as did the end of transit traffic from Jordan's port of Aqaba to Iraq. With the collapse of tourism, the government counted losses at more than half of the GNP, which proportionally was far greater than the losses of any other country.[160]

Unfortunately, even though Viorst looks at some geopolitical and economic factors in the context of the Gulf Crisis, his analysis easily gives way to simplistic divisions of Arab communities along religious lines and generalizations such as the inherent backwardness of Islam.

5.2. Back to the Muslims' Threat

Interestingly Lebanon, a country of multiple confessions and over which several neighboring states have some specific designs, proves to be the locus that showcases Islam's aggressiveness to the experts' eyes. Viorst points out: "Nationalism among the Arabs [during the 1920s] had emerged as a major political phenomenon in the Middle East, and the Arabs of Lebanon—that is, the Sunnis and Shiites—were among its leaders. Inside Greater Lebanon, the Arabs turned *aggressively* eastward, chiefly toward Damascus […]. Meanwhile the Christians, heavily dependent on France, faced *resolutely* west."[161] Viorst's view on Islam is a point I will tackle later. Now concerning the statement above, besides its insidious

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(US/UN) war option was not inevitable, see Majid Khadduri and Edmund Ghareeb, *War in the Gulf, 1990-91: The Iraq-Kuwait Conflict and its Implications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
[159] See Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 289.
[160] Viorst, *Sandcastles,* 299.
[161] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 165. My emphasis.

qualifications, Viorst presents Arab nationalism at the beginning of the twentieth century as a movement of Sunnis and Shi'ites, whom he identifies as Arabs. Lebanese Christians, his research reveals, feel themselves as Mediterranean non-Arabs, who are under constant Muslim threat.[162]

The historian Philip Hitti, among others, points out that Arab nationalism coalesced around the Arabic language and considered Arab-speaking people as one nation. "It began," Hitti observes, "as a purely intellectual movement having for pioneers mostly Syrian intellectuals, more specifically Christian Lebanese, educated at the American university of Beirut and operating in Egypt. Its early manifestations in the 1870s were revived interest in the Arabic classics and research in Islamic history […]. Everywhere the movement fed upon resistance to Western imperialism."[163] Hitti also explains that the promoters of Arab nationalism were predominantly intellectuals of Christian background because these were more amenable to Western ideas, because they, after all, shared with Europe a common heritage of Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions.[164] Western nationalism, in this context, was appropriated as an intellectual means to resist Western imperialism, hence its adoption by Christian and subsequently Muslim elite classes. Yet, besides its articulation of Arab self-rule and its pride in the Arab heritage, Paul Salem points out that Arab nationalism prior to 1948 was rather conservatively oriented because "in class terms, it expressed the interests of the traditional Syrian landed and merchant upper class, which found Arabism an effective weapon against Turkish domination and hoped it would do the same against the French and the British."[165] No wonder that this version of Arab nationalism held within itself the seeds for future contests and conflicts. Typically, like with other experts this chapter deals with, Viorst's look at Lebanon does not consider class and interest conflicts which more often than not cut across creed orientations, and prefers to reduce the country to Muslims vs. Christians. By doing so, Viorst's narrative reproduces the image of Christian Lebanese as a

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[162] See his interview with the Maronite priest Etienne Sakr in *Sandcastles*, 165-66.
[163] Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (1937; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 755. Indeed, the Arab Christian scholar Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883), whose writings are considered to spur the Arab national movement "warned against religious fanaticism [and] argued that an Arab cultural revival would guard against European cultural domination and prevent the fragmentation of Syrian society." Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994) 32-33. The idea of nationalism was not restricted only to Arab Christians but was also adopted by Muslim scholars, such as Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-73) by whom, however, the nationalist idea was articulated as Egyptian, not Arab, nationalism. According to Paul Salem, al-Tahtawi was "one of the first to refer consistently to an Egyptian fatherland (*watan*) and an Egyptian nation (*ummah*)." Salem, 32. Other Islamist modernists, whose names are linked with the emergence of Arab nationalism, are Mohammed Abduh (1849-1905), Rashid Reda (1865-1935), and Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi. See also Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1991) 304-10.
[164] Hitti, *History*, 748-49.
[165] Salem, *Bitter Legacy*, 40-41.

"beleaguered outpost" in the midst of a hostile Islamic/Arab Orient and aggressive nationalist Muslims.

Another Arab country that is represented as an isolated island in the midst of the violent sea of the Arab World is, according to Viorst, Egypt. Like Miller, Viorst's Egypt is conveniently reduced to the agreements its leaders, that is Sadat and Mubarak, made with Israel and the US. By signing a peace agreement with Israel, and later supporting the US during the Gulf War, Egypt cannot be part of the irrational world of the Arabs, according to the expert's logic. "Egypt today," Viorst states, "thinks of its culture as more worldly than that of its Arab neighbors [some other neighboring countries certainly do think the same]. Even its spoken vernacular is a dialect that other Arabs have difficulty understanding."[166] From this statement, one would infer that all the Arabs speak the same dialect and have no problems understanding each other except for the worldly Egyptians with their difficult dialect, who become therefore some sort of Arab outsiders. Why is this so, whereas it is common knowledge that Gamal Abdel Nasser's speeches held in vernacular language moved people much beyond the borders of Egypt? Moreover, one of the flagrant realities in the Arab world, flagrant at least to somebody who understands Arabic, is the widespread dominance of Cairo's colloquial due to the fact that the Egyptian cinema is by far the most popular in the Arab world. In this regard Viola Shafik, who works on Arab cinema, remarks: "Cairo's vernacular also dominates the screens beyond Egypt. The success of Egyptian cinema in neighboring countries has made its language the *lingua franca* of commercial Arab cinema."[167] So why does Viorst not see and recognize the popularity of the Egyptian or at least Cairo's vernacular in nearly all Arab countries? Or does his misperception betray an attempt to isolate Egypt, as the land that made "peace" with Israel and is at the same time a strong US ally, from the aggressive "Islamic/Arab Orient" the way he did with the Lebanese Christians?

Indeed, if the experts appear to be in agreement to mete out special treatment to Egypt for its two latest leaders' "right choices" vis-à-vis Israel and the US, Lebanon proves to be the country where they feel the duty to take sides in the conflicts besetting the region instead of accounting for them. Like Robin Wright and Judith Miller, Viorst never tires of emphasizing who backs Syria and Hizbollah, but keeps silent on the Phalange's backers. The readers are dutifully reminded of "Iranian-backed Hezbollah," and again "Hezbollah militiamen loyal to Iran." In the same vein, "Moscow […] [goes on] rearming Syria, while Khomeini's Iran,

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[166] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 91.
[167] Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1998) 85-86.

Syria's ally, set up bases in the Beqa'a [the valley of Lebanon]."[168] The Israeli-backed Phalange militia appears under the misleading name of "Lebanese forces," the very title Israelis understandably prefer to use. In fact, upon his meeting with some Phalange militiamen, Viorst does not use the opportunity to reveal that it is Israel which arms and supports the Phalange. He puts in instead that these were "the Lebanese forces, a self-appointed Christian militia independent of the Lebanese government."[169] As to why Hizbollah is called by its name whereas the Phalange should be called Lebanese forces, even though they operate independently of the Lebanese government is one of those typical contradictions Viorst's narrative does not bother to account for. Yet, these elisions perpetuate the view that it is only Iran and Syria that have some specific designs on Lebanon, never Israel.

5.3. Terrorism from the Occupier's Point of View

Similarly, terrorism is what "they/Palestinians" do to "us/Israelis," in which case Israel logically responds with legitimate raids that seek to stop the waves of terrorism. Viorst writes:

> in 1968 […] the Israeli army *raided* the Beirut airport, symbol of Lebanon's sovereignty and prosperity, *in retaliation* for acts of *terrorism* committed by Lebanon-based Palestinians […]. During their first twenty years of residence, Palestinian refugees had not been a major problem, but after the Arabs' devastating defeat in the Six-Day War, their political arm—the Palestinian Liberation Organization—decided to initiate *terrorist warfare*, which it euphemistically called "armed struggle,"on its own.[170]

As in Wright's and Miller's versions, the official Israeli point of view reigns supreme in Viorst's rendering of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, even though his chapter on the Palestinians devotes a large space to Palestinian voices, Viorst manages to shrug off their grievances with a typically colonialist trope, namely "their" disinterest in history.[171] Indeed, even if Palestinians speak in Viorst's narrative about their lives under occupation, they are never allowed to voice their version of their historical dispossession and displacement. His sources when it comes to history is the conventional Zionist version, which, as Said explains, "has always meant a blocking operation, by which the Palestinian cannot be heard from (or represent himself) directly on the world stage."[172] Apparently in a gesture to explain why he

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[168] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 158, 162, 178.
[169] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 158-59.
[170] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 172. My emphasis.
[171] See also his subchapter "Who Decides?" (226-32) where Viorst imputes the possible failure of the Israeli-Palestinian "peace talks" in the beginning of the 1990s to the difficulty of knowing who decides in the occupied territories. Here Viorst clearly reproduces one of the traditional Zionist answers which repeatedly explained that Israeli leaders, since the foundation of Israel, were unable to reach any agreement with the Arabs because "there was no one to talk to on the other side." See Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 28-53.
[172] Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1980) 39.

cannot take the Palestinians seriously, Viorst recounts the following anecdote. While visiting Kafr Ain in the West Bank, he noticed a building domed in the Ottoman style. Curious, Viorst stopped and asked a passerby who could not provide him with an answer. His reaction is, "Except for Koranic history, Arabs, in my experience, do not have the fascination that most Westerners have for history, not even their own. The most the woman [whom he had asked about the building] allowed was that she had lived her whole life in Kafr Ain, and the building was there long before she was born."[173] Such a sweeping statement, in a land where the claims are made in the name of historical rights to land, sweepingly renders Palestinians, represented by one woman, as unappreciative of their history and who therefore merit the life of poor refugees or the colonized status they have.

In fact, echoing the Israeli traditional version of history, based on the denial of Palestinian political rights, Viorst points out that "Palestinian nationhood was an alien notion, and they never rallied to defend it […]. While Zionist leaders [in the 1930s] presided over a small but steady immigration, the relentless purchase of land and the recruitment and training of a secret army, the Palestinians had no strategy but to resort to periodic violence, itself random and undirected."[174] Extending this simplistic but harmful version of ignorant and aimless Palestinians vs. smart and organized Zionists, Viorst makes full use of the blame-the-victim trope. Palestinians were not dispossessed and displaced but, Viorst claims, simply "fled from their towns and villages […]. Arab commanders did nothing to stop the flight and may even have encouraged it." All that Viorst can allow with regard to that last point is a brief reference to recent Israeli scholarship which speaks of the fact that "the Jewish forces had orders to *scatter* the Palestinians, seeing in the chaos of battle an opportunity to drive the local population from the land."[175]

Yet, revisionist Israeli historians unearthed more than just Viorst's carefully chosen words of the Jewish forces carrying orders to scatter the Palestinians. With regard to his claim about the Palestinians' failure to express their sense of belonging and their aimless attacks on the Zionist leaders and settlers, Avi Shlaim, who relies extensively on the Israeli archive, writes how the founding fathers of Israel, such as Ze'ev Jabotinsky and David Ben-Gurion, spoke of and recognized the power of Arab resistance. Hence Jabotinsky's answer with "The Iron Wall," a series of articles published in 1923, and Ben Gurion's recognition of the

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[173] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 199.
[174] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 203.
[175] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 204.

national character of the Arab opposition to Zionism after the outbreak of the Arab Revolt in 1936. [176]

With reference to the Palestinians' dispossession, Shlaim goes through the details of the conflict that erupted after the UN vote on November 29, 1947 in favor of partition. He speaks of Plan D that was prepared by the commanders of the Haganah in March 1948 to escalate the offensive strategy. Under the light of Plan D and other documents, Shlaim writes:

> There were many reasons for the Palestinian exodus, including the early departure of the Palestinian leaders when the going got tough, but the most important reason was Jewish military pressure. Plan D was not a political blueprint for the expulsion of Palestine's Arabs: it was a military plan with military and territorial objectives. However, by ordering the capture of Arab cities and the destruction of villages, it both permitted and justified the forcible expulsion of Arab civilians. By the end of 1948 the number of Palestinian refugees had swollen to around 700,000. [177]

Even though the findings of the historian Shlaim are by no means a unique phenomenon, especially since Israel's release of the official documents, Viorst still abides by the conventional Zionist version that puts the blame on the Palestinians' backwardness and their voluntary flight from their lands. [178]

5.4. The Rhetoric That Is Fact

However, once in other Arab countries, Viorst pays meticulous attention to the rhetoric held by Arab leaders and confronts it with the policies these latter enact. Indeed, in his chapters on Syria and Iraq, Viorst correctly puzzles over the use of the term "freedom" by the Ba'athist ideologues, such as Michel Aflaq and Elias Farah. He understandably kept pondering over the Ba'athists' usage of that term because both in Syria and Iraq the historical records of that party as well as the daily life point to massive repression and human rights

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[176] Shlaim points out that Jabotinsky's "The Iron Wall," especially its first section "On the Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)," recognizes the impossibility of reaching an agreement with the Arabs of Palestine at that time since the settlers seek no less than turning the Palestinian territory to the Land of Israel. Jabotinsky states: "Every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement. This is how the Arabs will behave and go on behaving so long as they possess a gleam of hope that they can prevent 'Palestine' from becoming the Land of Israel." Accordingly Jabotinsky argues: "We must either suspend our settlement efforts or continue them without paying attention to the mood of the natives. Settlement can thus develop under the protection of a force that is not dependent on the local population, behind an iron wall which they will be powerless to break down." Similarly Ben Gurion told the Jewish Agency Executive on May 19, 1936 during the Arab Revolt that: "We and they [Palestinians] want the same thing: We both want Palestine. And that is the fundamental conflict." Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 13, 18. See also Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 331-2.

[177] Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 31.

[178] Another source is, for example, Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

abuses. After conducting several interviews and comparing several of Aflaq's statements, Viorst argues that the bandied about term freedom "was a notion of freedom *for the state* to mobilize the citizenry, in any way that it saw fit, for what Aflaq called 'the higher Arab national interest.' Insofar as Saddam Hussein may be said to subscribe at all to the tenets of Ba'ath ideology, this last definition, a rationale for virtually any abuse by the state of the individual, is surely the one he prefers."[179] The simple procedure of checking the governors' rhetoric against how they govern their states makes Viorst reach the logical conclusion that the Ba'athist notions of "freedom" and "higher Arab national interest" reveal how dictators use language at their will. Hence "freedom" means their freedom to abuse their people and "national interest" stands for their personal interest.

Yet, like Miller and Wright, Viorst suspends his critical approach when he tackles the American designs on the Middle East. While it is true that Viorst points out the evidence of US involvement in encouraging Kuwait to provoke Iraq, his analysis, however, does not examine what lies behind the much used terms of "American security," "American interests," "international community," etc. Perhaps he realizes that these terms, once under scrutiny, would reveal their link with the geographically loaded terms of "the West," "the Western world" and "Western mission to civilize the rest of the world," the very rhetoric that accompanied the European capitalist/colonialist project of exploiting and plundering weaker countries. Whatever the links could be, Viorst does not raise the question. For instance, he writes "In the summer of 1986 […] Washington's position was that an Iranian victory over Iraq would be harmful to *the security* of the United Sates."[180] Shouldn't he have paused here to ponder over the use of the term security in this context, especially in that he refers to Washington's "tilting" towards Iraq and at the same time secretly selling weapons to Iran? Aren't these double-dealings textbook examples of a superpower's abuse which does not have anything to do with US security, unless that word means something else? In the words of Phyllis Bennis, "Washington had, through several subsequent administrations, essentially encouraged the Iran-Iraq war to rage unchecked, as millions were slaughtered…. Of the two parties, Iraq was far more desperate for military assistance. The Pentagon viewed its pro-Iraqi tilt, and the military largesse provided to Baghdad as a result, as necessary to keep the war alive."[181] It seems to me that the act of keeping a war alive speaks more to furthering one's imperial designs rather than maintaining one's security.

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[179] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 31.
[180] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 46. My emphasis.
[181] Phyllis Bennis, *Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today's UN* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2000) 23.

In another instance where Viorst writes about the UN reports on the deadly impact of sanctions on post-1991 Iraq, he comments "Notwithstanding, the international community continued to make clear that, as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power, it would make no more than minimal efforts to relieve the sufferings."[182] Given the fact that the real decisionmaker was neither the international community nor the international coalition but Washington, Viorst's language internationalizes what has been rather unilateral. In other words, if Viorst submitted the phrase of the "international community" to the same scrutiny he applied with the Ba'athist's use of language, he would easily find that this community is really a vehicle for the world's most powerful governments and corporations, headed by the US, in joint-venture with the unelected heads of states from the south, who correctly see their participation in the empire's war an asset for their dictatorships.[183] As to that conditional phrase that stipulates a regime change "as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power," was that ever mandated in any UN resolution? And if that was the US and the UK condition, as a plethora of records clearly indicates, why does it then wear the glittering aura of international community? Viorst posits that the US conducts a rational foreign policy, despite some minor blunders, through which it expresses the will of the "international community," and keeps vigilant on American, and even the world's, security. The Arabs, on the other hand, who are primarily heedless of their own history, spinners of deceptive rhetoric, and holders of an aggressive and backward religion need thereby a different approach to assess their politics.

5.5. The Reality That Is Sandcastles

No wonder, Viorst comes up with the title of *Sandcastles,* one of the key (colonialist) tropes that projects the world inhabited by the "Other," in this case the Arabs, as doomed to some inevitable destruction. Indeed, in such a case why bother about the US encouraging wars in that region, since they are doomed to destruction. Already in the beginning of the twentieth century several American travel writers predicted "the fall of the House of Arabs" in front of the assaults of European rationalism that would inevitably swallow up Arabs' fragile lives in the interstices of irrationalism. Edith Wharton, for instance, knowingly declared once she cast her eyes on a hazy Morocco, her narrative arrested in a mirage-like framework: "Buildings, people, customs seem all about to crumble and fall of their own weight."[184] Viorst's image seems at first not a sweeping one: the sandcastles stand for the Arab political states. He correctly points out: "The states have been as fragile as sandcastles. They have produced

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[182] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 329.
[183] See Bennis, *Calling The Shots*, xx.
[184] Edith Wharton, *In Morocco* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987) 76.

tyrants and secret-police agencies and corrupt bureaucracies that rule over restive populations by imposing a suffocating conformity, both intellectual and political."[185] This is of course well-observed; yet instead of looking at the material causes behind the existence of such sandcastles, some of which are well-armed and protected from their "restive populations" by US intelligence or military bases, Viorst makes the typical move of pointing to Islam as the phenomenon to blame.

He observes, for instance, that Muslims' "intellectual weakness [is] a by-product of a basic antagonism to creative thinking that had come increasingly to characterize Islam."[186] Then drawing on Gustave von Grunebaum, he asserts "Islam—the very word means 'surrender' or 'submission' to God's will—succeeded where Christianity failed in shackling man's powers of reasoning. It was a success for which Muslim society has continued to pay heavily […]. Arabs have often noted an intrinsic disposition to conservatism, if not fatalism, within their culture. They are uncomfortable with intellectual challenge."[187] How can such a tendency coexist with the historical record of thriving ancient Islamic civilizations? Curiously enough Viorst brings it up just in order to comment that it ironically helped Western Europe to dust off the cover of the Dark Ages. In this way, dynamic exchanges between cultures are dismissed with a stroke of pen. Viorst comments, "In one of the great ironies of history, the philosophical spadework done by Islamic thinkers in the Abbasid age, along with the texts of Greeks, made the journey from Baghdad to Western Europe, where they were instrumental in terminating the Dark Ages by ushering in the intellectual explosion known as the Renaissance."[188]

Another great irony then is that Western liberal discourse of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was also instrumental in providing the colonized intellectuals with some effective tools to plead and fight for independence and freedom. In the words of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin:

> European imperialism took various forms in different times and places and proceeded both through conscious planning and contingent occurrences. As a result of this complex development something occurred for which the *plan* of imperial expansion had not bargained: the immensely prestigious and powerful imperial culture found itself appropriated in projects of counter-colonial resistance which drew upon the many indigenous local and hybrid *processes* of self-determination to defy, erode and

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[185] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, xii.
[186] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 67.
[187] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 69.
[188] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 68.

sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge.[189]

The point is that intellectual appropriations, which might have some touch of irony, can by no means be reduced to an exceptional event, since they inform cultural crossings and encounters that are still going on.

Viorst's writing, however, veers off whenever a more complicated lineup emerges that would necessarily defy some of his statements; such as, Lebanese Christians "faced *resolutely* west," or "the Arabs turned *aggressively* eastward." Or only Arab dictators constantly abuse language and people. The aim behind pursuing such a simplistic dichotomous course seems to build a strong case about the total responsibility of an Islam that stands out as essentially inferior to the "West." He maintains:

> a strong argument can be made that Islam, the heart of Arab culture, sets the limits of personal and social development in the Arab world. Despotism, the Arabs' most pervasive political institution, is surely its offshoot, even though Islam has sometimes been at odds with its despots. […] institutional Christianity and Judaism have retreated over the centuries before the assaults of reason, and made compromises with secular culture. Islam, however, had defeated secular, nationalist trends within its culture by the eleventh century, and has been successful ever since in fending off their rebirth. […] the essence of Arab society has, withal, changed very little over the centuries […]. Indeed, in recent years more Arabs have come to recognize that building a civilization on tyranny or fanaticism, however indigenous they may be, is like building sandcastles.[190]

Unfortunately Viorst's argument draws on a very solid archive animated today by American neo-Orientalists who reiterate the thesis of Islam as anti-rationality, anti-democracy, and anti-development, that is anti-Western. Indeed, what Yahya Sadowski observes about the neo-Orientalists' obsession to exclusively ascribe the current crisis to their representation of Islam fits Viorst's work as well. Sadowski notes: "It is long past time for serious scholars to abandon the quest for the mysterious 'essences' that prevent democratization in the Middle East and turn to the matter-of-fact itemization of the forces that promote or retard this process."[191] Clearly, if Viorst were to heed Sadowski's advise and contextualize his analysis, his image of the sandcastles would not only fit Arab regimes and their states but also include the US foreign policy that has heavily invested in the status quo and lack of democracy in the Arab world. Yet, by reiterating today's fashionable

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[189] Qtd. in Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of the Global Capitalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997) 59. The emphases are the authors'.
[190] Viorst, *Sandcastles*, 357-59.
[191] Yahya Sadowski, "The New Orientalism and the Democracy Debate," *Political Islam. Essays from the Middle East*, ed. Joel Beinin and Joe Stork (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997) 43.

representation of Islam (itself tapping into a long history of demonization) as an inferior religion with reference to the West, as well as the stagnation of the Arab society, the culprit in the current crises becomes easily identifiable.

6. Thomas Friedman: From the Middle East to the Lexus

Thomas Friedman, the *New York Times'* columnist and Middle East expert, seems to be among the few journalists who turn to the matter-of-fact issues instead of digging for some aberrant mentality and an irrational and inferior religion to explain the Arab world's travails. Indeed, a case in point is Friedman's comment on the rise of Islamic radicalism in *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (second edition of 1998):

> Islamic fundamentalism, I am convinced, is at root a secular socioeconomic phenomenon. Yes, there are some true religious zealots among the fundamentalists. But I believe that most of their adherents are drawn to the Islamic banner as a vehicle for some very mundane, secular protests—about unemployment, corruption, disparities in wealth, and brutality of government.It was the economic crisis in Egypt, Algeria, and Gaza that caused Islamic fundamentalism, not the other way round […]. An Algerian statesman once put it to me quite starkly: "Our country had rampant unemployment, and this left our youth with a choice: they could either go to the mosque or go to Europe.Those who could get visas and jobs went to Europe; those who couldn't went to the mosque."[192]

Similarly his analysis of the Middle East political practice, despite his toying with the reductionist image that this part of the world could produce only two political types: the messiah and the merchant, goes directly to the source of all ills.[193] On the one hand, there are the Arab autocratic regimes that are not bound by any constitutional framework and whose fundamental interest lies in maintaining their power at whatever cost.[194] On the other hand, Israel, a democratic country, is an occupying and expansionist power that wants to keep by all means the status quo which denies the Palestinians their right to self-determination. After spending a couple of years in Israel as the *New York Times'* Jerusalem bureau chief, Friedman writes:

> I began to ask myself what the difference was between Labor and Likud, between Rabin and Shamir, between Shamir and Peres, or between Peres and Rabin? They all called the West Bank "Judea and Samaria"; they all believed that Israel's military occupation was benign, "the most enlightened in history"; and they all seemed prepared to set their ideological differences aside and maintain the status quo forever […]. The differences between

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[192] Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (London: HarperCollins, 1989) 548-49
[193] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 504.
[194] See Friedman, *From Beirut*, 91, 145.

Ben Gurion [Labor] and Begin [Likud] were more over tactics
than ends.[195]

Equally important Friedman recognizes that when power, and Israel is the only military power in the region, becomes combined with a self-perception of being a victim, it can be dangerous. Hence, Friedman speaks of Menachem Begin as a victim with an F-15, both of which made him wreak havoc on Lebanon while talking about going after "Hitler in his bunker" and correcting the indignities Jewish People suffered for centuries long and restoring Jewish pride.[196] Yet, certainly other components, which are also adding to that already dangerous combination of military power and the self-perception of being a victim, are the American mainstream media's as well as the successive US administrations' solid support of Israel. Indeed, Friedman writes: "Someone who sees himself as a victim will almost never morally evaluate himself or put limits on his own actions. Why should he? He is the victim."[197] I will add to this interesting equation that being supported at all levels by powerful institutions, such as the US mainstream media and a superpower, the United States, certainly encourages and even urges that same person not to put limits on his own actions. As Friedman bluntly puts it, "why should he? He is backed by a Superpower."

Nevertheless, Friedman's assessment of the US media, which he did represent in his position as a bureau chief in Israel for the most powerful American newspaper, does not probe the systemic distortion of information which typifies the media's coverage of the Middle East. He argues instead that Western media is obsessed about covering Israel, which leads, according to him, to a saturation coverage of the country. Friedman then imputes the overreporting of the region to Israel as being part of the Biblical super story. He argues that "the Jewish return to this particular land unleashes so many passions, touches so many memories, and is relevant for so many people in the West, Israel simply cannot avoid being extraordinarily newsworthy."[198] Then taking note of the Palestinians' frustration and confusion who see themselves constantly under the spotlight without the sympathy they expect the coverage should entail, Friedman solves the puzzle by explaining that all this attention the Palestinians receive is because they have the Jews as enemy. "The Palestinians," Friedman avers, "simply are not part of the biblical super story through which the West looks at the world, and it is the super story that determines whose experiences get interpreted and whose don't, whose pain is felt and whose is ignored. That is why when it comes to winning

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[195] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 257-59.
[196] See Friedman, *From Beirut*, 143-44.
[197] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 144.
[198] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 438. See also 433-38.

the sympathies of the West the Palestinians can never quite compete with the Jews, no matter how hard they try and no matter how much they suffer."[199] Friedman's apolitical dismissal of the Palestinians' suffering focuses on a "biblical superstory," so there is no need to deal with the more complex super story of the media's politics coalescing around power and hegemony. It is also unnecessary to talk about powerful journalists' political interests in siding with Israel, regardless of the facts, like A. M. Rosenthal and William Safire of *The New York Times*, who are both right-wing Zionist supporters of the Likud Party. Indeed, Edward Said is right when he observes that Friedman's apologetic explication of the pro-Israel Western media's coverage sounds like "when you come to think of it, not many people have the privilege—and they [Palestinians] are 'lucky' to have had the Jews as their enemy."[200]

Additionally, Friedman fails to dissect the US role in undermining the Palestinian right to self-determination. In his narrative the US emerges like an honest broker that just does not know how to proceed in dealing with the people of the Middle East, be it Israelis or Arabs. Hence his advice: "America still has much to offer the Middle East […]. The question is how. The answer, I believe, is by America learning to play several diplomatic roles simultaneously. She must learn to think like an obstetrician, behave like a friend, bargain like a grocer, and fight like a real son-of-a- bitch."[201] Ignoring the long record of the US constant vetoing of UN resolutions against Israel, including the invasion of Lebanon he covered for *The New York Times*, besides the generous military and financial aid the US almost uninterruptedly provides Israel with, Friedman turns to other examples which if they do illustrate anything, then it is how language can be used to make two similar situations look very different.

Explaining his idea about the different roles the US should play, Friedman declares that George Schultz, then Secretary of State, played the role of a friend of Israel well; yet he failed to switch roles in his tete-a-tete with Shamir and become the grocer who bargains hard to make Shamir accept his demands. In Friedman's words: "Despite coming to Israel three times in early 1988 to try to convince Shamir to attend an international peace conference, Secretary of State Shultz never established with Shamir a price for saying no. So, naturally, Shamir said no."[202] Luckily, Friedman points out, then came the administration of George H. W. Bush and James Baker whose emotional deafness vis-à-vis Israel enabled them to switch the roles in order to establish their price and impose it as well. Baker made Rabin come to the Madrid peace conference, which was held in October 1991, and imposed on the Israeli Prime

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[199] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 445-46.
[200] Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 363.
[201] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 498-99.
[202] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 505.

Minister the following conditions "no PLO officials could sit at the negotiating table […] Israel would not have to freeze settlements or take any other action on the ground as a precondition for the peace conference; the United Nations representative could attend only as a silent observer[…].; and even the Palestinians who took part could not attend as an independent delegation but had to be formally under the flag of Jordan."[203] Indeed a lot of things to press on Rabin, who certainly complied because after all he did not have to give up anything.

What all this is about is avoiding the crux of the matter which paradoxically enough Friedman is aware of: Israel's power and arrogance as well as the US blessing make the occupation possible and ensure its perpetuation. Indeed, he points out that Israelis ignore Arafat not only because "some cannot hear him and others do not trust him, but also because most of them don't want to hear him." Then he asks the question "When might the Israelis be ready to hear Arafat's message? Only when they have to."[204] Yet, if one logical implication for this thought is that the US, as the main financing source of Israel, should use its leverage and force Israel to end its occupation, Friedman instead reiterates US official policy with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that stipulates that the two sides in the conflict should first want peace then the US can interfere for mediation. Friedman states: "We cannot create peace settlements for them; there is no artificial insemination in diplomacy."[205] No wonder Rabin went to the Madrid Conference in 1991 and even signed the Oslo Peace Accord in 1993 while his government unabatedly went ahead with building more settlements and holding on "to its prerogative, as the ruling power, to shape the future. And it has shaped it with a vengeance:" remarks Amira Hass, "between the peak years of the Oslo negotiations and implementation of the agreements, 1992 to 1996, the Labor-led government allowed a 50 percent increase in the number of Jewish settlers in Gaza and the West Bank, from 100,000 to 150,000 (which does not include the settlements in East Jerusalem) [the largest ones]."[206]

Friedman's analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict remains, however, an interesting one. Indeed, despite some acute observations and his willingness to debunk some Israeli myths and the sporadic sympathy he bestows on Palestinians, his writing remains a demonstration of his power. Friedman sometimes seems to know and understand what grieves people on both sides, but Israel remains the story that matters, and Palestinians have to shrink themselves and adapt. Interestingly, Friedman's second book *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (2000), concentrates on the real super story, that is, Americanization and globalization and the

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[203] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 536.
[204] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 407-409.
[205] Friedman, *From Beirut*, 499.

peoples whose lives matter on this earth. Putting aside his expertise on the Middle East in favor of looking at the world through, what he calls, a "multilens perspective," Friedman thought while flying with James Baker in this latter's airplane over Israel and viewing the West Bank: "[…] in raw power terms, this place [the West Bank] isn't very important anymore; Interesting, yes. But geopolitically important, no."[207] Now in the New World Order where the "supermarkets" and the "electronic herds" have the major say, the places to visit regularly in order to stay abreast of events are, according to Friedman, Silicon Valley and the world capitals—Moscow, Beijing, London and Jerusalem.[208] Apparently, events such as the Israeli occupation and the Palestinians' resistance are primitive, hence of no concern to the world of globalization where anyway even if the "peace process," that is the repackaging of occupation, inevitably falters, Israeli foreign investments are doing well.[209] In this globalized world where high-tech knowledge can be exported by a modem, Friedman enthuses, Israel's "neighbors" are California, Japan, China and India.

With the help of his multilens perspective, Friedman argues that thanks to the democratization of information we have entered an age where people anywhere can see how everyone else is living. Accordingly, people will no longer gobble up their regimes' propaganda and take their austere and backward life for granted. As he puts it "masses are not going to sustain failed governments for long—not in an age when they can see how everyone else is living."[210] (Never mind about the people who are forced to live under the yoke of successful occupation or the very poor people who want to flee their failed governments and end up in the bottom of the Mediterranean or in detention centers.) For Friedman globalization brings about democratization and prosperity for all because "[t]he electronic Herd [the majority of whom resides in the North] will, on balance, pressure countries to put in place better software and operating system that constitute the building blocks of democracy."[211]

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[206] Hass, *Drinking the Sea At Gaza*, 346.

[207] Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000) 21. With the multilens perspective, Friedman means to look at the world by paying attention to five dimensions, namely, the financial markets, politics, culture, national security and technology. In this regard the stories Friedman brought with him from the Middle East were mainly about men and women who are anxious to join the global economy and "plug into the Electronic Herd." Ironically, it is the tragedy of 9/11 that made Friedman again pay attention to the Middle East. For as he puts it: "The events of 9/11 were particularly compelling for me because they brought together my two strongest interests—globalization and the Middle East." *Longitudes and Attitudes: Exploring the World After September 11.* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2002) x.

[208] Friedman, *Lexus,* 22-23. Friedman uses the term Supermarkets for the key global financial centers, such as Wall Street, London, Frankfurt, Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong. With the appellation "the Electronic Herds" he means the "millions of investors moving money around the world with the click of a mouse" (13). See also the chapter, "The Electronic Herd,"112-42.

[209] See Friedman, *Lexus,* 261-2.

[210] Friedman, *Lexus,* 450.

[211] Friedman, *Lexus,* 168.

By his celebrating globalization as the phenomenon that brings along democracy and better life to the rest of the world, Friedman's narrative becomes entangled in, to expand Homi Bhabha's term, the ambivalence of globalization discourse. Since this corporate-driven globalization is in reality about the concentration of power and wealth into fewer and fewer hands, it can by no means live up to its rhetoric of making the world a better and more democratic place. To draw on Bhabha again, at the height of British imperialism, the ambivalence of colonial discourse lays in bridging the gap between the post-Enlightenment language at home and the realities of colonialism concomitant with force and violence abroad. The ambivalence of colonial discourse, Bhabha explains, depends on ensuring the "strategic failure" of the civilizing mission, wherein "to anglicize is emphatically not to be English."[212] The non-English populations were expected to learn to become English and civilized in an impossible way. Similarly, the ambivalence of the globalization/Americanization discourse lies in bridging the gap between the language of human rights and economic growth and the realities of dealing with the Third World as incidentally sitting on "our" oil and other natural resources or reserves of cheap labor for Western corporations. Today one of the "strategic failures" of the globalizing mission is that the US aims at spreading globalization to better the whole world and it is the Third World that it is not doing enough to globalize. More than that, this Third World is ungratefully involving the US in a perpetual "war on terrorism." Indeed, Friedman's reaction to Ramzi Yousef who was involved in the World Trade Center bombing of 1993 is to call on more globalization under American hegemony:

> Is there any defense against such people? It would be nice to believe that with the right sort of social and economic or cultural programs, societies could eliminate the motivation, the resentment and the rage of all those who feel steamrolled by Americanization-globalization. But we cannot. People like Ramzi Yousef have a very high degree of motivation or depravity. Feeling their pain will not turn them around, and neither will social work. There will always be a hard core of Ramzi Yousefs. The only defense is to isolate that hard core from the much larger society around them. The only way to do that is by making sure that as much of that society as possible has a stake in the globalization system.[213]

As Naomi Klein succinctly put it: "whatever the ailment—poverty, migration, climate change, dictatorships, terrorism—the remedy is always more trade."[214] Faithful to the current dominant discourse, Friedman does call on more globalization and free trade. Interestingly

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[212] See Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 85-92.
[213] Friedman, *The Lexus*, 405.
[214] Naomi Klein, *Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front of the Globalization Debate* (New York: Picador, 2002) 83.

Friedman is blatant about the reasons why the world, that is here the Third World, toes the line of globalization. In fact, his "multilens glasses" make him conclude his book with the flat statement that this globalization age which has revolutionized the markets, transportation and communication systems is able to operate not really because of the rapid turnover of converts who see it as a source of wealth and/or democracy but basically because of the US "hidden fist." In his words, "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist […]. Indeed, McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the U.S. Air Force F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."[215] This is globalization at gunpoint. The gun, however, is not only US military might but also the International Financial Institutions, such as the IMF whose structural adjustment programs, make people take to the streets to ask for their local markets back.

Here lie some of the concrete reasons behind the Arab World's crisis (and indeed the Third World's): it is not what the experts' texts, marketed and portrayed as analytical and even objective, represented as the irrationality of Islam, the stagnation of Arab society, Arabs' alien mentality and culture that foster hate and violence etc. The concrete reasons, besides Arabs' own failures, can be traced to this system of globalization that is casting itself as an inevitable stage in human evolution. It is in the name of globalization that feeds on American imperialism that people have to wait until the corporations' insatiable needs for profits are met. It is for the sake of consolidating this global economic model that the current Bush administration, relying on the Project for the New American Century's vision, wishes to turn the Middle East into a "free trade zone" by the year 2010.[216] The war on Iraq in 2003 with the view to establishing the US undisputed hegemony and at the same time turning the country into, what Klein depicted as, the "biggest shopping mall" for mainly US corporations is but the opening sequence for the American Project.[217]

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[215] Friedman, *The Lexus*, 464. In fact, Friedman's statement validates Naomi Klein's reports on who really benefits from free trade. She writes: "[…] what about when citizens make democratic choices that aren't so popular with foreign investors? What happens when they decide to nationalize the phone company, for instance, or to exert greater control over their oil and mineral wealth? The bodies tell the story." *Fences and Windows*, 45.

[216] Naomi Klein, "Economic Warfare: From Argentina to Iraq," rec. 9 Oct 2003, CD, Alternative Radio.

[217] See Klein, *Fences and Windows*, and her speech "Economic Warfare." See also Zia Mian, "The Project for a New American Century, " rec 10 October 2003, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

III. Corporate Media and Imperialism

> With a compliant news system there is little or no effective information free of government beliefs, so official failures go uncorrected, faulty strategies continue, incompetents remain in leadership, and there is growing likelihood of public demoralization and civil disorder.
>
> Ben H. Bagdikian, foreword to *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War,* xiv

> [American TV] soutint frénétiquement les thèses du Pentagone et valorisa *ad nauseam* les péripéties ordinaires du corps expéditionnaire américain.
>
> Ignacio Ramonet, *Propagandes Silencieuses,* 124

1. Media Matters All the More in an Imperial Democracy

What Ignacio Ramonet, *Le Monde Diplomatique*'s chief editor, describes in the epigraph above as the American major news networks championing their government's perspective actually refers to their performance during the Vietnam war.[1] Unfortunately Ramonet's statement also lends itself as a good summary of the American mainstream media coverage of the Gulf War of 1991.

In *Media Matters: Race and Gender in U.S. Politics*, John Fiske studies four media events that took place at the beginning of the '90s, namely the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings, the debate on single motherhood as it was embodied in the sitcom, *Murphy Brown*, the LA uprising and the victory of the Democrat William Clinton in the election of 1992. These media events that are sites of "maximum discursive visibility and turbulence," signaled, Fiske argues, the beginning of a change in the structure of feeling in the United States. The crises that marked the stage of internal politics at the beginning of the '90s represent, according to Fiske, the crucial historical moment of a multidiscursive society contesting the unequal distribution of power. Accordingly, besides drawing on Baudrillard's ideas of hyperreality and the similacrum as well as the Foucauldian theory of discourse, Fiske chooses to concentrate on the analysis of discursive relations that aims to expose discourse as mainly a terrain of bitter struggle. Indeed, Fiske argues that since discourse always has the potential to be turned into a site of struggle and since discursive contestation is never conducted on a level

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[1] As to the well-publicized view that it was the uncensored news media that "lost" the war in Vietnam via its alerting public opinion about the atrocities of that war, Ben H. Bagdikian explains that since the beginning of American involvement in Vietnam in 1954 and later in 1960 when the war began, the mainstream media toed the government line and it was only after years of the media's dutiful reporting of the official version that a handful of American mainstream correspondents began to question the military claims and report what they saw in the field. See Ben H. Bagdikian, foreward, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda*, John R. MacArthur (Berkley, CA: University of California, 1993) xi-xviii. See also Ignacio Ramonet, *Propagandes Silencieuses: Masses, Télévision, Cinéma,* (Paris: Gali1ée, 2000) 21-47.

field, the analysis of discursive relations must reveal the processes "by which discourses work to repress, marginalize, and invalidate others; by which they struggle for audibility and for access to the technologies of social circulation; and by which they fight to promote and defend the interests of their respective social formations."[2]

Cataloguing the main forms that discursive struggles can take, Fiske identifies the following five.

> The struggle to "accent" a word or sign, that is to turn the way it is spoken or used to particular social interests […].
>   The struggle over the choice of word, image, and therefore discursive repertoire […].
>   The struggle to recover the repressed or center the marginalized […].
>   The struggle to disarticulate and rearticulate: Discourse not only puts events into words or images, it also links, or articulates, them with other events […].
>   The struggle to gain access to public discourse in general or the media in particular—the struggle to make one's voice heard.[3]

The highly mediated events Fiske considers chronologically start with the beating of Rodney King on March 3, 1991; that is four days after the first President Bush declared the end of the ground war on Iraq. Yet, the Gulf War does not figure as a marker in his study of race and gender in US politics, even though Fiske's analysis revolves around the attempt to unravel how "[a] consistent program of racism lurks just below the surface of the family values campaign" conducted by the Bush administration.[4] In fact, Fiske limits his investigation of the "family values campaign as a repressive discourse" to the above-mentioned media events, especially the LA uprisings. He, for instance, shows how Vice President Dan Quayle's statements on the LA uprisings have recoded the racial problem of Los Angeles into the discourse of "family values."[5] Similarly, Fiske deals with the Republican convention of 1992 where Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan accused Hillary and William Clinton of planning to destroy the traditional family.[6] Fiske argues that in this Republican program racism lurks below and does not obviously float on the surface, because, as he explains, racism is more inferential rather than overt in US society. He indeed writes:

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[2] John Fiske, *Media Matters: Race and Gender in U.S. Politics.* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press) 4.

[3] Fiske, *Media Matters*, 5-6.

[4] Fiske, *Media Matters*, 37.

[5] Dan Quayle declared to an audience at the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco, on May 19, 1992: "[…] When I have been asked during these last weeks who caused the riots and the killing in L.A., my answer has been direct and simple: Who is to blame for the riots? The rioters are to blame […]. In a nutshell: I believe the lawless social anarchy which we saw is directly related to the breakdown of family structure, personal responsibility and social order in too many areas of our society […]." In Fiske, *Media Matters*, 68.

[6] Fiske, *Media Matters*, 40, 56.

"inferential racism is the necessary form of racism in a society of white supremacy that proclaims itself 'nonracist'."[7]

Yet, what does all that have to do with the Gulf War that was after all fought with a United Nations mandate and in which 28 countries led by the US participated? Can one then ascribe a role to race and sexuality in the Gulf War? Is it legitimate to ask to what extent Saddam Hussein served as an international version of Willie Horton for the Bush administration?[8] Do not the White House's and the media's reduction of Iraq to Saddam Hussein, the Butcher of Baghdad, as well as the endless repetition of "looting, torturing and raping" Kuwait, betray the activation of a powerful discursive repertoire that still holds sway on the white consciousness?[9] To what extent does the dominant representation of Rodney King as the black male body who threatens white social stability converge on the representation of Saddam Hussein as the thug out of control who threatens (white) political stability and needs to be stopped by (white) law and order? Similarly, does not the articulation of the Gulf War within the framework of a "new world order," as conflated with the protection of the "family of peace loving nations," allow the US imperial ambition, that can but profit from racism, to be recoded into the discourse of law and order as well as morality and international responsibility?

1.2. The First US Gulf War in Context

In order to explain why the War on Iraq of 1991 proved to be popular in the United States and why its atrocities were condoned, Abouali Farmanfarmaian examines the role of race and sexuality in that war. Looking at the discursive articulations used by the US mainstream media and the White House, Farmanfarmaian points out that it was inundated with words like "looting, torture, and rape" that assault "the soul of a nation." He writes:

> Concerns about Iraq and the desirability of war were mediated through notions of family and sexuality—always with a racial link that implicitly emphasized western values—and only thereby managed to generate a unanimity in outrage against an outside evil, Iraq […]. The unity of the nation was kept through the use of the family, first as a notion embodying everything good and American in opposition to the projected Iraqi embodiment of anti-family values; and then the family as a real unit watching the war together in television in contrast with the Iraqis being watched on television […]. Sexual anxieties associated with

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[7] Fiske, *Media Matters*, 37.
[8] Willie Horton is an African American criminal who was used in an ad in the 1988 Republican presidential campaign for Bush's support of the death penalty for first-degree murders.
[9] The point here is not to deny that looting and raping were committed by Iraqis but the media's accenting certain words that become the focus of attention and can thereby be used as the justification for action, in this case, war.

> racial fears take on a more potent charge in war, […] the fear of Vietnam functioned very much as castration anxiety for an emasculated American manhood that could only be soothed by an open and overwhelming display of prowess in the Gulf.[10]

Indeed, Farmanfarmaian argues that it is this particular articulation of the Gulf War on the level of morality that accounts for its appeal to the American public. Moreover, taking into consideration the historic construct of race where "Orienals" were allocated the role of barbaric, dangerous and lustful, (images activated since the 1970s where Arabs' national struggles were associated with threat and terrorism) Farmanfarmaian tracks and exposes the fluidity of racism within the US and racism without. This fluidity does certainly explain the slippage evident, for instance, in the labels of "niggers" and "sandniggers." His contention is that the consensus over the Gulf War was easy to reach because "in contrast to rigid definitions of self, the lack of boundaries between constructs of Otherness—their uniformalization—positioned all non-whites as part of the same mass of flesh constituting the subjects of empire; hence, the sexual constructs of African Americans can evoke and be evoked within the sexual construct of the 'Orient.'"[11] What I would like, however, to take from Farmanfarmaian's reading of the role of race and sexuality in the Gulf War is that the positioning of the US as the righteous protector of the "family of peace-loving nations" vs. Iraq as an evil, destructive force allowed the US imperial agenda to be recoded into the discourse of morality and international responsibility. My focus will be more on the US imperial ambition to openly bring world major resources and markets under its control.

So why did the Gulf War occur? Was that war waged because of the unique combination of US national interests and the liberation of Kuwait and the protection of Saudi Arabia, as the Bush administration maintained? In my view, the US's interest in the Gulf War mirror, albeit on a much bigger level, Hussein's interests in invading Kuwait. Indeed, like the above-mentioned reasons that legitimated the Gulf War from the Bush administration's point of view, Saddam Hussein's regime had also legitimate grievances vis-à-vis Kuwait. Yet, his haste in solving Iraq's problems with Kuwait via resorting to his military machine is because the eight-year war with Iran not only caused Iraq severe economic crises but also left it with a

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[10] Abouali Farmanfarmaian, "Did you Measure Up?: The Role of Race and Sexuality in the Gulf War," *Collateral Damage: The 'New World Order' at Home and Abroad*, ed. Cynthia Peters (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992) 112.

[11] Farmanfarmaian, "Did you Measure Up?" 125. See also Salim Muwakkil, "African Americans and Foreign Policy," where the author delineates the history of African Americans' complex relationship to US foreign policy. Muwakkil argues that the US invasion of Panama, Grenada and the Gulf War of 1991 were paralleled with a growing foreign policy consensus among African Americans whose leadership began raising questions about the racial component of US foreign policy. *Collateral Damage*, 335-43.

large army and an expanding arms industry.[12] Indeed, Hussein's regime felt entitled to play a leading role in the Gulf region, for after all it spent eight years defending Saudi Arabia and the other Arab oil states from Iran's Islamic Republic. In other words, Hussein felt that with his strong army, in comparison to neighboring Arab oil states, and his committing his country to "defend the interests of the Arabs," Iraq could, either by way of brotherly appeal or intimidation, call on wealthy neighbors to participate in solving Iraq's economic ordeals.

However, Kuwait's behavior shattered Hussein's scheme to impose himself as the supreme leader of the Arabs. Kuwait not only denied Saddam Hussein a more secure outlet to the Gulf, there was also the allegation of its slant drilling from the contested Rumeillah oil fields that straddles the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. More than that Kuwait, besides the United Arab Emirates, was exceeding its OPEC oil production quota by 40 percent, which led to weak international prices and meant falling revenues for the oil states. Indeed, Larry Everest's detailed study of the 1991 Gulf War noted that Kuwait's excess oil production cost Iraq some $14 billion in lost revenues.[13] Adding insult to injury, Kuwait called for the immediate repayment of its wartime debt. It was these last two factors that made Saddam Hussein call for an Arab League Heads of States meeting on May 3, 1990, which Baghdad hosted from May 28-30. In that meeting, which was attended by the Emir of Kuwait, Hussein declared that Kuwait's actions amount to economic warfare.[14] Yet, clearly Saddam Hussein did not see it fit

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[12] In fact, with regard to Iraq's economic problems, Larry Everest points out that at the beginning of Iraq's war on Iran, "Iraq had $36 billion in reserves, making it one of the world's richest Third World countries. By the war's end, it was $80 to $90 billion in debt. The regime had been forced to abandon development and social projects, and inflation was running at 100 percent […]. [At the same time, Iraq's] armed forces had expanded from 190,000 to 1 million men; it had imported at least $42 billion—perhaps as much as $102 billion—in weapons; and, thanks in part to aid from the U.S. and its allies, Iraq had built an arms industry capable of turning out everything from light arms to Scud missiles and chemical weapons." *Oil, Power, and Empire*: *Iraq and the U.S. Global Agenda* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004) 119-20. Yet, what should be borne in mind is that Iraq's military power was that of a Third World country which is heavily dependent on the weaponry makers in the West and the Soviet Union. Indeed, Saddam Hussein's army which invaded Iran in 1980 was on the defensive already by March 1982, a fact that brought about the unusual alliance of the Soviet Union, France (that provided mainly the arms), the US (credits and aircraft) in addition to the Gulf money supplied especially by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. However, despite all this massive help, Saddam Hussein's army was unable to defeat the Iranian army. See Joe Stork and Ann M. Lesch, "Why War?" *Collateral Damage,* 170.
[13] See Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 120. Saïd Aburish points out that Kuwait started increasing its oil production one day after the announcement of a cease fire between Iran and Iraq on August 9, 1988. Later the United Arab Emirates followed suit, which consequently added more pressure to the Iraqi economic problems. See Saïd Aburish, *Saddam Hussein. The Politics of Revenge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) 260.
[14] See Stork and Lesch, "Why War?" 173. According to Saïd Aburish, Saddam Hussein "opened the first session [of the summit] with a long, improvised speech in which he lashed out at Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates for producing more oil than was allocated to them by OPEC. Citing Kuwait as an example, he wondered out loud why it had to produce 2.1 million barrels a day instead of its share of 1.5 million. He followed this by openly accusing Kuwait of declaring economic warfare against his country, stating that wars are not necessarily fought with tanks and planes. Then, cleverly, he offered Kuwait a way out—the cancelling of debt; the leasing of two islands at the mouth of the Gulf, Warba and Bubiyan, to give Iraq a sensible sea outlet; and a payment of billions of dollars." The Emir of Kuwait, according to Aburish, turned down all requests, continuing Kuwait's excessive production of oil. *Saddam Hussein*, 277-78.

to spend more time on negotiation with Kuwait, for on July 25, he summoned then US Ambassador April Glaspie to a meeting during which he related his grievances vis-à-vis Kuwait and threatened to take action.[15]

Whether Saddam Hussein's hasty move to take over Kuwait was motivated by his feeling that he got the green light from the US is subject to debate. But it is clear that he did so because he thought he had some legitimate causes which he could keep brandishing to the world while his army would be busy pillaging Kuwait and his country could start to recover from its severe economic crisis. Indeed, Hussein's rhetoric about a better sharing of Arab wealth and resources appealed tremendously to the Arab public opinion even though that meant condoning his act of aggression. As Joe Stork and Ann Lesch put it: "For many Arabs […] ambivalence about Saddam Hussein took second place to unambiguous hostility to a state system that permits a handful of ruling families to monopolize the region's resources while millions of Arabs live impoverished."[16] On balance Saddam Hussein's strategy to use his military machine to aggrandize his regional power and solve Iraq's economic crisis while using the rhetoric of freeing the Palestinian occupied territories, using Arab resources first for Arab needs and catering to Arab interests look very much like his own "New Gulf Order."[17]

The US ambition, unlike Saddam Hussein's, as coded by the Bush doctrine, is to play that role on a global level, hence "the New World Order." Indeed, the US, when it deemed it right, invaded Grenada (October 1983) and Panama (December 1989) thereby committing acts of aggression vis-à-vis its neighboring countries. Let's recall that Panama was invaded by the very Bush administration that wanted to reverse Iraq's aggression against its weak neighbor. The invasion of Panama and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait were both condemned by the UN. It is in this context that Democratic Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina responded to the Bush administration's zeal in resorting to war to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait by declaring:

> The President likes to ride us all up about the wild man Saddam
> Hussein, saying that Saddam has attacked two of his neighbors in

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[15] See the full text of the Glaspie-Hussein transcript that was released by the Iraqi government and which was described by the US State Department as "essentially correct." *Beyond the Storm: A Gulf Crisis Reader*, ed. Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991) 391-96.

[16] Stork and Lesch, "Why War?" 178.

[17] See the detailed study of the Iraqi economist Kazim Habib who points out that between 1976 and 1990, the Iraqi regime spent $250.6 billion on military, including the sum of $50 billion on the production of weapons of mass destruction, which present the equivalent of 39.2% of the Iraqi GDP in that period. Habib observes that the Iraqi regime's foreign policy was clearly aiming at expansion and offensive actions at the expense of the neighboring countries. He also writes that the countries that profited from Hussein's bellicose foreign policy and his development of his military machine in the period from 1976 to 1990 are France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Yugoslavia and other European countries, besides the Soviet Union and the United States. I am very thankful to Kazim Habib for e.mailing me the first chapter of *Al-Ma'sat wa al-Mahzala fī 'Iraqi al-Yawm,* (Tragedy and Farce in Today's Iraq) (Berlin, n.p. 1998) 29-30. My translation.

the last 10 years. But that is exactly what the US had been condemned for in the United Nations in 1983, not by 12 votes as in the case of Resolution 678, but by 109 members of the United Nations condemning the United States for an act of aggression in Grenada, and by 75 votes […] for an act of aggression in Panama.[18]

If Saddam Hussein had thought that a little war would busy his army while he went ahead with his project of establishing himself as the local power in the Gulf region, the US invasions of its neighboring countries in the Caribbean as well as the Gulf War are at heart about establishing US international power, boosting the US military/industrial complex and securing US corporations' privileged access to foreign markets and resources.[19] In this regard, Hussein's invasion of its oil-rich neighbor, Kuwait, might indeed pose a serious threat. However, it is clear that Iraq's threat did not pertain to the US national security, as it was claimed, but it had the potential to challenge US imperial interests. No wonder President George H. W. Bush described the possibility of Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait before the UN deadline for the war's beginning as a "nightmare scenario." Indeed, since the Gulf War was not only about liberating Kuwait but punishing severely a Third World upstart and demonstrating to the world that the US is willing to use its powerful military in order to maintain its status as the only superpower, one can understand then why atrocities, such as the carpet bombing of retreating soldiers and the massive saturation bombing of Iraq had to happen.[20] Larry Everest best summarized what was going on:

> Saddam was a Third World ruler trying to defend his interests and muscle his way to greater regional status. However, he was attempting to do so at a time when past constraints on American military power no longer existed; when the U.S. no longer had to balance Iran and Iraq off against each other, but could intervene more directly; and when Washington wasn't going to tolerate his effrontery, but was determined instead to turn it into a lesson for others around the world. In reality, Desert Storm was a war by the imperialist "north" against an upstart regime of the Third

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[18] Qtd. in John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (London, MacMillan, 1997) 158.

[19] See Arthur MacEwan, "Why the Emperor Can't Afford New Clothes: International Change and Fiscal Disorder in the United States," in *Collateral Damage,* 152-57. See also Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present* (New York: Perennial, 1999), especially his reference to an article in the *Wall Street Journal,* which eight years after the US invasion of Grenada (October 29, 1991), spoke of "an invasion of banks." A point that bluntly refers to the strong connection between US military intervention and the enhancement of corporate America (589). On the point of wars giving a boost to the military complex, see Randolph Stone, "The Struggle Continues at Home and Abroad," *Collateral Damage*, 233.

[20] See Ramsey Clark, et al., *War Crimes: A Report on United States War Crimes Against Iraq* (Washington DC: Maisonneuve Press, 1992). See especially the chapters of Paul Walker, "U.S. Bombing—The Myth of Surgical Bombing in the Gulf War," and Joyce Chediac, "The Massacre of Withdrawing Soldiers on 'the Highway of Death,'" 83-93. See also Saul Bloom, et al., eds., *Hidden Casualties: Environmental, Health and Political Consequences of the Persian Gulf War* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1994) 303-306.

World "south" designed to tighten the U.S. hold on the Middle East and preserve an oppressive regime.[21]

Indeed, while Iraq was tasting its grand defeat in 1991, the political establishment in Washington was hotly debating the parameters for the US grand strategy in the post-Soviet world, which found its culmination in the "Defense Planning Guidance" of 1992. Zia Mian, a professor in the program on science and global security at the Woodrow Wilson school at Princeton University, states that the Defense Guidance is an incredibly important historical document written by Paul Wolfowitz, Lewis Libby and Zalmay Khalilzad for then- Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.[22] The document presents as its objective the need

> to prevent the reemergence of a new rival, either on a territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere […]. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia.[23]

Such a document that reveals what people in power think and say to each other clearly shows that the "New World Order" of the first Bush administration is at heart an open embracing of imperialism.

1.3. Corporate Media and US Foreign Policy

Once Noam Chomsky finished a lecture he gave in Palo Alto, California, on March 22, 2002, he was approached by a young man who wanted to know about the mechanisms by which the US government controls the media. Chomsky answered that the government has no influence on the media and commented on the question that "it's like asking me how does the government convince General Motors to try to increase its profits!" The confused young man then tried to point out the reasons behind the media's support of the government's point of view. Chomsky's answer was "[t]he media are huge corporations which share the interests of the corporate sector that dominates the government. The government can't tell the media what to do. They don't have the power to do it here."[24] Indeed, unlike the media's case in totalitarian societies, the US media is by no means subordinate to the power of the government. Yet, as media critics Robert McChesney and John Nichols argue, since the US government has made common cause with the corporate sector which owns the major media

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[21] Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 129, 163.
[22] Zia Mian, "The Project for a New American Century," rec. 10 Oct. 2003, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.
[23] Mian, "The Project." See also Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 213-14.
[24] See John Junkerman's documentary, *Power and Terror. Noam Chomsky* (First Run Features, 2002).

outlets, the equation leads to a situation where press coverage is increasingly showing similarities to that found in the authoritarian states, albeit with a different hierarchical configuration.[25]

Ian Angus and Sut Jhally, two prominent professors of communication studies, point out that the culture industries experienced three major related changes in the 1980s. First, the US dominant media became increasingly integrated within the corporate sector, a fact that explains its advancing first and foremost business and commerce interests. Second, there has been a growing concentration of media ownership, with the consequence that while fewer and fewer corporations own more and more media outlets, the diversity and variability of opinions are slowly disappearing from the media landscape.[26] Yet, it should be borne in mind that at the time Angus and Jhally were writing their book, they were alarmed by the fact that nearly 50 corporations owned the US major media. In 2003, as noted by Ben Bagdikian, only five conglomerates headed by five men controlled these media, plus new ones.[27]

The third movement, discussed by Angus and Jhally, pertains to the commodification of the media and thereby of the issues they represent. As the two scholars put it, "[p]ower is not only exercised through direct control of the cultural realm by economic force or the state but by blurring the boundaries between the economic and cultural spheres. The media have increasingly become just another sphere of business such that their uniqueness and centrality as cultural forms are submerged beneath their treatment as commodities like any other."[28] They then point out that these developments, especially the concentrated corporate control of the media, explain why the media would rather remain silent about the core issues that inform US foreign policy, which in its turn mainly caters to the interests of the corporate sector.[29] Instead the media giants prefer to concentrate on what Angus and Jhally call "national identity spectacles" such as rituals of patriotism and the demonization of the "enemy other." Their

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[25] Robert W. McChesney and John Nichols, *Our Media, Not Theirs: The Democratic Struggle Against Corporate Media* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002) 67.

[26] Ian H. Angus and Sut Jhally, eds., Introduction, *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 2.

[27] Ben H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*, (A revised edition of his 1983 *Media Monopoly*) (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004) 23-50. The five giant conglomerates, as presented by Bagdikian, are Time Warner, the largest media company in the world by 2003; the Walt Disney Company; Murdoch's News Corporation, based in Australia; Viacom; and Bertelsmann based in Germany. General Electric, although not a mega-giant like the big five, still owns the NBC TV network, cable networks, Universal Pictures etc. An important feature documented by Bagdikian is that these mega-media firms have joint-ventures with each other. This makes them look like a cartel rather than being engaged in competing with each other. See also Robert McChesney, "Oligopoly: The Big Media Game Has Fewer and Fewer Players,"*Censored 2000: The Year's Top 25 Censored Stories,* ed. Peter Phillips and Project Censored (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2000) 187-98.

[28] Angus and Jhally, *Cultural Politics*, 2.

[29] On the nature of the US foreign policy in its serving primarily US private economic interests that in their turn determine US national interest, see Abbas Alnasrawi and Cheryl A. Rubenberg, *Consistency of US Foreign*

contention is that "It is this combination of celebration and secrecy that constitutes the main political effect of corporate concentration and control of media production."[30]

Yet the roots of the problems discussed by Angus and Jhally seem to go back to the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, according to McChesney, the systemic flaws with the US dominant media started in the late nineteenth century when large newspaper publishers solved their dilemma of gaining both the trust of their readers as well as attracting advertisers by adhering to the code of professionalism and objectivity, on the grounds that this can be but fair, accurate and non-partisan. Yet, McChesney argues that this professionalism, as it has been practiced in the United Sates, "smuggled in certain crucial biases into what's considered fair, accurate, non-partisan journalism that have actually made it not fair, not accurate, and not non-partisan."[31] In fact, McChesney explains that professionalism consists in making official or credentialed sources the basis for news stories. In this case journalists limit their reporting on what people in power say and debate. In this way, the range of debate that is covered is extremely narrow because it concentrates on the elite's point of views, that are certainly a fraction of the views held by the informed population. In a book written by McChesney and John Nichols, they remark:

> In matters of international politics, "official sources" are almost interchangeable with the term "elites," as foreign policy is mostly a preserve of a wealthy and powerful few […].If journalism that goes outside the range of elite opinion is dismissed as unprofessional or partisan—and, therefore, justifiably ignored— the media merely lock in a corrupt status quo and can offer no way out. If journalists must have official sources on their side to pursue a story, it gives people in power a massive veto power over the exercise of democracy.[32]

A second bias related to the news media's limiting their main information source to official sources, usually the government, is the avoidance of context. By the complete or partial ignorance of context, journalists, as McChesney observes, become exonerated from the uneasy task of accounting for the flagrant contradictions between what people in power say and what they do. This is why McChesney rightly points out that all this professionalism yields is "depoliticization and sanitized and meaningless facts."[33] The third bias McChesney and other media critics, such as Angus, Jhally, Nichols and Ben Bagdikian, reveal is the

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Policy: The Gulf War and the Iran-Contra Affair (Belmont, MA: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1989) 1-14.

[30] By secrecy, Angus and Jhally mean the news media's lack of investigating the connection between their very owners and the US government. See *Cultural Politics*, 3.

[31] Robert McChesney, "Write What We Say, Not What We Do," rec. 7 May 2002, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

[32] See McChesney and Nichols, *Our Media, Not Theirs*, 67-68.

[33] McChesney, "Write What We Say."

dominant media's reluctance to go after the corporations. Indeed, Bagdikian describes the news media's systemic avoidance of checking the powerful corporate sector as their philosophy of "leave business alone."[34] And since the dominant news industry is in the hands of the corporate sector this means, by extension, that the major media avoid to deal with themselves. Yet, by "leaving business alone," and dumping context in favor of reliance on official sources, the news media consequently become doctrinaire in their support of US official foreign policy.[35]

Concretely put in the context of reporting on US foreign policy, professionalism nicely dovetails with upholding the national, or rather the elites' consensus. Erwin Knoll, editor of the *Progressive* magazine, tracks the national consensus to the years of WW II and the beginning of the Cold War. He remarks that "with the overt collusion of the Democrats and the Republicans and the mass media, we've built this notion of a broad national consensus where whenever the government starts waving the flag or sending in the troops, all criticism is supposed to stop. And those of us who insist on continuing with criticism, nonetheless, are left to be marginlized […]. Every effort is made to sustain that myth of a seamless web of support."[36] One crucial point that informs this consensus with regard to the US foreign policy is the US's right to invade any country, as McChesney points out. This indeed explains the mega-media giants' amnesia about the US's past acts abroad.

Another crucial point the elite agrees upon is, as McChesney puts it, the equation of capitalism with democracy. In this context, the journalists' failure to investigate the frequent tensions that take place between capitalism and democracy serves in perpetuating the elite's consensus, while it is clear that what matters to private power is capitalism and not democracy. One telling recent example related by McChesney is the coup that overthrew the popularly elected government of Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. While the coup installed the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Venezuela as head of the state, who immediately suspended the Constitution and abolished the local elected bodies in the country, the editorials of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* did not find anything wrong with these undemocratic changes. On the contrary, as McChesney points out, the *New York Times'* editorial described the coup as "a healthy step to the restoration of democracy." Then it bluntly added that the new government will "encourage entrepreneurial initiatives."[37]

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[34] Bagdikian, *The New Media,* 13.
[35] See Bagdikian, *The New Media,* 98-102.
[36] Erwin Knoll, "The Gulf War: Enough Lies to Last a Lifetime," rec. 4 Feb. 1991, Audiotape, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO, 2000.
[37] In McChesney, "Write What We Say."

This is why McChesney and Nichols find the corporate media deeply entrenched within the system, and speak of "their media" that "are fostering our crises."[38] Erwin Knoll, similarly, speaks of the dominant media as stenographers to power. Ben Bagdikian observes that "media power is political power" which is used by the media owners "to enhance the values preferred by the corporate world of which they are a part."[39] However, the landscape of the US media despite the tremendous power wielded by the mega-media corporations goes by no means unchallenged. Indeed there are several media outlets, which despite their smallness, strive to rearticulate the issues ignored by the dominant media. For instance, Charles Lewis, former *60 Minutes* producer, founded the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, DC in 1989 as a watchdog organization that concentrates on investigating the corporate sector. Moreover *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *In These Times,* the *Progressive, Alternative Radio,* FAIR (Fairness in Accuracy and Reporting), Democracy Now etc. are all US media that engage in the struggle to recover the repressed and center the marginalized.

1.4. The Media Coverage of the 1990-91 Gulf Crisis

Media critics who pay attention to the increasing integration of the media within the broader control of the transnational conglomerates and the increasing concentration of media ownership focus their analyses, such as in the case of the 1991 Gulf War, on unraveling and exposing the collaboration between the media, the corporate sector and the US imperialist agenda.[40] On the basis of this powerful connection, these media critics argue that what the media serve is certainly neither public interest, in this case assisting informed public discussion, nor democracy but the investors' interests. It is then small wonder that the dominant media covered the Gulf War from the exclusive points of view of the American administration and the American government thereby serving literally as their mouthpiece.

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[38] McChesney and Nichols, *Our Media, Not Theirs*, 35.

[39] Knoll, "The Gulf War," and Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly*, 25.

[40] See McChesney and Nichols, *Our Media, Not Theirs*, 42-80. John R. MacArthur points out that NBC was said to be most susceptible to the government's censorship during the Gulf War of 1991 because the Pentagon is a major customer of the network's parent company, General Electric. However, once MacArthur found out that NBC, like the other giant television networks, lost tens of millions of dollars in their coverage of the Gulf War, he interviewed NBC president, Robert Wright, in order to ask him about the reasons behind NBC's total adherence to the pool system that clearly cost it scoops and better coverage that could have guaranteed better circulation. Without dismissing the links between General Electric and NBC's policy in covering the Gulf War, Wright, however, put the blame on the government, military censorship and more important on his own journalists who were willing to go along the Pentagon's pool system. See MacArthur, *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War*, 219-23. See also Serge Halimi, "United Sates: An Unfree Press," *Le Monde Diplomatique* June 2003, where the author argues that deregulation policies increase the concentration of media ownership thereby enhancing the media's dependency on the corporate sector. <http://mondediplo.com/2003/06/08halimi>.

The executive director of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), Jeff Cohen contends that the media coverage of the Gulf War was carefully managed and controlled.[41] The media, he argues, focused on presenting a narrow spectrum of opinion and nearly suppressed the historical background and context about the war. For instance, Cohen points out that the congressional debate that took place after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was hailed by the media as a full and thorough debate. Whereas, Cohen explains, the debate in question swung between the Republicans' position that maintained that anyone who opposes the war option is an appeaser and the Democrats who mainly limited themselves to advocating sanctions while agreeing with the Republicans that there should be no negotiation with Saddam Hussein. Indeed, both parties were in full agreement that in no way should they negotiate with Hussein and that they should keep their position and not budge.

Yet, according to the research conducted by FAIR, the debates going on in the US were broader than the debate going on in the mainstream media. In fact, Cohen refers to a poll published by the *New York Times*, once the war started on January 16, 1991, which showed that 56 percent of the people polled wanted a UN peace conference on the Middle East as a way of getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, against 37 percent of the people who said no. Cohen concludes that the fact that the congressional debate was narrow and the media hailing it as a full debate reveals how narrow the media's spectrum is. Moreover, the fact that the view expressed in that poll, which was totally ignored in the media before the war, shows that facts are finally exposed when their effects are irrelevant.

Moreover, Cohen points out that the mainstream media showed a remarkable consistency in virtually suppressing any historical background for the war. The news reports that were propounded during the buildup for the Gulf war revolved mainly around Iraq as a massive military machine, its battle-hardened troops and the imminent danger of Saddam Hussein. The media devoted a large space to voicing the most hardline views, such as, "sanctions wouldn't work" and "if Saddam Hussein was not stopped he'd terrorize the whole region." It was only later once the war started, Cohen remarks, that these news reports started being reversed. For instance, he refers to the *New York Times* of February 17, 1991 where Thomas Friedman debunked the mythology of the invincible war machine of Iraq and its troops. Cohen explains that the contradiction between what the *New York Times* was saying before the war and what it started saying after the war clearly reveals that "it's not important

to suppress the news altogether just delay it, until it no longer matters." Ben Bagdikian also comments that in the world of the news industry "'later' is too late."[42]

Another point FAIR has consistently raised is that the national media selectively deals with foreign governments' human rights abuses; that is, when a foreign government is a US ally, its human rights record is basically ignored by the mainstream media, yet once a foreign government falls into disfavor, its human rights abuse is all of a sudden major news. Iraq's case was no exception. Before Iraq invaded Kuwait, the media's coverage of Saddam Hussein's human rights abuses was almost nil, according to the research conducted by FAIR for years. In fact, Cohen says:

> After the crisis began, when the invasion of Kuwait occurred, all of a sudden, this [Hussein's regime] was the greatest human rights abuser in the world and all of a sudden Amnesty International reports on Iraq mattered. But those reports were released all through the 80s, when Iraq was an ally of the U.S., when the Reagan administration took Iraq off of the terrorist list so that they could get them billions of dollars of agricultural credits, when the Reagan-Bush administration was getting guns to Iraq through third party states including Jordanand Kuwait. During that whole period when the U.S. was helping build up the military and economic weight and might of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the issue of his human rights abuses was off the media agenda [...]. The key period in that history is the year and a half after Bush took power and before the invasion of Kuwait, when there were reports in Western media and Western Europe that Saddam Hussein was busily trying to get a nuclear trigger and George Bush was doing everything he could to prevent economic sanctions. If we had a foreign policy (and the media didn't put that out) that dealt with dictators through diplomacy through the 1980s instead of building up his economic and military might, there might have never been an invasion of Kuwait. And of course the U.S. bears large responsibility for that but that's off of the mainstream media agenda.

Indeed, what was on the mainstream media agenda prior to the Gulf War was the lining up of certain constructs and the endless repetition of one kind of interpretation. Farmanfarmaian notes that after President Bush's speech on November 30, 1990, that hinted to the possibility of war by referring to "the immorality of the invasion" of Kuwait, the dominant media followed suit. Looking at headlines and front page-stories carried by the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times*, Farmanfarmaian writes that the "the 'violation of Kuwait's sovereignty' became increasingly tied to *sexual* atrocities committed by the Iraqis, and infanticide, rape, and torture became the main focus of attention."[43] Moreover, it was the mainstream media's demonizing Saddam Hussein in chorus that proved to be a key factor in

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[42] Bagdikian, *The New Media*, 81-84.
[43] Farmanfarmaian, "Did You Measure Up?" *Collateral Damage*, 113.

rallying American public opinion behind the President and preparing it to enjoy a war that was waged in the name of justice and democracy. No wonder, as William Hoynes, a FAIR associate, reports, by January 1991 public opinion polls showed that many Americans considered Saddam Hussein an evil that had to be uprooted by all means.[44] This endlessly repeated image equating or rather reducing Iraq to Saddam Hussein proved to be very potent.

In fact, Philip Taylor points out that even when Western journalists started broadcasting the coalition's fatal bombing of civilian targets, such as the Amiriya shelter where hundreds of Iraqi civilians died, public opinion about the good performance of the US and Britain remained high "with around 80% of people surveyed in both countries indicating that it [the Amiriya shelter] was a legitimate target and that the incident had made no difference to their support for the allied effort."[45] Taylor ascribes this indifference to the well-emphasized horrors that were after all really committed by Saddam Hussein. "Saddam's behaviour itself […]," Taylor writes, "helped define the spectrum of moral condemnation around which the coalition could shape its propaganda and demeanour [through the media]."[46]

However, it is worth repeating that while the media did not contrive the atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein, its silence on US's previous complicity with Iraq's head of state and on atrocities engendered by the course taken by the US foreign policy itself, the media managed to completely disconnect very intertwined issues.[47] Indeed, instead of analyzing the rhetoric and contextualizing the claims propounded by the White House for starting the war, mainstream media merely reiterated them with little investigation into their meanings. Hoynes, for instance, refers to the media's pickup of the term "New World Order," one of the crucial terms in whose name the war was waged, without any serious attempt to question it or expose "the irony of initiating a 'new' order with the old tactics of U.S. military intervention."[48] Another old tactic is that the US military intervention sought after all to restore an oppressive regional order. If the dominant media had tackled these connections instead of demonizing Hussein and selectively using context, the war option in the name of reversing aggression, and initiating a "new world order" where "the nations recognized the

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[44] See William Hoynes, "War as Video Game: Media, Activism, and the Gulf War," *Collateral Damage*, 311.
[45] Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media*: *Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War*, 2nd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) 212.
[46] Taylor, *War and the Media*, 28-29.
[47] William Hoynes writes: "Within the extensive discussions of Hussein's responsibility for human rights violations [in the US media], there was rarely any discussion of why the U.S. administration had supported Iraq until August 1990. Nor was Hussein's brutality set in a context that suggested that the U.S. government had played an integral part in arming Iraq." "War as a Video Game," 311.
[48] Hoynes, "War as a Video Game," 311.

shared responsibility for freedom and justice, a world where the strong respects the weak"
would have appeared untenable as an argument. [49]

Yet, as Erwin Knoll points out, the broad national consensus built by the collusion of
the Democrats and Republicans and the national media prohibits serious investigation and
thorough contextualization of concepts in the name of which wars are fought. Accordingly, all
the media could persistently pursue, during the US military buildup for the war, is the
rearticulation of Hussein's crimes as part of a mentality of an Arab thug whose lust for
supremacy led him to the rape of his vulnerable neighbor Kuwait. By doing so, the media was
able to recode the Gulf War into the White House's discourse of the new world order where
morality and international responsibility assumed by the peace loving nations would reign
supreme.

Once the war started, the dominant media remained content with its function as the
mouthpiece of the US administration. Hoynes explains that the media were doing that partly
because at the battlefield they received the images and information from the military in what
came to be called the press pools that were formed with the view to having better control on
the media, especially its visual material. As Hoynes reveals, what the American public was
constantly given was "[u]pbeat music, catchy slogans like 'showdown in the Gulf,' and fast
paced images [that] made the war coverage seem like a well directed music video. The point,
here, however is that this top-rated video was produced and directed by the U.S. military, with
only minor editing by the networks."[50] That is what, for instance, Philip Taylor describes as
the media "going native" with the military, wherein the journalists become "cheerleaders for
the coalition's armed forces, indeed part of their propaganda machine."[51]

As to the argument that it is understandable to control journalists in a time of war for
security reasons, the military itself, according to Erwin Knoll, never accused the free
wheeling journalists who covered the Vietnam War of compromising military security.
Indeed, as Knoll puts it: "many of [the] stories [such as the My Lai massacre] about the
Vietnam War were embarrassing to the military and the government of the United States.
They didn't compromise security, but they often compromised the integrity or the intelligence
of our government and our military and of the policies that we were pursuing." Hence the
necessity to change the ground rules and attempt the total control of the media.

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[49] The parts between quotation marks are taken from President Bush's address to Congress during the 1990 Gulf
crisis, qtd. in Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy*, 163.
[50] Hoynes, "War as Video Game," 312.
[51] Taylor, *War and the Media*, xvii.

Besides this military censorship that the majority of the journalists did not resist on the battleground,[52] the journalists who were covering the issues around the Gulf War at home also practiced self-censorship by relying heavily on US and allied officials' points of view and permitting but a marginal space for opposition voices such as the anti-war movement.[53] Likewise, journalists not only referred to the war as "Desert Storm" and reiterated the "liberation" of Kuwait as the war's goal, they enthusiastically adopted the new military oxymorons; such as, "surgical strikes," "collateral damage" and "smart bombs."[54] Indeed, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam comment that:

> During the Gulf war, the newscasters dropped their usual mask of neutrality and metamorphosed into partisan cheerleaders. The historical inertia of their reputation for "objectivity" functioned in favor of the war. The newscasters' pro-war stance took many forms: adjectival qualifications of the bombing as "beautiful" or "precise," facile references to soldier "heroes," the tendentious use of the word "patriotism" to refer only to pro-war actions and attitudes. Newscasters spoke of Iraq as the "enemy," as if they had personally joined the armed forces.[55]

The dangerous outcome of this sort of journalism that chooses to become the mouthpiece of the White House and the Pentagon without declaring it is that Gulf War spectators were watching the war from the American pilots' perspective. In this vein, Shohat and Stam speak about watching the war "even through that of 'smart bombs.'" As they put it "I]n a war where the same pilot's hand that released the missile simultaneously tripped the camera shutter, spectators were teleguided to see from the bomber's perspective, incorporated into the surveillance equipment, sutured into the sights of high-tech weaponry."[56] No wonder when, after such a spectacular performance from both the national media and the US military,

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[52] See Hoynes, "War as Video Game," 306-307. Yet, Taylor explains that despite the media pool system via which the military could effectively control the journalists, there were some few "unilaterals," such as Patrick Bishop and Robert Fisk, who rejected the pool system altogether and decided to go after information on their own. Yet, in order to evade coalition detection, these journalists wore military uniforms, which put them even at greater risk. And more often than not, they were rounded up and threatened with withdrawing their passes by the Saudi authorities. Nevertheless, Taylor points out that "when their [the unilaterals'] copy clashed with official versions, as it often did, the result was not a clearer picture of what was happening […] but an even more confused version of events that made it even more difficult for television viewers and newspaper readers craving for information to ascertain what precisely was going on." See *War and the Media*, 59-62.

[53] Max Elbaum writes that "at its peak in January, [the anti-war movement] brought over half a million people onto the streets and influenced the thinking of millions of others." "The Storm at Home," *Beyond the Storm,* 143. According to Laura Flanders, the mainstream media not only ignored the anti-war movement, it undermined it by repeatedly comparing it with the anti-war movement of the Vietnam era, as if it were a simple revival of the 1960s and '70s and even more by conflating it with support for Muslim fundamentalism. See Flanders, "Restricting Reality: Media Mind-Games and the War," *Beyond the Storm,* 165.

[54] Hoynes, "War as Video Game," 311. See also J. Hoberman, "Burn, Blast, Bomb, Cut," <http://www.bfi.org.uk> and Alain Gresh, "Une guerre si propre," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Feb. 2001: 23.

[55] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994) 127.

[56] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism,* 126.

President Bush declared at the end of the Gulf War: "By God! We've kicked the Vietnam syndrome." Since then Iraq has remained the main theatre of US interventionist policies and imperial presumptions in the Middle East; while the mainstream media has kept to its winning card, that of dehumanizing and demonizing Saddam Hussein. The next section will take up the analysis of a CNN's film on the anniversary of the Gulf War, *The Unfinished War: A Decade Since Desert Storm* (January 2001), in order to illustrate that when the media adhere to the code of professionalism, rely heavily on US official sources and use context in accord to the elites' consensus, they rationalize the ambition of the empire.[57]

2. The "Unfinished" in CNN's *The Unfinished War*

During the Gulf War, Brent Sadler, who worked for ITN at that time, was among the few journalists covering the war from within Iraq.[58] His reports covered the destruction of civilian areas that took the lives of hundreds of people, such as the Amiriya shelter bombing and the damage on the Baghdad-Basra road. Philip Taylor writes that Sadler's reports about civilian deaths and injuries as well as his own remarks incurred the coalition's anger, for instance, his closing remark upon a report on civilian damages: "Tonight the bombers returned […] Tomorrow, more of Iraq will have been destroyed."[59] Sadler certainly has a lot of personal knowledge and experience about the Gulf war; moreover, his expertise on the Middle East is all the more enhanced by his current position as CNN Beirut bureau chief. In the CNN documentary *The Unfinished War: A Decade since Desert Storm* (2001), Sadler goes back to that war and looks again at its causes and its aftermath within the following decade.

Yet, why does the documentary speak of an unfinished war if several of the countries that made up the 1991 coalition such as France and Russia started showing their inclinations to resume business with Baghdad? For whom then is this war unfinished? Whose interests does it serve to look at Iraq in January 2001 as "unfinished business?" If the war is not finished yet because the US successive administrations have in reality pursued the goal of regime change, the condition *sine qua non* for removing the sanctions, then the documentary might have to deal with the legality of such a goal according to the UN resolutions. But in

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[57] The executive producer of the film is Vivian Schiller and the co-producer is William Morgan. The writers of the script are Brent Sadler, Diana Sperrazza, Jason Williams and Barbara Burst. The film's reporter is Brent Sadler.

[58] For more detailed information about the Western correspondents that were reporting from Baghdad, see Taylor, *War and the Media*, 91-103. Brent Sadler was in Baghdad during the beginning of the coalition air raid on Iraq. He had to leave the country for a while, however, when the Iraqi government decided to expel all Western journalists except CNN correspondent Peter Arnett and *El Mundo*'s Alfonso Rojo. Sadler was among the journalists allowed back to the Iraqi capital at the end of January, once the Iraqi government changed its mind and deemed the presence of Western journalists in Iraq better for its propaganda purposes. Taylor, 121.

[59] Qtd. in Taylor, *War and the Media*, 179.

order to pursue such a course, the documentary first has to establish as a fact that both the first Bush and Clinton administrations as well as the second Bush administration wanted Hussein out of power.

With regard to facts on that issue, they are certainly not hard to come by since already shortly after the 1991 war then-Secretary of States James Baker declared: "we are not interested in seeking a relaxation of sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein is in power."[60] In October 1998, Congress passed the "Iraqi Liberation Act of 1998," and in November the Clinton administration adopted regime change as its stated policy.[61] A much better known fact is Desert Fox that was waged in the name of this policy in December 1998, although the goal of toppling Hussein was never declared as such by official sources, hence its going unreported by the dominant media. Even at the time of the documentary's production President-elect Bush and his administration were voicing the same view about the necessity of removing Saddam Hussein from power. Indeed, several of the top officials who constitute that administration wrote, while out of power, an open letter to President Clinton on 26 January 1998 urging him to "seize that opportunity [the upcoming State of the Union Address], and to enunciate a new strategy […] [that] should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power."[62] (No wonder, as it was recently disclosed by former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, that the decision to invade Iraq was taken by the Bush administration in January 2001.[63] Granted that this information could not have been known by CNN at that time; yet, my point is that the aim to topple Hussein should have been well known and accordingly dealt with in the documentary.)

Understandably the producers and writers of the documentary, *The Unfinished War*, saw fit to remind the viewers of the reasons that led to the 1991 Gulf War. Certainly to make a documentary on the Gulf War and its aftermath confronts the analyst with an avalanche of historical background and contextual information. However, as the media scholar John Fiske puts it:

> Absolute truth is unattainable, so we are constantly faced with the
> need to decide what to treat as true. This requires a complex
> process involving the selection of bits of evidence from "out

[60] Qtd. in Phyllis Bennis, *Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today's UN* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2000) 264.
[61] See Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 212.
[62] The signatories of that letter are Elliott Abrams, Richard L. Armitage, William J. Bennett, Jeffrey Bergner, John Bolton, Paula Dobriansky, Francis Fukuyama, Robert Kagan, Zalmay Khalilzad, William Kristol, Richard Perle, Peter W. Rodman, Donald Rumsfeld, William Schneider Jr., Vin Weber, Paul Wolfowitz, R. James Woolsey and Robert B. Zoellick. See Project for the New American Century, <www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm>.Everest also writes that "the 2000 Republican party platform called for 'a comprehensive plan for the removal of Saddam Hussein.'" *Oil, Power and Empire*, 5.
[63] Chalmers Johnson, "Blowback: Impacts of the New Militarism," 11 Feb. 2004, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

there" and the articulation of these bits with others into a mutually endorsing relationship without which the truth can never be believable.[64]

What are the documentary's "bits of evidence from out there?" Which ones are selected, which ones are emphasized and which ones are not? And how are these bits connected to each other and what truth do they seek to endorse? Unfortunately *The Unfinished War* primarily resorts to the context that vilifies Saddam Hussein. This particular beginning then draws on the official stance of US foreign policy that prefers to impute its waging wars against weaker countries to the evil persona of their leaders.[65] Indeed, the documentary goes straight ahead to the official sources that obligingly elaborated on Hussein's dark and tribal mentality. Naturally there was no need to question the top officials' statements since the demonization of Hussein has become orthodox.[66] Moreover, in the culture and politics of contemporary United States where Arabs are generally synonymous with terrorists and villains, it is then easy for the program anchorman to explain Saddam Hussein's behavior not so much by delineating the political context but by drawing on the Western culture's large archive of anti-Arab racism.

2.1. Professionalism and Lack of Context at Work

This is how Brent Sadler, striding on top of a colorful map of the Middle East,[67] chooses to start what he announces as the key elements of the Gulf War:

> Opening footage showing Saddam Hussein in a balcony waving to a crowd of cheering people. Then we see him shooting with a pistol in the air, while we hear the voice-over of the anchorman: Saddam Hussein, the man who challenged the most powerful nations on earth to do battle in the sand is still in power, his notoriety undiminished.
> **David Welch**: (caption that reads: U.S. assistant Secretary of State) Saddam represents one of the darkest forces in modern Arab history. Here is a person who for the sake of his own grasp of power and ambition has been willing to execute hundreds, thousands of his own citizens.
> **General Brent Scowcroft**: (caption reads: former National Security Advisor) One of the reasons he has been so successful is that he terrifies everyone who works for him,

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[64] Fiske, *Media Matters,* 215.
[65] Colin Powell, for instance, warned with regard to the US invasion of Panama of "demonizing one individual and resting our success on his fate alone. Still, a President has to rally the country behind his policies. And when that policy is war, it is tough to arouse public opinion against political abstractions. A flesh-and-blood villain serves better. And [Manuel Antonio] Noriega was rich villain material." Powell, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine, 1996) 414.
[66] No wonder this demonization orthodoxy has become an inspiring and lucrative source for Hollywood films. Examples are Jim Abrahams' *Hot Shots! II* (1993) and Michael Dudikoff's *The Human Shield* (1992). See Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001).
[67] The huge map of the Middle East on the ground seems to have become a classical setting for shows or documentaries on the Gulf War. ABC Peter Jennings used it in his three major special shows before and during the Gulf War. See MacArthur, "Designing War," in *Second Front*, 78-111.

like personally executing or having somebody execute his best friend to show his loyalty. He is one of the most ruthless people the world has ever seen.

Saïd K. Aburish: (caption reads: author of *Saddam Hussein, the Politics of Revenge*) We are talking about a thug [Saddam Hussein], but a thug who is the most methodical Arab leader in the century. Saddam Hussein is tribal in his thinking. You can look at him as two people: a man who operates out of the 17th century, whose foot is in the 20th century and who is marching very fast into the 21st century.

Anchor (voice-over): [...] Saddam Hussein has ruled Iraq for almost 25 years. Time and again his ambitions for himself and for his nation have led him into conflict. In 1980 Iraq started an eight-year war with neighboring Iran . The long battle would leave Iraq in dire economic straits. To finance that war, Saddam Hussein borrowed money from his Arab neighbors including Kuwait. When Kuwait began to call in those debts and pump oil from a disputed oil field, Saddam Hussein responded by flexing his muscles again.

Saïd K. Aburish: What was at work at that particular time [before the invasion of Kuwait] was the fact he's insulted by people who are not entitled to insult him: small Kuwait. So I'm gonna come in here. I'm gonna teach you a lesson. World politics over all, the reaction of the West, he didn't think of that one single bit. His tribal mind has superceded his modern mind in that case.

Anchor: In fact, Saddam Hussein's squabble with Kuwait triggered the world's largest military operation since WWII.

Obviously, the documentary prefers to stick to the well-worn path of analyzing Saddam Hussein's evil persona which emerges as the key element in causing the Gulf crisis and in keeping him in power till today. Yet, to reduce the Gulf crisis to Saddam Hussein's malefic character conforms with the official, but deeply flawed, version maintained by the US's successive administrations. In doing so, the documentary submerges so many other crucial components leading to the Gulf crisis and the way it was resolved. The repressed context, as I mentioned above, serves to reduce the destruction inflicted on Iraq to the moral acts of saving Kuwait and containing the evil Hussein. The real issues, as Joel Beinin explains, go back to the end of WW II in 1945 when the State Department made a report about Middle East oil that was described as "a stupendous source of strategic power and one of the greatest material prizes in world history."[68] In this context, the war against Iraq, Beinin observes, is first and foremost "a contest over who will control the price of oil, will it be the cooperative but undemocratic and repressive regime of Saudi Arabia [...] or will it be the undemocratic but also uncooperative regime of Saddam Hussein, which with its control of Kuwait's oil in addition to its own, would have about 20% of the world's oil reserves under its control." Secondly by militarizing the crisis, the US creates the opportunity for a "stronger case to the Arab oil states to allow a permanent American military presence in the region."[69]

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[68] Joel Beinin, "Origins of the Gulf War," 30 Nov. 1990, audiotape, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.
[69] Beinin, "Origins." Beinin deliberately makes the difference between the issue of determining the price of the oil, which was one of the reasons behind escalating the crisis and the supply of the oil.

Indeed, if one accepts that control of petroleum and implanting US military bases in the Middle East are two crucial factors for the maintenance of US hegemony, the war option needs then other explanations that exceed the monstrosity of Hussein.[70] It is worth bringing another American journalist who attempted to do the same thing as Brent Sadler, that is, to look at the key elements of the Gulf War. His analysis, besides the just incrimination of Hussein, recovers the US responsibility. Speaking to an audience in April 1991, Erwin Knoll said:

> […] it turned out that given the dynamics of modern propaganda technique and the pliability of the media, merchandizing a holy war based on Iraq's aggression against Kuwait wasn't all that difficult. And it would provide the excuse for doing something the United States had wanted to do ever since the Shah of Iran was overthrown in the early or mid 1970s and that was to establish an American military presence in the Gulf. Now that the war is over, the US government has confirmed what was obvious to many of us […] and that is, at least some American troops are going to remain in the Middle East for a long time to come […]. I happen to believe […] that calling Saddam Hussein a new Hitler is a distortion of monstrous proportion, because it only serves to trivialize the true tragedy of the Holocaust. But it's certainly true that Saddam is a thoroughly bad man: he launched an aggressive war against a neighboring country, Iran; he may have used chemical warfare against his own Kurdish subjects […]. Saddam definitely maintained himself in power by the most barbarous means, totally ignoring all considerations of human rights. The problem is that he did all those things while he was a friend and ally of the United States of America which sold him arms, provided him with military intelligence, and generally supported him. Small wonder that our ambassador in Baghdad, Ms. Glaspie, assumed that we would close our eyes to his invasion of Kuwait, after all we had closed our eyes to all his other crimes. And in the spasm of war fervor and war fever that was whipped up in this country last summer and fall and winter, hardly any one bothered to remember that this world is full of tinhorn despots like Saddam Hussein […] people who brutalize their people at home and who covet their neighbors' land […]. What I am suggesting to you is that the climate of enthusiasm for the US war in the Persian Gulf was engendered by thorough application of a double standard and that the government and the news media were jointly complicit in projecting that double standard.[71]

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[70] With "control of petroleum" I don't mean only access to and the pricing of oil but also the recycling of petrodollars back to the United Sates through investments, savings, and the purchase of goods and services. And an even more important point, which is related to the pricing, is the usage of the dollar as the oil transaction currency, a point I will come to later at the end of the chapter. With regard to militarism, I follow Chalmers Johnson's distinction that militarism is no longer the defense of the country but "vested interest in a standing army." Johnson, "Blowback."

[71] Erwin Knoll, "The Gulf War."

Despite the fact that the CNN documentary was made ten years after the Gulf War, the act of articulating the US responsibility in empowering Hussein while he was waging war on Iran and later on his Kurdish subjects is still a taboo topic. Moreover, the Iran-Iraq war, which Saddler in passing refers to as a mere illustration of Hussein's danger, reveals a very important aspect of US foreign policy. Yet, clearly investigation of Washington's motives and the consequence of its involvement in supporting both Iraq and Iran in their war against each other is still off of the corporate media agenda.

One year after the end of the Iraq-Iran war, also known as the first Gulf War, Abbas Alnasrawi and Cheryl Rubenberg argue that the contradictory US policies vis-à-vis Iraq and Iran in the 1980s (shipment of US arms to Iran, strengthening its diplomatic ties with Iraq and tilting and counter-tilting from one country to the other depending on their performances on the battlefield) are primarily consistent with US foreign policy's objectives to further US economic, political, strategic, and ideological spheres of influence, at whatever cost.[72] They point out that by prolonging the Iraq-Iran war, the US made sure that neither combatant could achieve military victory nor emerge, as a result, as the regional power.[73] According to Alnasrawi, "[a]lthough the U.S.-brokered Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty bolstered the American position in an important part of the Middle East, it was the Iran-Iraq war that enhanced and expanded the U.S. position in the gulf region."[74] Indeed in the words of President Reagan's Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, who declared in testimony before the US House Armed Services Committee: "The fundamental issue is leadership, the leadership of the free world to resist the forces of anarchy and tyranny."[75] Or in the more accurate words of Larry Everest: "the key issue was how to maintain U.S. dominance in the region, not concern over the carnage of war, attacks on human rights, or spreading

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[72] See Alnasrawi and Rubenberg ed., *Consistency of US Foreign Policy*. The authors' analysis of US foreign policy goes beyond the Middle East and includes Latin America. Indeed, the fact that the profit made by the weapons sales to Iran was illegally diverted to the Contras—the forces trained and armed by the US to overthrow the elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua—also validates their contention that US foreign policy sought above all to crush all Third World nationalism.

[73] On the US pursuing the no-win strategy in the Iraq-Iran war, see Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 86-117. Henry Kissinger declared at the outbreak of the war: "the ultimate American interest in the war [is] that both should lose." Qtd. in Alnasrawi and Rubenberg, *Consistency of US Foreign Policy,* 150. Moreover, the US tilting and counter-tilting toward Iraq and Iran not only prolonged the war but ended it to the seeming advantage of Iraq. After the public disclosure of the Iran-Contra in November 1986, the Reagan administration stepped up efforts to stop the arms flow to Iran and started directly fighting on the side of the Iraqi army. In this context, Michel Moushabeck writes that: "by mid year [of 1987] the U.S. was involved in a head-to-head naval confrontation with Iran […]. A few months later [July 1988], a horrifying incident shocked the world: the USS *Vincennes* shot down a civilian plane belonging to Iran Air, killing all 290 passengers on board. Demoralized by this tragic loss and the latest military defeat, Khomeini was persuaded to accept UN cease-fire resolution." "Iraq: Years of Turbulence," *Beyond the Storm*, 35.

[74] Alnasrawi and Rubenberg, *Consistency of US Foreign Policy*, 75.

[75] Qtd. in Alnasrawi and Rubenberg, *Consistency of US Foreign Policy*, 81.

democracy—the principles Democratic and Republican administrations both routinely claim as their central motivations."[76]

By placing the first Gulf War, that is the Iraq-Iran war, in its historical and geopolitical context that unravels the objectives of American foreign policy in dominating the Gulf and tolerating no local power without its approval, one can argue that the seeds for the second Gulf War of 1991 were in the making. The first Gulf War gave Hussein a seeming victory and, as I argued before, left him with a standing army and the ambition to emerge as the local power besides Israel. On the other side of the globe, the end of the Cold War left the US as the only superpower, avid to maintain its standing army and ambiguous about the role Iraq should play in the Middle East. Saïd Aburish, in fact, talks of a "split in American policy [in mid 1990] between a pro-Saddam executive branch and an anti-Saddam Congress, press and perhaps intelligence service."[77] These major shifts clearly present a context ripe for (mis)calculations and a high possibility of clashes.

Yet, by disarticulating the US vital involvement in the Iraq-Iran war and its obvious design on the Middle East, CNN's documentary strips Saddam Hussein's hostile actions, as well as the US's, of their complex political and ideological context. What it does instead is it abides by the code of professionalism and presents Hussein's actions from the perspective of the White House top officials who understandably prefer to dwell on Hussein as a self-deluded thug on the loose. The US intervention in this official context gains the legitimacy of establishing itself as a matter of saving the world from "one of the darkest forces." Indeed, the language picked up by the documentary reinforces the notion that political and ideological actions of Third World countries are reduced to gangster theatrics, such as squabble, flexing one's muscles, etc. (see script above). The US intervention intrudes onto the scene once harm has been committed by "them," hence the US position acquires the status of defending its legitimate national or even the world's interests. No wonder the wording of causation in the documentary is "Saddam Hussein's squabble with Kuwait triggered the world's largest military operation since WW II."[78]

As the transcript above shows, in a very telling hierarchy that abides by the dominant value system, the documentary first presents the view of the hawkish David Welch who describes Saddam Hussein as "one of the darkest forces in modern Arab history." Then there is a cut to General Scowcroft who speaks about Saddam Hussein's brutal and murderous

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[76] Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 107.
[77] Aburish, *Saddam Hussein*, 276-77.
[78] What remains also unsaid in the documentary's reference to the "world's coalition" is that it was largely made up of other dictators who were able to join the coalition exactly because they were as depraved as Hussein himself and can make these life-and-death decisions that are totally out of step with their peoples' demands.

efforts to keep his person in power. What I am contesting here is not the documentary's resort to official sources. This is understandable since it is part of the journalist's task to present what people in power think about a given issue. Yet, its failure to challenge its official sources conforms to the way "professional" journalism is practiced in the US. Such a presentation, as Robert McChesney rightly points out, takes the controversy away from the stories and makes them look like some indelible facts. It would have certainly cast Scowcroft's statement under a new light had the documentary, for instance, referred to the fact that Scowcroft was employed by Ali Jabar al-Ali al-Sabah to sit on the board of a Kuwaiti-owned and directed oil company (Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's US subsidiary, Santa Fe International) from 1984 to 1986.[79] Moreover, the General, who is vociferously critical of Saddam Hussein's criminal ways of getting rid of the people he suspects of plotting against him, himself admitted to ABC journalist Peter Jennings that the first Bush administration decided not to support the uprising it had encouraged against Saddam Hussein and let the rebels be decimated by Hussein's army because "we would have preferred a coup."[80]

It might be understandable that Scowcroft fails to see the similarity between his government and the Iraqi regime in disregarding human lives for the sake of achieving their political goals. Yet, the documentary's acceptance of Scowcroft's statement at face value reveals its obedience to the national consensus. Accordingly, later when the documentary touches on the issue of abandoning the rebels to Saddam Hussein in March 1991, Scowcroft is asked to explain what happened. The general, who held at that time the position of National Security Advisor, explains away the administration's responsibility in the massacre of the rebels. His comment was: "I suggested to Secretary Cheney and to General Powell that we rescind General Schwarzkopf's permission [to allow Hussein to fly his helicopters which would be used for attacking the rebels]. They said it'd be a serious thing to do, that would undermine his command over his forces and so on. So I didn't pursue it. It was a mistake." If that were really a mistake, the US forces could still have interfered and stopped the massacre, given the fact that they were still in the area controlling the air and watching the Republican Guard annihilating the rebels. The more plausible explanation of what happened is spelled out in Powell's autobiography:

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[79] In Laura Flanders, "Restricting Reality," *Beyond the Storm*, 168. Part of the ground rules of the corporate media is that journalists are encouraged to censor information that may put into question the credibility of an official source; while the opposite, that is to try to find information that discredits those who do not agree with the US government, is well-appreciated. This is why, for instance, in his report on the role of France in the Gulf War, CNN's Jim Bittermann duly tells us that the French Defense Minister resigned because he was opposed to the war. Yet, Bittermann did not leave it at that; he hastens to add in a relative clause that suggests an explanation about the minister's resignation. He says: "France's credibility [about joining the coalition] suffered even more serious damage from its Defense Minister, *who was a founding member of the Franco-Iraqi Friendship Society*." (My italics). *World News* 15 Jan. 2001. The flaw of the Defense Minister is quickly displayed: he must be a "sympathizer" through his membership in the Franco-Iraqi Friendship Society, hence his resignation. As to General Scowcroft's work for the Kuwaiti government does not qualify as serious information that might let us see his comment on Saddam Hussein under a different light.
[80] Qtd. in Aburish, *Saddam Hussein*, 309.

> In March [1991], the Iraqi Shiites in the South rose up in arms to demand more recognition from Baghdad […]. In the north, the Kurds tried to shake off the Iraqi yoke. *Neither revolt had a chance. Nor, frankly, was their success a goal of our policy*. President Bush's rhetoric urging the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam, however, may have given encouragement to the rebels. But our practical intention was to leave Baghdad enough power to survive as a threat to an Iran that remained bitterly hostile toward the United States.[81]

That same pattern of seeking credentialed sources and presenting them as some God given truth will repeat itself in the documentary with regard to several issues, such as the air war where the source was President George Bush, General Schwartzkopf and footage of Wolf Blitzer, a CNN journalist reporting the air strikes.

2.2. The Native Informant

I would like to deal in this section with Saïd Aburish's comments on the personality of Saddam Hussein. Clearly his expertise, besides his being an Arab/insider, bestows on the documentary a touch of multiperspective reporting; yet, Aburish speaks to corroborate the condemnation intoned by Welch and Scowcroft. This is certainly CNN's idea of balanced reporting: both Americans and Arabs voice the same views on Saddam Hussein's villainy. And more importantly both reduce the whole complex issue of Kuwait's invasion and the Gulf War to the personality of the Iraqi leader. Indeed, while Aburish's voice-over starts divulging the inner workings of Saddam Hussein's tribal mind and his split persona that lives in different centuries, we are shown, certainly in a gesture to reinforce Aburish's analysis, footage of Saddam Hussein on a horse. The ominous music that picks up where Aburish stops clearly casts Hussein, à la Hollywood, as a totally evil character.

What boggles the mind about Aburish's comment is that his book, *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (2000), the title of which appears in the caption that introduces him as a writer, deals not only with Saddam Hussein's personal shortcomings but also with the West's, especially the US's Janus-faced politics in the Middle East and the multinational corporations that made huge profits in empowering Hussein.[82] In this biographical work on Saddam Hussein, Aburish describes himself as having indirectly worked for the Iraqi leader: in one instance Aburish was responsible for locating Western business people who wanted to take up construction projects in Iraq. Later he became involved in finding the much-needed Occidental expertise to build up the Iraqi nuclear weapons. His various contacts with Western

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[81] Powell, *My American Journey*, 516. My emphasis.
[82] See Aburish, *Saddam Hussein,* 129-59.

and Arab officials and leaders as well as with intelligence institutions such as the CIA make him, in fact, a good authority that can provide us with rare knowledge on the behind-the-scenes actions.

Yet, in the four statements Aburish delivers in the forty-five-minute long documentary, none tackles the US's hypocritical dealings with Saddam Hussein's aggressions, a view that is, however, well-documented in his book.[83] Indeed, Aburish concludes his book with the conviction that "[c]reating a client state in Iraq, which is what America and Britain are pursuing without admitting it, would leave us with a Middle East problem that would haunt us for far longer than the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unless sensible behaviour reasserts itself in the immediate future, what America and Britain are doing reduces them to Saddam's criminal equivalents and partners."[84] Yet, CNN, a network that clearly operates within the orbit of national consensus, does not deem it worthwhile to use Aburish's expertise in going after the corporations and the US government. Clearly, his expertise is welcomed only when exposing Hussein's reign of terror. For instance, concerning the aftermath of President Bush's call to the Iraqi people to overthrow their leader, Aburish writes: "The behaviour of the West at the end of the Gulf War sanctioned the survival of Saddam […]. Despite the mainly propaganda support for the INC [Iraqi National Congress] and Iraqi opposition groups in general, the USA clearly had no intention of allowing democratic forces or organized political movements to overthrow Saddam."[85] Given the fact that Aburish is, in his writing, clearly critical of the US foreign policy in the Middle East, would it not have been more enriching in terms of controversial information to let him voice his views that oppose the official sources?

2.3. Accommodating Dissent

The Unfinished War is not monodiscursive; critical voices do make it to the screen, albeit these remain primarily restricted to the sanctions regime that was, at the time of the documentary making, stubbornly maintained by the US and the UK. Fiske argues that the problem of the mainstream media is not ignoring dissent altogether, it is the "structur[ing] of

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[83] Nevertheless, there is the probability that Aburish might have spoken out his mind about the US's responsibility to the cameras but CNN edited it all out.
[84] Aburish, *Saddam Hussein*, 364. In fact, Aburish explains at length how the West overlooked Saddam Hussein's crimes and repression of his people. He also maintains that the US support of Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war was given with the view that neither of the two fighters should win that war, hence the US supply of both parties with weapons and technical help. Aburish even raises the issue whether Kuwait's arrogant attitude vis-à-vis Iraq, at the end of its war against Iran, and its insistence on overproducing oil was motivated by the US instigation in order to provoke Saddam Hussein into some horrible act. See 278-83.
[85] Aburish, *Saddam Hussein*, 313-20.

these voices in a hierarchy of legitimation that is a product of the dominant value system."[86] In fact, as I have shown above, the views of some of the White House top officials on the nature of Saddam Hussein as the cause of the Gulf War and its aftermath are reported as unquestionable truths. There was no attempt from the documentary's writers to supplement some history that would have easily exposed the one-sidedness of these views.

To the film's credit, when criticism is leveled at the UN Security Council, in this case the US and UK, for insisting on prolonging the sanctions against the growing relaxation on the part of Russia, France and China, the official US point of view is countered with oppositional views. Nevertheless, the views of dissenting UN officials are directly cut away to David Welch and the British ambassador to the UN, Sir Jeremy Greenstock. Clearly once the documentary voiced two different opinions, the issue of the ongoing sanctions becomes a controversial one: sanctions will be looked at differently depending on whom one asks, whether these are dissenting UN humanitarian workers or British and US top officials. Such an approach should have been maintained throughout the documentary, at least in order to live up to the spirit of "we report, you decide!" Here is the transcript of both views as presented:

> **Denis Halliday**: (caption that reads: Former UN Assistant Secretary General) The task at hand is to disarm Iraq, not to kill the people and the children of the country which is exactly what this program [economic sanctions] is doing […]. We cannot have the United Nations, the guardian of well-being, sustaining a regime of embargo or sanctions on the people, that impacts only on the people, not on the decision-makers, not on the government. More than impacts: it kills the people. We are in my view guilty through the Security Council of *committing genocide* in Iraq. (my emphasis)
> **Sir Jeremy Greenstock**: (caption that reads: British Ambassador to the UN) I don't think *it helps to talk in these terms* [reference to Halliday's words] *they don't mean anything*. Clearly the international community would like the Iraqi economy and the Iraqi people to be restored to their normal operations […] There is no argument with them. The argument is only with the regime. (my emphasis)
> **David Welch**: The international community is in the lead trying to ameliorate the effects of the sanctions, and the regime in Baghdad is in the lead in trying to aggravate them on its own people and turn around and present this case to, you know, people who are well-intentioned but *frankly a little soft-minded* and say that it's our fault. I think that's explicitly not true. (my emphasis)
> **Hans Von Sponeck**: (caption that reads Former UN Assistant Secretary General) If sanctions end tomorrow, you cannot bring back these ten years that have been lost by the young people. We can expect people entering adult life much less well-prepared than their parents were in facing civic responsibility, in having an ethical and moral grounding when they were taught mainly how to survive under sanctions. The chances are pretty good that we will see a generation that will not be so favorably inclined towards countries in Europe and North America.
> **Denis Halliday**: These people are no longer focusing on better forms of government or changing the system; they are focusing on survival. And we've demolished that

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[86] Fiske, *Media Matters,* 187-88.

very class, the very people, the very professionals amongst the Iraqi population who were thinking about better systems of government.

Anchor: But according to the US State Department, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Iraq should ultimately be blamed on Saddam Hussein.

David Welch: Responsibility is fundamentally Iraqi's government to take care of its own people. With all resources going in for oil-for-food program today, if the Iraqi government wanted to do something, he can do it […] and it can choose not to do it, and all too frequently it chooses not to do it. Lifting the sanctions will not automatically help the Iraqi people, because there is something that stands in between and that is Saddam Hussein.

To the documentary's credit, it brings two well-known arch-opposers to the regime of sanctions, namely Denis Halliday and Hans Von Sponeck, both former UN Assistants Secretary General who resigned in protest over the sanctions.[87] Interestingly both Halliday and Von Sponeck base their views on tangible evidence they saw in the daily life of the Iraqi people: the unnecessarily high number of deaths that reached 8000 Iraqis per month, the destruction of the Iraqi civilian infrastructure and the erosion of a culture.[88] David Welch and Greenstock, on the other hand, merely dismiss Halliday's and Von Sponeck's accusations, on the grounds that they, as representative of "the international community" are by no means involved in the destruction of a country. Indeed, even though the information put forward by Halliday and Von Sponeck have the merit, or at least some merit, of being factual, Welch and Greenstock refuse to deal with it as such and insist on seeing it as some misplaced emotionality and even soft-mindedness. Certainly Iraqis are well aware that Hussein and his regime bear the responsibility for their sufferings, especially in that they could see his spending huge sums of money from the UN-oil-for-food program on mosques and palaces. However, they are also well aware that the powers that control the UN are totally indifferent to their sufferings.[89]

Nuha al-Radi, an Iraqi ceramist and painter who started a diary with the beginning of the 1991 Gulf War, writes on the 40th day after the war began: "we've just been standing around with our mouths open, swallowing bombs […]. We didn't have anything to do with the Kuwaiti take-over, yet we have been paying the price for it."[90] Al-Radi's bitterness and growing disillusionment with the US's policies, reflect the feelings of most Iraqis, a fact that was recognized by Halliday and Sponeck; yet, the representative of "the international community" strangely do not feel bound to what the majority of the Iraqi people think about

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[87] Denis Halliday resigned in 1998 and Hans Von Sponeck, who replaced Halliday, resigned in 2000.
[88] The number of these deaths is given by Denis Halliday in his article "Guerre Non Déclarée Contre l'Iraq," *Manière de Voir* Nov.-Dec. 2000, 69.
[89] For a survey on Iraq's economy under the embargo, see Kazim Habib, *Al-Ma'sat* (Tragedy).
[90] Nuha al-Radi, *Baghdad Diaries: A Woman' s Chronicle of War and Exile* (New York: Vintage, 2003) 46-47.

their actions. Seven years later with the beginning of "Desert Fox" al-Radi writes from Lebanon:

> Clinton looks straight into the cameras, tries to look candid, and lies […]. Out of 500 UN supervision visits, five were contested. Is that fair? We have to be bombed for that? I'm not so sure Saddam didn't want the bombing, either. It breaks the stalemate: the embargo is not likely to be lifted […]. Why are we singled out for special punishment? […] I really cannot understand how we could still be such a threat to the world. Look at Israel: it bombs the south of Lebanon constantly; it breaks the sound barrier over Beirut nearly daily, it occupies Lebanese land. Tell me, are they not aggressors? We are very alone now […]. I know we are an easy target. I know we are a thorn in everyone's flesh. But I feel very, very sad, because we are also a people.[91]

As history amply shows, the perspective of weak people does not matter to the powers leading and deciding over world politics. This is why Sir Jeremy Greenstock as well as David Welch, in a classic case of power-driven agenda, dismiss the views of Halliday and Sponeck, and by extension the views of Iraqis and Arabs, as meaningless. Duly standing with the official point of view, the anchor, Sadler, closes the episode by repeating the State Department's view which puts the blame on Saddam Hussein.

Another point the documentary presents as a controversy is whether the Clinton administration was seeking to assassinate or merely discipline Hussein in the attack with the name of "Desert Fox," which was led by the US and UK on December 16, 1998 (on the eve of the House of Representatives' impeachment vote against Clinton). The documentary resorts to the same significant procedure of going first to official sources, putting in a dissenting view, and then closing with the official point of view:

> **William Clinton**: Earlier today, I ordered America's armed forces to strike military and security targets in Iraq. Their mission is to attack Iraq's chemical and biological weapons programs, to protect the national interests of the United States and indeed the interests of people throughout the Middle East and around the world.
> **Scott Ritter**: **[**…] These were villas, these were residential complexes and the only reason they were struck because there was a high degree of probability that Saddam Hussein was there.
> **David Welsh**: We targeted weapons of mass destruction facilities and their means of control and concealment. There was no intention to target civilians or any other parts of the regime. It will be no disappointment to most Americans and many official

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[91] Al-Radi, *Baghdad Diaries,* 163. Scott Ritter, former Chief Inspector of UNSCOM in Iraq, articulates what the majority of Arabs are painfully aware of. He says: "We would never allow 500,000 Jewish children to starve to death. We would never allow 500,000 British children to starve to death. It's racial politics, we all know that […]. It's pure racial politics, there is no doubt about that […]. The concept of us trying to save the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein is ludicrous. He is a brutal dictator. He may torture to death 1,800 people a year. That is a lot. That is terrible. I am not saying this is acceptable. We kill 6,000 a month." *Iraq Notebook* winter 2000: 14-15.

Americans when Saddam is no longer there. But we're not, you know, trying to bomb his house or even to make that happen.

However, the most important controversial part with regard to "Operation Desert Fox" is its being conducted without a Security Council authorization, a fact that certainly goes in line with several US and UK strikes that culminated in the Gulf War of 2003. In the words of international politics analyst and Middle East scholar Phyllis Bennis: "The 1998 Desert Fox bombing strikes were a violation of international law. *No* UN resolution called for, allowed, justified, or accepted unilateral attacks by a member state against Iraq in retaliation for real or alleged violations. U.S. officials relied on two UN resolutions to try to justify military strikes. But both claims were false."[92] The illegality of the 1998 attack is intertwined with another illegal purpose that was pursued by the US and UK, namely regime change in Baghdad. In his 1999 book *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem—Once and for All,* Scott Ritter vehemently criticizes the US manipulation of the inspection process for its own military and geopolitical purposes in the Gulf, which led to the inevitable discrediting of UNSCOM. Ritter not only delineates how Richard Butler, UNSCOM's executive chairman since 1997, organized his work with the US State Department, which made him more an agent of the US than a servant of the UN, but also argues that by seeking regime change rather than Iraq's disarmament, the United States were giving Hussein's regime good reasons not to comply. Ritter writes that Rolf Ekéus, UNSCOM's first executive chairman who was replaced by Richard Butler in July 1997, "saw a fatal flaw in the Clinton Iraqi policy. Like the Bush administration policy, it had no endgame [...]. Washington espoused a policy of indefinite economic sanctions until Saddam Hussein was removed from power. Ekéus knew that this policy was an inherent contradiction of the provisions of Security Council Resolution 687, which had no such linkage."[93]

Regrettably, all these crucial issues remained outside the scope of the documentary that merely raised the question as to whether the "Operation Desert Fox" really targeted Iraqi military facilities or the Iraqi head of state, instead of dealing with the more important issue of the US breaching international law either way.[94] The crux of the matter, as Ritter argues, is that "Desert Fox" while aiming at assassinating Hussein was also "born of frustration,

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[92] Bennis, *Calling the Shots*, 271. Her emphasis.

[93] Scott Ritter, *Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem—Once and for All* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999) 145-46. Indeed Ritter bases his argument on his own insider knowledge as UNSCOM Chief Inspector and also on the White House top officials' statements, such as Madeleine Albright's March 1997 declaration that bluntly states that even if Hussein disarms, economic sanctions would remain until he is out of power. See Ritter, *Endgame*, 156, 192-3. On Butler's work see 182-89.

[94] Roland Barthes, the French linguist and semiologist, calls such a procedure "inoculation/immunization," which he explains as "a little 'confessed' evil saves one from acknowledging a lot of hidden evil." *Mythologies,* (Paris: Seuil, 1957) 24.

namely, the Clinton national security team's inability to hold together the international coalition of Desert Storm."[95] Indeed the "Operation Desert Fox" offered the pattern the later Bush administration would apply to signal "displeasure" at the coalition that started loosening its embargo on Iraq. It is then small wonder that shortly after President Bush took office, he ordered the attack on an Iraqi radar system on February 17 and 18, 2001, even though the radars in question were beyond the US- and UK-established security zone.[96] The second Bush administration's unilateral bellicose stance vis-à-vis Iraq (with the compliant British government) was also sending a message to the important coalition members, that is, France and Russia, that started showing their inclinations to resume business with Baghdad.[97]

2.4. The Unfinished Business

Since the documentary focuses mainly on Saddam Hussein's monstrosity, the anchorman concludes the 45-minute-long program by stating: "In ten years, the Middle East region has turned full circle. Iraq's president is again positioning himself as a champion of Palestinian rights, he is also emerging as a leader with whom many countries are prepared to do business. Saddam Hussein has made no attempt to reinvent himself, instead he has clearly shown that while Iraq was repeatedly hit during ten years of unfinished war, he never fell down." Clearly all these statements are true in their own right; yet, by remaining silent on the US foreign policy's agenda that has also made no attempt to reinvent itself, I argue that the ending, like the whole documentary, deals only in half-truths.

The questions that lead to the other half-truths, submerged by the documentary, are: Why should the US be upset by Russia's and France's resuming business with Baghdad? Is it because the US feels their actions are impeding the goal of disarming Iraq? Certainly this cannot be the issue, since the US itself is not concerned about Iraq's disarmament, but with the illegal purpose of regime change. So what are France, Russia and of course Iraq itself trampling on when they talk business? Already in its issue of April 17, 1995, the *Wall Street Journal* sounds the alarm:

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[95] Ritter, *Endgame*, 192.
[96] See Stefan Kornelius, "Bomben als Politik-Ersatz," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 February 2001: 4. Interestingly Colin Powell was aware of the colonial aspect in his assignment to carve up the Iraqi territory. He writes in his autobiography, *My American Journey*, "One Sunday afternoon, with me in Washington and Jack [General Galvin, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR)] in Belgium, each with a map in front of us, we sketched out a 'security zone' […] I felt like one of those British diplomats in the 1920s carving out nations like Jordan and Iraq on a tablecloth at a gentleman's club. I called Galvin, in his trans-European role, 'Charlemagne,' and I told him that now he was truly a kingdom marker" (517). Naturally we needn't wonder why Powell had Jordan and Iraq in mind instead of Iraq and Kuwait themselves and Sir Percy Cox, who, with a red pen, drew some lines on the map that designated the borders between Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait in 1922.
[97] Wolfgang Koydl, "US-Luftschläge gegen den Iraq: Die Botschaften der Bomben," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 February 2001: 2.

> The European companies will have grabbed the best deals […].
> International politics is creating an uneven playing field for U.S.
> companies and could lead to a major power shift away from the
> U.S. oil industry […]. Indeed, the companies that win the rights
> to develop Iraqi fields could be on the road to becoming the most
> powerful multinationals of the next century.[98]

Indeed, Larry Everest points out that Iraq offered Russia the status of most favored nation in 1997. In addition to that, Russia, France and China negotiated oil exploration rights and lease contracts which were just waiting for the lifting of the sanctions to be legally initiated.[99] Moreover, it is understandable that Hussein's regime, vexed with the US policy that seeks his removal, turned to Europe for its export. Everest writes that "By 2001, German exports to Iraq had increased four-fold from previous years. These developments mirrored a regional trend: in 2000, U.S. exports to the Middle East totaled $23 billion (excluding Israel), while European exports were nearly triple that amount—$63.7 billion."[100]

Besides the growing isolation of the US and UK, that clung all the more to the sanctions as a means to keep the other powers out of savoring their business contracts with Iraq, there was another critical factor, left unmentioned in the documentary. According to William Clark, Hussein's law switching from dollars to euros for his oil sales in September 2000 posed a serious affront to US economic hegemony, especially if adopted by other oil countries.[101] Here lies the danger of Saddam Hussein in 2001, not in hiding Weapons of Mass Destruction but in interfering with what Special Forces veteran Stan Goff calls "petrodollar imperialism."[102] Another factor leveled by Clark is the impending phenomenon known as global "Peak Oil," which oil experts expect to occur in 2010, with Iraq and Saudi Arabia being the last nations to reach peak oil production. Hence Clark's conclusion updated after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 that

> The Iraq war was designed to 1) secure U.S./U.K. oil supplies
> before and after global Peak Oil, and 2) to have a large military
> presence to "dissuade" other oil-producers from moving towards

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[98] Qtd. in Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 207.

[99] See William Clark, "Revisited—The Real Reasons for the Upcoming War with Iraq," original essay published in January 2003; the revised one in March 2003. <www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/RriraqWar.html>.

[100] Everest, *Oil, Power and Empire*, 206-207.

[101] The law was made to be effective on November 6, 2000. Two years later, another OPEC country that started showing interest in pricing their oil exports in the euro currency is Iran. See Clark, "Revisited." According to Everest, this move of Hussein was a means to put pressure on the US to ease the embargo. See his *Oil, Power and Empire*, 207. See also Nuha al-Radi who was for the first time in agreement with Hussein's regime and found the idea brilliant. *Baghdad Diaries*, 184.

[102] Stan Goff explains that "It is because oil is denominated in dollars—which I can now call 'petrodollars'—since the U.S. dropped the gold standard and all its associated fixed currency exchange rates in 1971, that the US has been able to dominate not only the developing world, but its key capitalist competitors. Other nations must pay their energy bills in (petro)dollars, at a higher rate than the U.S., and those dollars come right back to the homeland (via Saudi Arabia, et al) to invest in T-bills and real estate." "The Infinite War and Its Roots," <http://www.fromthewilderness.com/cgi-bin/MasterPFP.cgi?doc=html>.

the euro as an oil transaction currency. These are the two crucial elements for maintaining U.S. hegemony over the world economy. Reconverting Iraq back to the petrodollar was not the critical issue, but preventing any further momentum towards a petroeuro is a critical component of U.S. geostrategy.[103]

All these factors (except the 2003 invasion) that revolve around energy, currency and the military were in full view during the film making of the *Unfinished War*. Yet, its failure to deal with them clearly goes back to the corporate media's principle of not digging too deeply where the political establishment is serving big business. No wonder it comes full circle when dealing with Saddam Hussein but utterly fails to do so when dealing with a US foreign policy that time and again resorts to its military might to maintain its hegemony and what it deems its imperial prerogatives. Again in the time framework of the documentary, this was the case with "Desert Fox" and the ongoing bombing of Iraq since then nearly on a daily basis.[104] Indeed, Iraq has been "unfinished business" for the US political establishment until it rests exclusively and safely in the hands of the US corporations and its territory opens up to US military bases. However, the connotations of the "unfinished business" in the documentary are more tied to the monstrous personality of Saddam Hussein, represented as still defiant of the "world' community."

3. The "America" in Steven Emerson's *Jihad in America*

Cultural critic and International Relations analyst Eqbal Ahmad gave a talk on October 12, 1998, with the title of "Terrorism: Theirs and Ours," in which he deals with the need to define terrorism as well as adopt an approach that deals with terrorism's causes and the ways to stop it.[105] Yet, Ahmad notes that the official US approach to terrorism does just the opposite: it avoids offering a definition since "definitions involve a commitment to analysis, comprehension, and adherence to some norms of consistency."[106] Moreover, he observes that despite the lack of definition, officials insist on being globalistic in their fighting of terrorism. He points out, "[t]hey [the top officials in the Clinton administration] may not define terrorism, but they can call it a menace to good order, a menace to the moral values of Western civilization, a menace to humankind. Therefore, they can call for it to be stamped out

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[103] Clark, "Revisited." On the phenomenon of "Peak Oil" see also Denis Babusiaux and Pierre-René Bauquis, "Anticiper la Fin du Pétrole," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Jan. 2005: 15.

[104] Everest writes that "In the eight months following 'Desert Fox,' U.S. and British airplanes attacked Iraq nearly every day, firing over 1,100 missiles against 359 targets." *Oil, Power and Empire*, 212.

[105] The talk was given at the university of Colorado at Boulder. Later, after September 11, 2001, the talk, besides an interview conducted by David Barsamian, were published by Seven Stories Press in 2001 with the title *Terrorism: Theirs and Ours*. The talk by Eqbal Ahmad, who died in Islamabad, Pakistan in 1999, deals not only with the complex issue of terrorism but with Osama bin Laden as "the sign of things to come."

[106] Ahmad, *Terrorism*, 13.

worldwide."[107] Ahmad also identifies other characteristics in the official approach, such as shunning causation, adhering to selectivity (hence the silence on terrorism conducted by friendly governments) and Washington's claiming a certain omniscient knowledge of terrorism (for instance, in the '80s Afghan and Arab Mujahideen were called freedom fighters by President Ronald Reagan, then in the '90s they became terrorists). Ahmad's pieces of advice to the US decision-makers in matter of foreign policy are:

> First, avoid extremes of double standards […]. Don't condone Israeli terror, Pakistani terror, Nicaraguan terror, El Salvadoran terror, on the one hand, and then complain about Afghan terror or Palestinian terror. It doesn't work. Try to be even-handed. A superpower cannot promote terror in one place and reasonably expect to discourage terrorism in another place. It won't work in this shrunken world. Do not condone the terror of your allies. Condemn them. Fight them. Punish them. Avoid covert operations and low-intensity warfare. These are breeding grounds for terrorism and drugs […]. Also, focus on causes and help ameliorate them. Try to look at causes and solve problems. Avoid military solutions. Terrorism is a political problem. Seek political solutions. Diplomacy works […]. Finally please help reinforce and strengthen the framework of international law […]. Enforce the United Nations. Enforce the International Court of Justice. Get a warrant, then go after him [Bin Laden] internationally.[108]

Yet, clearly such a view was neither what the military and foreign policy circles believed in nor what they actively pursued. In fact, the 1991 Gulf War that served as the framework for the "New World Order" indicated the perpetuation of the Cold War organizational structures; that is, while during the Cold War, extremes of double standards were tolerated in the name of fighting communism, the '90s and beyond are also to tolerate them in the name of fighting rogue states and terrorism (as identified by the US). In other words the structure of keeping a massive foreign arms trade would remain in place.[109] No wonder, as John Trumpbour puts it: "Hardly before the moisture from the thawing cold war could evaporate, U.S. pundits and politicians during the 1980s and 1990s warned of a whole new assortment of threats to the American century: The resurgence of ruthless Japanese imperialism […], the growth of narco-terrorism in the Americas…, the expansion of Middle East terrorism […], and the surge of third world immigration into the U.S. and European

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[107] Ahmad, *Terrorism*, 14.
[108] Ahmad, *Terrorism*, 24-26.
[109] See Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), especially the chapter "Stealth Imperialism" where he, for instance, points out that "[b]y 1995, according to its own Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, the United States was the source of 49 percent of global arms exports. It shipped arms of various types to some 140 countries, 90 percent of which were either not democracies or were human rights abusers […]. In February 1995, President Clinton released his new arms export policies. They renewed old Cold War policies even though the Cold War had clearly ended, but they emphasized the commercial advantages of foreign arms sales" (88).

metropoles […].”[110]Yet, even though all these potential enemies have been kept under continual study and analysis, it is Middle East terrorism/Islam, the perennial aggressor in Lewis's and Huntington's clash-of-civilizations thesis, that emerged as the mega-threat and served as a reliable conduit for conflict after the end of the Cold War.[111]

There is no doubt that militant and radical Islam is a threat to the people who live in Muslim countries, Western Europe and the United States, yet, as I have argued, it is a threat which has some tangible causes and a context that link up with other imminent dangers. The more accurate picture in my view is what Tariq Ali describes as clashes of fundamentalisms, between "a religious fundamentalism—itself the product of modernity—and an imperial fundamentalism determined to 'discipline the world.'"[112] Yet, another crucial element to this structure is that these fundamentalisms do not always clash. The feminist sociologist Fatima Mernissi cogently makes the point of how Western liberal democracies have constantly promoted what she calls "palace fundamentalism" of the Saudi Monarchy, before, during and after the Cold War (a point I will come back to later).

Yet, the experts, as I argued in the previous chapter, who appear frequently in the dominant media to explain (militant) Islam generally ignore the complex context of this phenomenon and tend to lump together Islam as a religion with all Islamic movements that exist from Morocco to Indonesia. As Edward Said puts it: "Sensationalism, crude xenophobia, and insensitive belligerence are all the order of the day, with results on both sides of the imaginary line between 'us' and 'them' that are extremely unedifying."[113] A case in point here is Steven Emerson's PBS film *Jihad in America* broadcast on November 21, 1994. Emerson draws on and reinforces Daniel Pipes's thesis that Muslims' goal is to expand Islam and force it on the rest of the world. Emerson, thereby, joins the large number of American experts who have an almost religious acceptance vis-à-vis what their country is blatantly forcing on the Arab world via the Gulf War and its aftermath.

Emerson announces in the beginning of *Jihad in America* that "since the World Trade Center bombing [of 1993] I've been investigating the networks of Islamic extremists committed to Jihad in America. For these militants, Jihad is a holy war, an armed struggle to

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[110] John Trumpbour, "The Clash of Civilizations," *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi and Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 90-91.

[111] See Trumpbour's reading of a seminar on "Megaterrorism" that was sponsored by the Nixon Center on Peace and Freedom in February 1996. "The Clash of Civilizations," 94-96. A classic book about the roots of the images constructed around Islam is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978).

[112] Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihad and Modernity*, (London: Verso, 2003). See also William Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2000).

[113] Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, updated ed. (New York, Vintage, 1997) xlviii.

defeat non-believers or infidels and their ultimate goal is to establish an Islamic empire." Granted that there is a small group of Islamic extremists who are fanatic enough to think that they have the right and can impose their religion, as they understand it, on all non-Muslims and above all on those they consider corrupt Muslims, and that is roughly the one billion people who live in Muslim countries. Yet, by stating that all Islamists/Muslims are committed to fighting the infidels and ultimately establishing an Islamic empire, Emerson reiterates the clash theorists' scenario: it is either "them"/"Jihad" or "us"/"America," hence his exclusive concentration on the need to crack down on the Jihadists' network. I will at that level concentrate on exploring the linkages between what Emerson posits as two mutually exclusive binaries. My intention is to show that the recent and ongoing relationships between Islamic fundamentalism and US liberal democracy open up the complex picture of corporate America and US foreign policy that have handled Islamic fundamentalism as an asset to their expansionist goals.

In the one-hour-long film, Emerson constitutes a firm dichotomy between CIA, FBI, State Department officials and counter-terrorism experts vs. Islamists as a source of threat and terror. While US officials are presented in scenes that show them reflecting on the immigration laws or on the limits of the right to freedom of speech and position them as holder of factual knowledge thanks to their first-hand experience with Islamist groups, Islamists are shown delivering one threat after the other.

Ironically, Emerson himself locates the beginning of Islamic extremism in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the US's crucial support of the Mujahideen via "the CIA that channeled $3 billion to the Islamist fighters."[114] Nevertheless, instead of elaborating on and investigating this convergence between the US's interests and the Islamist Afghans' and Arabs' interests which was to some extent still alive during the early '90s, Emerson goes to a CIA agent for a comment on the US's support of the Mujahideen in the '80s and leaves the matter at that. In fact, his interviewee Charles Cogan describes the operation he ran for the

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[114] Obviously another crucial supporter of the Mujahideen was Pakistan via its ISI (Interservices Intelligence); yet, the Pakistani and US governments were not the only ones who supported the Mujahideen, but also, according to Ahmad Rashid, China and Arab states. He writes: "The Afghan Mujaheddin were to become the US-backed, anti-Soviet shock troops. But for the Afghans the Soviet invasion was yet another attempt by outsiders to subdue them and replace their time-honoured religion and society with an alien ideology and social system. The jihad took on a new momentum as the USA, China and Arab states poured in money and arms supplies to the Mujaheddin. Out of this conflict, which was to claim 1.5 million Afghan lives and only end when Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, would emerge a second generation of Mujaheddin who called themselves Taliban (or the students of Islam.)" *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 13. The sum of $3 billion is the one given by Emerson in the film. Eqbal Ahmad, on the other hand, speaks of $8 billion that was spent by the US government on the "holy war" against the Soviet invasion. See his *Confronting Empire* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) 134-35.

CIA in Afghanistan as "the most successful covert action that the US engaged in." He goes on saying:

> We sought to maintain a balance and never allow it to get too far in favor of the fundamentalists. We had really very few illusions. That is, that's not to say that we could have predicted that some of these Mujahideen might have turned against the US or the West later on. But as I said, our focus was on hitting and hurting as much as possible the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. I don't think we have really anything to be apologetic about, these were the fighting assets and we had to aid them. What came later came later!

Indeed, in the spirit of "what comes later, comes later," Washington, despite the end of the Cold War, kept its adherence to the principle of fostering the "fighting assets" that would further its hegemonic interests. Accordingly, while an "Islamic blowback" (a CIA's term) was going on in the US—one of its most horrible achievements is certainly the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center—, the Clinton administration looked favorably on the Taliban once this militant Islamist group started conquering their country in 1994. What made the Taliban attractive to Washington in the beginning was their being anti-Shi'ite (hence, anti-Iran and other Afghan Shi'ite groups seen as loyal to Iran) and their having historical ties with Pakistan (an old ally of the US).[115] In this way, at the time Emerson was looking at Afghanistan (and indeed all Muslim countries) as a place that spawned terrorists with the mission to destroy the US, the Clinton administration was very interested in seeing US corporations getting hold of the oil and gas fields in Central Asia. And since Washington was adamant on isolating Iran, the pipelines that would carry the Caspian oil and gas had to cross either Turkey and/or Afghanistan which was at that time caught in a civil war. The journalist Ahmed Rashid, who investigated this issue for years, speaks of the "New Great Game," which like the Great Game of the late nineteenth century, is also "between expanding and contracting empires." Rashid explains that:

> As a weakened and bankrupt Russia attempts to keep a grip on what it still views as its frontiers in Central Asia and control the flow of Caspian oil through pipelines that traverse Russia, the USA is thrusting itself into the region on the back of proposed oil pipelines which would bypass Russia. Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are building their own communication links with the region and want to be the preferred route of choice for future pipelines heading east, west or south […]. The Central Asian states have their own rivalries, preferences and strategic imperatives. Looming above this is the fierce competition between American,

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[115] That is why Eqbal Ahmad points out: "The U.S. concern is not who is fundamentalist and who is progressive, who treats women nicely and who treats them badly. That's not the issue. The issue is who is more likely to ensure the safety of the oil resources that the United States or its corporations could control?" *Confronting Empire*, 50.

European and Asian oil companies […]. Although the USA was determined to isolate Iran, Turkmenistan could not afford to do so, as Iran offered the nearest and most accessible outlet to the south and the sea. […] [nevertheless] In 1994 Bridas, the Argentinian oil company which had concessions in Turkmenistan, proposed building a gas pipeline that would cross Afghanistan and deliver gas to Pakistan and India. The US company Unocal with support from Washington proposed a similar pipeline in 1995. The battle between the two companies to build this pipeline […] sucked in the Taliban and the other Afghan warlords. Thus Afghanistan became the fulcrum of the first battle of the New Great Game.[116]

Naturally since corporations and foreign policies of the countries that work with and against Islamists are spared from scrutiny in the film, Emerson manages to make Islamists look like the incarnation of pure evil or exhibitors of some "raw and red hatred" as judge Alvin Schlesinger puts it in the film with regard to the case of the convicted Egyptian Assayid Nusseir who murdered the Israeli rabbi Meir Kahane. In fact, the episode on Kahane reveals that for Emerson Israeli extremism is acceptable while Islamists' extremism is not. Certainly if the film showed that Kahane was the founder of the militant Jewish Defense League and that he had an American arrest for conspiring to manufacture explosives, his death, which remains unjustifiable, would yet appear as the assassination of one extremist by another.[117] Islamists' assassination, however, is imputed to "unknown sources" and only once the danger they present to the (Western) world has been elaborately dealt with, justifying thereby, or, at least, accounting for the reasons behind their elimination.

Certainly a militant Islamist filmmaker, committed to the establishment of the Islamic empire, would opt for an approach similar to that of Emerson. Indeed, my imaginary filmmaker would produce a film that shows Islamists or Muslims attacked everywhere without any good reason, except the desire of Washington to establish an American Judeo-Christian empire. Then the film focuses, for instance, on rabbi Kahane's racist utterances and flashes several shots that shows Kahane heatedly calling for the transfer of all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to Jordan.[118] Then, in the script, enters Nusseir as the man who wants to stop this imminent danger: in his statement to the filmmaker he reflects upon Israeli

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[116] Rashid, *Taliban*, 146-52. The Great Game is a reference to the fierce competition that took place between two expansionist empires in Asia, namely the British in India and tsarist Russia in the late nineteenth century. Afghanistan became the buffer zone between the two powers, or as Ahmad Rashid puts it "the center of gravity for the two powers." Rashid also quotes Lord Curzon, before he became the Viceroy of India in 1898 saying: "Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia—to many these words breathe only a sense of utter remoteness, or a memory of strange vicissitudes and of moribund romance. To me, I confess they are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the domination of the world" (145-6).
[117] See Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation*: *Lebanon at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 436-37.
[118] See Thomas Friedman, *Beirut to Jerusalem* (London: HarperCollins, 1995) 348-49.

settlement policies and points to their being supported and financed by the US. Then the film would move to another Judeo-Christian threat that law-abiding and peaceful Islamists would take care of eliminating.

Needless to say such a film would be, in the best case, dismissed on the grounds that its overall thesis has nothing to do with objective analysis, even if it occasionally touches on some hard facts; such as Kahane's extremism, the ongoing expansion of Israeli settlements and Arab peoples' resentment over this issue. A realistic case, however, is that this imaginary film would be seen as supporting and furthering terrorism. Yet, clearly to put Emerson's film in the last category would be thinking the unthinkable, even though it accepts extremism and terrorism when its source is not Islam. In fact, Emerson can do so because he does but repeat the views circulated in the dominant media on Islam and the rise of Islamist movements. It is small wonder that Emerson could claim that the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing showed a "Middle Eastern trait" because "it was done with the intent to inflect as many casualties as possible" and still remain an expert on Islamic terrorism.[119]

Indeed, since Islamists are one type, exhibit special traits and have one goal, Emerson's film, like Daniel Pipes's writing, does not bother to differentiate between the different Islamic groups and the different contexts of their rising and their sometimes conflicting goals. Conflating the Afghan Moujahideen with Khumeini's revolution, Sadat's Assassins, Lebanese Hizbollah, Palestinian Hamas, the Egyptian and Sudanese Muslim Brothers and Algerian Islamic Front among others, the film's narrative insists on their representing a conspiratorial network that aims at creating an Islamic empire and destroying the US. Yet, it is worth emphasizing again that such an approach, which is obsessed with constructing an enemy as pure evil that is not rooted in today's world politics, understandably elides investigating the context, the links and controversies. Whereas, for instance, one of the Islamist groups that Emerson deals with, namely Hamas, was fostered in its beginning in the 1980s by the Likud government as a way to weaken the secular nationalism of the PLO, a tactic that was previously adopted by several Arab regimes, such as Sadat's in 1970 in order to weaken strong secular oppositional parties.[120]

Moreover, one of the spectacular and long-lasting alliances is between Western liberal democracies and what Fatima Mernissi calls "palace fundamentalism." Mernissi argues that the structure of oil and arms markets clearly indicates that the marriage of palace

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[119] See John F. Sugg, "Steven Emerson's Crusade," *Extra!* January/February 1999.
<http://www.fair.org/extra/9901/emerson.html>.

[120] See Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000) 459. On Anwar Sadat's acting as the patron of Islamic resurgence, see John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 139-40.

fundamentalism and liberal democracies kept doing well even after the demise of the Soviet Union. She writes:

> The only significant change since the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War is that the United States now tops the list as the most important arms supplier for the Third World, replacing the Soviet Union. America's most greedy client is Saudi Arabia, with yearly arms purchases of 3.5 to 4 billion dollars […]. If within a ferociously competitive market, Saudi Islamic fundamentalism can hijack so many potential jobs from the Arab Mediterranean to Northern Europe and the United States, should we not relinquish the idea that this fundamentalism is an anachronistic, medieval religion and start regarding it as a strategic agency to create employment in the unsettling post-modern economy of the West? The skilful capture of jobs by liberal democracies, through the sale of arms which make the princes of undemocratic Arab states feel secure (at public expense), is one of the causes of the high rates of youth unemployment in the Middle East. It leaves states like Saudi Arabia open to the street fundamentalists' accusation that governments betray the Muslim community; and it creates a virulent internal opposition, which has gained unprecedented visibility since the Gulf War.[121]

Probably the corporate media fail to expose these linkages because they see themselves as the winners of the current world order . The winners in this context are not only CEOs of US corporations or employed people residing in the "north" but also some of the fundamentalists of the "south." Again in the shrewd remarks of Mernissi, she observes: "The young executives working for Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas seem more like the 'cousins' and 'brothers' of the Emirs than do young, unemployed Mustapha and Ali, strolling the streets of Cairo in humiliating uselessness."[122] Certainly one can add to Mustapha and Ali the American minumum wage earner, the unemployed, or the Black ghetto youth who were described, for instance, in Dan Quayle's speech on the LA uprisings, as "the underclass [which is] disconnected from the rules of American society."[123] In this way, I argue that Emerson's positing America vs. *Jihad* elides the crucial question of which America he is talking about (the government-corporate-military-intelligence nexus or the "underclass"). Above all his simplistic binarism avoids dealing with the real threat, that is the various forms

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[121] Fatema Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism and Liberal Democracy," *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, ed. Emran Qureshi and Michael A. Sells (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 55-57.
[122] Mernissi, "Palace Fundamentalism," 57.
[123] Qtd. in Fiske, *Media Matters*, 68.

of fundamentalisms, whether they clash or work together, they remain the major threat not only to the US but the whole world.

IV. Hollywood and Egyptian Cinema: A Sense of Siege

> Symbolic lines are being drawn, and what we know about culture is that once the symbolic difference exists, that is the line around which power coheres. Power uses difference as a way of marking off who does and does not belong.
>
> Stuart Hall, *The House That Race Built*, 298

> It appears that we're down to one group, the Arabs. When was the last time you saw an Arab character in a movie who was anything but one of the three B's (billionaire, bomber, belly dancer)? […] One group should not be singled out as enemies of all that is good and decent and American. […] Where are the movie Arabs and Muslims who are just ordinary people? It is time for Hollywood to end this undeclared war.
>
> Jay Stone, in Jack Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture*, 12

Like the last three chapters that deal with US foreign policy, popular and academic experts on the Arabs, and mainstream news where rejection of Arab causes and sweeping generalizations when it comes to Islam seem to be accepted and even demanded, Hollywood films follow suit. Indeed, given the fact that Hollywood sticks to the prevalent attitudes, at least it has to do so for the sake of succeeding at the box office, its consistent representation of Islam as a threat and Arabs as a dehumanized entity bent on destruction reveals today's acceptable attitudes. This is the context about which Edward Said writes: "the market for representations of a monolithic, enraged, threatening, and conspiratorially spreading Islam is much greater, more useful, and capable of generating more excitement, whether for purposes of entertainment or of mobilizing passions against a new foreign devil."[1]

Jack Shaheen, who spent more than two decades studying the way Arabs and Muslims are portrayed in American popular culture, writes that "[s]ince 1974, when I began to document images on entertainment shows, the rogues have often been Arab Muslims. A selective overview of more than 200 programs, including network newscasts, documentaries, comedies, soap operas, children's cartoons, dramas, and movies-of-the-week yielded the following results […]. they effectively show all Arabs, Muslims, and Arab-Americans as being at war with the United States."[2] This tendency unfortunately worsened in the 1990s for,

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[1] Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam. How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997) xxviii.

[2] Jack G. Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture* (Georgetown University, Washington, DC: Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, 1997) 22-23.

as Jack Shaheen documents, Hollywood's preferred villain narrowed down to one group, Arab Muslims.[3] Similarly, Roger Dobson of *The Independent* writes that Arabs "are portrayed in a derogatory way 96 percent of the time" and adds that "Arab characters have been the baddies in more than 20 big films in the past ten years [the '90s onwards]."[4]

No wonder that Arab American writer Leila Ahmed remarks: "I, like many I know who are Arabs, never go to a film in which I know that Arabs or Muslims figure. Naturally— why would I want to subject myself to the lies and racism that all too often are part of such things? This goes, too, for popular books on Arabs—their very popularity is usually an index of the fact that they are filled with bigotries and dehumanizations masquerading as truth."[5] Indeed, I myself know too well the experience of watching Hollywood films with characters playing Arabs, and how my being engrossed in the story of the film becomes a source of resentment when Arabs enter the scene. The terrorists are speaking my language and all they do with it is to threaten and curse. I watch the rest of the film no longer as an entertaining fictional story unrelated to real life, but as another hard statement that reminds me how and why the intended audience for Hollywood, Americans, will be seeing Arabs or have their prejudiced view on the (Muslim) Arabs reinforced.[6]

In fact, when it comes to the typical roles Arabs are allocated in the dominant Hollywood cinema, Shaheen observes in his study of more than 900 Hollywood films dealing with Arabs that these latter's roles remain largely faithful to the repertoire of stereotypical figures drawn from Orientalist/colonial discourses. He points out: "The vast majority of villains are notorious sheikhs, [humiliated, demonized, and eroticized] maidens, [nuclear-crazed, pro-Nazi, and devious] Egyptians and Palestinians as terrorists. The rest are devious dark complexioned baddies from other Arab countries, such as Algerians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Lebanese, Libyans, Moroccans, Syrians, Tunisians, and Yemeni."[7] This fatal reductionism is consistent with a regime of representation that is based on what Stuart Hall calls, "the exercise of symbolic violence" where stereotyping (that reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes

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[3] Shaheen, *Arab*, 27.
[4] Roger Dobson, "Arabs Seen as the New Villains of Hollywood," *The Independent Sunday* 29 June 2003. <http//Static.highbeam.com/T/theindependentsundaylondonengland/>.
[5] Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2000) 268-69.
[6] Fatimah Tobing Rony writes about the experience of becoming a savage: "Sometimes, there are moments in watching a film when the illusion of entering another space, another time, another experience is shattered. A tropical island. A prehistoric land. Fay Wray. Island Savages. King Kong. The savages are speaking my language. Tidak. Bisa. Kau. Like King Kong and the Islanders, I was born in two places, Sumatra and the United States […]. I am watching myself being pictured as a savage. I am the bride of Kong." *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996) 3.
[7] Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001) 13-28.

"difference") and power (to represent someone in a certain way and normalize the hierarchy between "us" and "them") are key elements.[8]

Given the large number of films that literally subsrcibe to the regime of representation mentioned above, this chapter will concentrate only on two Hollywood films, namely Edward Zwick's *The Siege* (1998) and David O. Russell's *Three Kings* (1999) that deal respectively with Arab terrorism and the 1991 Gulf War. My choice of these two movies is based not only on the topics they tackle, but also on the fact that both Zwick and Russell are two reputedly liberal filmmakers. However, while *The Siege* subtly adheres to the manichean thinking of "our" essential goodness and "their" congenital evil, which draws on the well-articulated and widespread American media fantasy of Islam, *Three Kings* steers clear of this invidious division and produces a humane representation of its Arab characters. Yet *Three Kings* remains tied to what Ella Shohat and Robert Stam call the "vestigial thinking" of eurocentrism. This chapter also deals with two Egyptian movies, namely Youssef Chahine's *The Other* (1999) and Khaled Youssef's *The Storm* (2000). My choice is also based on the liberal reputation of the two filmmakers and their dealing respectively with terrorism and the Gulf War. I have selected liberal films in order to examine a range of more resistant texts which endow the "other" with a "positive" image while remaining vehicles for the dominant discourse on Arabs or, in the case of Chahine's *The Other*, on Americans.

1. Edward Zwick's Arabs in *The Siege*

The Siege is not Zwick's first film that works with a plot in which Arabs are involved. In fact, his *Courage Under Fire* (1996) uses the battle of "Desert Storm" as a backdrop to the heroic exploits of Captain Karen Emma Walden (Meg Ryan). The tormented Lt. Colonel Nathan Serling (Denzel Washington), who could not get over his feeling of guilt for having killed his colleague with "friendly fire" in Iraq, was appointed to lead the inquiry as to whether Captain Walden, a chopper pilot, deserves the Medal of Honor for combat. Eager to do something right from beginning to end, Colonel Serling overzealously worked on the case of Captain Walden, which not only revealed to him her exceptional moral courage for which she risked her life rescuing her crew and other stranded GIs, but also her being a great mother who was raising her daughter alone, since her husband left her unable to put up with her career in the army. In this touching story line, the scenes that served as flashbacks to the fight between Walden's chopper and faceless Iraqis kept these latter to the status of "ragheads up on the ridge," and "motherfuckers" while typically scores of them fall whenever they are shot at. *The*

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[8] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1997) 257-59.

Siege's Arabs are Palestinian and Iraqi terrorists who seek to destroy important buildings in New York. The casting of Palestinians in the role of terrorists, as Shaheen's study amply reveals, has reached the status of what Michel Foucault describes as "the will to truth" or the truth that is chosen and then ceaselessly renewed.[9] Shaheen writes that "Since *Black Sunday* (1977), eighteen Hollywood motion pictures have displayed Arab Muslims invading America and liquidating innocents–from California to Indiana to New York."[10] Indeed, John Frankenheimer's *Black Sunday* can be said to have resurrected the medieval image of the siege, which he redeployed in the form of Palestinian terrorism on American soil. The movie's plot shows a female Palestinian terrorist (Marthe Keller) attempting to blow up a Goodyear blimp over the Super Bowl stadium with 80,000 people and the US president in attendance. Yet, thanks to the crucial intervention of an Israeli agent who is the movie's protagonist (played by Robert Shaw), the plot is discovered and the terrorist act is thwarted at the last minute.

Unfortunately the events of September 11 seem to validate *Black Sunday*'s and even more forcefully *The Siege*'s scenarios of fear. Today, with America enveloped in surge of flag-waving patriotism, it is surely harder than ever to contest Arab and Muslim stereotyping or plead for stopping their vilification. But let us recall why we must pursue, in Marx's terms, a ruthless critique of stereotypes. First, because we know that Hollywood has been flagrantly disrespecting the Arab-American community as well as the Arab and Muslim peoples even (more) in the last decades when it became harder to disparage other US minorities and other foreign nations. Second, because terrorism is not an inherently Arab phenomenon, nor do the handful of people who attacked the US represent the three hundred million Arabs and 1.2 billion Muslims. Third, the United States is a nation founded on dissent and the right of every citizen to publicly voice her concerns about the state of the union, but where the civil rights of citizens as well as visitors is in serious peril today.[11]

Thus the work of denouncing films whose representation process obtains its impetus from centuries-old accumulated hostility becomes an urgent task. Shaheen declared after September 11 that "[n]ot to move forward, not to make an effort to cease this unending barrage of images of hate would mean that I have allowed this lunatic fringe [Arab terrorists responsible for 9/11] to prevent me and my colleagues from helping to bring people together.

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[9] Foucault describes the "will to truth" as one of the most dominant procedures of exclusion in Western societies that enables mastery and control over discourse. See *L'Ordre de Discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

[10] Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs*, 430.

[11] Indeed one of the alarming events is the wave of censorship and blacklisting that is flooding American campuses, as a result of some faculty members expressing concern about the erosion of civil rights or critiquing the course taken by US foreign policy. See <http://www.academicinfo.net/usa911.html>. and <http://www.goacta.org/Reports/defciv.pdf>.

And that doesn't help any of us."[12] I would like to add to Shaheen's note that giving up would not only testify to the terrorists' winning but also to some Hollywood filmmakers' arrogant and mischievious, if unintentional, use of their industry's power in manufacturing and perpetuating prejudices.

In this regard, my analysis of *The Siege* will be more concerned with highlighting the ways in which the film resorts to classical tropes of representation, its affiliation with the US foreign policy and finally its bonding with the body of popular texts that insist on defining Americanness by drawing symbolic boundaries behind which stigmatized minorities are relegated. The questions I will be addressing are: How does the pre-credit sequence render the demarcation and reenergize the hierarchy between "us" and "them"? Do we recognize at that level some representational practices that have become, in Hall's term, an exercise in symbolic violence? Since *The Siege* does present us with a multicultural FBI team/"us" that even includes an Arab American, in the character of Frank Haddad, can we then automatically consider it a film that at least attempts to undo the solid edifice of binary oppositions? How positive is Haddad's positive role? Do we sympathize with him? How does his characterization unfold throughout the film? How do we get to know about his religious creed? Is his inevitable dilemma, at least at the level of sharing the same national origin and religious background with the Arab terrorists, foregrounded?

Tracking what Stuart Hall aptly refers to as symbolic boundaries that are central to all cultures in signaling who is included and who is rejected, I will be asking how *The Siege* contrives its cinematic space. How does it carve up that space into what film scholar Richard Maltby terms as safe vs. unsafe space? How is the crucial question of belonging to US culture symbolically tied with US football space but not, at the same time, with prayers at a mosque?

The answering of these questions will show how *The Siege* adamantly resorts to the (ab)uses of Islam as explained in Said's *Covering Islam.* The roles allocated to Arab Muslims remain largely faithful to the solid figure of Arabs (especially Palestinians) as terrorists. Since *The Siege* openly resorts to familiar representational practices in its dealing with Arab and Arab-American otherness, Frank Haddad's character, I will show, in no way reflects a complex and diverse Arab-American community, his presence amounts to repeating the same old story, with variation.

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[12] Qtd. in Robert Wilonsky, "Arabian Knight. Jack Shaheen Crusades Against Cinema's Depiction of *Reel Bad Arabs*," <http://www.sfweekly.com/issues/2001-10-10/stuff.html>.

1.1. "Them" and "Us"

The pre-credit sequence of *The Siege* starts by confronting us with a montage of stock footage of a building exploding, after which we are shown several shots of rubble and soldiers carrying maimed people and dragging dead bodies. The juxtaposed voices of well-known news announcers inform us about the bombing of a US military housing complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, an attack that really took place on June 25, 1996. At this point the movie almost seamlessly leaves history and enters fiction, as another voice tells us that the man responsible for the terrorist act is presumed to be the Iraqi Sheikh Ahmed Ben Talal, whom the camera pans first in profile before freezing him. This is a fictionalized version but clearly based on Bin Laden.[13]

Let me, however, leave the sheikh of *The Siege* for some preliminary excavation with regard to the sheikh figure in Hollywood. The Sheikh-trope initiated by early silent cinema, itself drawing on the rich repertoire of Orientalism in art and literature, represented him, in Matthew Sweet's words, as "a swarthy Sheik, wiggling his eyebrows and chasing the heroine around a tiled courtyard. After the 1973 oil crisis, he became an inscrutable, avaricious bully –a Ray-Banned variation on the stereotype of the Jewish moneylender. More recently, however, he's filled the vacancy left by the collapse of the Soviet Union."[14] Clearly, the tradition of his sexual lust driving him to rape and murder has bloomed into a lust for assaulting and destroying the West leading him to terrorism, exactly where we meet him in *The Siege.*

The following shot in the pre-credit sequence montage shows the real President of the United States, Bill Clinton, delivering a speech indicting terrorism, and by extension, reminding us that Arabs committing terrorism is part of our reality. We are, after all, not in the realm of troping and discursive practices but very much in the world of what makes headlines. However, if the US President's speech situates the film's focus as very much within current political affairs, the next shot moves us to a setting suggestive of "their" location outside of history. Here the camera plunges us back to the world of the Sheikh terrorist: a sweeping tracking shot smoothly exposes a vast empty and sinuous space of the desert, an impressive spectacle quite familiar to film audiences (recall desert romances from *Lawrence of Arabia* to *The English Patient*). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam comment on this

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[13] In real life, Bin Laden was actually suspected to be responsible for the bombing, according to the journalist Craig Unger, See his *House of Bush, House of Saud: The Secret Relationship Between the World's Two Most Powerful Dynasties* (New York: Scribner, 2004) 173. In this way the film's showing a fictionalized version of Bin Laden is understandable, yet the fact of making him Iraqi clearly gives away the ideology pursued by the film.

[14] Matthew Sweet, "Arabs Are the Latest People to Suffer the Racial Stereotyping of Hollywood," *The Independent* 30 July 2000. <www.independent.co.uk.>. See also Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs,* 19-22.

recurrent motif as a signal of topographical reductionism: "The desert, a frequent verbal and visual motif in orientalist films, forms the timeless backdrop against which history is played out […]. The barren land and the blazing sands metaphorize the exposed 'hot' uncensored passions of the orient; in short, the world of the out-of-control id."[15] Hollywood has successfully converted the tracking shot of the desert sands into a classical trope that suggests "their" emptiness and dreariness and by extension, one might conclude in our times where American spectators are fond of asking the "why-do-they-hate-us"-like questions, the evidential proof of "their" utter failure and irrationality. However, the Sheikh Ahmed Ben Talal, the terrorist, whom we watch, at first, driving freely in the desert, certainly on the way to commit more disaster, is efficiently trapped by CIA agents and/or Israelis and put behind bars, where the out-of-control id rightly belongs.

To sum it up, the pre-credit sequence establishes the enemy as an Arab Muslim man whose landscape and bodyscape cannot be articulated onscreen outside of the worn-out stereotypes that dehumanize and dehistoricize him. In fact, while the film selects some historical events that foreground "our" suffering (the bombing of US military dorms) and "our" perspective (the US newsmedia and Clinton's statement); the character of the accused Iraqi sheikh, who remained silent, is the filmmakers' fantasy. This power to decide who deserves to be put in historical context and who does not betrays the movie's own exercise of symbolic violence (Hall's term). This power also answers to the film's choice not to dwell on issues that could have been as enlightening to us as President Clinton's real indictment of terrorism. For instance, it could have supplied footage of some Saudi people's perspective on the ongoing US military presence in their land; or, the Saudi people's reaction to the attack on foreign soldiers living on their territory; or, the motive, however unjustifiable, behind the terrorist act.

However, *The Siege* clearly wants to voice only the Clinton administration version of terrorism which never points to the possibility of the US involvement in provoking terrorist acts. Hence once blood was shed, the bearded and robed man made his side-entrance in the space of the film in a way that summons up "the criminal mug shot from the forensic files of police photography,"[16] after which US President swears punishment, which, for the sake of Hollywood's ethical code, is promptly fulfilled. If one reads all those shots discussed above as a sentence, one meaning can be: those Arabs, who are, as usual, a conflation of the categories

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[15] Ella H. Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism, Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994) 148.

[16] I took this phrase from Kobena Mercer's "Reading Racial Fetishism" where he discusses the camera coding of the racialized Black body. See *Representation,* ed. Stuart Hall, 288.

Arab, Middle-Eastern, and Muslim male,[17] are back to threaten innocent "us" who become, accordingly, dragged into a fight for the world's security and freedom.

The second scene I want to analyze is an establishing shot which I read in terms of the dichotomy of safe/unsafe space. Richard Maltby explains that classical Hollywood cinema, which sought to engage with the viewers' emotions, paid special attention to camera movements. This is why movies tend to begin with an establishing long shot and move smoothly to a medium shot after which it might move to a close up creating thereby what Maltby designates as a safe space inside which "we [the audience] can direct our attention to engaging emotionally with the characters, confident that the movie's image stream will avoid any sudden shocks that may abruptly disrupt our involvement in the action."[18] Dealing with "their" terrorism (equated with Islam and Arabs) as the pre-credit foreshadows, *The Siege* consciously produces two different kinds of cinematic space: the unsafe space created by abrupt cuts and changes in camera movement and placement flings the evil "them" at us and the second safe one counters with a going back to normalcy where the good "us" are back in control along with the comfortable measured editing and camera work.

At the very beginning of *The Siege* we are shown, or rather, confronted with a close up of the face of a *Muazzin*, after which the camera abruptly shifts to a long medium shot of Muslims praying in a mosque. Then another cut, this time to a family praying in a low-lit living room. Afterwards the camera cuts to a high angle shot that looks down on a group of Muslims kneeling. Again the camera reverts to the *Muazzin* in a close-up, after which it swiftly zooms out to show the minaret then the mosque which, we are made to realize once the camera tracks out still further, is located not in some exotic location but in New York. What is extremely important here is that along with the harsh, dislocating moves of the camera and editing, the twilight and the ominous non-diegetic music which mingles with the Muazzin's call triggers a feeling of uneasiness, a foreboding of coming threat. To bring back Maltby's notion of safe space that bonds our identification with the presented characters, the unpredictable move of the camera, as well as the whole mise-en-scéne in this sequence seek the opposite effect, which is exactly, as Hussein Ibish comments, "to be shocked and unnerved by the Arab Muslim presence in New York from the outset, and this impression of danger is consistently reinforced throughout the film."[19]

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[17] See Nadine Naber, "Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab American Invisibility," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 23. 1 (Jan. 2000): 37-61.

[18] Richard Maltby*, Hollywood Cinema. An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 204-206.

[19] Hussein Ibish, excerpt from his forthcoming essay on *The Siege*. I am thankful to Ibish for answering my queries concerning the plot of the film and sending me an excerpt of his forthcoming essay.

Yet the camera movements become perfectly smooth once it starts introducing the locale of the FBI agents, revealing thereby the movie's manipulation of the safe-space techniques to make viewers feel safe and comfortable in this scene. In fact, the camera moves from a panoramic view of New York, tracks in on a Federal Plaza and smoothly enters the FBI office to focus on a thoughtful-looking Anthony Hubbard (Denzel Washington). At the same time lights become clear and we hear in the familiar background sounds of telephone ringing and officials answering with the "FBI, Good morning" that reassures the spectators, excepting of course Arab (American) spectators, that the FBI, like CIA in the pre-credit sequence, are here to combat the dark powers that be. Hence, at the very beginning of *The Siege*, the manipulative representation of space equates Islam and the ritual of prayer with a threat of violence, a classical orientalist trope that is here even made to serve as a foil to the FBI toiling for the safety of the Americans, among whom we are led to infer Muslims do not belong.

In another scene, the unsafe space technique is interwoven with the plot. At this level we know that Hubbard is a brave FBI agent who works zealously on a case of terrorism despite a lack of clues. In the scene I want to analyze we see him in front of a hijacked bus in Brooklyn negotiating with the hijackers while his partner Frank Haddad, an Arab American FBI agent (Tony Shalhoub), does the translation from Hubbard's eloquent and emphatic English utterances into undecipherable, gibberish-like Arabic. Hubbard first begs the terrorists to free the children, to which they respond by opening the door and letting the children out. The act of freeing the children reveals for certain the identity of the terrorists, suspected to be Arab: we know they are Arabs since they reacted to Frank Haddad's translation, although it might be possible as well that they never needed it. At another level, we admire the way Hubbard did not give in to CIA agent Sharon Bridger's (Annette Bening) warning to shoot the bus, because as she said: "it's lose, lose any way you play it." And once we hear his proposal to take him instead of the hostages, our admiration and identification with him becomes absolute. Receiving no response, Hubbard asks the terrorists to free at least the elderly people. Again the bus door opens and the elderly people start getting off. At this very moment when Hubbard starts thanking the hostage takers and walks nearer to the bus and we are totally engrossed by Hubbard's art in negotiating and feel more confident about the possibility of freeing more people, the bus is blown up and we, ourselves, are blown into what Maltby terms the "unsafe space" that is, when the characters' and audience's expectations are abruptly and totally reversed. As Maltby explains with reference to Hitchcock's Psycho, "We look on the screen more warily, in the knowledge that our comforting ability to predict what

will happen in a space or story can be arbitrarily violated."[20] Although, as Maltby argues, the unsafe space empowers malign characters since they are unpredictable and hence uncontrollable, their punishment becomes a necessity.

My argument is that this scene, because it destabilizes our trust in predicting what will happen in the space of *The Siege*, paves the way for the entry of megalomaniac General Devereaux (Bruce Willis) who gives the order to round up Muslim and Arab Americans and put them behind barbed wire. His utter disregard of this minority's rights is significantly not very dissimilar from the US policy makers amplifying their policing powers in the aftermath of September 11 at the expense of fundamental civil liberties, when thousands of people were detained by US authorities without access to legal counsel or being charged with any crime.[21]

Besides General Devereaux, to whom does the film narrative give the role of punishing Arab terrorists? A look at the multicultural FBI team that investigates the suicide bombing of the bus can be seen as a serious attempt to work against the long practice of presenting a US which is essentially white, especially because the chief agent of the FBI team is the African American Hubbard (Denzel Washington). It is certainly significant to recall here the star image of Denzel Washington, who more than any other African American since Sidney Poitier, almost always plays dignified, courageous, self-righteous, heroic characters. At another level, too, one can read this film, which deals with Arab terrorism, as making a heroic gesture that works against vicious stereotyping and homogenizing given the fact that the FBI team includes an Arab American, indeed as the very partner of Hubbard. The Arab American Frank Haddad (Tony Shalhoub), who seems to be breaking the stereotypical image of a necessarily evil Arab Muslim, aspires to speak for the film's complex approach to the issue of Arab terrorism. Another token gesture towards complicating the stereotyping of Arabs is the brief intrusion, during another montage of media soundbytes, of juxtaposed voices of Arab Americans asking the American people not to commit the grave mistake of rendering Islam synonymous with terrorism.

However, despite its seemingly valiant attempt to flash different voices within the Arab American community and the presence of the Arab American character, *The Siege* still operates within the manichean system of splitting the "Other" as either a docile sidekick who becomes "quite us" or the totally threatening villain "them" whose death is a relief to humanity. This obviously parallels the traditional portrayal of Native Americans in

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[20] Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, 218-19.
[21] See Ignacio Ramonet, "Adieu Libertés," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Jan. 2002: 1. See also John Brown, "Les périlleuses tentatives pour définir le terrorism," and Jean-Claude Paye, "Faux-semblants du mandat d'arrêt européen," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Feb. 2002: 4-5. See also Robert Greenwald, dir., *Unconstitutional: The War on Our Civil Liberties* (New York: Public Interest Picture, 2004).

Hollywood movies along the same binary: friendly, harmless and white-assimilated vs. primitive, bloodthirsty and savage Indians. In fact, Jack Shaheen, who met the producers of *The Siege*, Lynda Obst and Edward Zwick, prior to the film's release and pleaded for some changes within the script and suggested some alternatives, recalls that Zwick "insisted his film offered fair and balanced portraits. He cited Tony Shalhoub's portrayal of a decent Arab-American FBI agent." Shaheen remarks that "Zwick's Shalhoub comment reminded me of how producers once tried to justify their hostile depictions of Native Americans. Back then, in movies displaying scores of savage Indians massacring settlers, moviemakers pointed to the presence of Tonto."[22] In this context, I also argue that the Arab American Frank Haddad is granted the right and the privilege of working on the FBI side only because he is time and again declared to be anti-terrorism. But the movie constantly equates an anti-terrorism position with an anti-Arab position, making Frank's character espouse a blatant rejection of all Arab political causes, hence the possibility of absorbing him into the "us" side. His background as an Arab Muslim is a mere pose which disingenuously encourages viewers to construct a reading of the film as a serious attempt to combat stereotyping.

1.2. Purging Frank Haddad: A Necessary Curfew on His Spatial Representation

After discovering who was behind the explosion of the bus in Brooklyn, Hubbard, Haddad and Sharon Bridger rush to the apartment where the three Arab Muslim terrorists are hiding and send them a pizza box rigged with an explosive. Then we are shown the masked and heavily armed FBI squad demolishing the door, spotting and killing the three culprits, who were easy targets because they were still under the shock of the explosive. Their involvement in terrorism is, however, immediately made clear, when Frank Haddad spots the very material used for the bus bombing. Since we are led to follow the scene from a camera perspective directly behind the FBI rifles, we certainly think of it as a complete success for the FBI, and anyway the first time we are presented with the Arab youngsters, they get killed and not without reason for their crime is proven on the spot. That is why we can without a shadow of a doubt accept their deaths, indeed see their deaths as a victory, and contentedly watch Hubbard and Haddad, with his son Frank Jr., take a break from their hard work and play touch football. While still enjoying themselves in the open space of the football field and hugging each other, in a scene that clearly celebrates ethnic integration into American mainstream culture, the voice of the *Muazzin* calling for prayer creates a "chant hook" that ushers us into a crucial space where we are supposed to remark Frank Haddad's otherness.

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[22] Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs*, 431.

In fact, the following shot shows an *Imam* leading a prayer with several believers standing in rows. The camera then focuses on Frank Jr. Nearby stands his mother, whose presence would not be allowed in a male prayer room. Yet, while Frank Jr. seems to be praying, his father Frank Haddad is shown hugging and proudly looking at his son, after which, in a shot/reverse shot, he looks at somebody whom the camera pan reveals to be no less than Hubbard standing in the background smiling benevolently back at his partner. At this time we spot other familiar heads and these are the other members of the very team with which Haddad and Hubbard work. The question I keep asking whenever I watch this scene is: Why this scene? Why do we not get, for instance, Hubbard and the Haddads playing football, after which these latter wave good bye and step into a mosque where we hear them greet their friends in Arabic and pray? Or why do we not see the Haddads, once they leave Hubbard, at home sharing a meal, chatting, or praying along with Mrs. Haddad?

I should acknowledge that whenever I look at that scene, my mind promptly wants to rewrite it differently. And I know that my desire to do so comes from my yearning to see Arab Americans acting as ordinary individuals within their community. For in hundreds of Hollywood films, I have been watching them as people who can impart but "a lot of threatening looks, threatening gestures, threatening actions."[23] That is why once Frank Haddad is permitted to break from that role, I cannot help but expect to see him as a fully ordinary citizen who can speak with his family and interact with his community or other ethnic groups. Unfortunately Frank Haddad is not yet allowed to do so. This brings me to another question that will plunge us directly to what I consider the pernicious message embedded in the narrative structure of *The Siege*: Why does Frank Haddad's Muslim identity have to be inserted literally between the touch-football scene and the shot\reverse shot that take us to the FBI headquarters?

Because of *The Siege*'s association of Islam with terrorism, Frank Haddad's otherness cannot freely locate itself in the film's dichotomous spaces of *either* Arab-Muslim/terrorist (anti-American) *or* American/anti-terrorism (anti-Arab-Muslims). Having to stick to that rigid "grammar of representation," Haddad's religious affiliation is permitted to creep into the narrative only because it is, on the one hand, tightly sandwiched between two powerful American sites, the football field and FBI headquarters. On the other hand, his otherness

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[23] These are the words of the Arab American actor, Nicholas Kadi, who complains that the film directors seldom ask him or other Arab Americans colleagues to speak, instead they are told to look threatening and act similarly. Kadi also told the news show "48 Hours" in 1990 that "Every time we said 'America', we'd [be directed] to spit." Qtd. in Shaheen, *Arab And Muslim*, 23.

unhesitatingly surrenders itself to the cinematic embodiment of American benevolent control, the shot\reverse shot between Haddad and Hubbard in the mosque.

This also explains why, for instance, the task of praying and wearing Arab robes is relegated to Haddad's adolescent son (Are we here supposed to think that he will grow out of it? Or maybe it is acceptable because he is a native-born American and not as suspect as his immigrant father?) whom we see standing in the act of performing his prayers, significantly not bowing or kneeling or washing his hands. I argue that the film omits these acts, though normal in Muslim prayer, because these movements have earlier been associated with menace by means of the camera work and the choice of non-diegetic music: if they are now enacted by the good Arab they will necessarily impair the close link the movie is keen on maintaining between Islam and terrorism. In this vein, the presence of Hubbard in the background and his condoning smile at his partner do not make sense at all unless we want to see them as purging Frank of his Muslim background. The shot/reverse shot de-emphasizes the brief religious scene to highlight the relationship between the two men and even us, the audience, where Hubbard is the agent of the law, whose benevolent nod clears this "Muslim" whom we see obediently abstaining from praying in a culture that considers Muslim rituals as a call to war. Haddad is then eligible to be counted among "us," the constructed American public.

Frank's gradual "Americanization" through *The Siege*'s visual narrative begs another question: Why should the good Arab Muslim Frank Haddad bear an anglicized name? The first Arab American to win an Academy Award, for playing an Italian composer in *Amadeus*, is Farid Mir'ī Ibrahim who is today known as F. Murray Abraham and often mistaken for being Jewish. The sad fact is that, in Hollywood as in the wider American context, the act of blurring one's Arab origin is not merely a voluntary, individualized choice but a strategy of survival. Abraham says "When I first began in this business I realized I couldn't use Farid because that would typecast me as a sour Arab out to kill everyone. As Farid Murray Abraham, I was doomed to minor roles."[24] Jack Shaheen also reports that because of decades of stereotyping, Arab American children tend to feel ashamed of their religion and heritage, hence their desire to change their names and forget their Arabic.[25] Needless to say that because *The Siege* is not at all interested in Frank Haddad's inner dilemma or his having to make certain choices to negotiate his belonging to an intolerant culture, we, the audience, are led to ignore this point where there may have been a serious conflict.

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[24] Qtd. in Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim*, 62. See also Gregory Orfalea, *Before the Flames. A Quest for the History of Arab Americans* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1988) 233.
[25] Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim*, 46.

On the contrary, as Maltby argues "the meaning produced by spatial representations [Frank Haddad's (non)performing his prayer boxed in between football stadium and FBI agent's controlling look] is displaced onto characters and event. Spaces become contexts for different stages of the plot and acquire connotations."[26] Is it then a coincidence that Frank Haddad should be the bearer of the very frequent street name (Frank Street after the "Franks"/Christian Europeans) in the Middle East that connoted safety for nineteenth century Europeans and later Americans where they huddled together while the violent event of colonialism was under way?[27] Additionally, to the Arab audience, especially the Palestinians and some Lebanese Shi'ite communities, the name Haddad directly evokes the name of Major Sa'ad Haddad, loathed and feared for his work with the Israeli army in Lebanon as well as his perpetration of the massacre of Sabra and Chatila in Beirut in 1982.[28] In this vein, the character in *The Siege* who represents the Arab American community is not only denied some spatial privacy but becomes, on a symbolic level, the bearer of vestiges of colonial discourse (past and present) that feeds into today's popular misrepresentation of Arabs. Since *The Siege* extends that humiliating subaltern status to America's Arabs and Muslims, it is no wonder that Haddad's son should bear the name of Frank Jr.

In this vein, it becomes entirely predictable that Frank Haddad should be denied any realistic political point of view. By making an "Arab American" speak for and legitimate US popular and political discourse that vilifies Arabs, especially the Palestinians, and ignores the voices of a diverse and politically informed Arab American community, the film wants to be convincing and efficient in its incrimination of the Arabs. In fact, *The Siege*'s token gesture towards recognizing good Arab Muslims in the character of the "Franks," dad and son, is in reality enhancing the uses of Islam in the West. A Muslim is essentially a terrorist, the film asserts, that is why every time a terrorist appears in the film, he bears an Arab-Muslim name: first, he is sheikh Ahmed Ben Talal, an Iraqi described in the pre-credit sequence as a radical fundamentalist, then he is called Ali Waziri, a fanatical terrorist from Rama Allah (Palestine) who blows up the bus in Brooklyn. Finally, besides all the unnamed terrorists whose religion is constantly flashed to us via the metonymic sign of washing their hands before prayer, the FBI agents catch the last cell of terrorism and this time the name is Samir al-Najdi (Sami Bouajila), a very dangerous Palestinian Muslim terrorist because he uses his respectable

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[26] Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim*, 225.

[27] David H. Finnie reports that the first American who landed in Smyrna, Turkey, at the beginning of the nineteenth century chose to live in Frank Street where Europeans were living and gradually coming to think of that space as a symbol of Western immunity within the perils of an about to be colonized East. See David H. Finnie, *Pioneers East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967) 13, 22-24. See also Sarah Rogers Haight, *Letters from the Old World. By a Lady of New York* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840) 32-47.

[28] See Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

position as a professor of Arabic Studies at a university in New York to fraudulently obtain student visas for Palestinian terrorists. The film clearly wants to be part of the still accepted tradition of the Palestinian-as-terrorist scenarios, which is why Jack Shaheen lists this figure as one of the major villain roles given to Arabs in Hollywood. Shaheen imputes this fact to the US-Israeli connection.[29]

1.3. Coming Full Circle: How Symbolic Lines Become Barbed Wire

The Siege's utmost insidiousness comes, in my view, not in unfolding the familiar Palestinian-as-terrorist scenario, but in making an Arab American hate Palestinians and consider their Intifada of 1987 as a form of terrorizing Israel. For Frank Haddad, the Palestinians were responsible for the Lebanese Civil War of 1975, after which they expanded their terrorism to Israel and now even start threatening the US. As an "insider" with a Lebanese Shi'ite background, he retorted at Hubbard who privately reprimanded him for hitting his prisoner the Palestinian Professor, Samir al-Najdi, "Sometimes I'll tell you what these people did to my village in 75." When Sharon Bridger expressed her surprise at Haddad's and Hubbard's interest in al-Najdi by saying "I still don't understand why we're tipping our hand to him [Najdi]!" Haddad's reaction was "What's there to tip?" The Palestinians' business is one: it is terrorism for the sake of terrorism.

Yet, again we are given a token scene that seems on its surface to critique the American (in the figure of General Devereaux) discriminatory behavior towards its Arab American minority. Let me set the scene: after the apparent failure of the FBI to stop terrorism, General Deveraux declares martial law in New York and gives the order to round up any suspected Arab (and just the fact of being Arab is suspicious enough) to some sort of "concentration camps." Accordingly, soldiers go from door to door and arrest all male Arabs, one of whom is Frank Jr., even though they were told that his father works for the FBI. Appalled by the army's extreme measures, Frank Haddad goes to the detention center to look for his son and in a moment of despair flings his FBI badge at his partner Hubbard screaming at him "that's after all where I belong!"

However, the film narrative, which is not at all concerned with the predicament of Frank Haddad, throws him out of the narrative space for a while and shifts the source of the problem back to the frenzy of a megalomaniacal American General, appropriately played by Bruce Willis. In fact, at that level, the villain role bifurcates: the Arab Muslim terrorists are joined now by an American General who thinks he is above the law and that he can conduct

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[29] See Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs*, 26-28.

his own foreign policy. Consequently, the struggle is located between the FBI agent Hubbard, who searches for Frank Jr. and goes ahead with his aim in locating the source of terrorism, and General Devereaux, whose type of character seems to allow the liberals in the audience to scapegoat militarists and right-wing patriots, thus clearing themselves of any accusation of ethnocentrism or oppression. The point is, however, the total identification with the brave Hubbard and the sympathy with Haddad's plight implies not only a certain abhorrence vis-à-vis Devereaux but also the acceptance that Palestinians are a folk of terrorists.

When Haddad enters the narrative again, he picks his badge up and re-joins Hubbard, excited about the opportunity to use the military technology in tracking down the Arab Muslim terrorists. The film narrative does not deem it interesting to deal any further with Haddad's problematic position because it belongs to the issues that do not matter to Hollywood. What matters is his reiteration of the dominant view to beware of the Palestinians. What could that mean to the Arab-American community? In a typical fashion of brushing aside Arab causes, Hollywood appoints Haddad to instruct this community that siding with Palestinians amounts to siding with terrorism and adopting an Arab point of view signifies loyalty to Middle East tyrants.

In fact, Frank Haddad, who declares that he cannot bear the sight of Palestinians because they destroyed his village in Lebanon in 1975 (the year when the historic Civil War started) and terrorized Israel with their *Intifada,* is understandably very suspicious of Samir Al Najdi, the Palestinian professor. Haddad's emotional outburst against the Palestinians seeks to reduce the Middle East tragedy to an Arab vs. Arab conflict, where the Palestinians are basically the only culprit. As Edward Said explains in *Covering Islam*, many American experts during the sixties declared Lebanon a stable country because the "inter-Arab" situation was stable, the implication of this equation was, as Said puts it, "[a]ny trouble for Lebanon therefore had to come from the surrounding *Arab* environment, never from Israel or from the United States, both of which had specific but never-analyzed designs on Lebanon."[30] Noam Chomsky also reminds us that the US under Reagan and Israel under Perez explicitly blocked and dismissed all the proposals of the PLO for talks and insisted on pointing out "'the evil scourge of terrorism' which in the racist terms of American discourse, refers to terrorist acts by Arabs, but not by Jews, just as 'peace' means a settlement that honours the right of national self-determination of Jews, but not of Palestinians."[31]

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[30] Said, *Covering Islam,* 21.
[31] Noam Chomsky, *Pirates and Emperors: International Terrorism in the Real World* (New York: Black Rose Books, 1991) 49.

Drawing directly on that discourse, Haddad does not, or rather, cannot show any frustration with the US involvement in Lebanon's trouble, he never mentions Israel's occupation of Lebanon or its bombing of Lebanese villages; on the contrary, he is terribly indignant at Samir's participation in the *Intifada* of 1987, and sees it as telling evidence of his entanglement in terrorist activities on US soil. For the American audience that is used to watching the Arab-Israeli conflict from an essentially Israeli point of view, Haddad's "opinions" reinforce their one-sidedness. Besides, his representation as a sympathetic Muslim Arab-American character misses a good chance to voice his compassion for the Palestinians' plight. Ironically, the only voice declaring any feeling at all for the Palestinians belongs to CIA agent Sharon Bridger, who while drunk, coquettishly tells Hubbard that her first boyfriend was Palestinian and that "the Palestinians seduce you with their suffering!" The mise-en-scène of that particular shot (Sharon's flirtation with Hubbard) places the feelings of suffering in the register of lust and eroticism. The oversexual sheikh who trapped white women in the silent cinema via his deceit and lack of morality has become the Palestinian camp dweller who traps her with his suffering. No wonder that Sharon mentioned in a previous scene that being Palestinian "is a very lucrative profession."

Still within the register of sexuality, the film narrative suggests that the reason Palestinians commit acts of terrorism is *their* easy manipulation by sheikhs who murmur in the youth's ear about the pleasures awaiting them in paradise. This time it is Samir al-Najdi who tells us about the fundamentalist sheikhs, conveniently from countries considered by the US to be sponsors of state terrorism and part of an international "axis of evil" such as Iraq and not ally Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of bin Laden. Samir explains that the sheikhs lure the stupid young Palestinians "to die for *Allah* in order to have seventy virgins in Paradise." This is clearly a statement which plays into the Orientalist myth of the male Arab's uncontrollable sensuality and lust for which he is willing to die. The statement also implies that the Palestinians do not die for the sake of a political cause, but to fulfill the perverse desire of sheikhs who feast upon Israelis' and Americans' blood while thinking that their act will entitle them to endless copulation in the afterlife. Not once was it mentioned that the Palestinians were and are gravely abused, their rights constantly dismissed and their legitimate aspiration to a viable state brutally violated.

In fact, even when Sharon Bridger between tears acknowledges that the New York terrorist cell is the direct product of American-trained anti-Saddam rebels, the denouement of *The Siege,* reached by the shooting of Samir, at last revealed to be one of the leading fundamentalists, disavows Sharon's representation of the inconsistency in US policies in the

Middle East. Indeed, Sharon's character embodies the caring, sensitive and essentially well-intentioned (she seeks as she says to "make the world a little better") but endlessly confused US foreign policies in the region. Our natural sympathy with her and her good intentions makes us by extension sympathize with those of her nation and agency, the CIA.

Finally, besides the fact that *The Siege*'s denouement supports Haddad's views and convictions, what Haddad's character conveys through what he says and does not (or rather cannot) say is to be an Arab Muslim who practices his or her religion, sides with the colonized Palestinians and voices other Arab grievances *and* simultaneously to be an American is an unwelcome oxymoron and thereby dismissed altogether from the US mainstream culture. *The Siege* assiduously seals its own fence around its condemnation of Arab Americans and Arabs by creating a "sympathetic" Arab character, who gains the viewers' sympathy because his religious background is only glossed over in a script that tightly positions it between the popular site of the football field and the American surveillance institution of the FBI. Frank Haddad as the "good Arab American" is possible only as long as he voices no criticism towards Israel nor towards American foreign policy in the Middle East. Moreover, he not only unhesitatingly condemns Palestinian uprisings, such as the *Intifada*, but makes them the only source responsible for terrorism in the Middle East and the United States. Significantly, Stuart Hall argues that "symbolic lines are being drawn, and what we know about culture is that once the symbolic difference exists, that is the line around which power coheres. Power uses difference as a way of marking off who does and does not belong."[32] This essay has argued the necessity of applying Hall's statement to *The Siege*, a movie whose spatial regimes of representation clearly mark off the spaces where Arabs can belong and where they cannot**.** In the film, the detention center is the symbolic space for Arab identity—trapped in the Giants stadium, freed only after they can prove to FBI satisfaction that they are not really Arab, not really terrorist, but American. Because being American, in *The Siege*, means renouncing any political affiliation with Arab nationalisms or even any convincing display of belief in Islam.

2. Youssef Chahine's *The Other*: Terrorism from an Arab Point of View

Still within the topic of terrorism in cinema, I will turn to look at *The Other,* a 1999 film made by Youssef Chahine, one of the best known and highly regarded Egyptian filmmakers in the

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[32] Stuart Hall, "Subjects in History: Making Diasporic Identity," *The House That Race Built*, ed. Wahneema Lubiano (New York: Vintage, 1998) 298.

Arab world.[33] My aim behind bringing in *The Other* is to offer a cinematic counter telling of the history of terrorism informed by an Arab perspective, remapping and challenging Hollywood's Eurocentric accounts of the manichean good/us and evil/them. Indeed, unlike Zwick's *The Siege* that represents terrorism in the simplistic but powerful imagery of Arabs besieging the public spaces of New York upon which only the elimination of this community can restore stability and peace to the city, Youssef Chahine's *The Other* focuses on the top-bottom discourse that links US imperialist economy to Egypt, on the one hand, and on Egyptian upper-class arrogance vis-à-vis the rest of Egyptian population, on the other hand. Threat, in this context, is located not in a Middle-Eastern Muslim male person as is the case in Hollywood's *The Siege*, but in a system of brutal capitalism, racism, and growing inequalities, a system from which both American corporations and new Arab *Comprador* bourgeoisie bolstered by their respective governments make huge profits.[34]

The Other's pre-credit sequence significantly takes place in New York City, which we will be looking at through the eyes of two Arab students, namely Adam Emara (Hani Salama), an Egyptian-American student who is preparing a thesis on religious fundamentalism and terrorism at UCLA, and his Algerian friend Boujdad. The film starts with some shots of buildings and closes in on Adam, the protagonist, whom we see walking with Boujdad, towards the imposing entrance gate of Columbia University. The two students have a meeting with Columbia University Professor Edward Said, who, playing himself, tells his two visitors during their discussion: "not only the Americans, but all those who believe in the brutal form of power, will certainly provoke in the others a reaction of resistance, violence and hatred."[35] Edward Said, as he has been arguing throughout his academic career, speaks to Adam and Boujdad about the necessity and even the urgency to do away with the manichean thinking of "mine" and "yours" since "cultural creations," he tells them, "are for everybody. It doesn't matter who gives what to whom […]. We have to transcend having to belong

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[33] Indeed, in her studies of Arab cinema, Viola Shafik considers Youssef Chahine as one of the most important Arab filmmakers whose work has enriched Egyptian and Arab cinema, see especially her subchapters "Egyptian Realism" and "Cinema d'Auteur" in her *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1998) 128-43, 182-94.

[34] I took the term of comprador bourgeoisie from the economist Samir Amin who prefers to speak of compradorization instead of neocolonialism and dependency, because, as he rightly explains it, these two last terms deflect the attention from the presence of classes or governments in the Third World which play an active role in the reproduction of the unequal relation between center/North and periphery/South. In his words, Amin argues: "The peripheral status is not only a status of domination of an external society, the center, over the national or the local society, the periphery, it operates through international class alliances, that is through local classes which have common interests with the logic of global system." Interview with Samir Amin by David Barsamian, rec. 10 Oct. 1992, Audiotape, Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

[35] This is my translation because the video copy I am using is in Egyptian Arabic. All the following citations from *The Other* are my translation.

somewhere […]. I hope the day comes when we stop saying us and them, and instead say we."

The presence of Edward Said, an outspoken critic against essentialization of peoples and cultures, and his commitment to the contextualization of events foreshadows *The Other*'s trajectory: terrorism will not be reduced to a monolith of sheikhs who brainwash young people and/or Arab students in the US who bear some kind of gratuitous hatred vis-à-vis their host country as *The Siege* bluntly puts it. Said's words seem to pinpoint that any serious approach to the topic of terrorism has to situate this terrible phenomenon within its historical, political, social, and economic contexts. And the context the film narrative puts forward runs the gamut from neo-colonial relations between the US and the Arab world which feeds on the inherently polarizing character of world capitalist expansion to the consequences of dangerous liaisons that existed between several US administrations and some groups of Islamist radicals at the time when they were considered a feasible bulwark against Communism and Arab nationalism.[36]

Moreover, in contrast to the neatly-cut dichotomous space of *The Siege* where criminal Arab young men enter the innocent US on student visas with the aim to strike and destroy the host country, *The Other*'s pre-credit sequence presents us with two Arab male students whose discussion with Edward Said reveals their concern about the US's arrogant and imperialistic ways in dealing with the world. For instance, Boujdad's doubt about the US ability to see the rest of the world as a producer and a vital participant in the making of the human civilization. After that scene, Adam and Boujdad leave Edward Said and go to a concert hall where we see them enjoying George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." Within that representation, the film foregrounds Adam and Boujdad as Arabs who resent the US ways of dealing with their culture; yet, they feel at home in a global city that offers them the opportunity to debate existential problems and a diversity of cultures they can appreciate. Indeed, the act of their purchasing the sold-out concert tickets for more than what they would normally have cost them at the box office reveals their deep appreciation of the music of a man who was a great Jewish American composer working in pop and classical equally successfully. If, on another level, we move from the fictional space of the film to the real world, it is more likely for Arabs to be able to enjoy Broadway shows than for the Americans to go to the theaters of Cairo or Algiers, and that is due to the familiarity of a large number of Arabs with western European and later with American culture. For the Arabs, as Doreen Massey points out with

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[36] See Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization. The Management of Contemporary Society* (London: Zed, 1997) 88, 91.

regard to the colonized periphery, "that encounter has for centuries been 'immediate and intense.'"[37]

2.1. *The Other*'s Fundamentalists

The Other begins with Adam returning to Cairo in search of a first hand experience with terrorism. From there, the film narrative chronicles his *Bildungsroman*'s journey from naively thinking that all fundamentalists are bearded and fierce-looking male Muslims, towards recognizing the hidden but solid links between the world of greedy and corrupt capitalists, opportunistic religious fundamentalists, and terrorism. Adam's love affair and subsequent marriage to the impoverished investigative reporter Hanane Râaouf (Hanane Tork) provides him with the opportunity to perceive the subservience of the local comprador classes to the economic fundamentalism of "McWorld" (Benjamin Barber's term) that is adamant on converting the developing world into its lesser image, hence ensuring its ongoing dependence.[38]

In fact, the very plane that takes Adam back to Cairo has its first class full of an American delegation of businesspeople and an Egyptian high official Dr. Essame who hails globalization as a positive force that would bring a refreshing push to the economy of the country. Among the people who will receive Essame and the American delegation are no less than Adam's American mother, Margaret, played by the Egyptian star Nabila Ebeid and father, Khalil Emara (Mahmoud Hemeida). Their first talks will take place in the Emara's luxury hotel in Sinai where glasses will be raised to future giant projects thanks to globalization.

Significantly, attending the celebration of the gigantic project of a tourist compound and the three-religion center that will turn out at the end of the film to be a sham, were not only the US and Egyptian businesspeople, such as the Emaras and the American Kraskys, but there was also Dr. Essame, the representative of the Egyptian government, and the American ambassador to Egypt. Via the cross-cutting mechanism, the film shows us that while the wealthy people are drinking a toast in anticipation of more wealth which will be cashed in through lies and extreme corruption, a parallel scene takes place in the restaurant's kitchen. There an employee, namely Hanane's uncle, who does several jobs at the hotel, complains about the laying-off of half of the workers in the name of so-called structural adjustment. Yet, for him personally the structural adjustment program means more work hours with the same meager pay, while one of his close friends, a holder of an engineering degree who was

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[37] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place," *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) 165.
[38] See Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballentine, 2001).

making do with his work as a waiter, is fired. Hanane, who investigates corporate extortion enacted with the compliance of her government, angrily refers to the celebratory scene as the US businessmen's scary ambition "to buy Egypt."

For the majority of Egyptians who have been bearing the brunt of both their authoritarian state and Washington-driven structural adjustment reforms, Hanane's accusation and her uncle's complaints cinematically address what is seen in the real life as economic terror waged by free market fundamentalists.[39] Significantly, Hanane's indictment is founded not only on research based on a flagrant reality but is also emotionally tied to the loss of her father, who died in the 1977 insurrection. In fact, historically speaking on January 18, 1977 thousands of Egyptians took to the streets to protest the World Bank and especially the IMF policies that required the Egyptian government to sharply cut its subsidies of consumer goods. With the rise in the price of staple food, such as bread and flour, Egyptians started spontaneously demonstrating in Cairo and Alexandria and later in other smaller towns. The interference of the police to disperse the crowd with tear gas turned the protest into a violent revolt, after which police started shooting at the crowd and the army was called in to bring the situation under control.[40]

To go back to the film, what the two parallel scenes (restaurant hall vs. the kitchen) also emphasize is that the Egyptian government has no concern about the existential worries of the working class/the servants, as spatially represented in the confines of the kitchen, but sits at the table of the masters/corporate globalization in the larger and more comfortable restaurant hall. Later within the narrative of *The Other*, Dr. Essame will prove his support to corporate globalization by imposing new laws that curb the little freedom newspapers, such as Hanane's, might have had in pursuing their investigation of why globalization, contrary to what its advocates claim, seems to concentrate power and wealth into fewer hands while the rest of the people suffer mass downsizing and more misery.

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[39] See Yahya M. Sadowski, *Political Vegetables? Businessman and Bureaucrat in the Development of Egyptian Agriculture* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1991). Sadowski argues that Egyptian businessmen drain state budget and abuse public facilities to the best private advantages, all of which lead to squanders of cash and energy and corruption. He also argues that the IMF program remains blind to the realities of the country, hence its being protested by Egyptians as in the riots of 1977 and more crucially its achieving no positive results.

[40] On the 1977 riots, see Sadowski, *Political Vegetables?* 154-59. About the outcome of the clash between the army and protestors, Sadowski writes that "Even military intervention did not halt the violence. The demonstration only subsided […] when the radio broadcast the government's decision to reinstate subsidies and rescind all price increases. The government estimated that the protests had left seventy-seven dead, two hundred fourteen wounded, and thousands under arrest, but many Egyptians insist that the toll was several times larger. But a simple tally of dollars and death would not, in any case, indicate just how breathtaking the confrontation had been for the majority of Egyptians. Violence on this scale signaled a revolutionary loss of faith in the government" (156).

Indeed, the film's focus on the growing gap between the poor and the rich does not remain at the thematic level only but is accentuated by means of the mise-en-scène; crowded public transport that drive with open doors since people cram onto the buses' steps contrast sharply with the scenes of the Emaras' luxurious cars, a servant-crowded palace and glamorous parties. In one of the Emaras' parties the camera's viewpoint scans in swift close-ups the diamond jewelry worn by the upper-class women, showing thereby parts of their bodies such as a neck, an ear or a wrist, and lingers on their heavily rouged mouths gulping down the expensive food and the champagne drinks, all of which achieve an effect of fragmentation and ugliness.

Very crucial is that the camera placement in these shots came after two scenes pregnant with anger. The first shows Hanane's boss, the editor-in-chief of a leftist newspaper, indicting the Egyptian State's censorship, repression and uncritical embrace of globalization. In the following second scene Hanane screams out her disgust at living (thanks to her marriage with Adam) in a very large flat while a lot of people live in squalid conditions, adding that it is such flagrant inequalities which push a lot of people to crime and terrorism. The closeups of the bulky jewelry after those two intense scenes serves to validate Hanane's and her boss's anger and even urges the necessity of keeping it and turning it into positive action. Especially if one recalls that during that very party, where the camera closes in on the signs of extreme wealth, Margaret provocatively tells her son, Adam, that throughout their history Egyptians have proven to be an essentially miserable and downtrodden folk who should be happy with the few billion dollars her country donates each year. Certainly the composition of these scenes empowers the rage of the leftist journalists vis-à-vis globalization, the repressive local regime and corruption and directs it by means of the camera towards the people present in the Emaras' party, who are again a mixture of Egyptian and American high officials and billionaires, all of whom benefit from the status-quo.

In the Egyptian context, certainly the Emaras' and Kraskys' sham project to build a giant tourist compound as well as the lavish parties Margaret and Khalil frequently give evoke the very ills that beset the Egyptian society in the '90s. Muhammed Hassanein Heikal, editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram*, notes how Egypt, which saw its external debt reduced due to its position in the Gulf War (1991), came under siege by a wave of entrepreneurs brandishing plans for mega-projects that promised to create work for thousands of Egyptian people. What puzzles Heikal is how the State quickly opened the government coffers and allocated huge amounts of money for construction projects that rarely took place because most of the masterminds siphoned the money into their own pockets and left the country. At the same

time Heikal points out that besides the criminal behavior of the entrepreneurs stealing, diverting the funds abroad and disappearing from the country, Egypt sunk in an unparalleled wave of savage consumerism and wild partying.[41]

To zoom out from Egypt to the Third World, the film's dealing with globalization in the form of giant American-Egyptian projects that sap the state's money and disable it from dealing with more urgent issues recalls the devastating local effects of global capitalist expansion that feeds on what Samir Amin describes as "dismantling development and instituting recompradorization."[42] Similarly the economist Michel Chossudovsky calls the phenomena of social polarization and concentration of wealth a crucial part in the globalization of poverty. He points out:

> In the South, the East and the North, a privileged social minority has accumulated vast amounts of wealth at the expense of the large majority of the population. This new international financial order feeds on human poverty and the destruction of natural environment. It generates social apartheid, encourages racism and ethnic strife, undermines the rights of women and often precipitates countries into destructive confrontations between nationalities.[43]

Indeed, *The Other*, which wants to stage all this complex context seamlessly moves from the glamorous and greedy world of top wealthy capitalists to the shady world of Islamic fundamentalists, embodied by the character of Sheik Fathallah, Hanane's brother, and his followers. The seamless movement was enacted by no less than Margaret retreating from her own party and starting a virtual chat with Fathallah where she asks him to separate Adam from his sister. As an Islamist fundamentalist Fathallah does not have a problem with that request since he has already indicted his sister's marriage to Adam, on the grounds that this latter is Christian and half-American. Ironically, Margaret and Fathallah mutually reject each other (like Fathallah who did not accept his sister's marriage to a Christian, Margaret wanted her son to woo the US ambassador's daughter, Diana, who belongs to his class and certainly shares his creed) yet, when they conspire together to separate the young couple, their aim is after all to strengthen their rejectionist attitudes via claiming back their respective kin. Accordingly, Fathallah agreed to kidnap his sister while Margaret promised to provide him with a visa for the US.

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[41] Muhammed Hassanein Heikal, *'Am mina al-Azamat 2000-2001*. (A Year of Crisis, 2000-2001) Cairo: Alkotob, 2001) 120-23. See also Galal Amin, *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians? Changes in Egyptian Society from 1950 to the present* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2000).
[42] See Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, 35.
[43] Michel Chossudovsky, *The Globalisation of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms* (London: Zed, 1998) 34.

Another similarity between Fathallah's and Margaret's thinking is their intention to doublecross each other: Fathallah wanted to free his sister once he obtains the visa while Margaret sent the police to him once she was informed that he had captured his sister, hoping that both brother and sister would be killed in the shoot-out. In this regard, Hanane who rejected both her brother's and the Emaras' respective extremism (Fathallah legitimates his actions by invoking God; the Emaras invoke globalization; both avoid to deal with the devastating effects of their actions) stands out as the film's "Other" whose intellect, commitment and vision will incur her the wrath of powerful opponents. Her capture in an operation that brought Fathallah and Margaret together and eventual death in the shoot-out organized by Dr. Essame and Margaret highlights the veracity of her knowledge that the boat she was rocking was full with religious fanaticism, state corruption and corporate globalization.[44]

At another level, Margaret's conspiracy with Fathallah to eliminate the leftist journalist Hanane, who saw through her and Essame's projects, reaches out to the recent history where radical Islamists were financed and trained by the US as well as several Arab conservative regimes, like Saudi Arabia, to subvert leftist secular movements in the Arab world.[45] And the fact that it is Dr. Essame, a corrupt brutal man who was about to "discipline" the newspaper for which Hanane works, who sends the police to catch Fathallah after receiving a call from Margaret, recalls the posture of repressive Arab regimes that exploit Islamic radicalism to suppress all forms of serious opposition and strengthen their powers.[46]

2.2. The Representation of the US as All Evil

Chahine's *The Other* has the merit of excavating several key elements that are implicated in the scourge of today's terrorism. Similarly, the film's narrative clearly tries to deconstruct otherness, as some homogeneous entity on which one can blame all that goes wrong. Indeed, Chahine himself expresses his frustration with the means of communication, which despite their sophistication and power to reach everywhere, still perform a poor job in bringing about

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[44] While arguing that Capitalist globalization as it is being imposed on the Third World in the name of solving the current crisis is not a solution, the economist Samir Amin warns that the rejection of globalization is also not a solution, since "'rejections,' apparent only by the ways in which they are expressed—the turning back to ethnicity, and religious fundamentalism—become integrated into this brutal globalization and are made use of by it. Delinking […] is not to be found in these illusory and negative rejections but on the contrary by an active insertion capable of modifying the conditions of globalization." *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, 75.

[45] See Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*: *Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2003) 85 and Eqbal Ahmad, *Terrorism: Theirs and Ours* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001) 32-35.

[46] See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat, Myth or Reality?* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 218.

a real interaction with and understanding of each other. [47] Knowing that the machines' failure to facilitate transnational literacy (Spivak's term) is due to the still dominant clash-of-civilizations mentality, Chahine argues that the task of a filmmaker and artist should focus on bridging that gap and dismantling the deeply rooted dichotomies; yet, that is exactly where, I will argue, he fails utterly. *The Other* ends up producing monovocal representation of the US as all evil, as in the characters of Margaret, US diplomats and businesspeople, all of whom contemptuously abuse Egypt.

Indeed, Maragaret's character became the personification of the White House's policy vis-à-vis the Arab World via her arrogance and her provocative and insulting remarks; such as, her insinuation that in return for the $2 billion the US donates to Egypt yearly, her country is fully entitled to control Egypt. Her standing for an imperialist US is enhanced via dialogue and editing work where her quarrel with her husband takes place while the TV set in the background shows an anxious-looking Clinton during his tour of Africa, with his bodyguards shouting at people "Go back, Go back." Taking it for granted that what all Egyptians' fantasy amounts to is being born in the US, Margaret taunted her husband by saying: "You wish you were born [like Adam] in California, in the America which nobody dares touch." Khalil answers while winking at her: "I guess I did enough touching." Margaret screamed: "He who dares touch me, I hit him" while throwing a bottle of whiskey at the TV set. With the deafening noise still on, the shot cuts away to US missiles dropping on buildings.

In this context, Lina Khatib writes: "the fact that there is not one 'good' American character in the film signals Chahine's failure in transcending stereotypes. He might have shown us an imperfect image of Egypt, but his presentation of the United States as all evil is an East/West dichotomy in reverse, with the East this time viewing the West as an Other."[48] I do not totally agree with Khatib's argument because my view is that Chahine does more than just produce an imperfect image of Egypt. From its very beginning, the film's narrative insists on showing how the imbrication of phenomena such as brutal globalization, social polarization and terrorism happen because of us (the Egyptian government, the elite class, Islamic terrorism) and them (US corporate, military and government leadership, and International Financial Institutions). Moreover, by visually confronting the privileged elite on the one hand, and the suppressed classes including angry leftist intellectuals on the other, Chahine pinpoints Egypt's urgent need to implement social justice and democracy.

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[47] See interview with Chahine in *Alhayat* 8 Feb. 2000: 16.
[48] Lina Khatib, "*The Other,* A Review," <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/journal/filmrev/the-other.htm>.

Yet, in my view, the fact that the protagonist Adam, half Egyptian, half American, solemnly rejects his mother and unnecessarily declares "I've chosen to be Egyptian" which reproduces the manichean forms of thinking Edward Said denounces at the beginning of the film. Adam's ability to achieve heroism only via his rejection of his American roots, which were anyway never displayed seriously during the film, bespeaks *The Other*'s inability to see the US except in terms of the evil other, with whom there should be no connection whatsoever. Ironically the film's end starkly contradicts the promising beginning of giving up a rigid thinking of one's belonging and identity, as encapsulated by the appeal of Edward Said, the only postive American character! *The Other* thereby inscribes itself in the very intellectual tradition Said critiques in the Arab World. Indeed, recently Said again has indicted the Arabs' inclination of looking at the US as a monolith of evil.[49]

The Other could have been an opportunity to deconstruct this monolithic image of the US in the Arab imagination, especially that its pre-credit sequence does set the stage for such a positive undertaking. Similarly the film's narrative shows its awareness that what is at stake is not to opt for a clear-cut belonging to a given nationality supposedly containing a pure identity but how the industrial and political elites of both First and Third Worlds organize a skillful terracing of oppression between and within countries to maintain the pyramid of wealth. Yet instead of pushing these ideas to their logical end, *The Other*'s appeal to rethinking "us" and "them" has proven to hide, in its core, a dichotomic vision in which the US is evil.

3. *Three Kings*' Three-Dimensionality

Once Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, his status changed overnight from "our kind of guy" to become instead the head of a "rogue state" in the first Bush administration's view. This change meant that President Bush, who was one of the ardent supporters of the Iraqi dictator throughout his Vice-Presidency and later his Presidency until 1990, started a huge military buildup to free the Middle East from its new Hitler.[50] At the end of "Desert Storm" US troops remained in Saudia Arabia to protect its oil from the Iraqi "threat." At the same time, while the Kuwaiti ruling family returned home, Egyptian and other Arab governments were rewarded for their taking part in the International Coalition. Yet, the Iraqi people, who have been subject to Hussein's police state for more than a decade, failed in their attempt to topple

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[49] See Edward Said, "The Other America," <http://www.counterpunch.org/said03222003.html>.
[50] For a detailed account that relies on official documents in its investigation of George H. W. Bush's support of Hussein from 1980 to 1990, see Craig Unger, *House of Bush, House of Saud*: *The Secret Relationships between the World's Most Powerful Dynasties* (New York: Scribner, 2004) 57-82.

their leader in March 1991 thanks to the US adminstration's decision to leave Saddam Hussein in power. As Emran Qureshi and Michael Sells put it:

> The Iraqi people, their infrastructure destroyed by the bombing, their rebellion smashed with U.S. acquiescence, their economy ruined by years of misrule, sank further into misery […]. Even as Saddam was liquidating the remnants of his betrayed opposition, the U.S. press, public, and politicians erupted into a historic national celebration, replete with a Fifth Avenue ticker tape parade honoring the victory over Saddam Hussein.[51]

David O. Russell's *Three Kings*, released in 1999, plays against this multi-layered background.

Indeed, Russell, scriptwriter and director of *Three Kings*, who lived in Central America in the early 1980s, understands perfectly well the plight of the anti-Ba'ath Iraqis, who took up arms against Sadaam Hussein. They suffered the US-supported brutality of their regime and its military machine, only to find themselves during and after "Desert Storm" the target of, on the one hand, American bombs and the cruelty of their dictator on the other. As Russell points out with regard to what is probably the core impetus driving US foreign policy "we trained the militaries under a lot of dictatorships. We trained them in the arts of interrogation, sabotage and weapons and all sorts of things. Crazy games we played in the 70s and 80s. That's what happens when you have a huge weapons industry, as we do. We got to sell weapons."[52] Russell's experience in Central America also made him aware of what he calls the mainstream media's participation in misinforming the people.[53] Therefore he wants *Three Kings* to voice the secret history that has not been played yet. As he says, "we had the yellow ribbons and the celebrations. Did we really recognize that we've abandoned a democratic uprising and we've left a mess behind in Iraq which'd come back to haunt us […]. Less than ten years later we'd have to bomb them again and we're still bombing them."[54]

Accordingly, Russell embarks on making a film, based on John Ridley's story, that dispels the aura of morality around the Gulf War. His film brings to the fore several disturbing events: first, the US was directly involved in building up Iraq's military strength. Second, the US interferes to save the rich, non-democratic Kuwait from the dictator Saddam, while at the same time it abandons the Iraqi democratic uprising to the same dictator. And

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[51] Emran Qureshi and Michael Sells eds., *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 14-15.

[52] David O Russell's comment on DVD of *Three Kings,* recorded by *Village Voice.*

[53] In his own comment on his film *Three Kings*, Russell recalls that in Nicaragua people "wanted just to keep their farms going and get their economy started, meanwhile they had this American backed insurgency coming in across the border and blowing up their farms when the country war started." At the same time Russell who was on the ground says that in the US the media blotted out this background knowledge and instead regaled the people with a completely different story about the war's eruption.

[54] Russell's comment on DVD of *Three Kings.*

third, which is by far a long-term disaster, after the end of the Gulf War the US and its allies left behind an irreparable mess, which runs the gamut from continuing human casualties to environmental, health and political disasters.[55] Wanting to foreground these events, Russell breaks free from the much-cherished cycle in Hollywood that demonizes the Arabs and glorifies the Americans. The outcome is, in J. Hoberman's words, a "bold and messy feature [that] is an attempt to fathom war's purpose—as seen in retrospect."[56] In this retrospective rendering of "Desert Storm" and its aftermath both a group of oppressed Iraqis and three American reservists have the opportunity to voice their points of view and convictions; their confrontations and dialogues with each others made the GIs aware about their racism as well as the shortcomings of their homeland's foreign policy in the region.

However, *Three Kings*' critical rendering of the war is softened by the character-focalizer Major Gates, played by Hollywood star George Clooney, who saves face by sparing the lives of the Iraqi rebels; in reality his President unfortunately abandoned them to Saddam Hussein. Indeed, *Three Kings* is focalized around the Clooney character and his personal epiphany. The mise-en-scène foregrounds him as he explains to the GIs the plight of the rebels who were encouraged by President Bush to rise against Saddam Hussein only to be abandoned to this latter's Republican Guards. Accordingly, Major Gates's character functions as a "center of consciousness" that conveys narrative information, an activity which also pertains to the characteristics of focalization.[57] Besides his knowledge, Major Gates's freeing the rebels kept under torture and his decisive step to save these latter and their families from a certain death focuses onto him narrative agency, a process that clearly steers the spectator's identification with his character in the film.

My reading on *Three Kings* will first discuss the film's relevance to the tradition of the war-film genre, with a special focus on the representation of the GIs who will take up the mission of stealing the Kuwaiti gold and eventually end up freeing a group of Iraqi rebels. Then I will deal with how the humanizing of the Shi'ite rebels and the voicing of their grievances denounce US double-standard politics that cares only about "its" oil, and since the Kuwaitis happen to sit on that oil, then their lives become worth fighting for. Additionally, while in the mainstream media, the Iraqi soldiers typically entered the news either as war prisoners stripping themselves naked in front of the GIs' rifles or as corpses, Russell gives us the opportunity to see them under a different light. For instance, both a Saddam Hussein

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[55] See Saul Bloom et al., eds., *Hidden Casualties: Environmental, Health and Political Consequences of the Persian Gulf War* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 1994).
[56] J. Hoberman, "Burn, Blast, Bomb, Cut," <http://www.bfi.org.uk/cgi-bin/>.
[57] See Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics. Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond.* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 88.

soldier and a Shiʿite rebel, despite their political differences that turned the first to a killer of the second, agree that "Desert Storm" could happen because it draws directly on racism in the US and on the hypocrisy of American political culture.

The last point I will discuss deals with Major Gates's focal character as the mediator between otherized communities and the American reservists and, by extension, the spectators. While his role consists in uncovering a painful story, his heroism bestows on US foreign policy in the Middle East a human face that covers up its fatal mistakes. *Three Kings'* happy ending reflects the gist of that policy: exploitation and appropriation of the region's resources while sometimes getting (involuntarily) involved in settling issues that pertain to basic human rights.

3.1. *Bataan*'s Tradition

Before dealing with *Three Kings,* I will first delineate briefly Richard Slotkin's reading of *Bataan* (1943) as a film that establishes a new genre in making war movies. My concern with Slotkin's reading is to contextualize *Three Kings* in the combat genre and see the extent to which it brings in some refreshing touches that parody and question the cinematic clichés of that genre. Slotkin argues that *Bataan*'s newness was in departing from the old racial dualisms of *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and engaging instead the myth of America as "many in one" wherein the American military is represented as a site of reconciled ethnic and racial differences. Yet *Bataan's* vision was maintained by a set of imagery that while it brought different races and ethnicities together in the face of a racialized enemy, it still worked from within the well-established hierarchy of the racial system in the US. Slotkin writes: "[…] the resort to racialism may intensify the sense of nationality *against* an external 'Other'; but it does so at the price of dividing the people internally, as one class of citizens is identified with the blood or culture of the alien 'Other.'"[58] In this context, Slotkin identifies in the roles given to minorities, especially African-Americans, a regular pattern he calls the "Epps convention"[59] where the similarity of the internal "other" with the external "other" deprives him by necessity of any heroic deed or for that matter a heroic death.

Yet, if the "Epps convention" provides a token character that keeps the many non-white races under "one" control, it is definitely the roll-call ritual that flashes the "many in one" formula. Slotkin explains that in the roll call trope, we are shown a sergeant calling the roll while the camera pans in close-up the deadly serious faces of the called soldiers. Their

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[58] Richard Slotkin, "Unit Pride: Ethnic Platoons and the Myths of American Nationality," *American Literary History* 13.2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 472.
[59] Epps was the name of the African American character in *Bataan* 1943.

different colors are supposed to tell us about the multiethnic and multiracial nature of the American population. Besides the different races that stand out in the roll call, the platoon that takes up a given mission in the war never fails to include a character from the enemy camp. The function of this character, according to Slotkin, is to share in the hatred or contempt the American soldiers bear for their enemy. This "race-face" convention, as Slotkin chooses to call it, not only legitimates the behavior of the GIs but also serves to eliminate racism as motivating their actions. Certainly this trope also helps to consolidate the "war-is-just" leitmotif which constitutes the ideological premise upon which the events of the film unfold. In this vein, dehumanization and demonization of the enemy, as well as the heightening of his atrocities from which "our" values and way of life are in dire threat, creates the "savage-war" paradigm that impedes us from "mak[ing] deals with such an enemy; as in the savage war of the Frontier Myth, you can't make a deal; you can only fight till one side or the other is exterminated."[60]

3.2. Demystifying the Justness of the Gulf War

Three Kings begins at the end of Desert Storm in March 1991, that is exactly the time when, historically speaking, an orgiastic storm of flag-waving was going on in the US. In fact, on March 1, US citizens displayed huge support for their victorious Commander-in-Chief whose approval rating reached 91% and it remained high despite the fact that the news began to report that the Iraqi death toll might be 200,000.[61] At the same time Saddam Hussein was waging his stormy massacres of his own people. On March 14, as Chomsky writes, "Saddam was decimating the Southern opposition under the eyes of [American] General Schwarzkopf, who refused even to permit rebelling military officers access to captured Iraqi arms."[62] Similarly, not only the majority of Arabs but alert observers in the Third World were dubious of American motives and hasty military action.[63] Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns of Sao Paulo, Brazil, perceptively points out that in the Arab countries "the rich sided with the U.S.

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[60] Slotkin, "Unit Pride: Ethnic Platoons and the Myths of American Nationality," 482

[61] See Max Elbaum, "The Storm at Home," *Beyond the Storm: A Gulf Crisis Reader*, eds., Phyllis Bennis and Michel Moushabeck (New York: Olive Branch Press, 1991) 143-44. No wonder that, for instance, the enthusiastic Colin Powell, who was then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, comments on the therapeutic effect of the Gulf War on the American public: "after the stalemate of Korea and the long agony in Southeast Asia, the country was hungry for victory. We had given America a clear win at low casualties in a noble cause, and the American people fell in love again with their armed forces. The way I looked at it, if we got too much adulation for this one, it made up for the neglect the troops had experienced coming home from those other wars." See his *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine, 1996) 518.

[62] Noam Chomsky, *Rogue States*: *The Rule of Force in World Affairs* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000) 28.

[63] On the mood in the Arab world, see Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "The Politics of Linkage: The Arab-Israeli Conflict in the Gulf War," and Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, "The Other Occupation: The Palestinian Response," in *Beyond the Storm,* 183-90, 191-98.

government while the millions of poor condemned this military aggression." Throughout the Third World he writes: "there is hatred and fear: When will they decide to invade us, and on what pretext?"[64]

Back to the US. President Bush's speech announcing the end of the Gulf War "Kuwait is liberated, Iraq's army is defeated. Our military objectives are met," unleashed the victory parades and celebrations in the US, which Colin Powell described as the American people falling in love again with their armed forces.[65] *Three Kings,* which also begins with the end of the war, reflects the reigning spirit of victory among the American soldiers in the Gulf. Yet, ironically, the movie's opening sequence expresses a sense of chaos and confusion; the soldiers are not sure whether the cease fire is on yet, or if they are still shooting, or just taking prisoners. Accordingly, one of the main characters Troy Barlow (Mark Wahlberg), not knowing what to do, shoots an Iraqi soldier, the other GIs standing nearby, are fascinated by the formidable shot that gives them finally the opportunity to see some action. Immediately the camera swirls us around the wild partying of the GIs where their triumphant chanting "proud to be American" and "God bless America," right after their having wreaked havoc on a relatively small and impoverished country, reflects how their viewpoint on the war is clearly steeped in the noble-mission rhetoric propagated by their Commander-in-Chief, who outlined to Congress as follows his "New World Order" during the Gulf crisis:

> We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment […]. Out of these troubled times […] a new world order can emerge […]. Today, that new world order is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we have known, a world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle, a world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice, a world where the strong respects the weak.[66]

At the beginning of *Three Kings,* the GIs are shown celebrating their extraordinary moment of having lived up to the "new world order" expectation: the freedom is restored to small Kuwait and the just punishment of the aggressor Iraq has been, thanks to the superior air-land battle technology, "surgically administered." The GIs have every reason to pat themselves on the back and shower themselves with smuggled alcohol (illegal in Saudi Arabia). In the midst of this "partying and boozing," the main characters, who will appoint themselves the mission of stealing the gold Iraqis stole from Kuwait, are introduced to us but not according to *Bataan*'s stern roll-call ritual. Russell chooses instead to situate his

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[64] Qtd. in Noam Chomsky "'What We Say Goes': The Middle East in the New World Order," *Collateral Damage: The* "New World Order "*at Home and Abroad,* ed. Cynthia Peters (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992) 51.
[65] Qtd. in Powell, *My American Journey,* 518.
[66] Qtd. in John Dumbrell, *American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton* (London: MacMillan, 1997) 163.

characters in scenes that question the moral imperative of the war, then he inserts taglines that reflect to some extent the individuality and vulnerability of the GIs. We see Troy Barlow and Conrad Vig (Spike Jonze), singing, dancing, going berserk, posing for war photos and giving each other hair cuts, all those acts suggest that it was a fun adventure for the American soldiers, who had the best of all worlds: a real war that was for them more like a video game in a noisy bar.

In this context, we learn from the taglines that Troy is a new father, the event that pushes him towards joining the army reserves for the extra cash, as he later reveals to his Iraqi captor. Conrad's caption flatly states that he wants to be Troy Barlow. Conrad's total identification with Barlow introduces him as a characterless character, for whom the war meant bonding with and mimicking Troy. The African American Chief Elgin (Ice Cube), who was not involved in the partying, is introduced as being "on a four month paid vacation from Detroit." Another character that appears in Russell's "roll call" is Adriana Cruz (Nora Dunn) the NBS corespondent, about whom we learn that she is "five-time Emmy runner-up." Adriana, who admits being managed by the army and assigned Major Gates as her military escort, plays a crucial part in the happy ending of Major Gates's self-appointed mission to appropriate the gold of Kuwait. Finally, Major Archie Gates from Special Forces (George Clooney), who will lead the "platoon" into the "heart of darkness," is introduced to us in his sexual climax with the journalist Cathy while in their background several TV screens show the parade of the victorious army back at home. The scene humorously alludes to the media's wedding its coverage to the Pentagon's point of view.[67] However, if we look at the sexual climax with the parade victory in the background, it will become more in tune with the gendered language that wrapped the Gulf War, "where the 'rape of Kuwait'—the sexual violation of an innocent, passive, symbolically feminine persona—became the pretext for a manly penetration of Iraq […]. At the same time, through a show of phallic vigor in the Gulf War, a senescent America imagined itself cured of the traumatic 'impotence' it suffered in another war, in another Third World country—Vietnam."[68]

Three Kings also doubts the ideological premise of "war-is-just" which legitimizes in the first place the presence and the combat of the American army in some places of the world. Indeed, from the very beginning Major Gates confesses that he doesn't know why they waged this war, a statement that reveals not only Major Gates's confusion about the war, but also historically speaking reaches out to the large number of American military people who argued

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[67] See Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism,* 125, and Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) 31-87.
[68] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism,* 128.

that the war option was not inevitable.[69] Yet, the sad and depressed Major, whom we see in a slow-motion shot raising his hands hopelessly to his head, becomes instantly highly motivated to "go and fetch" the gold bullion Saddam stole from Kuwait. Of course, one can look at the story of stealing gold as a narrative pretext to send Major Gates and the other soldiers on the journey where they learn about the sordidness of the war. Significantly Major Gates "who knows the Arab leaders" is confident about the simplicity of the mission, for as he explains to his companions: "now, what is most necessary to Saddam's troops is to put down the uprising. We can do what we want, they won't touch us."

However, when Gates expects the Iraqi soldiers to be unable to deal with him and his soldiers, we think that he should take a whole army to get the gold and not three GIs only, who, logically speaking, should pose no problem to the hundreds of Iraqi soldiers. But if we recall the long tradition of Hollywood combat-film genre, four male GIs are more than sufficient in "handling" hundreds of Third World soldiers. Sure enough Gates, Chief, Troy, and Conrad drive to Karbala where the gold is allegedly stocked and Gates walks into a bunker crowded with Saddam's Republican Guards, brandishing a paper while shouting at the amazed guards "[o]rders from President Bush! Part of the cease-fire agreement!" To a large extent Major Gates's "attack" parallels in the Arab viewers' minds what exactly this war was about: US imperial power (that covets the oil) hiding behind grand rhetoric. Yet, the sympathetically portrayed Clooney takes valid critiques of the war and US imperialism and softens them to be more palatable to US/Western audiences. If we contrast Troy's fantasy of owning a carpet store with Exxon's scary hegemony, it is clearly a "kinder, gentler America" to use Bush's phrase in the film. What does the media do when gentler or harsher theft are being committed? In *Three Kings*, the journalist Adriana, who is supposed to be on Major Gates's heels, is put on the wrong track while Gates carries out the illegal mission in all equanimity.

Looking closely at the three GIs of *Three Kings,* Chief, like Conrad and Troy, join up as reservists for the extra cash (Troy) or for the job opportunity (Conrad), or a vacation compared to daily life in his Detroit ghetto home (Chief). Why did Russell choose to put reservists in the mission of "stealing gold" and insert cut away scenes that briefly give us a glimpse about their daily jobs, where we see the jobless Conrad killing away time by shooting at dolls and teddy bears? Hoberman writes that "Desert Storm was the province of volunteers, if not mercenaries."[70] In fact, the three reservists' financial motive behind enlisting exposes

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[69] See Max Elbaum, "The Storm at Home," *Beyond the Storm,* especially 149 where he discusses the unprecedented dissent of the retired military veterans.
[70] Hoberman, "Burn, Blast, Bomb, Cut."

another dark side of this war: that instead of addressing social and economic problems at home, the US administration pushes the victims of poverty to embrace the Pentagon's public relations slogan "Be All You Can Be in the Army"; that is be all you could not be in your society because of poverty, injustice and racism. Discussing the anti-war movement that started in the US right after President Bush's early-August troop deployment to Saudi Arabia, Max Elbaum refers to "the class-biased and racist nature of an 'all volunteer' military whose ranks were filled by victims of the poverty draft [that] was underscored time and again in anti-war agitation."[71]

But if poverty and the search for better opportunities render the war-business lucrative, anti-Arab racism fuels the search for adventure in the hot Middle East and provides the delight in killing "towelheads" and "ragheads." Elbaum points out that "For Bush, Colin Powell, James Baker and company, the prime lesson was that more sophisticated use of military power, media manipulation, demagogy and anti-Arab racism could make war palatable once again."[72] In fact, at the beginning of *Three Kings*, both Troy and Conrad unembarrassedly go about shoving the Iraqi prisoners and calling them "towelheads," "Abdul" and "ragheads." Conrad reacts to the death of an Iraqi soldier shot by Troy in the film's opening sequence: "Congratulations, my man, you shot yourself a raghead!" Problems arise only when Conrad flagrantly crosses the lines of racism and uses the term of "dune coon" that makes Chief, as African American Epps's grand child, furious. Troy who knows better jumps in to excuse Conrad's language and explains to this latter that the label of "dune coon" cannot be used since it implies the blurring of the lines between our "internal other" and the "external other." In fact, Troy, who is well informed about the intricacies of racism advises Conrad to limit himself to "towelhead" and "Camel jockey," for these are good substitutes to "dune coon" and "sand nigger."

Why is Conrad's overt racism, that unwittingly exposes the US long history of racism, outrageous, while Troy's anti-Arab racism and Chief's indifference seem to be acceptable? Nabeel Abraham, who writes on Arabs and Arab Americans, observes that

> [a]ny attempt to gauge anti-Arab sentiment during the crisis [the Gulf War] must take into account the hype trickling down from the White House and other powerful institutions (Congress, the news media, political commentators, academia) […]. The fallout from the Gulf crisis was clearly a manifestation of the anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, anti-Middle Eastern racism endemic to U.S. culture. Unlike other forms of racism, anti-Arab prejudice is often tolerated by mainstream society.[73]

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[71] Elbaum, "The Storm at Home," 146.
[72] Elbaum, "The Storm at Home," 143.
[73] Nabeel Abraham, "The Gulf Crisis and Anti-Arab Racism in America," *Collateral Damage*, 259-60.

In this regard, Conrad's redneck attitude presents the US mainstream audience with a form of racism they can reduce to Conrad's background as Southern white and working class. Hence, his racist behavior can be rejected out of hand and considered as ugly, obsolete and totally unwanted. Unable to identify with Conrad's racism, this audience is encouraged to see itself as the opposite of Conrad and thereby feel good about its keeping a safe distance vis-à-vis that character. Yet, the scapegoating of Conrad not only fulfills the audience's expectation by locating racism as present only with a poor white Southerner, it deflects our attention from another form of racism that is directly in the service of the White House policy, a racism that polices both poor people in the First World and Third World populations. Randolph Stone's pertinent questions are worth quoting at length:

> Is there a direct relationship between the misery and depravation and killing visited upon the people of Iraq and upon African-Americans right here at home? […] Why is there no strategic plan to deal with the issues of poverty and racism? What is the relationship between police violence and the violence in Baghdad? What is the relationship between our government's willingness to devote billions to bail out the savings-and-loan industry while ignoring the calls by the Urban League and others for an urban Marshall Plan to seriously deal with the crisis in this country?[74]

Randolph Stone's answer is that the twin growth of the war machine, whose target is basically the Third World nations, and the building of prisons in the US, whose inmates are largely African Americans, reveals a racist system that considers these peoples' lives expendable.[75]

Obviously *Three Kings* is also a film about racism in the US, for it is no coincidence that Russell has a brief scene showing the beating of Rodney King (an event that took place right at the end of the Gulf War). Another scene shows an Iraqi officer asking why the King of Pop, Michael Jackson, whitened his skin and butchered his face. If these "kings" are references to African Americans, then the third king can be a reference to anti-violence leader Martin Luther King, Jr., who pointed out in his powerful speech, "Beyond Vietnam" on April 4, 1967, how the buildup for the Vietnam war paralleled the breaking up of poverty programs for both poor Whites and Blacks in the US, thereby judging wars the enemy of the poor. His speech also foresaw the coming of more wars and invasions that will be fought, not out of honorable intent, but for and due to the trio of racism, extreme materialism and militarism.[76] With all these African-American traces haunting the structure of the narrative, anti-Arab

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[74] Randolph N. Stone, "The Struggle Continues at Home and Abroad," *Collateral Damage*, 234.
[75] Stone, "The Struggle Continues," 231-36.
[76] Martin Luther King, Jr. "Beyond Vietnam," Speech at Riverside Church in New York, 4 April 1967, rec. Alternative Radio, Boulder, CO.

racism in the US emerges as the latest visible link of a long and solid chain, that services the interests of those who benefit from that giant triplet. This is why the Gulf War proved to be an event where racism thrived supreme. No wonder that this war became another opportunity to leave us a rich record of racist epithets, such as "turkey shoot" or likening the killing of Iraqis to shooting "fish in a barrel" or the macabre frenzy of the "highway of death."[77] Clearly *Three Kings'* references and cross-references can be read as an attempt to denounce that process of dehumanization and foreshadows the main characters' discovery of their enemy's humanity and suffering.

However, the film's attempt remains timid, because Chief's failure to speak up affiliates *Three Kings* with *Bataan*: the subaltern cannot speak (for the "other"). Upon hearing Conrad's indirect insult of "dune coon," Chief confidently yells at him "I don't want to hear 'dune coon' or 'sand nigger' from him or anybody!" Still he shrugs his shoulder when demeaning terms are directed to a different race. Moreover, Chief not only represents an American minority that was subjected to blatant racism and still suffers a subtler form of discrimination, he also lives in Detroit, home to a large Arab American community, and thereby might have better knowledge than the others. However, despite these two crucial factors, Chief remains silent in the narrative of *Three Kings*. Is it because as an African American character, he is not allowed to speak for other minorities, or for that matter for a Third World nation? Indeed, even though *Three Kings* portrays Chief as heroic and intelligent, the narrative never allows him to spot similarities between his situation and that of the Arab enemies.

In fact, the film narratively privileges the Euro-American character of Clooney who will exclusively speak for "them": he voices his revulsion with the war, explains the rebels' plight and decides to risk his life and that of Troy, Chief and Conrad to save the doomed Shi'ite group. In contrast to Clooney's humane and heroic initiatives, Chief's brutal confrontation with the scene of the beating of Rodney King on TV in the Iraqi bunker elicits only an uneasy, taken aback Chief, who unfortunately quickly regains his posture by misfiring a bullet in his attempt to subdue one of the Iraqi guards. Unlike his forerunner Epps in *Bataan*, Chief could afford to stop any form of verbal racism directly addressed to him, whereas Epps had to look somewhere else when the white soldiers called their Japanese enemies "dirty monkeys."[78] Yet, like Epps, Chief is not yet empowered to draw the link between the violence of white policemen whom we see zealously beating Rodney King and

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[77] See Chomsky, "What We say Goes," 67, and Ramsey Clark, et al., *War Crimes: A Report On United States War Crimes Against Iraq* (Washington, DC: Maisonneuve Press, 1992) 83-93.
[78] See Slotkin, 483.

the Pentagon's massive saturation bombing in Iraq. Chief's resistance to racism is limited to a very pragmatic level; it is never allowed to offend the white audience. Indeed, his portrayal as heroic, intelligent and silent offers the US white audience a character they can side with and thereby an opportunity to think of themselves as even more liberal and antiracist.

3.3. From Pygmalion to Caliban

Three Kings' credit is definitely in its humanizing the Arab enemy. Commenting on the scene where the four GIs come face to face with the Shi'ite group that has just fled Saddam's guards, Russell says: "When Cliff Curtis [who plays the role of the Shi'ite Amir Abdulah] speaks, to me, it's like a moment in Pygmalion when she finally speaks. He [her creator] looks at her stunned that she could have a mind and a voice of her own." Amir Abdulah, as a persecuted person in his own country, would have been the perfect figure to play out the "race-face" convention where his role would be restricted to echoing the American heroes' condemnation of Saddam Hussein. Yet, when Major Gates and Chief ask Amir Abdulah about his daughter's state (this latter saw her mom being shot dead by Saddam's Guards), they do not seem to expect an answer from a man they hardly looked at. To their surprise, Amir's answer comes: "she is traumatized, what do you expect?" His speech that follows up highlights to us that the source of the trauma is not only the obviously criminal regime of Saddam Hussein that disregards the basics of human rights but also the US, the champion of freedom and justice, that intervenes to save the rich Kuwaiti and abandons the poor Shi'ites to rot. In Amir's own words: "I went to B-school at Bowling Green. I came back to open a couple of hotels near Karbala and you guys bomb all my cafés. Now we try to get rid of Saddam, Bush leaves us twisting in the winds." Indeed, we, the spectators, know that Major Gates, whose actions largely reflect American policy in the region, goes for the gold exactly because he knows that Saddam's troops are busy slaughtering the rebels, but what he did not expect was running into the midst of the slaughterhouse and having to admit that the rebels are intelligent human beings. Gates starts thinking about doing something because he is forced to, after all the whole world is watching. And this is exactly how Gates and his soldiers become forced "saviors" of a bunch of oppressed people while stealing their gold.

The dialogs between the Iraqi people and the GIs subvert the colossal work done by the mainstream media that has reduced Iraq to a country inhabited by Saddam Hussein and his army. In *Three Kings*, we encounter several Iraqi people who are just looking for a good living, the same as Troy, Chief and Conrad. Conrad, who has digested all the anti-Arab images the US media pours on their public, knowingly asks an Iraqi twin: "Y'all think America is Satan, right? America is Satan?" To the twin, the question seems ridiculous,

because, as far as facts show, it is the US that is after them and not the other way round, so it is the US that must bear some grudge against them and seek, thereby, all ways and means to annihilate them at their home. Their answer, in a perfect example of cognitive dissonance, was to express their confusion as to why America hates the Arabs and wants to kill all of them, when all they aspire to is to live life. As Amir Abdulah translates for them: "they want to have a hair salon and don't care if they cut American hair, Shi'ite hair, Sunni Hair, they just want to get rid of Saddam and live life, make business." At a structural level, during those dialogs, we are shown the Iraqi group leading Gates, Chief, and Conrad through the desert in order to get help to free Troy (who is at that time captured by the Iraqi Guards). The scene significantly foregrounds the Iraqis while the GIs appear in the background; at the same time, their conversations also seem to reverse their perceptions of each other.

While showing the above-discussed scene in which Gates, Conrad and Chief are interacting with the Iraqi rebels, Russell resorts to cross-cutting editing to make us follow another scene that is taking place simultaneously: this shows Troy at the hands of the Iraqi soldiers. Unlike typical scripts of war films that use this opportunity to highlight the atrocities of the enemy whose extermination becomes the only way out for the hero, Troy's face to face with the Iraqi Captain Said (Said Taghmaoui) serves to enhance the resemblance of their destinies: both are tools in the hands of politics that consider human lives expendable. Hussein, the thug, dreams about aggrandizing his power in the region, and Bush, the first President without the Soviet deterrent since the inception of the Cold War, hankers for this war in order to start up his "new world order" which is but a recycling of the old imperial (dis)order.[79] Said tells Troy: "I only joined Saddam Hussein army [sic] to make a good living for my family. Good house. Now I can't get out." Troy's response was "I joined up for the extra cash too. Found out I was gonna have a baby […]." Said's and Troy's confession behind joining the army, enhanced by the technique of eyeline matching, represent them like mirror images.

Before Captain Said captures Troy, we see him in a brief shot watching on TV the scene of the beating of Rodney King. So it seems that once he gets Troy, the white "savior" of the beaten Kuwait, as his prisoner, he wants him to clarify certain confusing issues. His query about the king of pop, Michael Jackson, butchering his face, bleaching his skin and straightening his hair clearly reflect his awareness of the still-effective vestiges of white supremacy, in the name of which people like him, dark-skinned and belonging to the Third World, become easy targets for American bombs once they misbehave or displease the white

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[79] See Eqbal Ahmad, "Introduction: Portent of a New Century," *Beyond the Storm*, 10.

masters. US foreign policy in the Third World unfortunately validates his view, for didn't the US concoct the Operation Just Cause, invaded Panama on December 20, 1989 in the name of stopping drug-trafficking and installed a government that would be answerable to the American administration and not the Panamanians.[80] Certainly Saddam Hussein was scheming to carry out the same scenario with Kuwait, thinking that weak Kuwait, militarily speaking, should come under his power and hegemony. His fatal mistake, however, was to step out of line and incur, thereby, the wrath of the Master.

The angry Caliban in *The Tempest* uses Prospero's language in order to curse him, Said, as another angry Caliban, uses the language of the master in order to make him curse the politics that have turned racism to a profitable business. Being used to the whole world speaking English in Hollywood, we, the audience, are certainly not surprised to hear the Iraqi officer conducting his interrogation of Troy in English. As Robert Stam writes:

> Inscribed within the play of power, languages as used in films are caught up in hierarchies rooted in cultural hegemonies and political domination. English, for example, has long been the linguistic vehicle for the projection of Anglo-American power, technology, and finance, and Hollywood films, for their part, have at times reflected this power, often betraying a linguistic hubris bred of empire. Presuming to speak of others on its native idiom, Hollywood proposed to tell not only its own stories but also the stories and legends of other nations, and not only to Americans but also to the other nations themselves, and always in English. In Cecil B. De Mille epics, both the ancient Egyptians and the Israelites spoke English, and so, for that matter, did God.[81]

However, Said's speaking English is not enacted within this well-known paradigm where Third Worlders open their mouth in order to tell their stories to Americans and to themselves from the perspective of a white-dominated Hollywood and in its language. For one thing, Said reveals the circumstances where he learned his English, not from a missionary or an elite school in Baghdad, as it would have been the case in the colonial times, but another site of maintaining (neo-colonial) control, and that is no less than military camps in the U.S. As he explains to the stunned Troy, in those camps he received training in using "sophisticated weapons, sabotage, interrogation methods, torture […]." While Troy was certainly trying to grasp the wisdom behind his country's teaching these people all those atrocities and then sending the American military to punish them for their aggressive act, he had to realize another bitter reality. For the first time, Troy recognized that while he left his

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[80] See Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Panama Paradigm," *Beyond the Storm*, 88-90.
[81] Robert Stam, *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism and Film* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) 78.

wife and daughter in safety in Detroit and signed up for the extra cash with which he can afford more prosperity once back home, his army was "bombing a country back to the Middle Ages" and in the process killing civilian families and children who had nothing to do with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In fact, Russell's brief but powerful sequence showing the fall of American "smart bombs" on the crib of Said's son swiftly points out an illegal side of the Gulf War. The attorney Karen Parker, who specializes in international human rights and humanitarian law, explains that the United States violated Security Council decisions and other provisions of United Nations law and procedure in the action against Iraq.

> For much of the war, the United States military action seemed primarily directed at destroying Iraq's civilian infrastructure and its military defense capability rather than at the Iraqi military presence in Kuwait. Most military commanders would agree that bombing Baghdad and the other numerous cities and towns in Iraq was not necessary to defeat Iraqi forces in Kuwait. Then when the United States finally directed actions at the Iraqi forces in Kuwait (and it was able to defeat those forces relatively easily, proving my point about "necessity"), the United States continued to attack. In fact, the United States attacked retreating forces –a clear violation of the rules of armed conflict […]. the fact that the United States went far beyond the authorized scope of military operations and failed to follow mandatory procedures is unique in United Nations history.[82]

Similarly, Said considers his prisoner as illegal and criminal because he holds his army responsible for the death of his child, the mutilation of his wife and the destruction of his city, all of which do not have anything to do with saving Kuwait. The only thing that explains to him the US violations is racism and sheer hatred. In his words: "Your sick fucking country make the black man hate his self [sic] just like you hate the Arab and the children you bomb over here." According to Said, both African Americans and Arabs are people still subjected to genocidal policies: the African-Americans, marked by their black skin, still live in a society that treats their lives as expendable; the Arabs, once enlisted as inhabitants of a rogue state, end up becoming testing grounds for American weaponry. Said's solidarity with African Americans is also shown in his using black dialect as well as the appellation of "bro" and "my main man," which are on another level nearer to the vernacular Arabic.

The following scene that shows Said's pouring oil down Troy's throat brutally states his reading of the Gulf War's motive, it was definitely not to save Kuwaiti people and restore freedom back to Kuwait; the war was waged for the sake of oil, as a means of securing US hegemony in the Gulf region. Said's acknowledgment that he was not proud of what his country did, besides his full awareness of both Hussein's as well as Bush's power-obssessed

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[82] Interview with Karen Parker in Saul Bloom, et. al. ed. *Hidden Casualties,* 303-304.

schemes, turned the interrogation scene into an initiating act that voiced what the mainstream media in the US kept under silence. Russell, who wants his characters to undergo fundamental changes after their confrontation with their enemy, makes Troy recognize and even sympathize with Said's perspective, hence his inability to take revenge and kill his torturer once he is freed by Major Gates.

3.4. The Mystical Ending: In Tears and with Gold

Comparing the character of George Clooney to Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*, Hoberman comments: "His mind blown by the sight of Saddam's soldier shooting down an unarmed civilian before her small daughter's eyes, Clooney takes his place in the Humphrey Bogart tradition of seemingly mercenary, secretly ideal Hollywood heroes." Indeed, Major Gates's bogart-ization as well as his focalization establishes him as the authoritative center of the film. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue that "the concept [of focalization] is illuminating when applied to liberal films which furnish the 'other' with a 'positive' image, appealing dialog, and sporadic point-of-view shots, yet in which European or Euro-American characters remain radiating 'centers of consciousness' and 'filters' of information, the vehicles for dominant racial/ethnic discourses."[83] In fact, even though *Three Kings* humanizes and gives voice to the "other," it is Clooney's character, who monopolizes the mediator role and is focalized as a kind of savior of the oppressed, a role that inscribes the film with the Hollywood style, in which "blatant self-interest can turn humanitarian while still remaining profitable."[84]

Indeed, at the beginning of the film, Major Gates critiques the Gulf War, shouting at Lieutenant Ron, "I don't know what we did here! Just tell me what we did here!" Later in his functioning as the filter, he informs Chief, Troy and Conrad about their regime's double standard politics vis-à-vis the rebels that were mercilessly abandoned to Saddam Hussein's army. Yet, like his country's interventionist policy in the Third World which is conducted in the name of "what is mine is mine" and "what is yours is mine,"[85] Major Gates's self-ordained right to steal the stolen gold understandably has no qualms about adding in the slight variation of "what is neither yours nor mine is mine." In fact, as I discussed above, profiting from Saddam Hussein's crushing the insurrection, Major Gates's self-appointed mission to

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[83] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, 205.
[84] Hoberman, "Burn, Blast, Bomb, Cut."
[85] See Holly Sklar, "Brave New World Order," *Collateral Damage*, 7.

"fetch" the stolen gold glaringly reminds us that the US also profited from Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in order to establish its incontestable hegemony over the region.[86]

Yet, the scene that perfectly illustrates Major Gates's using the rhetoric of American policy is his negotiation with the Iraqi rebel, "owner" of stolen Kuwaiti cars. While the latter wants to get cash for the cars the GIs need in order to free Troy and get back to the base, Gates assumes that as an American he can pay with empty rhetoric. Hence, his emphatic call "We are the United States Army […] We will rise up together, many races, many nations […] we're united. George Bush wants you […] for a free Iraq!" This seems to echo President Bush's address to the Iraqis on February 15, 1991 (that is according to the time of the film only two to three weeks before): "there is another way for the bloodshed to stop and that is for the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matter into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside and then comply with the United Nations Resolutions and join the family of peace-loving nations." The invitation to join the "family of peace-loving nations" was unfortunately thwarted by Saddam Hussein's troops crushing the insurrections and the President's realization that a contained Hussein is by far better for American interests in the region, a decision which his son corrected by going for a "pre-emptive" attack on Iraq.

At another level, Major Gates knew about Hussein's crushing the Shi'ite oppostition; however, that was not reason enough to do something serious about it. In fact, we see him freeing the prisoners he runs into while looking for the gold in Saddam Hussein's bunker, then once the gold is found, he prepares himself to leave knowing very well that the Iraqi guards will take back the prisoners to their cells where most of them have been tortured. What moves Gates to action and makes him take the prisoners with him is the fact of having to witness what he already knows: an Iraqi soldier shooting a civilian woman in front of her family's eyes, and more important in front of his eyes that are commanding the optical point-of-view shot. Gates's first helpless reaction is immediately recast in his standing up as a man determined to fight against injustice. This moment in the film endows him with what Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan calls the facets of focalization, that is "in addition to the perceptual facet, which concerns the sensory range of the character, these include the psychological facet, where the cognitive and emotional focus of the text resides with a particular character, and the ideological facet, which concerns the character whose perspective could be said to express the general system of values, or the 'norms of the text.'"[87] Major Gates's emotional and humane reaction powerfully signals his change from an opportunist using the putting

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[86] Indeed Colin Powell admits that "The United States today enjoys access to the region denied before Desert Storm." *My American Journey,* 513.
[87] Qtd. in Stam, et al., *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics,* 89.

down of the uprising in order to steal the Kuwaiti gold into a man who cannot tolerate the murder of a civilian woman. His prompt decision to take away with him all the rebels, despite the obvious danger that such an action will entail, redeems his previous indifference and positions him as carrier of the text's norms. The "other," whose plight is the thematic focus, becomes, by means of the focalization technique, "a trampoline for personal sacrifice and redemption."[88]

Unfortunately, Russell, who spent eighteen months doing research on the Gulf War and writing the script for *Three Kings,* chooses to make Major Gates entangled in the mission of saving some Iraqi Shi'ites which historically speaking never took place. Russell himself recounts that Sergeant Major Parker, who worked as his military advisor for *Three Kings*, told him about the dreadful moments of his having to see the massacre of the Iraqi rebels without being able to interfere to save their lives. Certainly Sergeant Major Parker's inability to help was due to General Schwarzkopf's strict order not to intervene on behalf of the rebels. Instead of including those disturbing events in his script, especially that the estimates of those killed in southern Iraq start at 6000,[89] Russell submits to the constraints of (Hollywood) film making that requires some scenes where the hero acts heroically.

Russell, therefore, scripts a complex semi-heroic, semi-selfish character audiences will want to identify with. *Three Kings,* accordingly, despite the laudable narrative which reveals several unspoken events that clearly denounce US foreign policy, becomes the trajectory of Major Gates's *Bildungsroman.* No wonder that we are given a scene where Major Gates and the two remaining reservists willingly give up a part of their gold to the have-nots they save so that they can afford to start a decent life in Iran, even though, given the goals for which the Gulf War was fought, the poor in the Arab world got poorer in the wake of "Desert Storm."[90] Still, in the world of *Three Kings,* a generous and brave Major Gates stands at the Iraq-Iran frontier with eyes blurred with tears waving with shackled hands at the people he and his companions have saved from a certain death, while looking forward to the comfortable life awaiting them back home thanks to the Kuwaiti gold and the Iraqis' help. Ironically, Russell, who finds "Desert Storm" as lacking in moral purposefulness, seems to make his script atone for that as well, Major Gates and the other GIs go back home, not only with huge wealth but even with a better conscience than was the case for Sergeant Major Parker, to whom *Three Kings* is dedicated.

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[88] Shohat and Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism,* 206.
[89] See Eric Hooglund, "The Other Face of War," *Collateral Damage,* 183.
[90] Joe Stork and Ann M. Lesch, "Why War," *Collateral Damage,* 175-80.

Yet, if we take into consideration questions of address as to who is imagined as watching, and who is actually watching,[91] then *Three Kings*' purpose is to appeal to the intended audience and persuade them to identify with a certain character and sympathize with some points of view. Understandably the film can achieve that effect only if it makes the audience feel good about themselves, which was offered to them via their rejection of Conrad's blatant racism and identification with Gates's heroism. In this sense, Bogart-izing Gates, scapegoating Conrad, and humanizing the Arabs are methods that, while they make the majority of the audience feel good about themselves, lead them to rethink the Gulf War's purpose and become aware of the rebels' horrible situation. The danger of such a strategy, however, is the perpetuation of what the film maker wants to subvert. Indeed, *Three Kings* ends up by weaving a narrative that while it humanizes the Arabs and speaks the grievances of the Iraqis, it skillfully fills in the moral vacuum of "Desert Storm" and corrects à la Hollywood the fatal mistakes of US foreign policy.[92]

4. Khaled Youssef: The Storm at Home

An Arab Egyptian film that deals with one of the fallouts of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the 1991 Gulf War is Khaled Youssef's *The Storm* that was released in 2000.[93] *The Storm* probes into the fate of the Egyptian workers in Iraq during the war and argues for the need to deal first with the home (Arab)-made problems in order to face up more effectively to the problems caused by outside powers. Indeed, the movie's main plot deals with the painful experience of an Egyptian mother Hoda al-Ghazali (played by the Egyptian star Yousra) whose two sons are caught up in opposing fronts during the Gulf War. Her first son Ali (Mohamed Nagati), who migrated to Iraq probably in the beginning of 1990 in search of a better living, was forced to fight on the Iraqi front while the second son Nagi (Hani Salama), who was doing miltary service when Iraq invaded Kuwait, became enlisted to fight on the coalition side.

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[91] Indeed, the producers of *Three Kings*, Charles Roven and Ed McDonnell, thought that because of the film's war background, the most difficult audience segment to appreciate this film would be women over 25 or 35; yet, to their pleasant surprise and perhaps thanks to the star image of George Clooney, the research screenings revealed that women of that age, besides young men, were the by far the largest audience. See "Producers Comment," on the DVD of *Three Kings*.

[92] Warner Brothers has recently declared that while they will release a new edition of *Three Kings*, they are not going to release the documentary that David O. Russell made to bring the movie uptodate. The filmmaker John Sayles explains that Warner Brothers' decision is part of the media moguls' desire to be disassociated with that kind of work that might offend the powers that be and by extension their economic interests. John Sayles, "Politics and Film," Interview with David Barsamian, rec. 8 Sept. 2004, CD, Alternative Radio, Boulder: CO.

[93] Unfortunately my reading of *The Storm* will remain at the plot level because all I could get was a bad copy that makes it impossible to closely follow the mise-en-scène.

Yet, before reaching the climax when Hoda becomes aware that her two sons will be fighting each other in "Desert Storm," the movie's narrative spends ample time dealing with Egypt's economic and social problems. Given the fact that poor Arab countries became heavily dependent on the flow of labor to and remittances from the oil Gulf states since the oil price explosion in early 1970s, a relationship described by economist Abbas Alnasrawi as derivative or secondary dependency, the Iraqi invasion and the subsequent Gulf War struck at that fragile structure and cut the flow of labor and capital. However, Alnasrawi points out that prior to the Gulf War the flow of labor and remittances have created more problems than it solved for poor Arab countries. He observes that Egypt, for instance, suffered a brain drain when "2 million of the cream of its labor force" migrated to the oil states. Another problem, according to Alnasrawi, is:

> the impact of these remittances on the patterns of consumption and the implications of this particular linkage to balance of payments and ultimately to external debts. As migrant workers are exposed to higher and diversified levels of consumption in labor-receiving countries, they tend not only to increase their own consumption but also to transfer this new pattern of consumption to their home countries. This demonstration effect will stimulate consumption with a high import component. [94]

The Gulf crisis's impact on this already problematic pattern lies in aggravating the problems of the majority of the migrant workers who had to face up to massive displacement, unemployment and poverty.[95]

The Storm's thematizing the push and pull factors behind Egyptians' migration as well as the impact of the Gulf crisis on migrant workers critiques not only the Iraqi invasion and "Desert Storm" but also the Arab economic reality that is clearly directed towards consumption (that is import of consumer and durable goods from the industrialized countries

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[94] Abbas Alnasrawi, *Arab Nationalism, Oil, and the Political Economy of Dependency* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991) 155-64.

[95] Alnasrawi writes that "The economic consequences of the takeover [Iraq's invasion of Kuwait] and the blockade [on Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil exports] forced large numbers of foreign workers to leave Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia and to return to their respective countries of origin—be they Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, the West Bank, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, or the Philippines. In all these cases, the act of return deprived these countries of an important source of foreign exchange as worker remittances were flowing while the workers were employed outside their economies. In the case of Egypt, for example, it was estimated that if the two million Egyptian workers were to return home, it would cost Egypt $2.5 billion in remittances or the equivalent of 60 per cent of Egypt's commodity export" (203). The Egyptian physician and novelist, Sherif Hetata, uses these economic losses, besides Egypt's dependency on US aid, to explain the case of Mubarak's government joining the Gulf War's international coalition. See his "What Choice Did Egypt Have?" *Desert Storm*, 241-47. Yet, it must be stressed that in general while the Egyptian and other Arab nationals had to leave Iraq and Kuwait because of war, Yemeni nationals working in Saudi Arabia were expelled as punishment for their government's rejection of the war option. Thousands of the vacated jobs by the Yemenis were apparently given to the Egyptian workers. Joe Stork and Ann M. Lesch write that "[t]he Saudis earmarked more than 600,000 work permits for Egyptians to replace the Yemenis, Palestinians and others who have been forced to

where they are manufactured) to which migrant workers also become tied once they go to work in the oil states. Indeed, the protagonist Hoda, a geography teacher, complains about having to teach ten more classes besides her usual ones since most of her colleagues prefer to teach in the wealthy Arab states. However, Hoda, who resents her country's brain drain, lets her son, Ali, a Cairo university graduate and a gifted singer with a leaning towards political activism, go to Iraq at the end of the Iraq-Iran war so that he can earn the money to start a decent life in Cairo. Once Iraq invaded Kuwait, a deadly worried Hoda about her son's safety screamed, lashing out at the goods she received from her son: "Did we really need a refrigerator with a deep freezer, a new cooker and a 25-inch TV […]?" Ali's possible death, since he ended up working for the Iraqi army which lured him with better pay than he earned as a car mechanic, cinematically denounces the canalization of the young generation's energy and intellect in the deadly twin options of savage consumerism and militarism.

At another level, *The Storm*'s main plot takes a significant turn when Hoda falls in love with history professor Mahmoud Asyyid Amin (Hécham Sélim), who advocates that a critical reading of Arab history and rethinking of the Arab present should take place at the level of primary schools. His critical stance towards Egyptian schools recalls that of several Arab intellectuals, like Sadeq al-Azm, who wrote in 1968 that "all of us know that our national universities are in reality institutions for administering final examinations at the end of the academic year rather than institutions for preserving, renewing, and transforming human knowledge and putting it at the service of the nation and the people."[96] Yet, even in the beginning of the 1990s, the movie time, Arab educational problems are still the same: history is made from above and is not subject to questioning.

Hoda's and Mahmoud's stormy love story that starts with mutual attraction in the sense of being like-minded people yet halts at a small misunderstanding that has the potential to grow into resentment bears some of the ingredients that typifies the relationships between Arab nation states. Indeed, Mahmoud's drawing a circle around the Arab world while telling the bewildered Hoda that the Arabs' main problem resides in the absence of serious initiatives from the Arabs to invest in ways and means that can enable them to know more about each other and talk to each other was in reality an indirect reproach for her rejecting out of hand what she considered his nosiness in her private life. Yet, when Hoda and Mahmoud denounce corruption of power, abuse of authority (the case of one of their colleagues who forces his

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leave the Kingdom, but as yet there has been no significant shift of Egyptian labor to the peninsula," "Why War?" (177).

[96] Qtd. in Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (New York: Cambridge University Press, Updated edition 1992) 44.

pupils to take private lessons) and embrace pan-Arabism and publicly dissent from their government's position in the Gulf War even at the cost of their teaching positions, they stand for the badly needed Arab people who think critically and take risks.

Nevertheless, the movie's narrative reveals that Arab reality is not heading towards that bright alternative of reform and change; on the contrary the majority of the Egyptians who have influential positions seem content with (or at best compelled to exhibit) conformity and compliance. Indeed, when Mahmoud tells the school principal about his dissenting position and his disagreement with the historical version used in the school books, the latter advises him to keep his ideas to himself and blindly stick to what is in the textbooks. In fact, *The Storm*'s representation of other powerful sites in Egyptian civil society, such as the university (attended in the beginning of the movie by Hoda's two sons) and the media, shows that the school principal's advice is the credo to which people in (or near) power adhere. Universities are mainly places where students are expected to parrot the professors' ideas, which are themselves reiterations of the politics pursued by the regime. In times of crisis, like in the Gulf War, they become surveillance institutions that attempt to control and diffuse the anger of the students. Hence a communication studies professor dismisses the students' demonstrations and meetings where they voice their opposition to the US's, and by implication Egypt's, war option in solving the Gulf crisis as "empty talk!" Similarly, when the female student Hayat Samir al-Jundi (Hanane Tork) expresses her doubt about the ability of Arab media to effectively compete in the cyber age given their continual dependency on a few people that are the ultimate authorities, the same professor comments on her objection as some "schoolkids talk!"

When Hayat starts her job for a local TV channel the same pattern of infantilizing her is practised by her boss who turns down her short films that foreground angry voices from Cairo's streets on the grounds that she is ignorant and does not know where the country's interests lie. Frustrated with the news editor's policy in constructing and airing a "public opinion" divorced from reality that clearly seek to please the authorities that be, she and other TV staff ironically turn to CNN and Euro News that showed to some extent what was going on in Cairo's streets in the fall of 1990.

Hayat, Mahmoud, Hoda and her two sons represent the resistant and oppositional voices in a society still ruled by a centralized power that insists on disenfranchising its citizens by directly policing the civil society. Hoda, via her relationship with revisionist Mahamoud, her idealist priniciples and her raising two children that brilliantly graduated from university and aspire to become artists, symbolizes the potentialities of Arab nations that

could have harnessed their wealth and youth in bettering their present and future. Yet her painful experience of watching her two sons forced into a fight against each other recalls the grim reality of Arabs' slipping into devastating wars that can only breed terrible loss and more despair.

Conclusion

> One has to keep telling the story in as many ways as possible, as insistently as possible, and in as compelling a way as possible, to keep attention to it, because there is always a fear that it might just disappear. I think one of the roles of the intellectuals […] is to provide a counterpoint, by storytelling, by reminders of the graphic nature of suffering, and by reminding everyone that we're talking about people. We're not talking about abstractions.
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> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Resistance*, 187

This dissertation has argued that demonizing Arabs and Muslims in the US media and film is the norm. As befits the hostile climate of misrepresentation, one of the recent Hollywood films shooting Arabs, namely William Friedkin's *The Rules of Engagement* (2000), has Marine Colonel Terry Childers (Samuel L. Jackson) killing unarmed Yemeni civilians.[1] The film's plot, which revolves around Childers' facing a court martial for allegedly breaking the rules of engagement by killing 83 innocent people, gradually uncovers the colonel's heroism and patriotism. The Yemeni people, including the children, are reduced to liars (they did carry arms), hateful mobs, and anti-American terrorists, deserving thereby to be gunned down. The film, accordingly, reasserts all the typical facets of cinematically engaging the Arab (enemy). Indeed, besides dehumanization and demonization, the only Arab who speaks, uses his voice to legitimize the Marine's action. Like *The Siege*'s Frank Haddad whose function is to warn the audience about the Palestinians' terrorism, *The Rules of Engagement*'s Arab character reveals the Muslims' commitment to terrorism against the United States.

Regrettably, when it comes to the representation of the Arabs, there is a continuity between the reel and the real world. With the second war on Iraq (2003), a large section of US mainstream media was more concerned with demonizing Arabs while the Bush administration's case for Iraq's occupation went nearly unchallenged.[2] In fact, the bestselling writer Ann Coulter, one of the most popular conservative commentators today who frequently appears on the major TV and radio network programs such as, "Good Morning America" and "The O'Reilly Factor," castigates the Democrats for delaying their approval for the war on

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[1] Jack Shaheen points out that *The Rules of Engagement* was produced in cooperation with the US Department of Defense and US Marines Corps. See his *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001) 404-406.

[2] See Ignacio Ramonet, "Médias en Crise," *Le Monde Diplomatique* Jan. 2005 : 1+. See also Ben H. Bagdikian, *The New Media Monopoly* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004).

Iraq and flatly states: "The Democratic Party simply cannot rouse itself to battle."[3] Since the battle is again against Muslims who are, in Coulter's view, barbarians and savages, war and occupation are but natural consequences.[4] And besides, even if the majority of Arabs resent that war, it doesn't matter, since as she puts it "Japanese Kamikaze pilots hated us too. A couple of well-aimed nuclear weapons, and now they are gentle little lambs. That got their attention."[5] Of course, Coulter provokes criticism from Democrats and liberals in the US, but she states baldly what other conservative commentators and pundits imply: massive military attacks will pacify the majority of populations in the Arab world.

Nevertheless, the project of transforming the "enemy" takes different forms. For instance, Cheryl Benard's book *Civil Democratic Islam*, sponsored by the RAND Corporation, which does research for the Defense Department, puts forward a strategy of how to transform Islam. As Benard reflects: "If 'nation-building' is a daunting task, 'religion-building' is immeasurably more perilous and complex."[6] After having identified four trends in Islam, namely the fundamentalists, the traditionalists, the modernists and the secularists, Benard suggests confronting (that is dumping) the fundamentalists, save Saudi Arabia on account of its strategic importance to the US. Then she advises supporting the traditionalists against the fundamentalists, selectively supporting the secularists and above all promoting the modernists. Her suggestion to the US administration and government is "[c]reate and propagate a model for prosperous, moderate Islam by identifying and actively aiding countries or regions or groups with the appropriate view."[7] Her study clearly shows that the groups with the "appropriate view" are those who limit their critique to Islam only. If, however, Islam critics also critique US foreign policy, as secularist people tend to do, they are relegated to "anti-US forces" and conflated with radical fundamentalists. If democracy is the condition of a society empowered to fully participate in their government, then this project, which blatantly disallows Muslims to have critical opinions about US foreign policy which has been impacting on their lives for decades, is not about "democratizing Islam" but "taming Islam." Benard's policy recommendations replicate the same blind spots and biases that the preceding chapters located in the discourses of academic and journalistic "experts": these pit one value system against the other and declare Arabs guilty for not appreciating the US "exertions" in converting them to the precepts of neoliberalism, free trade and globalization.

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[3] Ann Coulter, "Why We Hate Them," Sept. 26, 2002.
<http://www.townhall.com/columnist/anncoulter/printac20020926.shtml>.
[4] See Alain Gresh, "La Guerre de Mille Ans," *Manière De Voir 78* Dec. 2004/Jan. 2005 : 14.
[5] Ann Coulter, "Why We Hate Them."
[6] Cheryl Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, and Strategies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003) 3.

As this dissertation has argued, the clash of civilizations rhetoric or manufacturing new vision of Islam merely obfuscate the reality of aggression and dominance that is going under the cover of an endless American "war on terror," now in its Iraq-phase. The transformation that is at the core of that war, if one takes into consideration the US military bases, the US corporations' contracts and Bremer-signed laws, is clearly not about democracy and liberty, as the Bush administration claims, but about "greater and more overt American military/political domination."[8] Yet, neither the Bush administration nor the experts have to take account of Arab, and indeed the world, public opinion because they are the empire, and more importantly they are wreaking havoc on a relatively weak and demonized "enemy."

This is why in this study I felt it important to address both the reality of imperialism in relation to its enablers, in this case nearly all Arab regimes and the elite classes, and the economic terrorism of neoliberalism in its various linkages with Islamic fundamentalism. To look at the interconnection between these seemingly separate poles takes one to the real issue that has been under siege for decades and that is real development, real democracy and justice. Interestingly, economist Kenneth Rogoff, who served as director of research at the IMF from 2001 to 2003, imagines a scenario where every country suddenly reaches the same per capita income as the US, roughly $40,000 per year. Rogoff then points out that besides the damage to the environment, "[t]he mighty U.S. dollar would become a boutique currency and the euro experiment a sideshow. Investors would clamor for Chinese yuan and Indian rupees […]. Let's face it: The rich countries would no longer feel rich."[9] For the time being and back to reality the let's-face-it stance is that the richest country in the world resorts to all means at its disposal, whether legal or illegal, to remain rich and powerful. Hence the talk about bringing liberty to oil-owning Iraq, justice to dispossessed Palestinians and democracy to Arabs is a mere fantasy scenario.

Nevertheless, it is my conviction that once Arabs face up to both their self-inflicted failures and the reality of imperialism, they can work for a better future. With regard to resisting the empire, Arabs who are committed to breaking shackles whether local or foreign, are not alone. Indeed resistance is far and wide: the anti-globalization movements, the anti-IMF/WTO protests, gatherings like the World Social Forum, the huge audience for the Iraqi bloggers, various local struggles etc. are all manifestations of public power in the age of

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[7] Benard, *Civil Democratic Islam*, 62.

[8] Rahul Mahajan, "A Strategy, But Not One for Freedom," 16 May 2004. <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/554FAF3A-B267-427A-B9EC>.

[9] Kenneth Rogoff, "A Development Nightmare," *Foreign Policy* Jan/Feb 2004: 64.

empire.[10] This dissertation, which has performed a detailed analysis of the discourses of power that contribute to imperialism, nurses the hope that knowledge can strengthen resistance. As Arundhati Roy has succinctly put it: "Once you've seen certain things, you can't un-see them, and saying nothing is as political an act as speaking out."[11]

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[10] See Salam Pax, *The Baghdad Blog* (London: Atlantic/The Guardian, 2003). There is also an Iraqi woman who writes under the name of Riverbend, see her <http://RiverbendBlog.Blogspot.com>, or her forthcoming book. Some examples of local struggles are the Palestinian-Israeli *Atta'ayouch* (Living Together) movement, the Zapatistas movement, the landless people in Brazil etc.
[11] Arundhati Roy, *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile*, Interviews with David Barsamian (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004) 32.

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