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## The Western-Islamic “Clash of Civilizations”: The Inadvertent Contribution of the Bush Presidency

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### Abstract

This article argues that policies of the Bush administration since 11 September 2001, have had – perhaps inadvertently – the effect of generating “facts on the ground” that have led to the self-fulfilling realization of realities corresponding to Samuel Huntington's contentious concept of the “clash of civilizations” in relations between the Western and Islamic “worlds”.

One of the significant indicators of this phenomenon has been the counterproductive, self-defeating impact of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq on the “war on terror,” with all available information, even from the CIA and other U.S. governmental sources, agreeing that the presence of U.S. forces in Iraq has actually become more a part of the problem than of the solution.

In addition to documenting the perhaps counter-intuitive impact of President Bush's policies on exacerbating the factors making for global terrorism – and enhancing the motivation of those who are prepared to give up their lives in the execution of acts of catastrophic terrorism – the article briefly explores policies that could turn this situation around.

**Keywords:** *9/11, Bush administration, Samuel Huntington's “clash of civilizations”, Western and Islamic “worlds”*

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## THE WESTERN-ISLAMIC "CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS": THE INADVERTENT CONTRIBUTION OF THE BUSH PRESIDENCY<sup>1</sup>

*Dennis J.D. Sandole*

### Abstract

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### Introduction

Harvard Professor Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996) caused quite a stir in academic, policy, and popular circles a little more than a decade ago, with the publication of his controversial thesis that wars of the future would be fought between "civilizations" instead of states and that, therefore, a new "*civilizational paradigm*" was required to supplant the traditional state-centric one.

Huntington's thesis is that, in former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere in the *postmodern* world, intervention on behalf of ethnic kin can and has played a major role in conflict escalation through what Huntington -- borrowing from H.D.S. Greenway -- calls the *kin-country syndrome*, or "civilizational rallying" (1993, pp. 35-39; 1996, pp. 272-291):

In the post-Cold War world, multiple communal conflicts have superseded the single superpower conflict. When these communal conflicts involve groups from different civilizations, they tend to expand and to escalate. As the conflict becomes more intense, each side attempts to rally support from countries and groups belonging to its civilization. Support in one form or another, official or unofficial, overt or covert, material, human, diplomatic, financial,

symbolic, or military, is always forthcoming from one or more kin countries or groups. The longer a fault line conflict continues the more kin countries are likely to become involved in supporting, constraining, and mediating roles. *As a result of this "kin-country syndrome," fault line conflicts have a much higher potential for escalation than do intracivilizational conflicts* and usually require intercivilizational cooperation to contain and end them. In contrast to the Cold War, conflict does not flow down from above, it bubbles up from below (emphasis added) (Huntington, 1996: 272).

Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, Huntington's thesis has appeared more credible to many people on both sides of the Judaic/Christian-Islamic civilizational divide, with, regrettably, a self-fulfilling dynamic helping to bring reality more in line with it: for some, including Huntington himself (2004), the ultimate trap. In other words, while the "clash of civilizations" may not be a causal factor in the etiology of 9/11 and the subsequent global war on terror (see Mamdani 2004), it is quickly becoming a result.

### **Western-Islamic Relations**

Where does one begin in the "story" of Western-Islamic relations? The Third Crusade of nearly 1,000 years ago? The Iranian hostage crisis of more than 20 years ago and, in the eyes of millions of Iranians and others, the transformation of the U.S. into "The Great Satan"? The nearly half century of occupation of Palestinians and confiscation of their land by U.S.-supported and militarily supplied Israel? The slaughter of Bosniak Muslims by Serbs with relative impunity for three years, culminating in the genocidal massacres at Srebrenica in mid-July 1995? The U.S. as the driving force of globalization and agent of destruction of traditional cultures and religions worldwide? Perhaps, "all of the above"?

Here it is useful to keep in mind that "conflicts are driven by *perceptions*, not by 'realities'!" Hence, in addition to other perceived slights against Islam, many Arabs and Muslims worldwide, including Saudi billionaire dissident and *Mujahadin* Osam bin Ladin, felt assaulted and insulted by one significant consequence of the first Gulf War of 1990 when, following the forced ouster of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, U.S. military forces remained in Saudi Arabia until recently.

The perceptual factor is especially important here. Many Americans, accustomed to U.S. forces remaining in South Korea, Japan, Germany, Britain and elsewhere for more than 50 years following the end of World War II, would not be particularly alarmed by the remaining presence of some 5,000 U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia. Muslims, on the other hand, would be. Saudi Arabia is the site of the two holiest shrines in Islam: Mecca where The Prophet was born and Medina where The Prophet established the first Islamic state.

Here we are addressing not only perceptions but also *identity* which, for John Burton (1979, 1990, 1997), is a *basic human need*: a "categorical imperative" that must be fulfilled and if not, then feelings of hostility may be experienced, perhaps accompanied by violent attacks that are likely to at least be contemplated if not actually carried out against the perceived source of *frustration* of fulfillment of the need. For Kenneth Boulding (1962), basic human needs have the status of *inner core values*: values that possess us rather than values that we possess. Hence, an attack on our values (e.g., identity) would be an attack on us.

Violations of the need for identity -- including for culturally embedded *identity groups* -- often occur together with felt violations of the needs for *recognition* and *security*: not only do people have a "need" to know who they are (in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion, race, nationality, and the like) but to feel "good" about who they are, and to feel "safe" in that identity.

In response to bin Laden's perception and felt insult to the sanctity of Islam by the infidel and "Crusader", he and his followers have launched attacks against Americans and their symbols, including an earlier attack on the World Trade Center (1993), followed by attacks against U.S. military installations in Saudi Arabia, two U.S. embassies in East Africa (Tanzania and Kenya in 1998), and the USS Cole anchored off the coast of Aden in Yemen (2000). These, together with *fatwa* (religious edicts) issued by bin Laden against the U.S. and Americans in general, culminated in the catastrophic attacks of 11 September 2001 against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, resulting in the deaths of some 3,000 people from more than 80 nations.

Among President Bush's initial responses to the 11 September attacks were his declaration (on 16 September) of the need to conduct a "crusade" against terrorism (retracted on 17 September 2001) and his now famous, "you are either with us or the terrorists." These and other actions (to be discussed below) have not helped matters in avoiding an emotionally charged bifurcation of humanity into a global "Them" and "Us". Still, events could have moved in a more positive direction than has actually been the case.

For instance, the U.S. could have built on the support for it and Americans in general following the devastating attacks of 11 September, as expressed by the French newspaper *Le Monde*, with its comment that "We are all Americans now" (12 September 2001). In other words, using that outpouring of sympathy as a point of departure, the U.S. could have built a truly global coalition to deal with the factors making for global terrorism: truly a *superordinate goal* (see Sherif, 1967) which no one actor, not even the world's sole surviving superpower, could pursue successfully on its own, but only by working together with others.

Such a coalition followed the Americans into Afghanistan, where French and German as well as British and other troops remain to this day as part of a NATO peace support mission (the "International Security Assistance Force" [ISAF]), with the Russian Federation turning a blind eye to the presence of U.S. forces in various parts of the former Soviet Union bordering on Afghanistan (the "near abroad"): a Russian *quid* for the U.S. *quo* of not protesting too much publicly about the war in Chechnya. Regrettably, this consensus has not been replicated in

the Iraq war, which has caused ruptures in America's relations with its German, French, Russian, and other allies and security partners which, early in the Bush second term, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the President himself have set out to mend.

Enter the "Fog of War" (see Sandole, 2004a). While conducting military operations against the Taliban and al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan made sense to many members of the international community (see Huntington, 2004), going to war against Saddam Hussein on the basis of dubious premises did not. This is not simply a case of "left-wing," antiwar people clashing with "right-wing," pro-Bush people. For instance, Republican and former Secretary of the Treasury in the first Bush term, Paul O'Neill, has indicated that from Bush's first days in office - - nine months before 11 September -- the President wanted to attack Iraq (Suskind, 2004). Similarly, when those attacks occurred, Bush instructed his counterterrorism chief Richard Clarke to look for an "Iraq connection," while Clarke repeatedly insisted that 9/11 was the work of al Qaeda, and not Saddam Hussein (Clarke, 2004).

No matter what the "facts" were, including that no weapons of mass destruction were ever found (Barry and Hosenball, 2004), the various intelligence failures ("The 9/11 Commission Report," 2004), and the apparent fact that Bush wanted to go to war against Saddam "no matter what" (Blix, 2004), Bush was able to convince a majority of Americans to stick with him and his mission in Iraq. This, despite the fact that the U.S.-led invasion and occupation were resulting in a major insurgency against the Americans, horrible acts of terrorism committed against civilian Iraqi and foreign personnel, and the deaths of some 1500 U.S. military personnel and countless thousands of Iraqis. Indeed, in the roughly one week since "a new cabinet was formed [in Iraq in late April/early May 2005] ... more than 290 people - mostly Iraqis - [were] slaughtered in car bombings and other bloody attacks" (Osman, 2005, p. B1).

### **Toward Explanation**

How can we account for these developments? One answer is, once a group comes under a violent attack -- with its sense of identity, recognition, and security undermined and in chaotic disarray -- members of the group are likely to base their subsequent "defense" decisions more on *affect* (e.g., "rage") than on *reason*, especially as their young men and women in uniform continue to be killed in battle.

Neurologist Paul Maclean (1975, 1978) talks about *schizophysiology*, where, in response to increasing stress, the limbic (emotional) brain overwhelms and overtakes the neocortical (thinking/reasoning) brain, so that "feeling [and not seeing] is believing." Similarly, studies from crisis decisionmaking have shown that, as emotionally stressed actors become more involved in crisis, they tend to (a) *overperceive* threat and (b) *overreact* to it (see Holsti, et al., 1968 and Zinnes, et al., 1961).

Clearly, in the wake of a catastrophic attack, survivors are likely to be highly emotional, insecure, and to grab onto a harsh, punitive, *Realpolitik*-type -- and not necessarily *rational* -- response to the outrage. Indeed, so pervasive has this aspect of the "Fog-of-War" phenomenon been in post-9/11 America, that many Americans and others still believe that the atrocious attacks of 11 September 2001 were carried out by Iraqis and/or Palestinians ("the usual suspects").

*Obedience-to-authority* (Milgram 1974) applies here as well. Even under the most superficial, *ad hoc* leader-follower conditions, people will tend to comply with requests ("orders") to commit acts which even they would define as unethical. For example, if Stanley Milgram could convince over 60 percent of his subjects to continue to "the bitter end" to administer what they thought were electrical shocks to anonymous victims in response to each of the latter's "errors" in a "learning experiment," why shouldn't 51 percent of voting Americans feel that they should stick it out with their "Commander-in-Chief" during a "time of war" against those who did 9/11 to us?

### Arab/Muslim Perceptions of the U.S.

Hence, George W. Bush was re-elected to the U.S. Presidency on 2 November 2004. Is the world a safer place, as he claims, because of his policies and the likelihood that they will continue until 2008? Also, how has all this been perceived and "felt" in the Arab/Muslim "streets"?

Since 1 May 2003, when President Bush declared an end to "major military operations," the U.S. has faced a growing insurgency and terrorist campaign. The upshot of Bush's policies -- none of which have targeted the *deep-rooted causes* of "why they hate us" (see Sandole, 2002b, 2004b; Mamdani, 2004) -- has been a worsening of the "war on terror," as predicted earlier by Generals Wesley Clark and Anthony Zinni (see Milbank, 2002; WP, 2002; Clancy, et al., 2004). More recently, according to Samuel Huntington (2004):

the "with us or against us" framing of the war on terror by President George W. Bush has had catastrophic implications.

*What is happening now is that all the local wars between Muslims and non-Muslims [in Chechnya, Africa, the Philippines] are being incorporated into a broad clash of civilizations* (emphasis added).

According to the 2003 survey conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes Project:

The [U.S.] is losing a propaganda war for the hearts and minds of millions of Arabs spurred by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon...

The survey ... suggests that al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden inspires more confidence than President Bush across much of the Arab and Muslim world. It also shows a further slump in public

perceptions of the [U.S.] over the past year around the globe, with favorable ratings down to as low as 1 percent in Jordan and the Palestinian territories.

"We have gone from bad to worse over the past year," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, noting that hostility toward the [U.S.] has increased as a result of the invasion of Iraq. "We have been unable to make the case against bin Laden with Muslims because they see the [U.S.] as a threat" (Dobbs 2003) (For the Pew 2003 report, see: (<<http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/185.pdf>>)).

In the Pew report for 2002:

Perhaps the most alarming finding is that a majority of respondents in Lebanon and Ivory Coast, and sizable minorities in Nigeria, Bangladesh, Jordan, Pakistan, and at least five other countries, say *they believe that suicide bombing in defense of Islam is justifiable* (emphasis added) (AM, 2003) (For the Pew 2002 report, see: <<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=165>>).

Clearly, many in the Arab and Muslim worlds seem to despise the West, particularly the perceived main driving force of Western culture and influence, the U.S. For those among them willing to commit catastrophic attacks against the U.S., if all they have in response to their rage are their own bodies as weapons in defense of Islam, then:

The war on terror will never be neat or clear-cut. Nor will it be short. "These people have a different sense of time," says a senior intelligence official. "They hark back to the Crusades. For them, the jihad is never-ending" (Isikoff, et al., 2003: 31).

Hence, Joyce Davis' (2003a) characterization of the "apocalyptic" nature of this struggle as "*a world war*." Such a conceptualization of the fight against the "new terrorism" (see Sandole, 2005) follows in part from the universalism inherent in Islam, plus the global nature of the perceived onslaught on traditionalism and, therefore, Islam. The *Umma* is now global!

So, when Muslims in Malaysia and Indonesia express their concern for their "Muslim brothers" in Palestine and question the "double standards" implicit in the U.S. role in the Middle East, this is not a mere expression of ethnocentrism at the intergroup level, but an expression of the "civilizational rallying" that plays a major role in the "clash of civilizations." Nevertheless, involved here is a "writ large" version of what we normally find in ethnocentric discourse and experience: a keen sense of "ingroup-outgroup" differences with a minority ingroup, in this case



Muslims worldwide, who feel that the Christian (now Judaic/Christian) Western outgroup is pursuing a Crusade against them that goes back nearly a 1000 years.

By implication, Western attacks on Muslims anywhere in the world are perceived by particular Muslims (e.g., in Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia) as attacks on them: a global, civilizational expression of the "circling of the wagons" phenomenon usually associated with the integrative functions of conflict at the intergroup level (see Simmel, 1955; Coser, 1956). Such is the nature of the link between *identity* and the "new terrorism" (see Sandole, et al., 2004).

"Why do they hate us?" is the question that motivated Joyce Davis (2003b) to write her book, *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East*. One answer is, quite simply, because the same types of people -- in terms of race and religion -- who launched the Crusades against Islam nearly a 1000 years ago, are still perceived by Arabs and Muslims to be oppressing, marginalizing, and humiliating Islam: the U.S.-led wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq being merely the two most recent examples of "Crusader" efforts to keep Islam in a backward state of development.

### **The Growing Jihad**

One troubling result of the U.S.-led war and occupation of Iraq in particular is that, according to the authoritative *The Military Balance 2003-2004* issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London (see Langton, 2003), the war "has swollen the ranks of al Qaeda and galvanized the Islamic militant group's will" (Chipman, 2003; Graff, 2003). Such observations even predate the revelations of U.S. prisoner abuse coming out of Abu Ghraib and other prisons in Iraq and Afghanistan (see Katyal, 2005), plus the Bush policy of "extraordinary rendition": sending suspected terrorists to other countries where torture is more a routine part of the interrogation "subculture" (see NYT, 2005a).

According to the National Intelligence Council, the "CIA director's thinktank," especially "David B. Low, the national intelligence officer for transnational threats":

Iraq has replaced Afghanistan as the training ground for the next generation of "professionalized" terrorists.... Iraq provides terrorists with "a training ground, a recruitment ground, the opportunity for enhancing technical skills.... There is even, under the best scenario, over time, the likelihood that some of the Jihadists who are not killed there will, in a sense, go home, wherever home is, and will therefore disperse to various other countries" (Priest, 2005a: A1).

Jihadists reside in Western Europe as well as the Middle East and elsewhere. According to a recent *Frontline* program on "Al Qaeda's New Front" (Frontline 2005):

Home to an estimated 18 million Muslims, Western Europe has become the new and deadly battleground in the war on terror.

That's because disenfranchised Muslims, inspired by local radical imams and jihadist websites are taking up the causes of jihad. And al Qaeda, once just a loose organization on the continent, has morphed into a powerful ideological movement.

"The threat is before us, not behind us," France's top antiterror judge, Jean-Louis Bruguiere, tells FRONTLINE. "And we are quite concerned...I think that the terrorist threat today is more globalized, more scattered, and more powerful...than it was before September 11."

What's driving the terrorism threat? Many experts in counterterrorism say it's the belief that violence is justified in order to free the Muslim world from corrupt governments and the influence of the United States and Europe. And because it is difficult for jihadists to launch an attack on U.S. cities and institutions, their focus has turned to local targets in Western Europe.

Hence, the attacks on four trains in Madrid on 11 March 2004, killing nearly 200 and injuring more than 1400 early morning commuters:

The key reality faced on the other side of the Atlantic is the 18 million Muslims whose ranks are expected to swell to 20 percent of Europe's population in the next 15 years. This community of immigrants who share religious and ethnic bonds has largely failed to integrate into Europe societies. Many are poor and subject to bigotry; they have lived in Europe for years and many were born there, yet often feel that they are not full members of society. This sense of alienation is deepened by the ubiquity of television with its non-stop images of their suffering brethren in Palestine, Iraq, and Chechnya. Inspired by local radical imams and jihadist Web sites, disenfranchised European Muslims are taking up the cause of jihad.

With full-scale war between the U.S. military and Islamic insurgents in Iraq -- which is just a two-and-a-half day drive from Berlin -- the reality of a war between Islam and the West is a domestic problem for Europe (ibid.).

Accordingly, violated needs for identity, recognition, and security, exacerbated by "historical memory" and calls to action by religious leaders and TV images of the oppression of their fellow "Wretched of the Earth" (see Fanon, 1968; Sandole, 2002a), have likely played a role in the etiology of global terrorism and the concomitant "clash of civilizations." Further, the violent conflict potential of these

factors has probably been enhanced by lingering experiences of *structural and cultural violence*: the experience by members of certain ethnic, religious, racial, and other *minority groups* that they have been — and continue to be -- denied access to the political, social, economic, and other resources typically enjoyed, culturally celebrated and presided over by mainstream groups in society (see Galtung, 1969, 1996).

Returning to the National Intelligence Council's "new report on global trends [*Mapping the Global Future*, which] took a year to produce and includes the analysis of 1,000 U.S. and foreign experts" (Priest, 2005a):

the 119-page report is an evaluation of Iraq's new role as a breeding ground for Islamic terrorists.

President Bush has frequently described the Iraq war as an integral part of U.S. efforts to combat terrorism. But the ... report suggests that conflict has also helped terrorists by creating a haven for them in the chaos of war.

"At the moment," NIC Chairman Robert L. Hutchings said, "Iraq is a magnet for international terrorist activity." ...

Iraq has joined the list of conflicts -- including the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate, and independence movements in Chechnya, Kashmir, Mindanao in the Philippines, and southern Thailand that have deepened among Muslims and helped spread radical Islamic ideology.

At the same time, the report says that by 2020, al Qaeda "will be superseded" by other Islamic extremist groups that will merge with local separatist movements. Most terrorism experts say this is already well underway. The NIC says this kind of ever-morphing decentralized movement is much more difficult to uncover and defeat. ... NIC officials said their greatest concern remains the possibility that terrorists may acquire biological weapons and, although less likely, a nuclear device.

Approximately one month after the release of the NIC report, top U.S. national security officials, including CIA director Porter Goss, told Congress that "The Insurgency in Iraq continues to baffle the U.S. military and intelligence communities, and the U.S. occupation has become a potent recruiting tool for al Qaeda and other terrorist groups (Priest, 2005b):

Islamic extremists are exploiting the Iraqi conflict to recruit new anti-U.S. jihadists, CIA Director Porter J. Goss told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence [on 16 February].

These jihadists who survive will leave Iraq experienced and focused on acts of urban terrorism," he said. "They represent a potential pool of contacts to build transnational cells, groups and networks in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other countries." ... [such] statements underscored the *unintended consequences of the war in Iraq* (emphasis added).

"Our policies in the Middle East fuel Islamic resentment," Vice Admiral Lowell E. Jacoby, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the Senate panel. "Overwhelming majorities in Morocco, Jordan and Saudi Arabia believe the U.S. has a negative policy toward the Arab world." ...

"It may be only a matter of time before al Qaeda or another group attempts to use chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons," Goss said.

Apropos attacks in the U.S., FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III "said transportation systems and nuclear power plants remain key al Qaeda targets," while James Loy, acting deputy secretary of homeland security, said: "any attack of any kind could occur at any time" (ibid.)

### **Conclusion**

This discussion has indicated that, far from containing and dealing with the factors making for global terrorism, Bush's policies, especially the war and occupation in Iraq, have actually made matters worse. As the *New York Times* Bob Herbert put it (2005):

So tell me again. What was this war about? In terms of the fight against terror, the war in Iraq has been a big loss. We've energized the enemy. We've wasted the talents of the many men and women who have fought bravely and tenaciously in Iraq. Thousands upon thousands of American men and women have lost arms or legs, or been paralyzed or blinded or horribly burned or killed in this ill-advised war. A wiser administration would have avoided that carnage and marshaled instead a more robust effort against al Qaeda, which remains a deadly threat to America.

Part of the lingering al Qaeda threat, embedded within the growing "civilizational clash," is the possibility of an attack on an American city with a weapon of mass destruction. While a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons might be more difficult to launch than attacks with biological or chemical weapons, terrorist use of nuclear weapons remains a disturbing possibility:

Of all the clues that Osama bin Laden is after a nuclear weapon, perhaps the most significant came in intelligence reports indicating that he received fresh approval last year from a Saudi cleric for the use of a doomsday bomb against the United States.

For bin Laden, the religious ruling was a milestone in a long quest for an atomic weapon. For U.S. officials and others, it was a frightening reminder of what many consider the ultimate mass-casualty threat posed by modern terrorists. Even a small nuclear weapon detonated in a major American population center would be among history's most lethal acts of war, potentially rivaling the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Linzer 2004).

Clearly, "A nuclear attack in an American city is the ultimate nightmare," at least for Americans (NYT, 2005b). One "key to prevention is identifying and securing nuclear weapons and materials, especially in the former Soviet Union" (ibid.). As Michael Scheuer, "who ran the CIA's bin Laden unit," put it: "al Qaeda would probably seek to buy a nuclear device from Russian gangsters rather than build its own" (Linzer, 2004: A6).

Another approach to prevention is to further explore the dealings of Dr. A. Q. Khan, the "father of Pakistan's A-Bomb" and "the mastermind of the largest illicit nuclear proliferation network in history" (Broad and Sanger, 2004: 12).

Still another is to transcend the tactical level of *symptoms* and deal with some of the longer-term, underlying factors that drive "civilizational conflict" between the Islamic and Western worlds, e.g., the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In his review of "The 9/11 Commission Report," Peter Bergen (2004) tells us:

The report's policy recommendations ... have some puzzling lacunae. There is scant mention, for instance, of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Clearly, waving a magic wand over that conflict would not put al Qaeda out of business, but solving the problem – as well as conflicts in places such as Kashmir and Chechnya – would go a long way toward dealing with some of the core grievances and training grounds that fuel jihadist terrorism. On these issues, the otherwise eloquent 9/11 report is strangely silent.

Some of the issues here include:

- (1) apparently *disparate* conflicts may be linked, such that success in solving any one of them may depend on dealing with them all; and
- (2) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is linked to other conflicts involving Islamic and non-Islamic actors: in Chechnya, Kashmir, Mindanao (Philippines), and southern Thailand.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has also been a "sacred cow," not to be touched, not even by the U.S. (see Mamdani, 2004) which, alone in the world, has credibility with both the Israelis and Palestinians. Clearly, the time has come to change this state of affairs. And given the impressive shift in "facts on the ground" created by the election of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) to the Presidency of the Palestinian Authority, plus President Bush's overtures to a still skeptical Europe, the

time may indeed be ripe for eliminating this pivotal conflict from the motivations of "why they hate us" and from the concomitant "civilizational clash." As former USMC General Anthony Zinni (2004) puts it: "You solve the Middle East [conflict and] you'd be surprised what kinds of other things work out."

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