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The Muslim World
after
9/11

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Summary

Events since September 11, 2001 have dramatically altered the political environment in the Muslim world, a vast and diverse region comprising the band of countries with significant Muslim populations that stretches from West Africa to the southern Philippines, as well as Muslim communities and diasporas scattered throughout the world. In the Muslim world, as in others, religion, politics, and culture are intertwined in complicated ways. The purpose of this study is to examine the dynamics that are driving changes in the religio-political landscape of the Muslim world. Our goal is to provide policymakers and the broader academic and policy community with a general overview of events and trends in the Muslim world that are most likely to affect U.S. interests and security.

First, we develop a typology of ideological tendencies or orientations in the various regions of the Muslim world. The world's Muslims differ substantially not only in their religious views but also in their political and social orientation, including their conceptions of government, law, and human rights; their social agenda (in particular, women's rights and the content of education); and their propensity for violence. The defining characteristics of the main tendencies in Islam are summarized in a typology that we apply on a region-by-region basis. This methodology allows for a more precise classification of groups and for comparisons across regions and allows us to identify in a systematic way the sectors with which the United States and its allies can find common ground to promote democracy and stability and counter the influence of extremist and violent groups.

Having begun to lay the foundations for what could be called a "religio-political map," we explore the main cleavages in the Muslim world, primarily those between the Sunni and Shi'a branches of Islam and between the Arab and the non-Arab Muslim worlds and those deriving from membership in subnational communities, tribes, and clans.

The majority of the world's Muslims are Sunni, but a significant minority, about 15 percent of the global Muslim population, are Shi'ites. Shi'ites are the dominant group in Iran, and they form a politically excluded majority in Iraq (until

the fall of Saddam), Bahrain, and possibly also in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, where the dominant Wahhabi ideology stigmatizes them as "polytheists."

The expectations of Iraqi Shi'ites for a greater say in the governance of their country presents an opportunity for the United States to align its policy with Shi'ite aspirations for greater freedom of religious and political expression, in Iraq and elsewhere. If this alignment can be brought about, it could be a powerful barrier to radical Iranian influence and a foundation for a stable U.S. position in the region. Of course, this alignment would not come about easily. A reversal of the U.S. commitment to de-Ba'athification in Iraq or a U.S. policy that is perceived as pro-Sunni would erode trust in the U.S. commitment to democracy and drive otherwise moderate Shi'ites into the arms of Iran.

The second major cleavage is between the Arab and the non-Arab worlds. Arabs constitute only about 20 percent of the world's Muslims, yet interpretations of Islam, political and otherwise, are often filtered through an Arab lens. A great deal of the discourse on Muslim issues and grievances is actually discourse on Arab issues and grievances. For reasons that have more to do with historical and cultural development than religion, the Arab world exhibits a higher incidence of economic, social, and political disorders than other regions of the so-called developing world.

By contrast, the non-Arab parts of the Muslim world are politically more inclusive, boast the majority of the democratic or partially democratic governments, and are more secular in outlook. Although the Arab Middle East has long been regarded (and certainly views itself) as the core of the Muslim world, the most innovative and sophisticated contemporary work in Islam is being done on the "periphery"—in countries such as Indonesia and in Muslim communities in the West, leading some scholars to ask whether Islam's center of gravity is now shifting to more dynamic regions of the Muslim world.

Ethnic communities, tribes, and clans often constitute the principal basis of individual and group identity and the primary engine of political behavior. The failure to fully understand tribal politics was one of the underlying causes of the catastrophic U.S. involvement in the Somali conflict in the early 1990s. Ten years later, the U.S. government still knows little about tribal dynamics in areas where U.S. forces are or may be operating. As the United States pursues an activist policy in disturbed areas of the world, it will be critical to understand and to learn to manage subnational and tribal issues.

The third goal of this study is to examine the sources of Islamic radicalism. We break these sources into three classes: conditions, processes, and catalytic events. Conditions are factors that have a permanent, or quasi-permanent, character. They are the result of processes, which are developments that occur over an extended period of time and have a particular outcome. Catalytic events are major developments—wars or revolutions—that changed the political dynamics in a region or

country in a fundamental way. Table S.1 gives examples of conditions, processes, and catalytic events relevant to our study.

The condition that perhaps more than any other has shaped the political environment of the Muslim world, and the Arab world in particular, is the widespread failure of the postindependence political and economic models. Arguably, many of the ills and pathologies that afflict many countries in this part of the world and that generate much of the extremism we are concerned about derive from—and contribute to—economic and political failure. This situation leads to the concept of structural anti-Westernism (or anti-Americanism). This concept holds that that Muslim anger has deep roots in the political and social structures of some Muslim countries and that opposition to certain U.S. policies merely provides the content and opportunity for the expression of this anger. It differs fundamentally from the type of anti-Americanism that may result from objections to specific U.S. policies in that it is not amenable to amelioration through policy or public diplomacy means. The third condition discussed is the decentralization of religious authority in Sunni Islam, which makes it vulnerable to manipulation by extremists with scant religious credentials.

Processes include the Islamic resurgence experienced by much of the Muslim world over the past three decades. Outside the Arab Middle East, Islamization has involved the importation of Arab-origin ideology and religious and social practices—a phenomenon that we refer to as *Arabization.* This process has had a polarizing effect outside the Middle East, creating greater distance between Muslims who have chosen to adopt elements of the Arab religious culture as a way of manifesting greater piety and those Muslims who continue to adhere to local customs and religious practices.

Table S.1
Sources of Islamic Radicalism

Conditions	Failed political and economic models
	Structural anti-Westernism
	Decentralization of religious authority in Sunni Islam
Processes	The Islamic resurgence
	Arabization of the non-Arab Muslim world
	External funding of religious fundamentalism and extremism
	The convergence of Islamism and tribalism
	Growth of radical Islamic networks
	Emergence of the mass media
	The Palestinian-Israeli and Kashmir conflicts
Catalytic events	The Iranian revolution
	The Afghan war
	The Gulf War of 1991
	September 11 and the global war on terrorism
	The Iraq war

Much has been written about Saudi funding and the export of its fundamentalist version of Islam as a factor in the spread of radical and violent movements. The funds that finance the propagation of Wahhabi ideology throughout the world come from public and private sources and are channeled through a variety of foundations and middlemen to recipients around the world. Until recently, efforts to establish accountability have been weak or nonexistent, either because it has had low priority for donors or because the mechanisms to monitor the disposition and use of the money are lacking.

Although the literature on the relationship between tribalism and radicalism is not yet well developed, interviews in the region and anecdotal evidence suggest that extremist tendencies seem to find fertile ground in areas with segmentary lineal tribal societies. Tribal conservatism—a cultural and not a religious feature—and religious extremism can be mutually reinforcing. In the absence of countervailing forces—for instance, a strong central authority—they produce a mix that, in the words of a Kuwaiti interlocutor, "leads to bin Laden."

We cannot overemphasize the importance of the development of networks in the growth of Islamic extremist and terrorist movements, and we devote a chapter of this study to analyzing their structure and influence. These networks may be explicitly Muslim in nature or simply collections of individuals who share a common religious background. They can be diasporic (that is, related to Muslim communities outside the Muslim world), humanitarian, or financial. As we now know, support networks have been key nodes in the funding and operations of extremist and terrorist groups.

Another important process is the emergence of the satellite regional media, whose most visible manifestation is the well-known Qatar-based network Al-Jazeera, whose political line reflects that of the Qatari Muslim Brotherhood. These new media reinforce existing stereotypes and narratives of Arab victimization that play into the radicals' agendas.

Beyond those factors, the specific modalities that radical political Islam has taken are the product of a number of critical or catalytic events that have altered the political environment in the Muslim world in fundamental ways. Catalytic events include the Iranian revolution, the Afghan war, the Gulf War of 1991, the global war on terrorism that followed the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the Iraq war of 2003. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Kashmir conflict are not catalytic events per se but rather chronic conditions that have shaped political discourse in the Middle East and South Asia for over half a century. Arguably, they have retarded the political maturation of the Arab world and Pakistan by diverting scarce material, political, and psychic resources from pressing internal problems.

The aftermath of September 11, particularly Operation Enduring Freedom and expanded U.S. counterterrorism operations across the Muslim world, brought about a strategic realignment, as a number of countries in the Muslim world sided openly

with the United States in the global war on terrorism or quietly expanded their counterterrorism cooperation. The most dramatic change was in Pakistan, where President Musharraf presented himself as a bulwark against Islamic extremism. After Afghanistan, Southeast Asia was regarded as the "second front" in the war on terrorism, and the United States stepped up counterterrorist cooperation with regional governments. In Central Asia, the de facto alliance with the United States removed the Taliban threat to the Central Asian republics and brought money, opportunities, stature, and unprecedented international attention to the region. It is in the context of this geopolitical realignment that the war in Iraq brought U.S. power into the heart of the Middle East.

The war in Iraq and its aftermath can be regarded as the most potentially significant event in the U.S. relationship with the countries of the Greater Middle East in the past half-century. For the first time since the withdrawal of the European colonial powers from the Middle East, a Western-led coalition assumed responsibility for the governance and political reconstruction of a Muslim country, pending the establishment of a permanent constitution and government. In the short run, the major threat to Iraq's stability is posed by the increasingly organized Sunni-based insurgency. The long-term threat, however, is not popular support for the extremists but the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalist forces, both Sunni and Shi'a, and the manipulation of Shi'ite movements by Iran.

Over the medium to long term, the impact of Iraq on the political evolution of the Greater Middle East will depend on whether the new Iraq emerges as a pluralistic and reasonably democratic and stable state or whether it reverts to authoritarianism or fragments into ethnic enclaves. The first outcome would challenge current negative perceptions of the United States' role in the region, demonstrate that some form of democracy—what we call "democracy with Iraqi characteristics"—is possible in the Middle East, and undermine extremists and autocrats alike. However, any of the unfavorable outcomes would further destabilize the Middle East, diminish U.S. credibility and influence, discredit democracy-based policies, and open opportunities for encroachment by U.S. adversaries in a vital region of the world.

The impact of the war in Iraq and the removal of the Saddam regime was more attenuated in the geographically and culturally distant regions of the Muslim world. The war in Iraq did not strongly resonate in Central Asia. For the Central Asian republics, the key event of the post–September 11 period was the regional governments' partnership with the United States and the overthrow of the Taliban government in Afghanistan. For the most part, mainstream Muslim sectors in South and Southeast Asia opposed the war in Iraq, but the war does not appear to have had lasting effects on the evolution of political Islam or on U.S. relations with South and Southeast Asian states. This is not to say that the war in Iraq did not introduce a new and complicating factor into the war on terrorism in those regions or that it did not have an adverse effect on perceptions of the United States.

Thus, while outside the Middle East the war and subsequent developments have not altered trend lines or the fundamentals of the U.S. relationship with countries in those regions, it can and is being used by radicals to gain influence. Nevertheless, a liberal minority shares the U.S. expectation that the removal of Saddam opens the prospect of democratic evolution in Iraq and in the Muslim world at large.

Radical and dogmatic interpretations of Islam have gained ground in many Muslim societies, for reasons that we explore in this volume. The outcome of the "war of ideas" under way throughout the Muslim world is likely to have great consequences for U.S. interests in the region, but it is also the most difficult for the United States to influence. How can the United States respond to the challenges and opportunities that current conditions in the Muslim world pose to U.S. interests? We suggest a number of social, political, and military options (see pages 60–67).

Promote Moderate Network Creation

The radicals are a minority, but in many areas they hold the advantage because they have developed extensive networks spanning the Muslim world and sometimes reaching beyond it. Liberal and moderate Muslims, although a majority in almost all countries, have not created similar networks. Their voices are often fractured or silenced. The battle for Islam will require the creation of liberal groups to retrieve Islam from the hijackers of the religion. Creation of an international network is critical because such a network would provide a platform to amplify the message of moderates and also to provide them some protection. However, moderates do not have the resources to create this network themselves. The initial impulse may require an external catalyst.

Disrupt Radical Networks

Most of the networks described in this study perform socially useful functions. A key question is how the United States can identify hostile use of these networks. There are several approaches to consider. One is to examine the profiles of communities that sustain violent Islamic networks and the nodal and communicative characteristics of these networks. Once the characteristics of these networks are known and their recruitment patterns and weaknesses identified, a strategy of nodal disruption could be implemented to break up these networks and to empower Muslim moderates to take over the transmission belts that sustain the networks.

Foster Madrassa and Mosque Reform

Radical madrassas (Islamic boarding schools) from Pakistan to Southeast Asia have been one of the main sources of personnel for radical movements and terrorist groups. Despite the importance of madrassa reform, few concrete plans have emerged to design and implement specific changes in these schools, and little consideration has been given to how they fit within the broader reform of public education systems, which can help produce more desirable economic, political, and social outcomes. There is an urgent need for the United States and other concerned countries and international institutions to support the reform of Islamic schools, to ensure that these schools are able to provide a broad modern education and marketable skills. This reform is key to breaking the cycle of radicalized madrassas producing cannon fodder for radical and terrorist groups. In some countries, the United States could help to establish or strengthen higher education accreditation boards that monitor and review curricula in both state and private schools.

Although the United States may be reluctant to involve itself in ostensibly religious affairs, it should find ways to support the efforts of governments and moderate Muslim organizations to ensure that mosques, and the social services affiliated with them, serve their communities and do not serve as platforms for the spread of radical ideologies.

Expand Economic Opportunities

"Youth bulges" and high rates of population growth in many Muslim countries will create educational, economic, and social needs that are being met in many places only by radical Islamist organizations. Lack of economic growth and employment opportunities could push still more individuals and communities to support radical organizations and initiatives and could ultimately pose a threat to U.S. security interests.

Provision of alternative social services in many places might help to indirectly undercut the appeal of radical organizations. In particular, the United States should be most concerned with initiatives that would improve the economic prospects of the young. Assistance from U.S. and international sources needs to be channeled in ways that are appropriate to local circumstances and, to the extent possible, rely on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with existing relationships in the recipient countries. Funding for education and cultural programs run by secular or moderate Muslim organizations should be a priority to counter the influence of radical groups.

Assistance programs in the Muslim world that promote economic expansion and self-sufficiency can help reduce the perception that the United States has only military interests in the region, a perception that likely contributes to opposition to all U.S. interests there. Improving economic, political, and social conditions will not

guarantee an end to terrorism or extremism, but it could reduce the potential for popular support of extremist movements. To succeed, these programs would have to be accountable and transparent—otherwise they simply foster corruption among administrators. And they need to be linked to economic and fiscal policies on the part of the recipient countries that promote economic rationality, productivity, and growth.

Support "Civil Islam"

Support of or stronger links with "civil Islam"—Muslim civil society groups that advocate moderation and modernity—is an essential component of an effective U.S. policy toward the Muslim world. Moderate political Islam in a democratic context could offset the appeal of theocratic movements or of those favoring exclusively Islamic states. Funding of educational and cultural activities by secular or moderate Muslim organizations should be a priority. The United States may also have to assist in the development of democratic and civil society institutions where they do not currently exist. Ensuring that these institutions are transparent and protective of minority rights—including, of course, the rights of Muslims where they are a minority—can have long-term benefits for perceptions of the United States in the Muslim world.

Deny Resources to Extremists

A complementary element of the strategy of supporting secular or moderate Muslim organizations is to deny resources to extremists. This effort needs to be undertaken at both ends of the funding cycle. The point of origin of the funding is Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Gulf. The Saudis have begun to take steps to monitor their funding activities more closely and to close down the branches of some suspect charities, but it is unclear that there are adequate safeguards to ensure that funds are not diverted to extremist or terrorist organizations. The technical capabilities of the recipient countries also need to be strengthened to give them the capability to monitor and, when necessary, to interdict suspect financial flows.

Balance the Requirements of the War on Terrorism and of Stability and Democracy in Moderate Muslim Countries

Radicals will continue to present U.S. actions as a war against Islam and will attempt to use them to destabilize moderate governments. The United States, therefore, should calibrate carefully its next steps in the war on terrorism with a view to avoid-

ing destabilizing effects. This is not to say that the United States should soft-pedal antiterrorist actions or condone inaction by these governments. However, it is also important for the United States to demonstrate that its efforts are meant not to strengthen authoritarian or repressive regimes but to promote democratic change in the Muslim world.

Seek to Engage Islamists in Normal Politics

A difficult issue in the development of Muslim democracy is whether or how Islamist groups that may not have fully credible democratic credentials—for instance, the Muslim Brotherhood—may be engaged in the democratic process. While there is always a danger that an Islamist party, once in power, may move against democratic freedoms, the inclusion of such groups within existing, open democratic institutions may have the effect over time of taming the threat they pose to the system. This is particularly the case in parts of the Muslim world that have stronger democratic traditions in which public opinion can be expressed through the ballot box and whose governments have ties to broad international alliances. An unequivocal commitment to nonviolence and democratic processes should be a prerequisite for inclusion. For its part, the United States should register its opposition to electoral machinations designed to marginalize legitimate opposition parties.

Engage Muslim Diasporas

Engagement of diaspora Muslim communities can also help the United States advance its interests in the Muslim world. The U.S. Muslim communities are a unique source of cultural information that can be harnessed to the promotion of democracy and pluralism in the Muslim world. One possibility is working with Muslim NGOs in responding to humanitarian crises in the Muslim world. Needless to say, any effort to incorporate transnational Islamic organizations in development should be undertaken cautiously. At the same time, the U.S. military has proven itself adept at meeting ad hoc needs of Islamist groups, as, for example, its civil affairs officers did in assisting those in need of short-term care during massive international pilgrimages to Shi'ite shrines in Iraq after the fall of Saddam.

Rebuild Close Military-to-Military Relations with Key Countries

The military will continue to be an influential political actor across the Muslim world. In some countries—Pakistan, for instance—the military will likely control the state for the policy-relevant future. More often than not, the military is on the fore-

front of the war on terrorism. In Turkey and Indonesia, the military establishments are also pillars of their respective countries' secular political institutions. Therefore, military-to-military relations will be of particular importance to any U.S. shaping strategy in the Muslim world.

U.S. legislative restrictions on military-to-military relations—for instance, the Pressler amendment and its sequelae in Pakistan and the Leahy amendments in Indonesia—precipitated a serious disconnect between the United States and the military establishments in two of the most important countries in the Muslim world, a breach that will take years to repair. Rebuilding a core of U.S.-trained officers in key Muslim countries is therefore a critical need. Programs such as International Military Education and Training (IMET) not only ensure that future military leaders are exposed to American military values and practices but can also translate into increased U.S. influence and access.

Build Appropriate Military Capabilities

Militarily, the United States faces a need to reduce the more obvious aspects of its presence while working to increase different types of presence, e.g., intelligence, psychological operations, civil affairs. In some places in the Muslim world, this will mean continuing to reduce a heavy (and politically sensitive) forward presence and instead seeking to support operations from consolidated regional locations. Islamists, particularly in the Middle East, have often used the U.S. military presence as a reason for violence. A lower U.S. military profile may reduce targets for such violence. In Iraq, it would certainly be desirable for U.S. forces to lower their presence in populated areas as soon as operationally feasible, reducing U.S. visibility as an "occupying power" and promoting rapid development of Iraqi military and security forces.

Likewise, establishing main operating airbases in Iraq is not politically desirable in the foreseeable future. However, the United States should not foreclose the option of access to Iraqi military facilities, if welcomed by a sovereign Iraqi government, which could be necessary to respond to future military contingencies in the Gulf.

Civil affairs are a promising area for military cooperation in countering the influence of radical Islamic networks. The interaction of U.S. and other countries' militaries in the area of military medicine could be an excellent model for engagement in responding to the effects of conflict and natural disasters.

Ungoverned areas throughout the Muslim world, from isolated portions of Indonesia and the Philippines to large tracks of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen, can become havens for extremist and terrorist groups. Political and economic stabilization in such areas will reduce opportunities for extremism and terrorism to take root. Not only can greater government presence, supported as necessary by the United

States, help reduce the immediate threat of Islamist terrorism, it can also foster a greater sense of national integration, thus helping to increase long-term security.

Better cultural intelligence is needed. While the relative lack of Arab specialists in military and intelligence positions is well known, the need for specialists in, among other matters, Persian and African regions and languages is less well known but nearly as urgent. Some U.S. intelligence and diplomatic capabilities in parts of the Muslim world have atrophied in the past two years as a result of redeployment to other areas of this region. A transnational approach will also be needed to address what are often transnational rather than isolated national phenomena. This may include working with regional alliances to root out militant Islamist organizations that operate across international boundaries.