STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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U.S. STRATEGIC DISENGAGEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Given the growing anti-US sentiment in the Middle East, and the rise of Islamic extremism, the United States may not be able to indefinitely maintain stability and leadership in that region at affordable costs. In this research project, I intend to examine the concept of containment vis-à-vis strategic disengagement by the U.S. from this region. Primary emphasis will be on economic considerations and political consequences of such a disengagement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

U.S.. STRATEGIC DISENGAGEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST 1

BACKGROUND 2

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT 3

THE ARAB OIL WEAPON 5

THE RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM 7

THE COSTS OF STABILITY 11

A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST 12

UNDESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES 13

DESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES 14

CONCLUSION 16

ENDNOTES 19

BIBLIOGRAPHY 23

U.S. STRAGTEGIC DISENGAGEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In its effort to defend access to and ensure low prices of Middle Eastern oil, the United States pays an exorbitant price for stability throughout the Muslim world. These costs are shared by consumers at the gas pump, as well as by US taxpayers for the inherent military and diplomatic efforts required. That price continues to rise exponentially as Muslim fundamentalism intensifies. Our current war in Afghanistan is just the first battle in the first campaign of a massive war of violent Islamic extremism against the West in general, and the US in particular.

> **"The actions of the oil-rich Muslim states, if placed in their historical, religious, racial and cultural setting, amount to nothing less than a bold attempt to lay the Christian West under tribute to the Muslim East."**
> ***Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations***[1]

Despite hundreds of billions of dollars toward the effort, the US cannot hope to defeat or turn the tide of anti-US sentiment in this region. The roots of anger and mistrust are centuries old and irreconcilable. Islamic fundamentalists want the US to abandon support to Israel and remove all of its military forces from the land of Mohammed. The former is non-negotiable for America, but the latter demand holds promise for the US.

In order to save our nation from the economic and political exhaustion that is sure to develop as a result of fighting this losing battle, the US should strategically disengage from and isolate the region. Economic and political isolation of the region will lead to the inward collapse of Muslim fundamentalism as a political system, just as it did to the Soviet Union.

The adoption of such a strategic scheme is the path of least resistance for the US. It will lead to the beneficial realization of US energy sovereignty, smarter energy policies around the world, a cleaner environment, and immense opportunities for US business in advanced energy technologies. More importantly, it will provide greater political flexibility for the United States to pursue its foreign policy goals.

To frame the argument for disengagement, I first discuss the historical events that have lead to the growth of Muslim fundamentalism. I then provide a synopsis of the Arab-Israeli dilemma and conclude with a look at key events of the past twenty years. Such a review provides ample evidence of the futility of trying to tame the movement.

Next, I will look at the real costs to the US of directly confronting fundamentalism. It is important that a review of the social, economic, and political costs of confrontation be discussed. This review will show that real costs to our nation will continue to grow in direct proportion to the intensity of fundamentalism in the region.

Having presented the background in the first two sections, I then conclude by proposing a new US national strategy for dealing with the Arab Muslim world. This proposal will consider the costs and

benefits of withdrawal. It will offer options to pay for the costs and review opportunities for exploiting the benefits of strategic disengagement.

BACKGROUND

"Islamic fundamentalism, commonly conceived as political Islam, is only one component in a much more extensive revival of Islamic ideas, practices, and rhetoric and the rededication to Islam by Muslim populations. The Resurgence is mainstream not extremist, pervasive not isolated."
Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations[2]

Evidence suggests that Muslim states, throughout their existence, have been many times more likely to war with their neighbors than any civilization. Relations along the Islamic perimeter have long been antagonistic. Muslims have always fought, and continue to fight, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews in the west, Orthodox Christians to the north, Hindu's in the south, and Buddhists in the east.[3]

Following the seventh-century unification of Mohammed, Moslem rule surged across North Africa, Persia, the Middle East, Iberia, and northern India. The eleventh century saw a brief Christian resurgence. Then, in the fifteenth century, the Ottoman Turks secured for Islam much of the Balkans and Constantinople. By then the tide began to ebb for Islamic expansion.[4]

Europe, emerging from the Middle Ages, gradually recovered Iberia and, due to superior technology and navigation skills, were able to penetrate the Indian Ocean and circumvent the Muslim heartland to trade with Asia. At the same time the Russians squashed Tatar rule. These developments began a long retreat of Islam. By the end of World War I, in 1920, all but four Muslim countries (Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan) were ruled by non-Muslim Europeans (Britain, France, and Italy.) Muslim civilization had been largely left behind in the Middle Ages.[5]

Western colonialism gradually waned in the aftermath of World War II and gave way to Arab independence. Finally, the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union brought independence to many other Muslim countries in Central Asia. Although political independence for Muslim states had, by 1964, been realized, the economic interdependence of the West and Islam, caused by the global demand for cheap oil, assures a constant and ever-increasing mingling and confrontation of the two civilizations.

Although the underlying conflicts between the West and Islam are centuries old, events of the past fifty years, and particularly of the 1980's and 1990's, have clearly defined the nature of this – the latest war between the two. Samuel Huntington aptly points out that "If Muslims allege the West wars on Islam and if Westerners allege that Islamic groups war on the West, it seems reasonable to conclude that something very much like a war is underway."[6]

Prior to World War I, Western interest in the Muslim world was primarily focused on the maintenance of strategic trade routes between Europe (mainly the United Kingdom) and India. Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, Western interest has largely been motivated by the petroleum reserves of the Middle East and North Africa. Cheap oil fueled the enormous needs of an increasingly industrialized West.[7]

Although this broad outline of regional history is helpful, it is more important to review the specific events of the past half century that have created a complex mix of oil, politics, and religion. It is during this period that the sharp divide we now see between the two civilizations took shape. Although certainly not the sole basis of Muslim contempt for the West, one cannot talk about Arab attitudes toward the West without at least a cursory review of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since 1948 the United Nations creation of a Jewish homeland on disputed Arab soil has angered the Muslim world. The dislocation and disenfranchisement of Palestinians is seen by Islam as merely the latest "crusade" by the Christian West to reclaim the Judeo-Christian Holy Land from Islam.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

On May 14, 1948 the British Union Jack was hauled down over Palestine for the last time. David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, had proclaimed his country's birth in accordance with the United Nations Partition Resolution. The next day, Arab armies rolled into Israel from Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. The first Arab-Israeli War was underway. By January 1949 the Arabs had had enough and they withdrew – their armies in disarray. Israel had increased its land area by 20 percent.[8]

About 300,000 Palestinian refugees fled Israel to all parts of the Arab world during the 1948-49 war. Citing that the refugees had left their homes and property of their own free will, Israel refused to restore their rights at the end of hostilities. This refugee problem has lasted a half-century and constitutes the major stumbling block to Arab-Israeli relations.[9] In the place of the Palestinians came Jewish displaced persons from recently liberated Europe and other Arab nations. By the end of 1951, about 680,000 Jews had migrated from Europe and by 1957 another 500,000 had relocated from Arab nations.[10] Of the Palestinians who remained in occupied Israel, about four-fifths were unskilled and dispossessed peasants. They lived in refugee camps set up in neighboring Arab countries or on former British and French Army camps.[11]

Skirmishes, raids, and assorted acts of terrorism highlighted the restless 1950's. The most notable military actions were the Israeli raid on Egyptian security outposts in Gaza in 1955, and the Israeli occupation of Sinai in 1956-57.[12]

The highlight of this period was the rise of Gamal Abdul Nasser to power in Egypt. Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, effectively ending British Imperial interests in the region. He then concluded

an arms deal with the Soviets, which effectively introduced Cold War politics and tensions to the existing regional friction.[13]

In October, 1956 the UN Security Council debated the issue and eventually drafted a plan that would have placed the Suez Canal under international supervision. The Canal had become a symbol of European prowess versus Egyptian sovereignty. Egypt flatly rejected the proposal and was supported by their new friend and supporter, the Soviet Union.[14]

The French had their own reasons for intervening in the region. They had a serious rebellion on their hands in Algeria and Nasser was actively supporting the Muslim rebels. The French also had close ties to Israel in the realm of science, technology, and shared national ideals.[15]

When Israel's 1956 attack in the Sinai resulted in a full-scale Egyptian military response, Britain and France joined forces to assist Israel in their efforts. Diplomatic and political pressures from around the world, including the United States, mounted rapidly, forcing Britain and France to sign cease-fire agreements. Israel, meanwhile, had conquered the entire Sinai all the way to the Suez Canal. Britain and France, on the other hand, were discredited and rendered largely irrelevant in the region by the misadventure. This void left the US and USSR as the major regional protagonists.[16]

By 1957, the Americans had persuaded Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Sinai in return for US and UN guarantees of freedom of passage through the Gulf of Aqaba. Arguably more important to Israel than the Suez Canal, Aqaba opened markets to Israel throughout Africa and Asia and their economy flourished. This access also allowed Israel to import oil from Iran (who maintained relations with Israel) rather than continue to import it from other nations as far away as Venezuela.[17]

Between 1957 and 1967 the region witnessed the longest period in Arab-Israeli history without a major confrontation. Israel realized vast economic, military, political, and cultural gains. Palestinian refugees, however, did not share in this peace or prosperity. During this period, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was recognized and took its first guerilla actions against Israel in January, 1965.[18]

Egypt, capitalizing on the Palestinian cause, quickly played their hand. In May 1967, with his troops massed at Sharm al-Sheikh, Nasser defiantly announced that Aqaba was closed to all Israeli shipping and foreign ships transporting Israeli goods. Israel responded by declaring that any interference with freedom of their shipping would be considered an act of aggression. Nasser continued to make bellicose speeches that included declarations that Palestine must be liberated and Israel destroyed.[19]

The Six-Day War erupted on June 5, 1967 as Israel destroyed most of Egypt's, Jordan's, and Syria's Air Forces on the ground. After the air strike, Israeli soldiers defeated the Egyptian army, seizing the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai Peninsula. They then seized the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank from Jordan. A new map of the Middle East came into being as a result of the Israeli victory – with Israel three times larger than it had been in 1949.[20]

The absence of a negotiated settlement following the Six-Day War made another round in the Arab-Israeli conflict inevitable, particularly in light of the damage done to Arab honor, pride, and self-

respect. Nasser, although weakened by the defeat at the hands of Israel, publicly resolved that "what had been taken by force would be recovered by force."[21]

When the combined armies of Egypt and Syria launched a massive surprise attack in October 1973, Israel turned back the Arab invaders and once again controlled the Sinai, Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. In what the Israeli's called the "Yom Kippur War" and the Arabs referred to as the "Ramadan War," Israel was able to turn the tide, but not without coming perilously close to running out of ammunition and weapons. The US began airlifting supplies to Israel while the Soviets sent aid to Syria and Egypt. Though Israel won the war militarily, the Arabs had won important psychological and diplomatic victories. The world had been "jolted" back to the conflict and the US was forced to mediate the settlement.[22]

As a reprisal for the $2.2 billion in US support to Israel during the October War, the Arabs resorted to a new tactic – one of a direct economic attack on the US.[23]

THE ARAB OIL WEAPON

"Considering that the United States is the principal and foremost source of the Israeli power which has resulted in the present Israeli arrogance and enabled the Israelis to continue to occupy our territories; ..the participants recommend that the United States be subjected to the most severe cut proportionally with the quantities of crude oil .. that it imports from every exporting country. The participants also recommend that this progressive reduction lead to the total halt of oil supplies to the United States.."
Resolution, Conference of Arab Oil Ministers,
Kuwait, October 1973[24]

Throughout 1973, leaders around the world, including the Muslim nations, had hinted at the likelihood of the eventual use of the "oil weapon" against the West. Therefore, it should have come as no surprise when, on October 20th (the day after President Richard Nixon requested the $2.2 billion aid package) the Saudi's banned oil exports to the United States. Other Arab nations quickly followed the Saudi lead.[25]

According to a 1974 Department of Energy (DOE) report the embargo, which lasted five months until March 1974, cost the US economy 500,000 jobs and a $10-$20 billion loss in its gross national product. The American economy was battered, as was that of every other nation who had supported Israel.[26]

In eventually lifting the ban on US shipments, the Saudi government won a long list of concessions from the US. Among these were: condemnation of Israel for launching retaliatory raids into Lebanon; massive building projects (to include entire cities) that were to be supervised by the Army Corps of Engineers; an agreement to provide Saudi Arabia with economic, technical, and military cooperation; and, a recognition of the Palestinian right to independence and sovereignty in Palestine. It is noteworthy

that all of these actions had been flatly rejected by the US the year before! Economic pressures by the Arabs succeeded where diplomatic and political ones had failed.[27]

This first demonstration of the Arab oil weapon resulted in a renewed, albeit brief, US interest in energy conservation and alternate energy sources. More desperate than the US, France went so far as to offer nuclear development equipment and technology to Iraq in exchange for oil![28]

Many scholars argue that the 1973 embargo hurt the Arabs more than it did the West. Nevertheless, it was a massive shock and expensive blow to the US and her allies. It set into motion the events that would lead up to the US-brokered 1978 Camp David Peace Accords between Egypt and Israel. The accords were undercut from the start by Israeli unwillingness to halt further settlement in the occupied territories. The agreement also isolated Egypt in the Arab world for making a separate peace that excluded other Arab nations. Saudi Arabia went so far as to break diplomatic relations with Egypt.[29]

Developments in the late 1970s, such as the seizure of American Embassy hostages in Tehran, the Iran-Iraq war, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led some Arab governments (if not their people) to view the Arab-Israeli conflict as less threatening than Soviet aggression and religious extremism. The internal conflict of the Islamic world widened.[30]

Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 – just in time to inherit more drastic developments in the Middle East. The assassination of Anwar Sadat, the controversial sale of AWACS aircraft to Saudi Arabia, and the use of American-made Israeli aircraft to destroy an Iraqi nuclear reactor troubled the early days of this new administration. Reagan's desire to focus on limiting Soviet aggression in the Persian Gulf made the US seem somewhat unresponsive to these lesser developments.[31]

Silence from Reagan and the US State Department, regarding 1982 Israeli retaliatory strikes into civil-war torn Lebanon, led Israel to believe that they had tacit US consent to invade further into Lebanon. Israeli forces pursued the PLO into the streets of Beirut, destroying Syrian air defenses, shooting down Syrian aircraft, and outflanking Syrian ground forces. The most politically damaging actions of the Israeli action, however, were the attacks on refugee camps and the many civilian casualties in Beirut – scenes of which were broadcast around the world on television.[32]

Despite a call from Iran for another punitive oil embargo against the US, the Arab oil weapon was not used in this, the first Arab-Israeli war since 1974. Reagan's consolation to the Arabs was to send US Marines to Beirut as part of a multi-national peacekeeping force. However, when a suicide truck bomb killed 241 Marines the US withdrew its troops. Shortly thereafter, Israel withdrew from Lebanon.[33]

After several dramatic terrorist attacks and hijackings in the mid-1980s failed to achieve political results, the Palestinians mounted a grassroots *intifada* or "shaking-off" (of oppression) throughout the occupied territories in 1986-87. A lack of PLO political success, decades of curtailed civil rights, economic suffering, and lack of attention by other Arab nations, led the region to boil over with rage and frustration. The intifada led to over 11,500 Palestinian casualties (two-thirds of which were under the age of 15.) Israel's massive and ruthless response was deemed by the world to be too harsh, even by

American Jews. Although the uprising was most likely spontaneous, Arafat eventually claimed credit for its continuation.[34]

In the summer of 1988, Arafat began to float proposals for a solution. Namely, he would settle for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza based on the 1947 plan and a lasting peace with Israel. Israel ignored the rumblings as did the rest of the non-Arab world.[35]

As its next ploy, the Palestinian National Council (PNC), considered by the PLO to be its "Parliament in Exile" proclaimed on November 18th, 1988 the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Within three days, twenty seven nations (mostly Arab & Muslim but including the Soviet Union) formally recognized the government in exile. Israel dismissed the declaration as irrelevant as did the United States.[36]

Arafat, having been denied a visa to travel to the UN Headquarters in New York, addressed a "reconvened" United Nations in Geneva on December 13, 1988. In his address, he finally accepted Israel's right to exist. On the next day, he held a televised press conference in which he reiterated his support for both UN resolutions and renounced the use of terrorism. On that day, the US opened dialogue with the PLO.[37]

Despite more than a decade of trial solutions, high-level negotiations, the establishment of a Palestinian authority, and international pressure, it appears that the Arab-Israeli conflict is no closer to a lasting resolution today than in those first four decades of the Israeli state. In fact, in light of the Palestinian terrorist attacks and massive Israeli military reprisals that have occurred recently, it seems that the conflict is more violent now than ever.

THE RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

In addition to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the second major threat to regional stability has been the rise, during the 1970s and 1980s, of Islamic fundamentalism. The fundamentalist group Muslim Brotherhood had existed since the collapse of the Ottoman's in the 1920's. However, the Iranian revolution of 1979, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, that ousted the pro-Western Shah of Iran, marked the beginning of a new era in which anti-Western fanatical religious groups would seize power and threaten to destabilize the entire region.[38]

Today, the US's allies in the region are leaders (not masses) who are either dependent on the West militarily, like Kuwait or Saudi Arabia, or economically, like Egypt and Algeria.[39] These "friends", however, are realizing mounting fundamentalist pressure from within to sever western ties. Walking a tight rope between their alliance with the West and growing unrest at home, these governments maintain a minimum tolerance for US presence. Arguably, if Muslim countries were to hold elections, the outcome would almost certainly lead to a rejection of the US and its Western allies. Indeed, in the few elections that have been held in the past twenty years, Islamic fundamentalist groups have done quite well. They

would have seized power in Algeria had the military not cancelled the elections in 1992. That guerilla movement continues today.[40]

In the wake of the recent terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, US leaders were quick to point out that the "criminals" responsible represent a small minority of an otherwise peace-loving Islamic world. They argue, in public at least, that the actions of the "evil-doers" are rejected by the mainstream Muslim majority and their leaders. Evidence or this, however, is severely lacking. In offering $10 million in recovery aid to then New York City's Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal quickly wore out his welcome, and was told by the mayor to keep his money after the Prince asserted that the US had indirectly caused the attack by its policies in Israel.[41]

Similarly, Egyptian President Mubarak tied US over flight of aircraft and access to the Suez Canal to US commitments to appease the Palestinians in Israel.[42] Likewise it was Muslim nations that, despite their early statements of condolence and sympathy, were quick to call for a premature end to US air strikes against the Arab terrorists and their Taliban hosts in Afghanistan.[43]

So, what is the Muslim world's disagreement with the US? What has the US done, if anything, to contribute to the rise of fundamentalism? To answer these questions, Huntington identifies five factors that increased the friction between the West and Islam in the late twentieth century:

1. Muslim population growth has generated large numbers of unemployed and disaffected young people who become recruits to Islamic causes, exert pressure on neighboring societies, and migrate to the West.
2. The Islamic Resurgence has given Muslims renewed confidence in the distinctive character and worth of their civilization and values compared to those of the West.
3. The West's simultaneous efforts to universalize its values and institutions, to maintain its military and economic superiority, and to intervene in conflicts in the Muslim world generate intense resentment among Muslims.
4. The collapse of communism removed a common enemy of the West and Islam and left each the perceived major threat to the other.
5. The increasing contact between and intermingling of Muslims and Westerners stimulate in each a new sense of their own identity and how it differs from the other.[44]

Each of Huntington's factors are worthy of further discussion with regard to how they fuel fundamentalism and can result in wars between Islam and the West. I will discuss each of them in order.

Muslims constituted 18 percent of the worlds population in 1980. This number has steadily grown to over 20 percent in 2000 and is likely to jump to 30 percent by 2025. Furthermore, Muslim populations will, for years to come, be disproportionately young. This youth group will be overwhelmingly urban with a notable demographic bulge in the late teens and early twenties. Huntington refers to this "youth bulge" as a leading indicator of the restlessness of a society.[45]

Huntington asserts, with a great deal of evidence, that young people are the protagonists of revolution. The existence of large groups of young people has historically led to protest, instability, and reform or revolution within a society. It was during a similar demographic growth that the Protestant Reformation, Democratic Revolution, Fascism, and US Anti-War protests of the 1960's reached their peak. It is none but the young Arab who has fueled the fundamentalist flame today.[46]

According to the United Nations' World Population Prospects study, the youth bulge in some Muslim countries peaked in the 1970's and 1980's. In other Muslim countries it will peak in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Among these yet to peak are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Jordan and many others the US currently calls "friends."[47]

Unemployment in the Middle East is nothing more than evidence of squandered resources in broken single-resource oil economies or the actions of corrupt governments. Youth unemployment, in most cases, reaches 30 – 50 percent. Illiteracy, a precursor to unemployment ranges from 5-10 percent in Iraq to 25 percent in Libya, Kuwait, and Qatar. Functional illiteracy is about 50 percent in Algeria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia and an unbelievable 80 percent in Yemen. Hence, as a rule, Muslim oil exporting countries are poor and getting poorer as their population grows.[48]

Perhaps the main neglect of the Arab leaders, regardless of oil revenues, has been their failure to develop agriculture and domestic food and water supplies. Consequently, the nations of the Middle East and North Africa cannot feed their people. With a rapidly rising population, this factor will undoubtedly place ever-increasing pressure on neighboring regions for scarce food and water resources in this century.[49]

As for Huntington's second factor, he equates the Islamic Resurgence to the Protestant Reformation. Unlike the Reformation though, which lasted centuries and was confined to a portion of Europe, the Resurgence has covered the entire Muslim world – from Morocco to Indonesia and from Nigeria to Kazakhstan in only 30 years. Starting in the cultural sphere, it has rapidly spread through the social and political realms to a point where, even in more secular states such as Turkey and Tunisia, leaders show anxiety about Islamic issues.[50]

Islamic scholar Ali E. Hillal Desouki sees the Islamic Resurgence as an effort to replace Western law with Islamic law, instill religious language in place of Western language, create educational institutions based on Islamic heritage, substitute Islamic social customs for Western customs, and expand efforts to develop international solidarity among Islamic states and societies.[51] Certainly, this movement will inspire "renewed confidence in the distinctive character and worth" of the Muslim masses – particularly among the bulging youth population – that may very well threaten existing Arab governments. Proof of this was evident when, in 1988, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah said that the greatest threat to his country was the rise of Islamic fundamentalism among its youth.[52]

The third factor Huntington presents speaks to the idea of globalization. Muslim fundamentalists do not need to work hard to find a great deal of political capital in criticizing the godless West and its efforts to politically, militarily, economically, culturally, and informationally control world events. After all, the West, according to author Jeffrey Barnett:

- Owns/operates the international banking system
- Controls all hard currencies
- Is the world's principal customer of raw materials
- Provides the majority of the world's finished goods
- Dominates international capital markets
- Exerts considerable moral leadership within many societies
- Is capable of massive military intervention
- Controls the sea lanes
- Conducts most advanced technology research and development
- Dominates access to space
- Dominates the aerospace industry
- Dominates international communications
- Dominates the high-tech weapons industry[53]

The Islamic Resurgence rejects the notion that modernization along Western lines is necessarily good. Unfortunately, Muslims see rampant crime, a decadent entertainment industry, corrupt leaders, and support for oppressive regimes around the world by the West as a reason to reject "godless" globalization on Western terms. A top Saudi official explained in 1994 that "Foreign imports are nice as shiny or high-tech things but intangible social and political institutions imported from elsewhere can be deadly – ask the Shah of Iran....Islam for us is not just a religion but a way of life. We Saudis want to modernize, but not Westernize."[54]

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War caused an upheaval of world order and presented Muslim fundamentalists with one "real" enemy at whom they could direct their increasing anger and frustration – the US. The collapse of order in the Balkans quickly led to wars between Moslems and Christians in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania. Indeed, thousands of Islamic fighters who battled the Soviets in Afghanistan during the 1980s quickly shifted their anger in the 1990s to fight the US and the West for its many "crimes against Islam."

Finally, Huntington discusses the increasing contact between Islam and the West that "....has left each the perceived major threat to the other." The sources of this increasing contact are many. Perhaps the information age alone, with live television broadcasts and the instant proliferation of images on the

Internet, has caused this. Certainly the stationing of Western armies and navies in the region has enraged many Muslims. Likewise, the spread of western culture, in the form of fast food, women's rights, and western values are depicted by Muslim's as having undermined their core beliefs.

These factors that fuel the Islamic Resurgence cannot be borne entirely by the West. Unable or unwilling to create policies and conditions that promote and ensure domestic well-being, Islamic leaders have wasted decades of economic and social opportunity.

From the early 1970s through the 1980s the Middle East, and to a lesser extent, North Africa, was believed to be economically the most promising part of the world. In some cases, the nations went from dire poverty to extreme wealth in a decade. In 1980, Kuwait's per capita income surpassed that of most European countries. Similarly, Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia were at the level of Central Europe. In 2000, however, none can boast a standard of living equal to any European country.[55]

The illusion of unlimited oil revenues led Arab rulers to overlook other problems as they developed. The first cardinal error was the neglect of agriculture. Unable to feed themselves they are now dependent on the rest of the world to eat.

Secondly, they failed to educate their population, based on an apparent assumption that oil production needed only a handful of experts and not mass literacy. Now they are faced with a largely uneducated and unskilled workforce. It will take generations and vast resources to correct this.

Their third major error was to invest solely in capital intensive heavy industry (oil production) instead of labor intensive manufacturing. The resulting "economic monoculture" has led to a dependence on exports with critical exposure to the rise and fall of the world oil market. This has virtually sealed their fate as nations of unemployed.[56]

The autocratic rulers of the Middle East and North Africa chose the easy way out with a dependence on oil revenues and protection from the West. Hence, the development problems in the region are grounded more in political disservice than economic predetermination.

THE COSTS OF STABILITY

Despite the volatility and risk inherent in our traditionally offensive strategy of promoting peace and stability in the region, the US shows no outward sign of impending withdrawal or exhaustion. On the contrary, the US becomes further engaged in the region with each passing year. The GAO estimates that the US spent $366 billion in military expenditures alone to defend oil supplies in the region from 1980 to 1990. Then, despite a 40 percent reduction in the post Cold War Defense budget, we continued to spend an average of $32 billion per year through the 1990's.[57]

What do these expenditures buy us? Primarily, it is an investment in stable world oil prices. Although just 15 percent of US oil imports come from the Middle East, the region accounts for about 80 percent of European and Asian imports.[58] The DOE estimates that by 2020, 67 percent of the entire

world's supply of oil will come from this region. The importance of Middle Eastern oil among advanced and developing nations, particularly those in Asia, will only increase in the future.[59]

Middle East oil prices are intrinsically linked to all modern economies, especially those in Europe and Japan. Conceivably, the US could walk away from Middle-East oil, meeting its own demands through other means. Our allies in Asia and Europe, however, left to deal with a destabilized Middle East, would suffer such an upheaval in oil prices that world markets would be severely shaken long-term. Therefore, the stability we pay for in the Middle East is directed primarily at regional peace and economic security rather than a selfish defense of cheap oil to the US and other countries.

Although a secondary benefit to our involvement in the region is our support to Israel, that obligation has not heretofore required our physical presence. Moreover, we can continue to support Israel through our Mediterranean lines of communication without the costly presence in the Persian Gulf.

A NEW STRATEGY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Although the US is not likely to abandon its support of Israel, it is entirely possible that we could vastly reduce our military effort in the Middle East. To do so would lead to several undesirable developments in the region. First, an immediate spike in world oil prices would be caused by production cuts. Second, political unrest resulting in civil war, vast militarization, and the overthrow of several governments throughout the region may result. Third, East Asian countries may act to reshape global alliances by cooperating with the Middle Eastern countries. Fourth, starvation, dislocation, and poverty on a massive scale will likely befall many countries in the region. Fifth, the potential emergence of a single Islamic entity as proposed by many a fundamentalist cleric would likely occur.[60]

Although this doomsday scenario is hard to imagine, it is not without historical precedence. We have walked away from regions before. The West, at various times, was forced to deal immediately with the complete loss of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, China, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union as trading partners. Although painful as the initial turmoil ensued, ways were found to cope with the new environment.

On the other hand, such a scenario would yield many desirable benefits to the West and the greater civilized world. Through military and economic disengagement in the Persian Gulf, we would: largely free ourselves from the expensive entanglement in the volatile Middle Eastern geopolitical environment; develop other sources of oil in the America's, Central Asia, Europe, Asia and Africa – free from the animosity of Arab politics; exploit high-tech alternative energies that would yield a cleaner environment; realize the freedom inherent in energy sovereignty; and allow the Islamic world to sort through their volatile unrest without holding us as political or economic hostages while they do so.

UNDESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES

Disengagement does pose several problems.

First, with regard to an upheaval in world oil prices, it is obvious from trends and developments over the past twenty years that the free flow of Middle East oil will be interrupted at some point in the near future whether we like it or not and despite our best strong-armed efforts. The US must prepare for immediate and unforeseen reductions in petroleum imports.

Second, it does not take a great leap of imagination to foresee a revolution in which the royal family of Saudi Arabia is replaced overnight by fundamentalists or some other group. Conversely, these rebels could attack the Saudi oil fields and pipelines in protest of the Royal family's tolerance of US regional policy. Given the shaky ground on which many pro-Western monarchs rule in the Middle East, it is conceivable that such a development would lead to a regional uprising.[61]

The same is true for political upheaval and war – it is a train wreck waiting to happen. The 1979 Iranian revolution is not likely to be the last time a Muslim nation openly rebels against Western presence in the region. Just as in Iran, there will be nothing the US can do to stop future Islamic revolutions once they start.

Third, an alliance between the Middle East and East Asia would be based on oil. Such an alliance would benefit East Asia only insofar as they require Middle East oil – and only if the Asians are willing to pay the transaction costs of trading in the region. This alliance can strain US relationships with some important allies like Japan. A more dangerous alliance might include China.

The DOE estimates that China's current oil imports of 1 million barrels per day are expected to rise to between 5 and 8 million barrels per day by 2020 – with a predominant dependence on Middle East exports.[62] Unless China and other East Asian nations develop alternate energies or vastly greater efficiencies, they will be forced to buy from the Middle East. Another potential source of oil for East Asia could come from Russia, the former Soviet Central Asian countries, or Africa. At any rate, an alliance between East Asia and the Middle East based on the flow of oil would not, by itself, endanger US national security – especially if the US had no interest in Middle East oil.

Moreover, East Asia and India are not immune from Islamic expansionism. At the time the Ottoman's were invading Southeast Europe, the Mogul barbarians destroyed much of Hindu and Buddhist civilization. The recent destruction, by Islamic fundamentalists, of ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan is a reminder of the destructive capacity of the Resurgence – even towards the East.[62] Asian parties to any Islamic alliance would eventually have to reckon with this historically irreconcilable friction.

The final undesirable development of disengagement is the certain resultant economic chaos, including starvation and dislocation. Today, major Middle Eastern countries cannot feed themselves. In some countries, starvation is rampant. Iraq, Iran, Sudan, and many nations of North Africa starve while their leaders spend freely on weapons and self-serving security forces. In simple terms, the leaders of today's Islamic world have fostered broken economies that are not able to provide for the well being of

their people. The breakdown of order and stability following a US withdrawal of aid and leadership would force this issue to the forefront of regional politics.

If fundamentalists have their way, the West will exit the region, taking with them their foreign aid and corrupt values. The extremists will then have ample opportunity to show the true greatness of their civilization – by feeding their hungry masses. Unable to provide even this basic service after shedding the Western "yoke," Arab leaders will certainly find themselves in violent wars throughout the region over scarce food and water supplies.

These events may lead to the final undesirable development - that of the emergence of a single radical Islamic state for the region. Such a consolidation of power could possibly lead to the closure of the Suez Canal to the West, a deadly attack on Israel, and another armed attempt to expand Islam into Europe, Africa, and Asia – not unlike the historical conquests of the Ottoman Empire and the Moghuls.

The repulse of an armed invasion like this is something for which the West is particularly well suited. The shift from our current strategic offensive to a strategic defensive in preparation for such a development would be necessary. Holding these Islamic hordes at bay would likely be less costly and more achievable than is our current policy of engagement.

DESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES

> **"There is increasing awareness of global competition for fossil fuels and their potential threats to the global environment. The United States can diminish both risks by becoming more energy efficient at home, by working with other nations, and by encouraging developing countries to use the cleanest and most energy-efficient technologies. ...Doing so could prove to be a cost-effective investment, for both the United States and emerging economies."**
>
> **Bush National Energy Policy, 2001** [68]

Undesirable consequences, as horrible as they will be, are justified by the long-term benefits - the ends - of our disengagement. The first desirable consequence of disengagement would be freedom from expensive entanglement in the volatile Middle Eastern geopolitical environment. Savings would be generated from a reduction in military forces, cancellation of foreign aid and assistance, and the recall of diplomatic missions. The resources saved, however, would not translate immediately into available cash for reinvestment. These resources would in time, however, allow the US to reinvest in many more worth-while initiatives at home.

These initiatives should be divided between short-term and long-term programs.

Naturally, the first priority for the US would be the development of energy sources other than Middle Eastern oil. Although a short-term measure, this band-aid approach to replacing lost Middle East oil is entirely feasible at the present time. In a recent Business Week article, three concrete alternatives were proposed as follows: dramatically expand the Strategic Petroleum Reserve as a hedge against

future supply disruptions; move aggressively to diversify sources of oil imports, and boost domestic production.[63]

The Strategic Petroleum Reserve currently holds a 60-day supply (about 544 million barrels). Some members of Congress have proposed increasing it to one billion barrels. This reserve would support short term economic dislocation in an abrupt oil shortage.[64]

Sources of oil outside the Middle East are many. Currently, US imports from Canada, Mexico, and Venezuela are twice the amount of those from the Arab OPEC countries.[65] The DOE reports that the continued development of Canada's oil can be "a pillar of sustained North American energy and economic security." President Bush's National Energy Policy argues strongly for investment in and development of those Canadian resources.[66]

The DOE also hails West Africa as one of the fastest growing sources of oil for the US market. Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan also hold substantial, largely untapped, reserves (about 20 billion barrels) that are presently being developed. These sources, together with North Sea oil and Latin American natural gas offer vast opportunity for US energy needs outside of the Middle East.[67]

The greatest opportunity for the US, and perhaps the world, lies in the exploitation of high-tech alternative energies. With the realization that an ever-increasing world dependence on fossil fuels is creating irreparable damage to the global environment while creating myriad national security challenges, the US should take the lead in developing long-term energy alternatives.

President Bush's National Energy Policy outlines and supports the advancement of many nonreplicable sources of domestic energy. Among those identified in the report as viable technologies are: biomass, wind, solar, and geothermal. However, the research and development investment necessary to move these technologies from the lab to the street has been sorely lacking.[69] After satisfying the short-term goal of immediate replacements for Middle Eat oil, savings realized from disengagement should be reinvested here.

Surprisingly, the $32 billion that the Unites States spends annually on defending Middle East Oil is one hundred and fifteen times the paltry $276.65 million allocated in the FY2002 federal budget for renewable energy research that promises to free us from a vital interest in that which we are defending.[70]

Through an intense alternative energy effort, the US has the potential to become the world leader in a largely petroleum-free economy. Such a position would create untold growth for the American economy for generations to come. More importantly, these developments would lead to a cleaner environment around the world. This timely marriage of capitalism and environmentalism would represent the best that the US has to offer and displays global leadership of the highest order.

"Conservation measures and research leading to greater energy efficiency and alternative fuels are a critical element of the US strategy for energy security. Our research must continue to focus on developing highly energy-efficient buildings, appliances, and transportation and industrial systems, shifting them where possible to alternative or renewable fuels such as hydrogen, fuel cell technology, ethanol, or methanol from biomass."

A National Security Strategy for a Global Age
President of the United States, December 2000[71]

One could argue that high-tech alternate energies, ones that free us from the heavy production, refining, and transportation costs of oil, could be the economic silver bullet in future trading wars with Asia. Cheap and available sources of renewable domestic energy could conceivably offset our disadvantage in labor costs, thereby revitalizing manufacturing at home. The US could actually find itself as an energy exporter!

Energy sovereignty would be the next greatest reason for taking the drastic step of disengagement. The cornerstone of our national security strategy in the Middle East, as previously stated, is an expensive and risky one. A hearty respect for this weak link in our national security surely prompted our national leadership to mention it in the National Security Strategy *and* National Energy Policy.

Finally, disengagement will have the positive consequence of forcing the Islamic world to work out its place in the greater community of nations. Lacking a common enemy (as they had with the US and Soviet Union) to blame for their poor juxtaposition in the world, Muslims will have to examine themselves (their religion, politics, values, aspirations) as a civilization and determine how they fit in the global community. Such a critical examination, coupled with much suffering, will eventually force a revolution in their economies, social systems, and international relations that accommodates the other 80 percent of the world. This will naturally be a violent process but one that is inevitable. It must be brokered from within the Muslim community. History has shown that foreign engagement in their countries, regardless of the cost or complexity, is exhaustive and fruitless.

CONCLUSION

It appears from most accounts that the Islamic Resurgence, dangerously fueled by fundamentalism, will likely consume the Middle East in political turmoil for the first half of this century. Fundamentalism is fueled by the irreversible effects of a restless youth bulge throughout the region that has created rampant unemployment, urbanization, poverty, and a rebellion against all things Western.

The US, despite its best effort and intentions, will be unable to continue to conduct business as usual in the region without suffering political and economic exhaustion. Our strategic goal of ensuring the

free flow of cheap oil from the region will eventually meet with defeat as the last remnants of Western colonialism are toppled.

We must develop a multi-year plan to disengage from the region or risk an expensive and indefinite political and military commitment unseen in American history. Currently, the US conducts a strategic offensive in the region that requires constant and expensive engagement. Disengagement would result in massive disorder and the inevitable regional reshaping that would require the adoption of a US strategic defensive to contain radical Islam along its perimeter. We executed this strategy with great success against the Soviet Union.

In order to adopt such a strategy, the US must first adopt short-term interim measures to ensure alternate oil sources are in place and available. We must, simultaneously, reinvest the savings of disengagement in the research and development effort necessary to field viable alternatives to fossil fuels for energy.

Finally, the US should take these alternate energies to the world marketplace. This effort will foster a robust American economy well into the future while leading the world towards a cleaner environment. It may also be America's silver bullet in future economic battles with Asia.

WORD COUNT = 7835

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