

American Values, American Interests

The United States and the Democratization of the Orient

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Senior Thesis for the Major in Interdisciplinary Studies & Certificate in Islam and
Muslim-Christian Understanding

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July 2005

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For Mimi, Mary, Mare and Mare-girl.
Who would be very happy that I had finally finished “the thesis,” but who would not agree with it one bit.

Freedom and Democracy

That's the word from Washington every day,

Put America to sleep

with warm milk and a cliché,

Some people are expendable along the way-

Your dollar is dependable,

What more can we say?

-Ani DiFranco, "Dog Coffee," 1990

Introduction

By the afternoon of September 11th, 2001, it was clear to most shocked and angry Americans that the world had changed. New York City lay beneath a cloak of ash thrown up by the collapsing Twin Towers, the sky over Northern Virginia was marred by a dark pillar of fiery smoke rising from the Pentagon, somewhere in western Pennsylvania a field lay strewn with the twisted remains of a passenger jet, and thousands of civilians were dead. Americans, long accustomed to regarding their country as the benevolent, if sometimes reluctant, world policeman were frightened and stunned by what had happened in New York and DC that morning. By dinnertime that evening, the President of the United States made a rare live TV appearance to reassure his fellow Americans, and explain the attacks to them. Pledging to bring the dramatic attacks' organizers to justice, President Bush proudly told the country that "America was targeted for attack because we are the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining." He warned the TV viewers in the United States, -and anyone who might be listening in Afghanistan- that the US would "make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them," then quoted Psalm 23¹ and ended his speech to an anxious and frightened audience.

Outlining America's new War on Terror before a special joint session of Congress a week after the attacks, President Bush painted a stark picture of a changed world, "a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack."² In this speech he announced the creation of the new Department of Homeland Security, and declared war

¹ George W. Bush, "Statement by the President in his Address to the Nation." September 11, 2001.

² George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People." September 20, 2001

against “every terrorist group of global reach.”³ In the end, Bush told the American people that the War on Terror was about protecting freedom, democracy, and the American way of life.

Americans are asking, why do they hate us? They hate what we see right here in this chamber -- a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms -- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other... These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life.⁴

Bush told his audience that “justice would be done” against their terrorist enemies and that America would defeat this attack against the way of life that it had defended against both fascism and communist totalitarianism. These attacks did not just threaten American freedom and democracy, but threatened liberalism all over the world. “This is the world’s fight. This is civilization’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom.”⁵ In a world that has been sharply divided between the Western democracies and “the enemies of freedom,” Bush announced an ultimatum whose weight fell primarily upon the Islamic world: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”⁶

A month later, another leader in the new “War on Terror” released a speech to the news media. Presumably standing before a video camera somewhere in South Asia, Osama bin Laden cited American support of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, American nuclear attacks against Japan in the 1940s, and US-led UN sanctions against Iraq in his warning to the American people.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

What America is tasting now is something insignificant compared to what we have tasted for scores of years. Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and this degradation for more than 80 years. Its sons are killed, its blood is shed, its sanctuaries are attacked, and no one hears and no one heeds...To America, I say but a few words to it and its people...neither [it] nor the people who live in it will dream of security before we live it in Palestine, and not before the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad, peace be upon him.⁷

The dissonance between bin Laden's stated rationale for his attacks, and President Bush's reassurances is striking. Chomped into sound bites and TV images of a violent, bearded Muslim talking about God and *jihad*, it is unlikely that very many Americans read or heard any of the references in bin Laden's speech. This formerly obscure figure became so hated after the attacks that it is also unlikely that very many Americans would have stopped to think about what he said, or to compare his explanation with the one given by President Bush. Was America attacked by the freedom-hating maniacs of the Islamic world for being a detestably "shining beacon"? Or was it attacked as an act of retribution for America's violent foreign policies?

In a world rendered in the familiar tones of us-and-them, many of the nuances were bleached out of this conflict. After September 11th, the US government announced a commitment to the establishment of free-market democracies in a sweeping area it called the "Greater Middle East." Since the end of the Cold War, the US has assertively pursued similar objectives in other parts of the world, most notably in Eastern Europe, and has argued that free-market democracies both reflect America's cultural values and promote its security and economic interests. As President Bill Clinton wrote in his 1999 *National Security Strategy for a New Century*:

The spread of democracy, human rights, and respect for the rule of law not only reflects American values, it also advances both our security and prosperity.

⁷ Osama bin Laden, "Complete Text: Bin Laden's taped statements." Associated Press. October 7, 2001.

Democratic governments are more likely to cooperate with each other against common threats, encourage free trade, promote sustainable economic development, uphold the rule of law, and protect the rights of their people. Hence, the trend toward democracy and free markets throughout the world advances American interests.⁸

The aggressive pursuit of free-market democratization in “The Greater Middle East” has been embraced by both dominant political parties and become a cornerstone of the conventional wisdom of American foreign policy. To accomplish it, the US has embarked on a seemingly endless war against a vague and undifferentiated evil which stretches from Osama bin Laden to Saddam Hussein, an arc some have described as “Muslim totalitarianism.”⁹ The government argues that it has turned over a new leaf. After decades of cynically “excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East”, it is now committed to helping the people of the region enter the capitalist-democratic future.¹⁰ As President Bush grandiosely told the American people from the flight deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln after the conquest of Iraq, “American values and American interests lead in the same direction: we stand for human liberty.”¹¹

This study argues that America has not actually turned over a new leaf. I argue that the United States has either rhetorically or actively promoted its capitalist and democratic “American values” in the Middle East for centuries, and that this has never been simply altruistic. Throughout the history of the American relationship with the societies of the region, these values have been promoted in the service of its economic and security interests, which have taken priority over any stated idealistic commitments.

⁸ William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* Washington: The White House, December 1999 p 4. Available from the US National Archives and Records Administration at <http://clinton3.nara.gov/WH/EOP/NSC/Strategy/>

⁹ Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004 p 60

¹⁰ George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Twentieth Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy.” November 6, 2003

¹¹ George W. Bush, “President Bush Announces Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended.” May 1, 2003. Available at <http://www.state.gov/p/nea/rls/rm/20203.htm>

This trend has been propelled by the “Orientalist” political and social attitudes heavily critiqued by Edward Said: the United States treats the Middle East like an ailing patient in need of an American cure and diagnoses its backward deficiencies, prescribing solutions that promote American interests even if they may harm the local population. This study will show that, in this context, America’s post-9/11 commitment to democratize the “Greater Middle East” and its battle against “Muslim totalitarianism” are not new ways of interacting with the societies of the region, but simply a new and aggressive development in an often abusive relationship that is two-centuries old.

This work is broken into two sections which are organized thematically. The first section defines two important concepts used throughout this study and analyzes the historical effect of Orientalist attitudes on the American relationship with the Middle East in a necessarily concise narrative. Chapter One provides working definitions of the terms “American values” and liberal universalism, as well as of Said’s critique of Orientalism. Chapter Two broadly examines the American relationship with the Middle East until the Second World War, a period in which it generally did not pursue aggressive policy goals in the region and was relatively well-liked,¹² but secured important national interests and subtly promoted its values among people it largely considered savages. Chapter Three examines American Orientalism during the Cold War and 1990s, when it evolved into a set of technocratic policy sciences applied in the pursuit of political and economic goals. To provide focus to an enormously complicated time period, I use the American relationship with the Shah’s Iran as a case study. Section Two contains a critique of American democratization policy since the 9/11 attacks, and shows that it is based on

¹² For more information on this period and on the findings of the commission, see Harry N. Howard *The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry into the Middle East*. Beirut: Khayat, 1963

Orientalist attitudes which are similar to, but more aggressive than, those which powered the US relationship with the Middle East in the 19th and 20th centuries. Each of the chapters contained in this section focuses on a different case study: Chapter Four critiques the controversial “Greater Middle East Initiative” as an expression of Orientalist attitudes, and Chapter Five critiques the invasion and occupation of Iraq as an example of those attitudes used to justify and defend an act of imperial aggression. Throughout the work, I demonstrate that American post-9/11 democratization efforts represent a new development in its Orientalist promotion of liberal “American values”, but that it is not a new way of interacting with the region.

I do not argue that political liberalism as a philosophy or set of attitudes is alien to the Middle East or incompatible with Islam. There is a great body of literature by Middle Eastern and Muslim writers which promotes democracy.¹³ Furthermore, in states throughout the region there is widespread support for democratic reforms and a number of vibrant indigenous reform movements, such as Kifaya in Egypt and the broad-based democratic movement in Lebanon.¹⁴ Nor do I argue that liberalism is in itself objectively bad. Rather, this study focuses on the promotion of liberalism in American foreign policy as an expression of cultural values and a means of promoting national interests, and critiques its Orientalist motives and imperialist methods. As a point of departure I take the assertion that the distinction between the “East” and “West,” the former hopelessly in need of guidance which the latter is both qualified and entitled to provide, is an imagined

¹³ For example, see Saad Eddin Ibrahim, *Egypt, Islam and Democracy: Critical Essays*. New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2002.; or Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Special Report: Crises, Elites, and Democratization in the Arab World,” *Middle East Journal*, Spring 1993; Vol. 47. Iss. 2; or Fatima Mernissi, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002.

¹⁴ Many recent newspaper and magazine articles provide good overviews of this. For example, see Scott Wilson and Daniel Williams. “A New Power Rises Across Mideast; Advocates for Democracy Begin to Taste Success After Years of Fruitless Effort.” *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2005 p A1

one that feeds what Said calls the Orientalist “style of thought,”¹⁵ and encourages Western political, economic and military intervention. While the Bush administration has acknowledged past American support of regional dictators, it argues that the 9/11 attacks are without any specific context save a vague connection between Islamic terrorism, fascism and communism.¹⁶ Therefore, in this study I will attempt to uncover the “big picture,” and illuminate the Orientalist context which so many try to conceal or ignore.

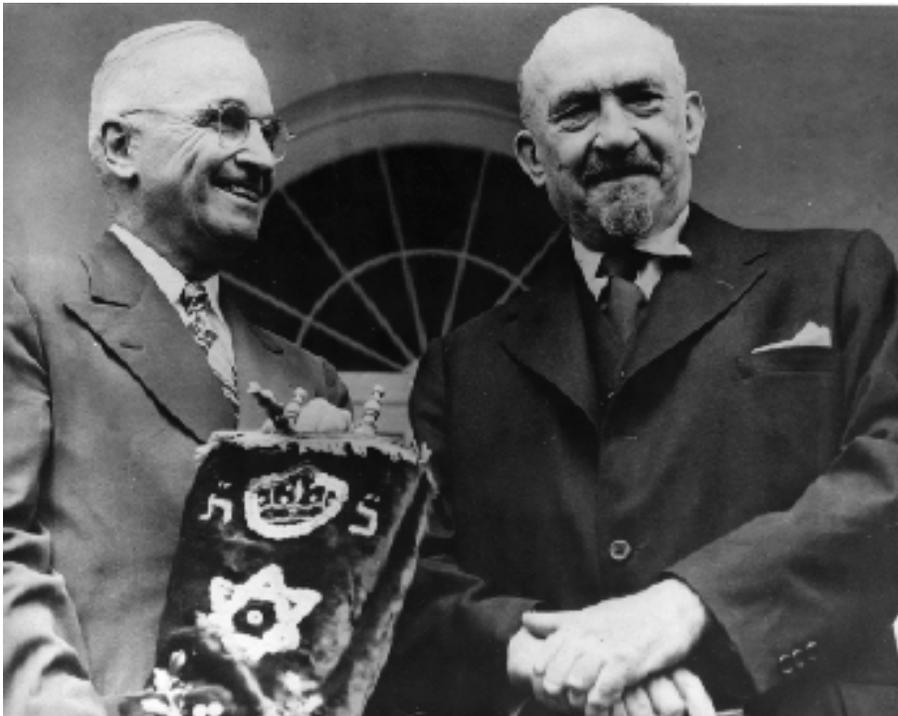
¹⁵ Edward Said, Orientalism, New York: Vintage Books, 1978 p 2

¹⁶ George W. Bush, “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People.” September 20, 2001

Section I

American Orientalism & Interests

before 9/11



President Harry S. Truman and Israeli President Dr. Chaim Weizmann. Truman is holding a blue velvet mantle embellished with the Star of David. The mantle was a gift symbolizing Israel's gratitude for American recognition of and support for the new nation. From The Truman Presidential Museum & Library. Available at http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/israel/large/israelphotos.php

Chapter One

Defining the Terms

Before beginning an analysis of American “Orientalism” and the promotion of “American values” in the Middle East, it is important to define these terms as clearly as possible. This task is complicated because the definitions of many terms are endlessly debatable, and any attempt to assign them one becomes a political act in itself. This lack of precision is a key part of the War on Terror, since terms like “freedom” and “democracy” are vague and unquantifiable concepts. One is tempted to ask, how many elections will it really take to make Iraq democratic? How many elections will it take to make the United States democratic? It calls to mind the old saying “It’s a free country, isn’t it?” Well, is it? How do we know?

Ideas and words are subject to broadly differing interpretations, and some may never be pinned down. Here I outline working definitions for two concepts which are important for this study: “Orientalism,” and the ideas tied up in the phrase “American values.” I leave any protracted debates about the exact definition of words such as “freedom,” “liberal,” or “democracy,” and to what degree the United States exhibits any of these traits, to other future scholarly works and political polemics.

Orientalism

In the days after September 11th, the Bush administration rushed to explain al-Qaeda's motives to the American people. The reasons the organization gave for its attacks and its declaration of jihad were considered irrelevant, and were left unmentioned. Speaking for its adversaries, the American political establishment defined the conflict as a battle between good and evil, the forces of progress and freedom versus backwardness and hate, and one that could only be solved through military intervention to make the Middle East freer. The War on Terror would make the "Greater Middle East" a better, more democratic place, and would make the United States a safer place. As America presents the story, there is no reason why it should not intervene in the region to spread democracy and free-market capitalism.

These attitudes treat the East as a hermetically different place than the West, yet one that it can intimately know and represent, and whose problems and pathologies it is entitled to diagnose and treat by any means necessary. This way of thinking about the East has bled into Western actions for centuries, and has justified aggression long before the American War on Terror. These attitudes are inherited from the powerful and complex Orientalist tradition of European and American scholarship on the colonial world. As Edward Said argues in Orientalism, his landmark 1978 study of the relationship between the production of knowledge and the exercise of imperial power, the attitudes and images created by this tradition compose a closely bound system of created

knowledge, “of willed human work”¹⁷, about the Eastern “other” which the imperial powers of Europe and North America have historically used to invite and justify political and economic intervention and imperialism. It is worth citing Said’s own, long definition of Orientalism, to give a sense of the complexity and expansiveness of the unequal power relationship which he critiques.

[Orientalism] is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of “interests” which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the reigning policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), [and] power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do).¹⁸

This knowledge has traditionally been created and organized under the academic field of Oriental Studies, which has played a crucial role in creating and maintaining the imagined distinction between two separate and opposed geographic and cultural entities, “the East” and “the West.”

Orientalism denies the peoples of the Orient the ability to represent their own experiences, desires or needs, and renders them conveniently knowable to the Western audience through a system of biases and hostile attitudes. Fundamental to Orientalism is the representation of the Oriental “other” by Western scholars or men of letters, who

¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1978 p 15

¹⁸ *ibid.* p 12. Emphasis original.

“make the Orient speak, describe the Orient, render its mysteries plain for and to the West,” and defend their representations with “some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job.”¹⁹ These systems of created knowledge are used to render the East known to the peoples of the West, to give the West the authority to speak on the East’s behalf, and to justify Western feelings of cultural, political and religious superiority that invite and make necessary Western domination and control of the East.²⁰ The problems of the East are quickly explained to the West, whose aggressive suggestion of the right, and coincidentally Western, solutions is considered natural, and is justified by the unequal power relations exploited and maintained by Orientalist attitudes.

While analyzing the Orientalist motives of an imperialist state, it is essential that students and scholars not fall into the Orientalist trap of denying the people of the non-Western world the agency to shape their lives outside of the manipulation of the West. When discussing US imperialism and foreign manipulation, it is important to remember that before the invasion of Iraq the United States did not formally control any country in the region. Even its closest client regimes have exercised a certain degree of their own sovereignty and agency.²¹ The people of the Middle East are not simply mindless puppets manipulated by outside forces or their own governments, nor do they passively or uncritically accept whatever influence happens to be strongest, like dry leaves on a branch that blow whichever way the strongest political wind whips them. Similarly, the

¹⁹ Ibid. p 21

²⁰ Ibid. p 40

²¹ For an example of the way in which regional regimes and their leaders tried to get the best possible benefits out of their relationship with the United States by manipulating its fears and concerns for the security of its interests, and the general confusion which often afflicted these relationships, see April R. Summit “For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and the Shah of Iran,” *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Autumn 2004) pp 560

fact that many in the Middle East support political liberalization, democracy or capitalism does not make them beholden to the Western liberal model, or crown it a universal norm. It simply reflects the frequent exchange of ideas between societies and cultures which takes place in a world without the hermetic divisions that Orientalism constructs and maintains. Acknowledging the agency and power of Middle Eastern states and societies does not absolve the manipulation of foreign imperialists, or blame the people of the formerly colonial world for imperialist designs upon them. It simply puts the unequal power relationships critiqued by Said in their entire context, which includes individual human agency, massive contextual power of institutions and the body of created knowledge about the East.

“American Values”

In this study, I use the term “American values” to mean ideas of political and economic liberalism, in particular democracy and free-market capitalism. The term “liberalism” is necessarily vague. It encompasses multiple theories which all lead in the same general direction, but has been subject to different interpretations in different contexts and time periods. For example, in the context of early 21st century American domestic politics, it implies a belief in a redistributive tax system and broad personal freedoms, including access to abortion and support for gay marriage. To be sure, this is a form of liberalism that the Bush administration does not promote, even within its own borders. Rather, in the words of Paul Berman, the general form of liberalism at the heart

of America's self-image as a "free country" has historically been "an idea of progress toward ever more freedom, ever more rationality, and ever more wealth."²²

It is this idea of progress and freedom that most Americans like to believe their government helps realize in other countries. Indeed, the idea of individual freedom is central to "American values" and ideas of political liberalism. Paul Berman has written at length on the place of freedom in liberal ideas, and has identified it as the governing principle of liberalism, a view with which many concur. I quote one of his more comprehensive definitions here, in full:

It was the recognition that all of life is not governed by a single, all-knowing and all-powerful authority- by a divine force. It was the tolerant idea that every sphere of human activity – science, technology, politics, religion, and private life- should operate independently of the others, without trying to yoke everything together under a single guiding hand. It was a belief in the many, instead of the one. It was an insistence on freedom of thought and freedom of action- not on absolute freedom, but on something truer, stronger and more reliable than absolute freedom, which is relative freedom: a freedom that recognizes the existence of other freedoms, too. Freedom consciously arrived at. Freedom that is chosen, and not just bestowed by God on high. This idea was, in the broadest sense, liberalism- liberalism not as a rigid doctrine but as a state of mind, a way of thinking about life and reality.²³

Some scholars, such as Bernard Lewis, who is highly-respected by the public and is the most well-known living defender of classical Orientalism, argue that the idea of freedom is historically alien to Islamic civilization.²⁴ Not everyone agrees. In carefully crafted public statements, President Bush says that the freedom he hopes to "advance" in the Middle East is "not American freedom, but universal freedom, freedom granted by a

²² Paul Berman, Terror and Liberalism, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2004 p 38

²³ Ibid. pp 38-39

²⁴ Bernard Lewis. "Islam and Liberal Democracy: An Historical Overview," in *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 7, No. 2 (1996) p 58

Higher Being;”²⁵ while Berman writes that historically, liberalism meant that “liberal civilization belonged to all mankind, and people around the world looked on liberal ideas as their proper heritage, and tried to claim what was theirs.”²⁶

In its relationship with Middle Eastern societies, America has historically operated on the assumption that liberal values were in fact alien and new to them, but that with a few lessons from the United States it could be ushered into the fold of “liberal civilization.” Lewis argues that Muslims have such 19th century European efforts to thank for what exposure and knowledge they have of freedom. According to him, European imperialism attracted Muslims to the European way of life because “these new masters were willing to share at least the idea of freedom with their new subjects.”²⁷ This Orientalist assumption, that the West can decipher the exotic and mysterious culture of the East and help rewrite it in a more familiar Western way, is then clearly not unique to the United States. It was embraced by those 19th century imperialists committed to what the French called *la mission civilisatrice*, and is the assumption underlying Western missionary activity throughout history.

Currently, many in the United States interpret the end of the Cold War as incontrovertible proof that liberal democracy and free-market capitalism are a universal ideal which will eventually spread across the face of the Earth. After all, runs the conventional wisdom, they beat communism. Francis Fukuyama, an academic-turned-bureaucrat-turned-to-academia, is the author best known for articulating the view that “liberal universalism” is the inevitable wave of the future, a phenomena which he termed

²⁵ Quoted in Bill Sammon “Bush Renews Demand on Syria; Credits God for Freedom in Mideast” in *The Washington Times*, March 3, 2005

²⁶ Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*, p 38

²⁷ Bernard Lewis. *What Went Wrong?: The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* New York: Perennial Publishing, 2002 p 57

“the end of history.” Fukuyama carefully defined the word history in the Hegelian sense, which he termed “the history of the idea” and not “the end of worldly events, but the end of the evolution of human thought about such first principles...[in an attempt] to distinguish between the essential and the contingent in human affairs.”²⁸ Working from that definition, he argued that in the end of the Cold War, the world was witnessing “the triumph of the West, of the Western *idea*... the endpoint of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government” which will be “underwritten by the abundance of a modern free-market economy.”²⁹ Many politicians and writers from across the political spectrum criticized Fukuyama’s argument as overly simplistic or downright unrealistic, but many others lauded it as “rousing,”³⁰ “seductive”³¹ and “brilliant.”³²

Since 9/11, the United States has publicly committed itself to spreading the capitalist-democratic “American values” that Fukuyama describes in the Middle East. While it promotes these values more aggressively now than in the past, America’s new campaign is not without precedent. Throughout its history, it has either rhetorically or actively promoted liberalism through an Orientalist diagnosis of the East, casting a critical eye upon its utter difference and prescribing the liberal cure it deemed appropriate. The following chapters of this study will examine the changes in American Orientalism over time, and provide the full dynamic context within which to best

²⁸ Francis Fukuyama, “A Response to my Critics” *The National Interest*, Fall 1989 (Number 17)

²⁹ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989 (Number 16). Emphasis original.

³⁰ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, “Responses to Fukuyama” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989 (Number 16)

³¹ Pierre Hassner, “Responses to Fukuyama” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989 (Number 16)

³² Allan Bloom, “Responses to Fukuyama” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989 (Number 16)

understand America's newly aggressive commitment to democratization in the years since the fall of the Twin Towers.

Chapter Two

Orientalism and the Development of Strategic Interests before the Cold War

Merchants and Missionaries in the 19th Century

The United States relationship with the lands of the Middle East and the broader Islamic world has been very long. Americans have held Orientalist attitudes towards Islam and its followers since the founding of the Republic. These endured throughout the 19th century, as the American government and its citizens interacted with the societies of the region in a military, commercial and missionary capacity. The long period from the founding of the Republic until the beginning of the Cold War was significant because it was a time of relatively benign American interaction with the Middle East. Missionaries sought to transform Arab society from inside, while merchants profited from trade with the Ottoman Empire. Both groups were armed with the Orientalist urge to know, transform and control the societies they encountered in the Middle East, but this urge was simply expressed less aggressively than contemporary European imperialism, or future forms of American intervention.

America's founding fathers used biased, derisive and hostile images of the East with gusto to paint portraits of Oriental barbarism and savagery against which they framed the young republic. For the men who wrote the Constitution the lands of Islam

were the perfect example of everything that their new republic would not be- backward, decadent and despotic. “Americans of different political philosophies disagreed on the particular lessons drawn from Muslim history. But all of them...agreed that Islam fostered religious and political oppression.”³³ In early debates over the future form of the Republic, the Middle East was portrayed as wholly alien to the liberal ideals that America’s revolutionary leaders wanted to enact. These ideas were based not on in-depth knowledge of the Islamic faith or the lived experience of people within the broad and diverse Islamic world, but on hostility and disdain nurtured and perpetuated by the Orientalist “system of knowledge.” As Said wrote of the Orientalist attitude,

the imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections.

Even at this early date, the US imagined the East as a backward and autocratic place, and shortly after the Republic’s foundation it set out to change it.

In the early decades of independence, the American navy fought a series of wars against North African pirates who demanded tribute from passing merchant vessels, and who often took American sailors captive. The plight of captive American sailors and merchants generated a body of sensationally popular 19th century literature about the horrors of white slavery at the hands of the “Mahometens”. The American public was horrified at the idea of white slaves being held by Muslims and Africans. The fact that many of these white “slaves” in Africa admitted to being treated much less brutally than black slaves in America was rarely noted. The public hysteria over Mahometan slavers

³³ Robert J. Allison, The Crescent Obscured: America and the Muslim World 1776-1815. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995 p 35

and Muslim pirates enflamed American bias against both the Middle East and the Islamic faith, and helped firmly anchor the popular image of Muslims as despotic barbarians into the public imagination.³⁴

As the 19th century progressed, US involvement in the Middle East became primarily commercial and missionary, and more Americans were exposed to the societies of the region. By the end of the century, American merchants had established far-flung commercial networks trading in Middle Eastern commodities, from which they reaped impressive profits. “By the 1870s American entrepreneurs were buying nearly one-half of Turkey’s opium crop for resale in China,” while importing many different manufactured goods into the Ottoman Empire.³⁵ Meanwhile, American missionaries fanned out across the cities of Anatolia, the Levant and the Nile valley. They opened schools and founded prominent universities such as Constantinople’s Robert College, Asyut College in the central Egyptian city of the same name, the Syrian Protestant College, today called the American University of Beirut, and the American School for Girls, today Lebanese American University.³⁶ The activities of this handful of nineteenth century Americans did little to erase the negative popular images back home, where the people of the Holy Land were considered “backward Muslims” and “headstrong Jews” who were “a people by nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive and superstitious,” in the words of Mark Twain.³⁷

While bigoted images dominated American popular opinion about Islam and the Middle East throughout the 19th century, in the region itself American commerce and

³⁴ *ibid.*, p 59

³⁵ Little, Douglas, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002 p 14

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad*. London: Collins, 1961 p 516

educational activity was considered relatively benign. American merchants, teachers and missionaries seemed harmless compared to the specter of the expanding British and French empires. American missionaries sought “to convert Syrian society from *within*, as partners, rather than as self-declared outsiders like the British and French,”³⁸ and so were also clearly engaged in an Orientalist exercise of control. They wanted to contribute to the Western body of knowledge about the East, and tried to remake the Orient in the American image, by “instilling in the Syrians the Protestant values of democracy, hard work and free intellectual inquiry”³⁹ which were presumably alien to their own culture. Despite this, they were also less hostile to the local culture than were their European counterparts; the instructors at Beirut’s Syrian Protestant College even used Arabic as the language of instruction. As Robert Kaplan writes, many Arabs came to respect the missionary educators because of their humanitarian work and unusual respect for Arab culture, and Americans were generally more well-liked than the Europeans, whose missionaries and merchants were tarred by their governments’ imperial ambitions and were met with hostility and suspicion.⁴⁰ The US cast its Orientalist gaze on the Middle East, and promoted its values over the societies it surveyed, but in a relatively non-aggressive way. Compared with European conquest, American expatriates who often taught and traded in the Arabic language did not seem objectionable.

The region’s generally warm sentiments towards the United States were encouraged at the end of the First World War by American support of the principle of national self-determination, embodied in US President Wilson’s 14 Points. Point 12 was

³⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Arabists: The Romance of an American Elite*, New York: The Free Press, 1993 p 34

³⁹ *Ibid.* p 36

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p 34

of particular interest to many in the region, especially non-Turks agitating for greater independence from the Ottoman Empire. It asserted that “other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.”⁴¹ In a 1919 report sent to Washington by representatives of the King-Crane Commission, American diplomats proudly reported that former Ottoman subjects viewed the United States with the utmost “respect, faith and affection... [thanks to] the world-wide reputation which [it] enjoys for fair dealing [and to] unselfish and impartial missionary influence exerted for a century.”⁴² The demand for self-determination embodied in Point 12 amounted to an unprecedented and assertive American promotion of liberal values abroad, although it did not last long.

Oil, Israel and Interwar Years: The Development of American Interests

In the peace conference held after WWI, the history of “fair dealing” which the King-Crane Commission proudly described was scuttled against European imperial ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean. These were put to paper in the secret Sykes-Picot Accord which divided the Levant between the French and British empires. Faced with their resistance to Arab self-determination, America found Point 12 to be diplomatically untenable. The US reneged on its promised commitment to self-determination rather than risk a confrontation with its war-time allies over liberal rhetoric, so the fate of the Middle

⁴¹ Woodrow Wilson, “The Final Draft of the Fourteen Points Address.” January 7, 1918. Quoted in Official documents; texts of selected documents on United States foreign policy, 1918-1952, New York: Woodrow Wilson Foundation, 1952

⁴² James Harbord, “Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia,” October 16, 1919. Foreign Relations of the United States 1919: Volume II. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1934 pp 849-850.

East was discussed by European and American negotiators at Versailles. Before the conference, the King-Crane Commission recommended that the United States govern the Levant under a series of Mandates that would be granted independence once they were determined fit for self-government. It also recommended that the US reject the Zionist goal of a Jewish state, and govern Palestine as part of a Syrian mandate.⁴³ It is important to note that Woodrow Wilson himself was supportive of Zionism and the Balfour Declaration, and was unmoved by the Commission's opposition to the creation of a Jewish state. Thanks to an increase in American isolationism after the war, and the untimely death of President Wilson, the Commission's recommendations were scrapped in favor of British and French control of the Levant and a continued commitment to Zionism.⁴⁴

In the years between the wars, the United States government had little influence in the Middle East because of British and French control of the region. It was more or less content with the mandate system agreed upon at Versailles. American missionaries and educators continued their humanitarian work in the region, and their universities in Beirut and Cairo became more popular. The British and French mandates quickly came to resemble their other colonies, with the exception of Palestine, which became the site of increased settler activity. While European imperialism kept the United States from promoting its values as assertively as it had in the Fourteen Points, its presence in the Middle East actually became more assertive after the First World War.

During this period, American corporations became very influential in the expansion of the oil industry in the Persian Gulf, and the US government became a sturdy

⁴³ Kaplan, The Arabists p 68

⁴⁴ Ibid., p 70

supporter of the Zionist movement.⁴⁵ Although American influence in the region paled in comparison to the British and French, the interests it developed in oil and Zionism long outlived the European empires. Since the fall of the European empires, these have developed into America's most closely-protected national interests in the Middle East. In both arenas, the US government paid little attention to the wishes or well-being of the region's inhabitants. It operated with the Orientalist's cool and all-knowing high-handedness, confident in what it thought it knew about the East and comfortable in its position of superiority.

During the interwar years privately-held American oil companies became a powerful force in the region for the first time, and operated largely within British and French mandates and spheres of influence. European oil interests were active in the region since 1908, when the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) made its first large discovery in southwestern Iran, inside the British "sphere of influence". Beginning in 1922, the British government allowed American companies to participate in the Turkish Petroleum Company, a prospecting firm operating in Mandatory Iraq which had formerly been an exclusively Anglo-French concern. By the time the firm discovered its first major oil fields near Mosul in 1922, it had been renamed the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), and was now partially owned by two US firms- the Standard Oil Company of New York (Socony), and the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, as well as three European owners: APOC, Compagnie Française des Pétroles, and Royal Dutch Shell. Almost all of the IPC's profits went to European and American corporations. The one exception was a 5% share of the profits was given to the Armenian negotiator who had secured the IPC's original concession from the Ottoman Empire. By 1941 three new American firms had

⁴⁵ Little, American Orientalism p 43

secured lucrative concessions in the Persian Gulf: Standard Oil Company of California, Texaco, and Gulf Oil. By the eve of World War II, these five companies had invested nearly \$1 billion into the exploration and development of Middle Eastern concessions, and were the major form of American influence in the Gulf. As Douglas Little writes “As late as 1939, US oil executives wielded more power in Baghdad and Riyadh than did US diplomats.”⁴⁶

In the Levant, American influence was most strongly felt in its embrace of Zionist territorial ambitions in Palestine. Zionist plans for the creation of a Jewish state found early favor in the United States. Most Americans knew nothing about Palestine except that it was the biblical location of the Kingdom of Israel, and was now populated by an unseemly crowd of backward Arabs. As early as 1918, former President Theodore Roosevelt argued that the United States and its European allies should “never make peace until the Turk is driven from Europe, and...the Jews [are] given control of Palestine.”⁴⁷ There were times when American support for Zionism wavered slightly because of armed Arab unrest in Mandatory Palestine; but at the end of the day the US support for the Zionist movement did not falter.⁴⁸

In retrospect, it is easy to forget how fiercely American diplomats, intelligence officers, missionaries and defense officials fought against a US endorsement of Zionism. Kermit Roosevelt, a Middle East specialist with the US Office of Strategic Services, was one of many contemporary Orientalists who rejected Zionism. In 1948 he wrote “Almost all Americans with diplomatic, educational, missionary, or business experience in the Middle East protest fervently that support of political Zionism is directly contrary to our

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp 44-48

⁴⁷ Quoted in Little, American Orientalism p 15

⁴⁸ Ibid. p 17

national interests, as well as to common justice.”⁴⁹ In 1880, just before the earliest Zionist settlers emigrated to Palestine from Central and Eastern Europe, the territory had a population of 300,000, of which only 25,000 were Jewish. But for America, the demographic makeup of Palestine was less important than the Orientalist spin on the numbers, which grew more and more distorted as time passed.

American support of Zionism in the years before, during and immediately after the Second World War was based on a mixture of Orientalist images that pit the familiar, heroic Israeli cowboys against the backward Arab savages. Kermit Roosevelt’s protest against Zionism raises an important point about this period of America’s relationship with the Middle East. Most Americans were familiar with hostile Orientalist images of Arab barbarism and largely supported Zionism out of a disdain for Oriental backwardness, but most American Orientalists themselves were strongly opposed to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. For most Americans, support of Zionism did not involve any direct interaction with the people of the region, or even a brief consideration of their wishes, but a simple digestion of these familiar images. As Rashid Khalidi notes of the interwar years: “Because of their pioneer heritage, Americans were even more apt than Europeans to identify with lurid images of brave, outnumbered settlers of European stock taming an arid land in the face of opposition from ignorant, fanatical nomads...”⁵⁰ After the atrocities of the Holocaust were revealed, more and more Americans began to regard the tension in Palestine as a simple and familiar story of brave pioneers, fleeing religious persecution, building a sparkling new country in a sea of brown backwardness.

⁴⁹ Kermit Roosevelt, “The Partition of Palestine: A Lesson in Pressure Politics.” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 2, Iss. 1 (1948)

⁵⁰ Rashid Khalidi, Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004 p 119

Douglas Little notes that after the Holocaust, American popular representations of Jews and Arabs, which had once been similar in their patronizing disparagement, diverged sharply. Reflecting this, Zionism was presented as a common sense matter of “relatively westernized Jews reclaiming their rightful place in the Holy Land from orientalized Arabs.”⁵¹ The popular portrayal of Zionism as a simple matter of restoring the Jewish people to their rightful land was considered by many to be a symbolic atonement for the Holocaust, and it produced strong electoral pressure. US President Truman recognized the State of Israel minutes after it was born in 1948, against the advice of many of his advisors, and explained to them that there were hundreds of thousands of Zionist voters in America, and no one to represent Arabs at the polls.⁵²

Every President since Wilson has strongly backed Zionism, despite what some might consider its apparent contradiction with “American values” of liberal freedom. In fact, for many Americans, support of Zionism has historically been *derived from* an understanding of American values and interests in the region. American Jews have long suffered under the weight of great anti-Semitism, even during the Second World War, when the US government long refused to acknowledge the Holocaust-in-progress and denied asylum to boatloads of Jewish refugees. Even within the context of American anti-Semitism, the prospect of a Jewish liberal democracy in Mandatory Palestine was intuitively attractive because of the popular belief that Arabs and Muslims were alien, at best, or hostile, at worst, to liberalism. For many Americans, Jews were and continue to be a familiar face that seems more deserving of a state in Palestine than a horde of Arab savages. Given the choice of supporting a Jewish democracy, or leaving the Holy Land in

⁵¹ Little, *American Orientalism* p 24

⁵² Quoted in Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire* p 119

the clutches of people thought to primitive savages, impossibly hostile to the West and its concept of liberal democracy, American voters and leaders overwhelmingly backed Zionist ambitions. It will always be unclear what solution the world may have found to the challenge of Zionism if the demographic data on Palestine, or the personal experiences of Palestinians, had been allowed to speak for themselves, without being translated into a set of simplistic and derogatory images for Western public consumption.

Chapter Three

American Orientalism: The Cold War and After

For most people, the start of the Cold War draws to mind images of the Berlin Wall, although in some important respects its earliest flashpoints actually occurred in the Middle East. The first major crisis within the Allied Bloc was the Soviet refusal to withdraw from the occupied northern provinces of Iran in March 1946. This was followed a year later by the Truman Doctrine, which committed the US to providing an unprecedented aid package to Greece and Turkey to help them rebuild their infrastructure and fight off what were believed to be Soviet-backed communist insurgencies.⁵³ In an interesting and little noted Orientalist turn of phrase, the term “Cold War” itself was first used by Spanish Christians in the fourteenth century to describe their wars against Spanish Arabs and Muslims.⁵⁴ The phrase was resurrected and popularized during the 1940s by American policy analysts, and is now identified exclusively with the 20th century ideological conflict between capitalist and communist states.

During the Cold War, American Orientalism produced innumerable examples of political intrigue, aggression and imperialism, and there is an expansive literature on the subject.⁵⁵ Briefly put: fearing the spread of global communism, the US promoted

⁵³ Fred Halliday, “The Middle East and the Great Powers.” in The Cold War and the Middle East. Ed. Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1997 p 10

⁵⁴ Don Juan Manuel, Escritora in Prosa Anteriores al Siglo XV Madrid : Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles de Rivandeneira, 1952 p 362

⁵⁵ For a good study of American orientalism during the Cold War, with a focus on Iraq, Libya and Saudi Arabia, see Douglas Little, American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945.

capitalist development and technological modernization around the world, pursued its national interest and battled any perceived communist advance, usually by supporting friendly authoritarian regimes. My purpose here is to provide a concise historical sketch of the transformation of American Orientalism into an activist outlook used to justify US imperialism, in the same way that it had originally been used to justify European imperialism. Therefore, for the sake of brevity, in this chapter I discuss some broad Cold War trends, and then focus on the instructive case of Iran to illustrate how America pursued its anti-communist objectives by promoting an inconsistent liberalism. In Iran, the US emphasized capitalist development and paid lip service to democracy, but at the same time dismantled the democratic tradition that Iranians had been building for themselves for half a century. After this case study, I will then discuss America's garbled and inconsistent promotion of its liberal values in the Middle East during the 1990s. During this period it tried to introduce a limited degree of political and economic liberalization while keeping friendly autocrats entrenched, for fear that regional instability would undermine its national interests.

Cold War America in the Middle East

The Cold War saw the beginning of American imperialism in the Middle East, which was not unknown in some parts of the world, but was unfamiliar in Iran and the lands of the former Ottoman Empire. World War II left Europe decimated and focused on

Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002. For a very in-depth study of the US relationship with Pakistan and Afghanistan during the Cold War, see John K. Cooley, Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism. London: Pluto Press, 2002.

rebuilding itself with the help of American Marshall Plan aid. During this convalescent period, the former imperial masters began to lose control over their world-wide empires, and within ten years of the fall of the Third Reich, French and British dominance of the Near East also effectively came to an end.

Soon after the war ended, the victorious Allied Forces began to dissolve into the tension and simmering hostility of the Cold War blocs, as the capitalist-democratic “free world” and the communist Soviet Union began carving the globe into spheres of influence based on ideology. Both superpowers believed their ideologies and ways of life were universally valid, and promoted their values and national interests around the world. During the Cold War, American interests in the Middle East have been called the “holy trinity” of Israeli security, secure access to oil, and opposition to communism.⁵⁶ European control was weakening every day, and the region’s large oil reserves gave the “free world” a vital interest in it that the US could not afford to ignore. Throughout the Cold War the two powers competed for influence in the region by making alliances with friendly regimes, and shoring up their allies’ power by giving them enough military and economic aid to fight off any challenge, domestic or foreign.

Although individual autocratic regimes became adept at playing the superpowers off of each other and “shopping around” for the most favourable aid packages, that does not diminish the fact that Orientalist attitudes were at the foundation of these American and Soviet policies. American and Soviet interests in the Middle East were considered more important than the desires or demands of the region’s inhabitants themselves, who were treated either as pawns to be manipulated, or obstacles to be overcome, in the

⁵⁶ This phrase is taken from Michael Hudson, “To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy Towards the Middle East.” *Middle East Journal*. Volume 50, No. 3, Summer 1996

pursuit of national interests. In this competition, both superpowers were propelled by the high-handed attitudes of the Orientalist tradition, and acted upon the people of the region with little regard for their opinions or goals, upholding the cherished Orientalist mantra that the East cannot speak for itself, and so must be spoken for.

During this period, America combated Soviet influence and protected its national interests by promoting an inconsistent and aggressive form of its traditional liberal values, which prioritized capitalist development and a regime's commitment to the "free world" alliance. If a state's loyalty was drawn into question, the US was willing to overthrow a democratically elected regime or undermine the broad liberal freedoms described by Paul Berman,⁵⁷ for the sake of the larger, international battle against illiberal communism. This liberal mutation was a distinct change from the non-aggressive 19th century missionary model, but it was not as strident and openly demanding as post-9/11 universalism. As a general policy, American support of illiberal regimes was justified by a rhetorical commitment to anti-communist liberalism, and based almost exclusively on the regime's acceptance of a reform program of technological modernization and capitalist economic development, and its opposition to communism.⁵⁸ By pushing modernization and development upon its allies and clients, the US hoped that it could improve the standard of living, while building the technological infrastructure that would provide easier access to valuable natural resources like oil.⁵⁹ If the people of

⁵⁷ See Berman, Terror and Liberalism p 38

⁵⁸ Understanding how politically difficult it was for regional leaders to normalize relations with Israel, during the Cold War the United States did not demand that its allied and client states befriend the Jewish state, so long as they did not actively try to destroy it. Making peace with Israel, though, was the quickest way to America's heart, and any state that did so was sure to receive a generous American aid package, as Egypt did after the Camp David Accords in 1978. For more information, see Michael Hudson "To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy Towards the Middle East." *Middle East Journal*. Volume 50, No. 3, Summer 1996

⁵⁹ Little, American Orientalism p 193

the Middle East started to live the capitalist good life, then communist revolution would be unthinkable. And if that helped secure American access to oil, even better.

Many argued that modernizing states had to be autocratic in order to suppress popular resistance to Western development projects that might increase unemployment and poverty. Acting upon this view, the US tried to provide regional allies, such as Iran, with enough economic and military support to maintain their power and institute economic reforms that may be unpopular.⁶⁰ Undergirding these economic and strategic reasons were the Orientalist attitudes with which the United States was by now well-versed, although in the post-War period American Orientalism underwent a serious qualitative change. The patronizing and often hostile attitudes towards the Eastern other, a product of European and to a lesser extent American scholarship, were now supplemented by a technocratic expertise which went hand in hand with America's new interventionist role. As Said writes,

No longer does the Orientalist try first to master the esoteric languages of the Orient; he begins instead as a trained social scientist and "applies" his science to the Orient, or anywhere else. This is the specifically American contribution to the history of Orientalism, and it can be dated roughly from the period immediately following World War II, when the United States found itself in the position of Britain and France... Immediately after World War II, then, the Orient became, not a broad Catholic issue as it had been for centuries in Europe, but an administrative one, a matter for policy. In any event, the new Orientalist took over the attitudes of cultural hostility and kept them.

After WWII, security planning and economic development became the most prominent policy sciences, titles they have retained ever since. During the Cold War, this new, activist Orientalism drove US plans in the region. America could give the people of the Middle East the capitalist economic development they surely wanted, while defending

⁶⁰ John Rapley, Understanding Development: Theory and Practice in the Third World. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996 p 140

them from the communist influence that they didn't realize was bad for them. That their entrance into the capitalist bloc would advance American Cold War interests was a happy side-effect. Western-trained economists assured states throughout the Third World that any negative side-effects of their development programs would only be temporary; besides, they were a small price to pay for the Free World's generous protection from the Soviet Union, and a little piece of the American dream.

John Rapley writes that "democracy, it is sometimes said, is a luxury for the rich and must be deferred in the interests of development."⁶¹ During the Cold War, democracy and liberal ideals were frequently deferred for the sake of American national interests. Indeed, during the era of superpower conflict America embraced the position that developing states were better off with capitalist dictators, especially if democracy could pose a threat to US interests and the Cold War balance of power. This was never publicly enunciated as a policy, but even a brief overview of America's relationship with its Third World allies, such as Iran, reveals how superpower calculations mutated America's historical commitment to promoting "American values" into a hard-nosed suppression of any political development that deviated from the liberal economic model.

During the nineteenth century, missionary zeal drove Yankee Protestant educators to teach their Arab students "the Protestant values of democracy, hard work and free intellectual inquiry."⁶² During the Cold War President Kennedy told the country, in his Inaugural Address, that

To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves,

⁶¹ John Rapley, Understanding Development: Theory and Practice in the Third World. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996 p 17

⁶² Kaplan, The Arabists p 36

for whatever period is required--not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right.⁶³

But within his short term in the Oval Office, he provided generous economic and military support to monarchs and dictators in Libya, Saudi Arabia and Iran.⁶⁴ The unspoken message clearly was that once the states of the Third World developed and matured to a point at which the US no longer feared they were ripe for communist picking, then they could give democracy a shot.

Case Study: Iran 1953 & the Coup Against Democracy

Iran provides an excellent case study of the orientalist attitudes underlying US Cold War policy towards the Middle East because after 1945 it became America's most closely doted upon project in the region. The history of the US relationship with Iran and its ruler, the Shah, provides a good illustration of the high-handed and biased attitudes with which the US approaches the Middle East and other parts of the formerly colonial world. As such, it is an important example of the dynamics that this study attempts to uncover. In this section, I provide a brief history of this Cold War relationship and use it as a case study to illustrate the lengths to which the United States was willing to go to protect its interests in the Middle East, at the expense of those living in the region.

Iran was one of the primary focal points of the Cold War from its earliest stages. In 1946, the Soviet Union postponed the withdrawal of its troops from northern Iran, which stoked Iranian fears of Russian imperialism and pushed the country's young

⁶³ John Fitzgerald Kennedy, "Inaugural Address." January 20, 1961. Available from the Kennedy Presidential Library at <http://www.jfklibrary.org/j012061.htm>

⁶⁴ Little, American Orientalism p 193

monarch, Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, into the arms of the United States. Indeed, American advisors and intelligence agents had been active, both openly and covertly, inside Iran since the end of the war. It was seen as one of the most pivotal states of the early Cold War because it lay squarely between the USSR and the Persian Gulf and had been the site of Russian imperialism in the past.⁶⁵

Iran had been adopting a democratic system in fits and starts since 1906. Most of its population was impoverished peasants, and the Majlis, or parliament, was dominated by an aristocratic landowning elite. As early as 1949, the United States encouraged the Shah to introduce land reform measures and technological modernization to improve the standard of living and prevent instability among the rural and urban poor. The Shah, and his landed support base, resisted American suggestions, but were soon presented with more sweeping demands by their fellow countrymen. In 1950, a movement called the National Front gathered wide support and proposed broad social reform, financed by nationalizing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In 1951 popular pressure coerced the Shah into appointing the leader of the National Front, Muhammad Mossadeq, to be Prime Minister. One of his earliest actions was to demand that the AIOC renegotiate their concession. When they refused, the Majlis unanimously nationalized the company.

The people of Iran were ecstatic at the nationalization of the AIOC, but Britain reacted with furor and organized a crushing international boycott of Iranian oil. After the delight of the nationalization wore off, most Iranians became increasingly anxious for the benefits they had been promised. But the international boycott effectively shut down the Iranian oil industry, and put the country in tight economic straits that severely limited the pace and scope of reform. The boycott lasted for three years, and as it ground down the

⁶⁵ Fred Halliday, Iran: Dictatorship and Development. New York: Penguin Books, 1979 pp 24-26

economy pressure mounted from the Shah and conservative members of the Majlis to reconcile with Britain. The economic effects of the embargo and popular pressure for reform severely destabilized Iranian politics, which in itself was enough to give the capitalist powers cause for pause. To offset the conciliatory pressure of Iranian conservatives, Mossadeq began to openly support the leftist Tudeh party in 1953, a development which greatly worried the United States and confirmed some hard-liners' fears of creeping communist influence in Iran.⁶⁶

After the nationalization of the AIOC, Britain requested American help in recovering their lost concession. Although President Truman opposed the nationalization and disliked the precedent it set, he was reluctant to support Britain in any aggressive move to regain control of the oil fields because he feared it would destabilize Iran and alienate it from the capitalist bloc. Some in Truman's cabinet disdained Britain's desire to recapture the oil fields, and thought that while America was thinking about the bigger picture of superpower competition, the British were pettily trying to shore up what was left of their eroding empire. For the United States, "the primary objective...[was] to prevent the domination of [Iran] by the USSR" because "[if that country] assumes an attitude of neutrality in the Cold War, political steps by the US and UK to restore alignment with the free world would be required."⁶⁷ But in contrast, as Secretary of State Dean Acheson explained, British policy aimed at "preserv[ing] what they believe to be the last remaining bulwark of British solvency; that is their overseas investment and property

⁶⁶ Little, American Orientalism p 215

⁶⁷ National Security Council Study No. 107, March 1951. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954; Volume X: Iran 1951-1954. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989 pp 11-21

position.”⁶⁸ Truman did not see the nationalization of the AIOC as a turn towards Moscow, and saw no reason why the US should support an intervention. Besides, although nineteenth century American humanitarian work had been limited in Iran, most Iranians thought warmly of the United States as a neutral third party, especially compared with the recently departed British and the looming threat of Russia.

Mossadeq’s embrace of the left-wing Tudeh Party coincided with the election of Dwight Eisenhower, a more aggressive anti-communist than Truman who considered the Tudeh’s newfound favour with the Prime Minister an ominous sign of communist inroads in Tehran. Fearing that Iran could turn into a “second China”, the American and British governments began to plan a coup against Mossadeq. Codenamed “Operation Ajax,” the coup was closely orchestrated on the ground in Tehran from a private villa paid for by US taxpayers, and from a command center inside the US embassy by Kermit Roosevelt. The plot to undermine Iranian democracy and increase the power of the monarchy was planned almost entirely from boardrooms in Washington and London, and from bunkers inside the US embassy compound in Iran. Roosevelt and other CIA provocateurs in Tehran spent a great deal of time and energy persuading the Shah to participate in the plan, ultimately presenting it to him as a matter over which he had no control, implicitly giving him the option of cooperating with the US or facing American hostility along with Mossadeq. Under these circumstances, the timid monarch agreed to participate, and sign

⁶⁸ Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State, remarks to a meeting at the State Department, Nov 10, 1951. The Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954; Volume X: Iran 1951-1954 Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1989 p 279

a decree removing the popular Prime Minister from office in violation of the Iranian constitution.⁶⁹

Operation Ajax capitalized on the growing elite opposition to Mossadeq, and worked to spread it into a broad mistrust of him among the Iranian people. Ajax also wanted to create a feeling of violent chaos in the streets of Tehran to convince its inhabitants that Mossadeq was bad for the country and needed to be removed. Elite dislike of Mossadeq had begun to spread to poorer Iranians because of increased hardship caused by the embargo. Roosevelt organized American and Iranian agents to make the most of this, and bribed and co-opted influential people throughout the country, who were paid to criticize the Prime Minister or commit acts of violence in his name. As Kinzer writes, “They were to break windows, beat innocent bystanders, shoot at mosques, and generally outrage the citizens.”⁷⁰ Once the Shah signed the decree removing Mossadeq, some military commanders were more easily persuaded to join the coup. These co-opted officers were essential to the plot’s success, and one of them, General Zahedi, became the new Prime Minister on Wednesday August 19, 1953, after several days of rioting and looting in Tehran organized by street gangs whose leaders were on the CIA payroll.⁷¹

Modernization and Orientalism in the Shah’s Iran

The coup against Mossadeq was also a coup against Iranian democracy. Even though the Majlis continued to function under the new Prime Minister, the parliamentary

⁶⁹ Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003 pp 1-17

⁷⁰ Ibid. p 172

⁷¹ For a highly detailed account of the days leading up to the coup, see Kinzer, *All the Shah’s Men* pp 167-193

system was stripped of any real authority and the Shah held near-absolute power. His rule was buttressed by American military and economic assistance, and in exchange he committed his country to the anti-Soviet bloc. After the coup the US rearticulated its policy towards Iran, and placed the highest priority on supporting “a strong and stable government in Iran capable of maintaining internal security and providing some resistance to external aggression.”⁷² The US wanted a strong, authoritarian regime in Tehran that could pursue the capitalist economic development it thought would discourage Communist sympathies among the lower classes, ensuring that Iran would remain a member of the “free world.” Successive American administrations thought that supporting the Shah was the best way to ensure that Iran stayed on America’s side in the Cold War, and also thought it was the best they could do to show the Iranian people the capitalist good-life. As a National Security Council report at the time argued,

Over the long term, the most effective instrument for maintaining Iran’s orientation towards the West is the monarch which in turn has the army as its only real source of power. US military aid serves to...consolidate the present regime and provide some assurance that Iran’s current orientation to the West will be perpetuated.⁷³

In the calculations of Cold War America, whether or not the people of Iran were free to participate in their own government was less important than whether or not their country was committed to the fight against international communism. Paradoxically, the maintenance of a relatively young and indigenous experiment in liberal politics was less important than the state’s commitment to the battle against international communism, in

⁷² “National Security Council Study 5402”, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1952-1954, x: Iran 1951-1954, No. 403, pp 865-890 quoted in Shahram Chubin, “Iran” in The Cold War and the Middle East. Ed. Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim. Clarendon Press; Oxford, UK: 1997 pp 223

⁷³ “National Security Council Statement of Policy Towards Iran,” January 2, 1954 in Foreign Relations of the United States, x: Iran 1951-1954 No. 403, pp 868-870 quoted in Shahram Chubin, “Iran” in The Cold War and the Middle East. Ed. Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim. Clarendon Press; Oxford, UK: 1997 pp 223

defense of the ideologies of political and economic liberalism and the American interests at stake in that conflict.

In the decade after the coup, US oil demand almost doubled from six million barrels per day to ten million barrels per day. By the end of the Shah's reign in 1979 US demand nearly quadrupled to nineteen million barrels per day⁷⁴, three million of which were imported from the Persian Gulf.⁷⁵ In August 1954, the US, UK and the Shah negotiated a deal that disbanded AIOC and replaced it with a Consortium of the seven largest Western oil companies. Of these, British Petroleum held a 40% stake in the Consortium's operation. Iran was allowed to keep half of the Consortium's profits, funneled through a new state oil concern called the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). Unbeknownst to the Shah, the heads of the Consortium's foreign constituent corporations secretly negotiated a price-controlling agreement which balanced Iranian production against each of their global oil interests. This effectively made Iranian oil revenues dependent upon the internal financial calculations of a clique of Western corporations. NIOC produced a relatively minor amount of oil outside its agreements with the Consortium, and more assertively exercised its independence in production and marketing after the foundation of OPEC, although this paled in comparison to the power that the American, French and British Consortium held over the Iranian oil industry and economy throughout the Shah's reign.⁷⁶

The United States urged the Shah to protect himself against his restless subjects and institute social and economic reforms, although during this period it hedged its bets

⁷⁴ "US Oil Demand by End-Use Sector, 1950-2000," available from US Dept. of Energy at http://www.eia.doe.gov/pub/oil_gas...asics/Dem_image_US_cons_sector.htm

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980 pp 34-36

by providing him with generous military aid packages. Having invested so much in his regime, the US did not want to lose its ally or his valuable oil fields to popular unrest or future communist inroads. For more than a decade, the Shah resisted foreign and domestic pressures for reform because he was afraid of alienating his elite, land-owning support base; and also because he was loath to defer American funds from the massive expansion of the military and secret police. He finally agreed to reforms in 1962, when President Kennedy made them a condition of continued military assistance. In early 1963 he held a successful referendum on an ambitious reform program called the White Revolution. This program proposed the legal abolition of serfdom; nationalization of forests; amendment of electoral law and the enfranchisement of women; creation of a profit-sharing system for industrial workers; the privatization of state enterprises; and compulsory secular education. It was accompanied by another large expansion of the secret police. The United States and Britain welcomed the reform program, in particular its commitment to the privatization of the oil industry and the expansion of state security forces. They thought it would neither be in their own best interest, nor the best interest of the Iranian people, if the monarchy's experiment in populism threatened the Shah's absolute power and the political status quo.⁷⁷

Washington strongly supported the White Revolution, which it saw as the long-awaited reform program that would solidify the Shah's power and protect the carefully-arranged balance of power. The last thing they wanted was another Mossadeq.

Any dissent or criticism of the regime or its Revolution was harshly repressed. Despite this brutality, the White House became more enamored of the Shah as the reforms progressed, and rewarded him with even greater military assistance. Even though the US

⁷⁷ Ibid. pp 71-72

thought the reforms meant that Iran was moving away from its “reliance on aid,” it still recognized Iran as a “weak” state with valuable military potential in the Cold War. As President Johnson’s Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was advised in 1964, “our assistance strategy should not ignore the fact that strategically located Iran still remains hospitable to our military and intelligence sites at a time when other countries are obliging us to remove or limit such facilities.”⁷⁸ By the time of the Nixon Administration, Iran’s credentials as a member of the “free world” were impeccable, and its commitment to the liberal forces of international capitalist-democracy was unquestionable.

The Shah appeared to be everything America could want in a loyal Cold War ally: supportive of the Vietnam War and committed to modernizing the country, educating women, beating back communism and keeping the oil flowing. In American eyes, as long as Iran supported the “free world” against communist totalitarianism, whether or not the regime itself was a model of liberalism was less important. Pahlavi’s American admirers paid little attention to popular anger at police repression, nor to his 1975 decision to convert Iran into a one-party state, or the increasingly influential clerical resistance to the White Revolution. Washington was convinced that if the Shah could stay in power long enough to see the White Revolution through, then all this unrest and resistance would eventually be calmed by the benefits of reform.

This simplistic faith was based on the American devotion to a deeply Orientalist view of economic development called modernization theory. Modernization theory held that development and modernizing reforms could create the same social conditions and

⁷⁸ Thomas, “Iran as a Country in Transition from Aid to Self-Support.” Information Memorandum from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to Secretary of State Rusk. March 20, 1964. FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. XXII, Iran (a) . Available at http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xxii/a.html

wealth in the formerly colonial world as it had in the formerly imperialist, industrialized states. It imagined economic development as a linear progression towards modernity, which was always identified with the Western way of life. On this linear scale, industrialized Western states like America and Britain were the most advanced and modern; all other societies were progressively more backward. The Middle East in particular was presumed to be alien to modernity, and to hate it passionately. The only way the Orient could crawl out of its primitive state was if the West led it. As Rapley explains, according to modernization theory

Underdevelopment was an initial state. The West had progressed beyond it, but other countries lagged behind. However, the West could help speed up the process of development in the Third World, for instance by sharing its capital and know-how, to bring these countries into the modern age of capitalism and liberal democracy.⁷⁹

The assumptions upon which modernization theory and economic development are based mirror the liberal values that America promoted in the Middle East since the late 18th century. The promotion of these “American values” has been at the heart of the project of economic development in the formerly colonial world since its inception. During the Cold War, the United States pushed its allies to reorganize their economies and move up the linear development continuum to protect them and the interests’ they represented from its communist competitors.

Using the social science toolbox of economic development, America could cure the Orient of its debilitating, weakening otherness and bind it to the modern good life of the West.⁸⁰ In Iran, this meant covertly replacing a democratic regime that was soft on communism with an all-powerful anti-communist autocrat who could be encouraged to

⁷⁹ Rapley, Understanding Development p 17

⁸⁰ Said, Orientalism p 290

modernize his backward Oriental subjects. If Iran followed the American path to development and modernity, then its people would eventually embrace the universal, liberal, “American values” without even realizing it; and a geographically strategic and oil-rich state would safely be delivered from communism once and for all. All they needed to do was progress further towards that goal, and the US was willing to forgive them their backwardness and help them get there. Anyone who resisted the White Revolution or the Shah’s regime, like the Ayatollah Khomeini, was written off as troublesome aberrations from the linear model. They were small side-effects that could be repressed, imprisoned or exiled. Perhaps once Iran was developed, it could give democracy another shot, but not until it made some progress.

The Shah fell in 1979 with the establishment of an Islamic Republic, under the leadership of exiled cleric Ayatollah Khomeini. The US relationship with Iran disintegrated quickly. America was deeply dismayed that its strongest regional ally had been overthrown after years of investment and cooperation; while for their part, the regimes new leaders hated America’s history of support for the Shah. Khomeini and his followers reacted strongly against American imperialism and its Orientalist belief that its intervention and manipulation in their country was justified because it knew what was wrong with Iran, and simply knew the best way to fix it for them. America’s entire post-war relationship with Iran - the coup, the overwhelming military aid, the demands for capitalist reform- was an imperialist attempt to remake it into a capitalist society committed to international liberalism and to American values and interests. This ambition backfired badly, and after the Islamic Revolution the two states’ embrace was replaced by

an uneasy co-existence, frequently punctuated by fiery rhetoric and tense stand-offs, which continues to the present day.⁸¹

The 1990s

With the end of the Cold War the United States stood alone above the Middle East, and the world, like a colossus, with no political, economic, military or ideological competitors. Most Americans interpreted the end of the Cold War as a testament to the righteousness and universal appropriateness of American political and economic models, a view which Fukuyama energetically advanced when he announced that “History”, in the Hegelian sense, had ended. In this new world, America began a loud and unabashedly proud drive to promote the “Washington consensus” of free-market democratization in countries around the globe, often with crushing humanitarian costs. It is significant, though, that the Middle East received almost none of this treatment, and instead the US continued its inconsistent promotion of liberalism. The United States maintained strong trade and aid relationships with regional autocrats, while at the same time providing meager amounts of aid to grassroots organizations that wanted to liberalize their societies through relatively undisruptive activities like micro-credit loans and literacy programs. Often, US foreign aid went to autocratic regimes and liberal NGOs in the same states. This was a tepid echo of its efforts elsewhere, and makes no sense outside of the logic of Orientalism.

⁸¹ Graham, Iran: The Illusion of Power pp 229-241

This muddled policy was justified by two primary arguments, both familiarly Orientalist. First, many in the US justified American support for regional tyrants and considered democratization in the region dangerous because it could pose a threat to American interests in the region, especially Israeli security and the maintenance of secure access to oil. For their part, European governments also resisted any efforts to promote democratization in the region because they also feared disrupting access to oil, and were strongly opposed to any action that could increase Arab immigration.⁸² These threats were considered especially strong if the main political opposition to a regime was an Islamic party or social movement, as was the case in Algeria in 1991. Providing repressive governments with the economic assistance and heavy artillery with which they could oppress their people was deemed acceptable because doing otherwise could possibly endanger the ability of Americans to buy cheap fuel, or could lead to a regional confrontation. In America's Orientalist eyes, these two concerns trumped all others.

The second popular argument frequently invoked during the 1990s was that Muslims were culturally and religiously hostile, or at least alien, to democracy and Western notions of freedom. Promoting democracy in Muslim countries was at best a futile and foolish dream, and could be downright dangerous for America. The most strident advocate of this position was Bernard Lewis, the most well-known living champion of classical Orientalism, who also happens to be a *New York Times* best-selling author. In 1996, Lewis argued that Islamic "fundamentalists," a term which he never defines, were practitioners of an untrue and illegitimate form of "neo-Islam," and were

⁸² Sheila Carapico, "Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World," *The Middle East Journal*; Summer 2002; Vol. 56, Iss. 3 p 380

congenitally and uniformly hostile to democracy. Representing these “fundamentalists” for his Western, Anglophone audience, Lewis writes:

Clearly, [their] version of Islam is incompatible with liberal democracy, as the fundamentalists would be the first to say: they regard liberal democracy with contempt as a corrupt and corrupting form of government. They are willing to see it, at best, as an avenue to power, but an avenue that runs one way only.⁸³

While he admitted that there are some “elements in Islamic law and tradition that could assist the development of one or another form of democracy,”⁸⁴ he also argued that all Muslims, not just those committed to a false “neo-Islam,” are alien to both the concept of citizenship (because there is no Arabic, Turkish or Farsi translation of the English word “citizen”) and to the western concept of freedom. He writes that, “the idea of freedom—understood as the ability to participate in the formation, the conduct, and even the lawful removal and replacement of government—remained alien.”⁸⁵ Lewis claims that it was completely unknown in the Middle East until Napoleon conquered Egypt and made this “imported novelty” a new fad, akin to the 19th century popularity of “western-style frock coats, neckties, and trousers.”⁸⁶ He concludes his article by expressing the familiar Orientalist hope that Muslims become less attached to their faith and somehow less bizarrely other, and that they adopt secular, liberal political models. “One may hope that having contracted a Christian illness, [Muslims] will consider a Christian remedy, that is to say, the separation of religion and state.”⁸⁷ But, as Lewis makes clear in his article, Muslims’ culture of “command and obedience”⁸⁸ and the rising popularity of “neo-

⁸³ Lewis, “Islam and Liberal Democracy: A Historical Overview,” p 53

⁸⁴ Ibid., p 55

⁸⁵ Ibid., p 53

⁸⁶ Ibid., p 57

⁸⁷ Ibid., p 63

⁸⁸ Ibid., p 55

Islam” make the adoption of “a Christian remedy” unlikely. The implications of arguments like this are clear. America should nurture its friendship with its regional allies, as autocratic as they may be, lest the entire region fall into the hands of anti-democratic and anti-western Islamic opposition, throwing American interests into peril.

With these arguments in mind, Europe and the United States funded small liberalization initiatives whose effectiveness was massively overpowered by their continued support for local authoritarian allies. For example, the US funded more than 50 liberalization projects in Egypt, while still annually providing the authoritarian Mubarak regime over \$3 billion in economic and military assistance.⁸⁹ The point of these policies was never to end political repression in the Arab world, but to promote “limited liberalization.” Like the White Revolution, these policies were meant “to control the revolution of rising expectations....and buy time for peaceful reform.”⁹⁰ As Hawthorne summarized in the diplomatic industry journal, *The Foreign Service Journal*

The Clinton administration recognized, however, that limited political reform could help to maintain the stability of the region. Expanding participation in politics and decision-making could decrease opposition to unpopular regimes and thereby contribute to the long-term viability of key Arab governments, especially moderate regimes friendly to the US. This goal was much less dramatic than democratization initiatives within the former Soviet Union, and was intended to ease domestic pressure felt by regional allies, buttress their authority and protect American interests in the long-term.

Most of these projects were funded by multilateral or bilateral development agencies, specialized democracy foundations, and non-profit organizations from funds drawn from both public coffers and private investment; and sought to cultivate regional

⁸⁹ Michael Hudson, “To Play the Hegemon: Fifty Years of US Policy Towards the Middle East.” *Middle East Journal*. Volume 50, No. 3, Summer 1996

⁹⁰ Little, *American Orientalism* p 218

counterparts, committed to the promotion of democracy. Between the fall of the Berlin Wall and September 11th, nearly 600 grants were written to grassroots liberalization groups in the region. Of those over a third focused directly on training Palestinian and Egyptian NGOs. As Sheila Carapico writes, education and institution building initiatives emphasized “everything from two-year masters’ degree programs to two-week training sessions to two-day workshops to voter registration handbooks.” The US also “sent expatriate technical advisors, furnished offices, supplied voting machines or other equipment, renovated courts or other facilities, or granted ‘seed money’ for new institutions.”⁹¹ While education and institution building are important, these efforts could accomplish little in the face of overwhelming US aid delivered to their autocratic rulers.

During the 1990s, the United States maintained its commitment to defending its interests by supporting authoritarian regimes, and allowed little of the democratizing enthusiasm of the “Washington consensus” to influence its policies in the Middle East. While it half-heartedly promoted political liberalization, in many states the same autocratic allies ruled from atop the same dominating party apparatuses, and their warm relations with the United States changed little. The project of economic development continued much as it had before, and the technocratic Orientalism that propelled it continued to dominate the American relationship with states like Egypt. It was not until September 11th, 2001 that America’s Orientalist approach to the Middle East underwent yet another change.

⁹¹ Carapico, “Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World,” p 386

Section II

A Different Kind of Middle East



An Iraqi child from the village of As-Samawa with food rations distributed by the US military. The White House Press office describes this photograph as “an Iraqi civilian enjoying the abundance of rations given out on April 5, 2003.” (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Kyran V. Adams) Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/iraq/photoessay/essay4/07.html>

America and Oriental Democracy

Al Qaeda's well-coordinated terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 stunned people around the world and changed America's relationship with the Middle East in significant ways. In the first hours, days and weeks after the attacks, the government argued that the new War on Terror was a battle in defense of freedom and liberty around the world, values which violent movements like al Qaeda were bent on destroying. America would destroy all terrorists everywhere and make the world safe for its way of life again.⁹² Soon, the scope of this war was widened to include the political and diplomatic promotion of capitalist democracy within allied regimes, and the military promotion of these liberal models within hostile regimes, the latter known as "regime change." In the post-9/11 world, America decided that the only way to protect its way of life at home was to spread that way of life abroad.

Many commentators were quick to point out that al Qaeda is the heir of the shadowy mujahideen militias of Afghanistan, financed and armed by the United States during the Cold War as a proxy army against the Soviet invasion. As Mahmoud Mamdani writes, "The Afghan jihad gave [right-wing political Islam] numbers, organization, skills, reach, confidence and a coherent objective. America created an infrastructure of terror but heralded it as an infrastructure of liberation."⁹³ The US government also admits that the international terrorist networks it now confronts are an unexpected product of Cold

⁹² Bush, "Statement by the President in his Address to the Nation." September 11, 2001.

⁹³ Mahmoud Mamdani, "Inventing Political Violence." *Global Agenda Magazine*, 2005. Available at <http://www.globalagendamagazine.com/2005/mahmoodmamdani.asp>

War policy, but infrequently addresses its role in their sponsorship and creation. Instead, America blames local autocratic governments for creating desperation and anger and incubating terror. To its credit, the US has been very willing to denounce both its historical support of these autocrats, like the Shah, and the crude cultural arguments about the incompatibility of Muslims and freedom which were sometimes used to support it. But while rejecting these old arguments, American leaders make the case for liberal universalism.

To atone for imposing its economic and political will on the region in the past, the US has committed itself to a new set of demands which it argues are universally desirable anyway. During a state visit to the United Kingdom in November of 2003, President Bush gave a speech renouncing past-American policies at length and appealing to the liberal needs of the Middle East. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

...The most helpful change we can make is to change in our own thinking. In the West, there's been a certain skepticism about the capacity of even the desire of Middle Eastern peoples for self-government. We're told that Islam is somehow inconsistent with democratic culture. Yet more than half the world's Muslims are today contributing citizens in democratic societies. It is suggested that the poor, in their daily struggles, care little for self-government. Yet the poor, especially, need the power of democracy to defend themselves against corrupt elites. Peoples of the Middle East share a high civilization, a religion of personal responsibility, and a need for freedom as deep as our own. It is not realism to suppose that one-fifth of humanity is unsuited to liberty; it is pessimism and condescension, and we should have none of it.

We must shake off decades of failed policy in the Middle East. Your nation and mine, in the past, have been willing to make a bargain, to tolerate oppression for the sake of stability. Longstanding ties often led us to overlook the faults of local elites. Yet this bargain did not bring stability or make us safe. It merely bought time, while problems festered and ideologies of violence took hold. As recent history has shown, we cannot turn a blind eye to oppression just because the oppression is not in our own backyard. No longer should we think tyranny is benign because it is temporarily convenient....⁹⁴

⁹⁴ George W. Bush, "President Bush Discusses Iraq Policy at Whitehall Palace in London." November 19, 2003. available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/print/20031119-1.html

According to the US government, terrorism is not a response to oppression or injustice, as Osama bin Laden claimed in his televised remarks of October 2001;⁹⁵ it is a response to a lack of “the essentials of social and material progress,” a long list which conspicuously includes “limited government” and “economic liberty.”⁹⁶ Not coincidentally, these values are at the core of free-market democratization. Since 9/11 America has lobbied hard to roll back local economic regulations and introduce reforms to enable relatively unchecked capital flows into the region.⁹⁷ The protection of American security interests and the integration of the Middle East more closely into the globalized capitalist economy have been central concerns of the promotion of liberal values in the region.

The American government explicitly and enthusiastically identifies “American values” with the economic and security interests of the United States, and now aggressively promotes both in the Muslim countries of a broad swath of territory which the US now refers to as “The Greater Middle East.”⁹⁸ By the end of his first term in office, President George W. Bush had led the United States in the invasion and regime change of Afghanistan and Iraq. In his second inaugural address, Bush told the world that “America’s vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one...So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Bin Laden, “Complete Text: Bin Laden’s taped statements.”

⁹⁶ Bush, “President Bush Discusses Iraq Policy at Whitehall Palace in London.” available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/11/print/20031119-1.html

⁹⁷ See “Fact Sheet: Proposed Middle East Initiatives” May 9, 2003 available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/print/20030509-12.html

⁹⁸ “G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership Working Paper” published in *Al-Hayat*, February 13, 2004 p 1. available from the Middle East Intelligence Bulletin at www.meib.org

⁹⁹ George W. Bush, “President Sworn-In to Second Term,” January 20, 2005 www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/01/print/20050120-1.html

On its surface, this rhetoric suggests a desire to finally allow the Orient to speak for itself. In truth, it is firmly rooted in the long history of American liberal Orientalism, which has undergone another significant change since 9/11. It is now both more strident and more violent, but always works to protect and advance America's political and economic interests. The promotion of "freedom," generally understood as synonymous with the definition of "American values" provided in chapter one, has become the rhetorical centerpiece of US foreign policy. The government argues that only by successfully promoting liberal American models in "The Greater Middle East" can terrorism be defeated and national security assured; the very safety of the American way of life depends upon its adoption in the region. As Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters during a surprise visit to Baghdad in the spring of 2005, "the security interests of the United States call for a different kind of Middle East."¹⁰⁰

In this section, I will show how American-led democratization in "The Greater Middle East" demonstrates this aggressive new form of American Orientalism. To do this, I will focus on two major aspects of the current push for democratization. In chapter four, I will discuss the way that the US government puts its familiar Orientalist attitudes into action by prescribing a universally appropriate Western cure for a feeble Eastern patient, in this case the sweeping expanse of territory that is the so-called "Greater Middle East." Then in chapter five, I will show how the Coalition Provisional Authority's economic reconstruction program for occupied Iraq did not improve the lives of the Iraqi people, but instead reflected American political and economic interests, what Said might

¹⁰⁰ Christine Hauser, "In Visit to Iraq, Rice Urges Government to Forge Ahead" The New York Times, May 15, 2005

call acts of “willed human work”¹⁰¹ executed on the behalf of its Oriental subjects for the gain of Western business interests.

¹⁰¹ Said, Orientalism, p 15

Chapter Four

America puts it in Writing: The Greater Middle East Initiative

In the winter of 2004, the United States began secretly circulating a draft proposal for free-market and democratic reforms in the Middle East among members of the Group of 8 (G-8)¹⁰², an informal organization of the eight largest industrial economies in the world. Called the Greater Middle East Initiative (GMEI), it clearly put America's ambitions for the Middle East into writing. This initiative addressed the political and economic situation in an expansive swath of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Himalayas, a culturally and historically diverse group of states including the entire Arab world plus Israel, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. This area seems to be united by little except an uneven commitment to capitalism and democracy¹⁰³ and, with the exception of Israel, majority Muslim populations. The US government passed this draft among the G-8 members hoping that a rough consensus in support of it could be achieved so that it could be grandly unveiled and quickly endorsed at the June 2004 summit in Sea Island, Georgia. When the draft's existence, and America's sly diplomatic maneuvers, came to light it produced a torrent of anger and criticism that derailed the US government's hopes for a fast-track endorsement.

¹⁰² The member of the G-8 are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation the United Kingdom, and the United States. The European Union also sends representatives to summits as an observer. It is worth noting that every member, save Canada, has sought or administered a large empire at some point during the twentieth century.

¹⁰³ Turkey and Israel are both addressed by the GMEI, although the former is a democratic member of NATO and an aspiring member of the EU, and the latter operates a capitalist democratic system within its formal borders and an ethno-religiously based military regime within the Occupied Territories.

Neither the political leaders of these Islamic countries nor the liberal activists funded by western NGOs and think-tanks were consulted about the detailed changes proposed by the US in this document. The outline for reform was drawn out without consulting anyone who was expected to follow it, although it frequently references the 2002 Arab Human Development Report (AHDR), which argues that human development in the Arab world is held back by a “freedom deficit.” It is significant that this report does not equate freedom with democracy per se, nor with capitalism or any type of economic liberalism. Rather, the authors of the report acknowledge that freedom is difficult to quantify and that “the prevailing basis for assessments of such difficult-to-quantify phenomena as freedom smacks of bias and lack of rigour.”¹⁰⁴ In their study, they define freedom loosely as “various aspects of the political process, civil liberties, political rights and independence of the media” as well as “gender empowerment.”¹⁰⁵

The US response to the “freedom deficit” identified by the panel of Arab academics that authored the AHDR is to promote the loaded American definition of freedom in the region, for the sake of its national interests and those of its industrial allies. In its first lines the GMEI warns of the dangers that the backward societies of the GME pose to the developed world.

The GME region poses a unique challenge and opportunity for the international community. The three ‘deficits’ identified by the Arab authors of the 2002 and 2003 UN AHDR- freedom, knowledge, and women’s empowerment- have contributed to conditions that threaten the national interests of all G-8 members. So long as the region’s pool of politically and economically disenfranchised individuals grows, we will witness an increase in extremism, terrorism, international crime, and illegal migration.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ The Arab Human Development Report 2002 New York, NY: United Nations Development Program, Regional Bureau for Arab States, 2002 p 27

¹⁰⁵ The Arab Human Development Report 2002 p 28

¹⁰⁶ “G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership Working Paper” p 1. available from the Middle East Intelligence Bulletin at www.meib.org

It further warns the European members of the G-8 that “51% of older Arab youths expressed a desire to emigrate to other countries, according to the 2002 AHDR, with European countries the favorite destination.”¹⁰⁷ To end the “freedom deficit” and hold the Arab hordes back from the shores of Europe, the GMEI proposed the creation of free-market democracies across the broad region, and laid out a number of concrete steps that G-8 members could take to make this a reality. Some of the measures proposed in the GMEI amounted to little more than a continuation of US AID programs funded during the 1990s, such as augmenting UN literacy programs in the region and organizing “parliamentary exchanges” to give Middle Eastern politicians tours of and exposure to the functioning of European assemblies. Other proposals required more direct cultural or political meddling in the region by outsiders. The GMEI’s nonsensical solution to the paucity of new books published in the Arabic language annually is to propose that “each G-8 country fund a program to translate its classics in the [different academic] fields [so that] these books could then be donated to school, university and local libraries” along with reissued copies of what Arabic-language books have been published in the past. The proposal does little to encourage new writing or innovation by Arab authors, but encourages them to study the Eurocentric Western canon, that authoritative-sounding body of hostile scholarship from which the Orientalist tradition springs.

At its most troubling, the GMEI calls for the G-8 to assertively shepherd democratizing regimes through stringent economic liberalization measures. The document explicitly referring to the “shock therapy” programs imposed upon the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

republics of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s, which devastated Russian society. As economist John Gray writes of these over-zealous market reforms,

True, millions did not die of starvation; but fertility and life expectancy fell precipitously, leading to a population collapse on a scale unprecedented in a developed country. Most people survived by living on the produce of small land-holdings...The country fell back on subsistence agriculture.¹⁰⁸

Disinterested in the historical effects of such reform, the proposal pronounces that “closing the GME’s prosperity gap will require an economic transformation similar in magnitude to that undertaken by the formerly communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.”¹⁰⁹ It also recommends that G-8 members “increase [their] emphasis on WTO accession and implementation for countries in the region,”¹¹⁰ and that local governments encourage foreign investment by adopting strong economic deregulation measures and creating regional trade hubs to make capital flow faster and enable “‘one stop shopping’ for foreign investors.”¹¹¹ The GMEI also calls for the creation of “Business Incubator Zones (BIZ)” modeled on export processing zones, in which multinational businesses could “design, manufacture and market their products”¹¹² with the help of cheap local labour. Throughout the text of the initiative, no reference is made to the social consequences of these suggested reforms, or to whether or not the people of the region even want the industrial and financial giants of the global economy to so harshly and cavalierly remedy their economic backwardness.

¹⁰⁸ John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern*. New York: The New Press, 2003 p 46

¹⁰⁹ “G-8 Greater Middle East Partnership Working Paper” p 7

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 8. At the time of the GMEI’s publication in *al-Hayat*, Algeria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, Syria and Iraq had all applied for membership in the WTO, although none had yet been approved.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*,

¹¹² *Ibid.* pp 8-9

When it was leaked to London-based Arabic-language newspaper *al-Hayat* and published on February 13, 2004 the GMEI caused an uproar in the “Greater Middle East” and was sharply criticized within the United States as well. Unsurprisingly, many of the region’s authoritarian leaders responded angrily and defensively, especially America’s regional allies who had not been consulted on the future that Uncle Sam had planned for them. Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia attacked the plan as an attempt to “dictate change,”¹¹³ and said that it would not change its political system “to get a report of good behaviour” from the United States.¹¹⁴ Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, a brutal authoritarian ruler and the recipient of \$8.1 billion in American economic and military assistance for fiscal years 2002-2004¹¹⁵ announced through his regime’s three semiofficial daily newspapers that

Whoever imagines that it is possible to impose solutions or reform from abroad on any society or region is delusional. All peoples by their nature reject whoever tries to impose idea on them. [The Bush Administration] is behaving as if the region and its states do not exist, as if they have no people or societies, no sovereignty over their land, no ownership.¹¹⁶

The opposition daily, *Al-Wafd*, struck a similarly defiant tone when it published a lengthy opinion piece chastising the American government and rejecting the GMEI on July 9, 2004. It wrote:

If some American officials were demanding to impose a certain type of policy on an Arab state, this would totally contradict the principle of sovereignty, and such American behaviour would be unacceptable. We must not submit to such political and economic restrictions, because democracy can only stem from the country itself.

¹¹³ Quoted in Steven R. Weisman and Neil MacFarquhar “US Plan for Mideast Reform Draws Ire of Arab Leaders.” *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2004 p 3

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Glenn Kessler and Robin Wright, “US Mideast Initiative Faces Arab Backlash.” *The Washington Post*, March 21, 2004 p A19

¹¹⁵ “Paper Says US Using Aid to Press Egypt to Accept US Policy.” *BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political*, July 11, 2004 p 3

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Steven R. Weisman and Neil MacFarquhar “US Plan for Mideast Reform Draws Ire of Arab Leaders.” *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2004 p 3

The countries of the Middle East can understand their political conditions and the possibility of reforms in them more than others can.¹¹⁷

Despite the regional backlash against this proposal, it was endorsed by the G-8 in June 2004, although no G-8 member committed to actively pursuing any of the specific step outlined on the GMEI's agenda.¹¹⁸

In the year since the GMEI was endorsed by the G-8, there have been a number of potentially positive developments for democratic movements in the region, although neither the Initiative nor America's self-proclaimed mission to "use [its] influence and idealism"¹¹⁹ to spread free-market democracy in the Middle East deserve much credit. The US cut funding for the GMEI by a third after the program's first year and none of its specific recommendations have been translated into policy. Administration officials have anonymously disparaged the GMEI in *The Washington Post* as "a gigantic gabfest," one admitting that "I don't know anyone who thinks this a serious way to promote reform."¹²⁰ Meanwhile, America's strong relationship with regional autocrats persists, and the Bush Administration shows no serious sign of lessening its long-standing support. While the United States has campaigned for the release of jailed political dissidents in Egypt and persuaded Mubarak to allow multiparty competition in the 2005 elections. But it overlooks highly restrictive election laws decried by Egyptian democracy activists as a scheme to rig the election by barring any competitor with a shot at beating him,¹²¹

¹¹⁷ 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, "Secret Meetings, Public Pressure, and Official Denials." *Al-Wafd*, July 9, 2004 p 5

¹¹⁸ Philip Dine, "G-8 Summit: Mending Fences." *The Seattle Times*. June 8, 2004 p A3

¹¹⁹ George W. Bush, "President Bush Presses for Peace in the Middle East: Remarks by the President in Commencement Address at the University of South Carolina." May 9, 2003. available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/print/20030509-11.html

¹²⁰ Robin Wright, "Campaign To Change Mideast Under Fire: U.S. Cites Actions Behind the Scenes" *The Washington Post* June 9, 2005 p A18

¹²¹ "Egypt Lawmakers Approve Election Rules." *The New York Times*, May 9, 2005 p A3

writing them off as “a first step for free and fair elections in Egypt.”¹²² It invaded and militarily occupied Iraq to impose a democratic structure there, and supports Lebanese democracy advocates who oppose its Syrian enemy, but has remained silent on the incarceration of democratic activists in Saudi Arabia and has maintained a strong relationship with its ruling monarchy.¹²³

Once again, America is promoting its liberal values in the Middle East as a means of advancing its economic and political interests. For the United States government, the promotion of American values through vehicles like the GMEI does not reflect a *selfless* and patronizing desire to help the Oriental natives adopt the system that it knows will serve *them* best, but a *selfish* and patronizing desire to help them adopt the system that it knows will serve *itself* best. Economic reforms that will benefit American business interests and local elites are emphasized as important steps on the road to freedom and democracy. As Bush has explained,

Across the globe, free markets and trade have helped defeat poverty, and taught men and women the habits of liberty. So I propose the establishment of a US-Middle East free trade area within a decade, to bring the Middle East into an expanding circle of opportunity, to provide hope for the people who live in that region.¹²⁴

America has not pushed its allies to end their authoritarian ways with as much vigor as it pursues the creation of free-trade areas from which it could profit, or their accession to global trade bodies like the WTO, which it has dominated since their inception. As the President of the Institute of International Economics, C. Fred Bergsten, put it during Senate hearings on the ratification of the WTO Agreement,

¹²² Laura Bush, “Briefing by the First Lady to the Press Pool.” May 24, 2005 available from the US Embassy, London UK at <http://www.usembassy.org.uk/midest631.html>

¹²³ Wright, “Campaign To Change Mideast Under Fire” p A18

¹²⁴ “Fact Sheet: Proposed Middle East Initiatives- Promoting Economic Growth.” May 9, 2003. Available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/print/20030509-12.html

[The WTO] does not work by voting. It works by a consensus arrangement which, to tell the truth, is managed by four- the Quads: the United States, Japan, European Union, and Canada... Those countries have to agree if any major steps are going to be made. But no votes.¹²⁵

In the case of Egypt, a free trade agreement is held out as a reward for the greater economic liberalization and the completion of the 2005 presidential election, which many believe has already been rigged to ensure the impossibility of democratic regime change.¹²⁶ At the same time as the First Lady of the United States describes President Mubarak and his wife Suzanne as “literally, friend[s] for years,”¹²⁷ and the United States continues to provide the Egyptian state with over \$3 billion in aid a year,¹²⁸ the state tries to rig the 2005 election through convoluted laws,¹²⁹ sweeps the hometowns and neighbourhoods of suspected militants with mass arrests,¹³⁰ and targets protesting democracy activists with police brutality and sexual assault.¹³¹

Free-market capitalism is billed as a universal ideal which can teach the people of the GME “the habits of liberty.” The large potential profits that American and other multinational corporations stand to make off the establishment of a US-GME free trade pact are an unmentioned motive. Whether or not a free and fair democratic election actually takes place in Egypt is less important than the economic arrangements being made, and the baby steps which the regime claims are being taken. For the people of

¹²⁵ C. Fred Bergsten, Testimony before the US Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Technology, Washington, DC; October 13, 1994

¹²⁶ Elizabeth Becker, “Bush Ties Trade Pact with Egypt to More Freedom.” *The New York Times*, May 19, 2005 p A4

¹²⁷ Bush, “Briefing by the First Lady to the Press Pool.”

¹²⁸ Hudson, “To Play the Hegemon”

¹²⁹ “Egypt Lawmakers Approve Election Rules.” *The New York Times*, May 9, 2005 p A3

¹³⁰ Neil MacFarquhar and Mona al-Naggar “Bombing at Cairo Tourist Site Leaves 2 Dead, 18 Wounded.” *The New York Times*, April 8, 2005 p A16

¹³¹ Michael Slackman, “Assault on Women at Protest Stirs Anger, not Fear, in Egypt.” *The New York Times*, June 10, 2005. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/10/international/africa/10egypt.html>

Egypt, this is the face of the new American Orientalism. But no where in the so-called “Greater Middle East” has this face loomed larger than in Iraq.

Chapter Five

The Object of Our Investment: Iraq is Open for Business

On the evening of March 19, 2003, the United States invaded Iraq. That night, at 10:16 pm Eastern Standard Time, President Bush addressed the nation to explain that the invasion was an important step in defeating terrorism and protecting American values at home and abroad. He reassured his TV audience that “[we] enter this conflict reluctantly, yet our purpose is sure” and that the war was

A military operation to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from a grave danger.... We will meet that threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines, so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of fire fighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities.... We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail.¹³²

The United States quickly conquered the country and established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), a civilian bureaucracy which worked closely with the US Department of Defense (DOD) to administer and economically reconstruct Iraq. The CPA was advised by the Iraqi Governing Council, an appointed group of prominent Iraqis and Iraqi exiles who ran day-to-day operations in a number of ministries. It also prepared for the transfer of sovereignty to an Interim Government appointed in June 2004, at which point both the Governing Council itself and the CPA were formally dissolved. The Interim Government’s task was to govern the country while preparing for elections held in January 2005. After the elections, the Interim Government relinquished

¹³² George W. Bush, “President Bush Addresses the Nation: The Oval Office.” March 19, 2003. Available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/print/20030319-17.html

power to an elected transitional one, whose task was to write a constitution that all parties in Iraq could live with. Once a constitution was agreed to another election would be held and power would change hands once again with the establishment of a permanent representative government.¹³³ By June 2005, the Transitional National Assembly had begun writing the constitution, while politicians in both Iraq and the United States held their breath.

Before the war, the US government provided three main reasons for the invasion. It would disarm Iraq and protect the world from weapons of mass destruction which the US insisted Iraq either possessed or would soon acquire; punish the Iraqi regime for its alleged involvement in the September 11th attacks; and remove Hussein from power. Most importantly, it would nobly act on behalf of the Iraqi people to replace a socialist dictatorship with a capitalist democracy and “[accept] obligations that are difficult to fulfill and would be dishonorable to abandon” so that “the untamed fire of freedom will reach the darkest corners of the world.”¹³⁴ In the nineteenth century, this rationale for war would have been justified as “lifting the white man’s burden.” In 2005, it’s called advancing “the forward strategy of freedom.”¹³⁵

Over the course of the occupation weapons inspectors could find no WMD;¹³⁶ and a chorus of commentators including the bi-partisan Congressional 9/11 Commission realized that “no compelling case” could be made to connect the Iraq to Al Qaeda.¹³⁷ During the long course of events between March 2003 and the January 2005 elections,

¹³³ Iraqi Interim Government: Announcement Ceremony Press Packet available at www.cpa-iraq.org

¹³⁴ Bush, “President Sworn-in to Second Term.”

¹³⁵ Bush, “Remarks at the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy”

¹³⁶ Glenn Frankel, “Blair Admits Mistake on WMD Claim; Decision to Oust Hussein Defended at Party Forum.” *The Washington Post*, September 29, 2004 p A21

¹³⁷ The 9/11 Commission Report Washington DC: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003 p 334

promoting free-market democracy emerged as the central and all-important reason for the war, and the Coalition Provisional Authority imposed a number of laws to ensure that this goal was realized. Despite the election of a democratic government, the American *mission démocratique* continues into the summer of 2005.

Coalition military forces still exercise broad power within Iraq. They train and command the ill-equipped Iraqi army and battle a powerful and violent rebellion against both the occupying forces and the Iraqi state.¹³⁸ In June 2005, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld admitted that because of the rebellion “statistically, [Iraq is] no more safe than in 2003...But clearly it has been getting better as we’ve gone along, [and] a lot of bad things that could have happened have not happened.”¹³⁹ The US military remains in the country “to help establish the stability and security that democracy requires,” and that will calm the nerves of potentially nervous multinational corporations. The US government is counting on their investment in “The New Iraq” to rebuild its dilapidated infrastructure and show its people the benefits of free-market American values. They are the key to Iraqi reconstruction, and it cannot begin in earnest until they are confident their bets will pay off. Democratization is a big investment.

In this section, I focus on the extreme liberalization of the Iraqi economy under the CPA and the accompanying campaign to convince American and other Western multinational corporations that “Iraq is an attractive investment.”¹⁴⁰ These new economic laws represent the boldest face of America’s new Orientalist project in the GME because they are the clearest indication of what economic and political forms it wants to see there.

¹³⁸ Bryan Bender, “US Hiring Goals Fall Far Short in Reconstruction: Up to 30% Jobless in Iraq.” *The Boston Globe*, July 11, 2004 p A6

¹³⁹ “Iraq ‘no more safe than in 2003.’” *Agence France-Presse*, June 15, 2003

¹⁴⁰ “Doing Business in Iraq” promotional pamphlet, p 2 available at http://www.cpa-iraq.org/economy/business_in_Iraq.pdf

While the GMEI put America's ambitions for the region into writing, the CPA put them into action. It created a legal framework for the "liberated" Iraqi state based on over 100 edicts issued by its Administrator, L. Paul Bremer III. These edicts set strict rules for how the Iraqi political and economic system could be organized. This was a plainly undemocratic move, and in light of the Americans' stated objective "to help Iraq achieve democracy and freedom,"¹⁴¹ it was deeply hypocritical. Their content embodies the free-market "American values" which the US has promoted in the region for centuries, and which it hoped the GMEI would spread. They are significant because they demonstrate what the United States chose to do, what political and economic values it chose to impose and which interests it chose to promote, when its power over the Orient was absolute.

From Sanctions to Free Trade

During the 1990s, Iraq's political life was dominated by the Hussein regime, but its economic life was dominated by an economic sanctions regime imposed by the UN Security Council, which the United States firmly supported. The sanctions were imposed on August 6th, 1990 after Iraq invaded neighbouring Kuwait, an act of aggression that threatened the security of nearby oil giant Saudi Arabia and provoked the First Gulf War.¹⁴² The sanctions were meant to force Iraq's surrender, and were timed to coincide with a multilateral military effort dubbed Operation Desert Storm. As a *New York Times* headline from the time declares, the United States "[Bet] Its Troops Will Deter Iraq

¹⁴¹ George W. Bush, "President Outlines Steps to Help Iraq Achieve Democracy and Freedom: Remarks by the President on Iraq and the War on Terror" Given at United States Army War College, Carlisle, PA; May 24, 2004. Available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/print/20040524-10.html

¹⁴² Thomas L. Friedman, "Bush, Hinting at Force, Declares Iraqi Assault 'Will Not Stand;' Proxy in Kuwait Issues Threat." *The New York Times*; August 6, 1990, p A1

While Sanctions Do the Real Fighting.”¹⁴³ Although there is disagreement among Western demographers, the most reliable estimate of Iraqi casualties from the First Gulf War and its immediate aftermath is 111,000.¹⁴⁴ The Security Council originally considered an unprecedented embargo of all goods, including medical supplies and foodstuffs.¹⁴⁵ Although the measure it eventually adopted, Resolution 661, does allow the import of “supplies intended strictly for medical purposes, and, in humanitarian circumstances, foodstuffs,”¹⁴⁶ it still imposed the most severe sanctions regime in history.

At the end of the First Gulf War the Security Council modified the sanctions through Resolution 687, which allowed the import of “materials and supplies for essential civilian needs”¹⁴⁷ and set the conditions with which Iraq must comply for the blockade to be lifted. These included defining its border with Kuwait, dismantling its capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and committing to pay war reparations. In May 1996, the Security Council modified the sanctions once again under Resolution 986, which reaffirmed that Hussein must accept the conditions set by Resolution 687 and created the Oil-for-Food Program. This allowed Iraq to export \$1 billion in oil over a 90-day renewable period and empowered the UN to purchase humanitarian goods on behalf of the Iraqi people with the profits from the sale.¹⁴⁸ Hussein refused to comply by the UN

¹⁴³ Andrew Rosenthal, “Confrontation in the Gulf; Strategy: Embargo; U.S. Bets Its Troops Will Deter Iraq While Sanctions Do the Real Fighting.” *The New York Times*; August 9, 1990, p A14

¹⁴⁴ Jack Kelly, “Estimates of Deaths in First War Still in Dispute.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 16, 2003, p A11

¹⁴⁵ P. Conlon, “Lessons from Iraq: The Functions of the Iraq Sanctions Committee as a Source of Sanctions and Implementation Authority and Practice,” *Virginia Journal of International Law* No. 633 (Spring 1995) p 636

¹⁴⁶ UN Security Council Resolution 661, (August 6, 1990) section 3C. Available at <http://www.fas.org/news/un/iraq/sres/sres0661.htm>

¹⁴⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 687, (April 3, 1991) paragraph 20 Available at www.fas.org/news/un/iraq/sres/sres0687.htm

¹⁴⁸ *Unsanctioned Suffering: A Human Rights Assessment of United Nations Sanctions on Iraq*. Washington, DC: The Center for Economic and Social Rights, May 1996, Chapter 1 p 2. Available at <http://cesr.org/node/view/393>. Accessed July 6, 2005.

these conditions; the US and UK frequently denied Iraqi requests for items such as pencils, textbooks and spare parts for ambulances as “non-essential;”¹⁴⁹ and the sanctions continued for twelve years.

The strong support of the US and the UK was essential to the sanctions longevity. Both believed that crushing a civilian population was an acceptable way of dislodging its brutal authoritarian ruler, and neither was moved by the ever-expanding humanitarian crisis their tactic caused. The sanctions destroyed the Iraqi economy and caused the value of its currency to collapse because it was cut off from almost all sources of foreign exchange. Wages were stagnant while prices soared. The average price of most basic foodstuffs increased 15-fold during the first year of the sanctions, although the price of wheat flour increased 11,667-fold.¹⁵⁰ With the currency worth so little, the meager amount of medicine and food that was imported was beyond most people’s reach. The frequency of malnutrition and related diseases increased 50-fold, and the country’s public health system began to collapse. Iraqi water and sewage systems once treated water for 93% of the urban and 70% of the rural population, but under sanctions water treatment began operated at 50% capacity while sewage treatment stopped functioning altogether.¹⁵¹ Hospitals were flooded with an increase in both chronic diseases like cancer and diabetes, and preventable infections like diarrhea, pneumonia, whooping cough and typhoid.¹⁵² While America’s tactic-of-choice for toppling Hussein failed to

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Chapter 1, pp 1

¹⁵⁰ Technical Cooperation Programme: Evaluation of Food and Nutrition Situation in Iraq. New York: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, September 1995 p 10

¹⁵¹ Roger Normand, “Iraqi Sanctions, Human Rights and International Law” *Middle East Report* No. 200 (July-September 1996) pp 41

¹⁵² Proposal for Water and Environmental Sanitation Project. New York: United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), August 1994 p 1

remove him from power, an estimated 500,000 children under the age of five died of causes related to the sanctions by 1996.¹⁵³

The lives and deaths of the Iraqi people meant little, if anything at all, to American policymakers. In 1996 Madeleine Albright, US ambassador to the UN and Secretary of State during the Clinton presidency, was interviewed on the TV news program *60 Minutes* by reporter Lesley Stahl. Stahl asked Albright about the humanitarian cost of “containing” Saddam: “We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that’s more than died in Hiroshima. And, and you know, is the price worth it?” Albright responded:

I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think the price is worth it. Don’t we owe it to the American people and the American military and to the other countries in the region that [Saddam Hussein] not be a threat? My first responsibility is to make sure that US forces do not have to go and refight the Gulf War.¹⁵⁴

The embargo may have failed to dislodge Saddam, but after the Gulf War ended America’s focus shifted to the defense of its interests in the region. The US found the civilian casualties inflicted by the sanctions to be perfectly justifiable because it had an obligation to itself and the people of the Orient to do whatever it decided was necessary to contain a threat to its oil interests. During the First Gulf War, oil prices fluctuated wildly in US markets, sending ripples through “other markets worldwide, affecting trillions of dollars in investments.”¹⁵⁵ Hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties were a more affordable price to pay than whatever shock would be sent through world oil markets if Iraq was allowed to threaten its oil-rich neighbours again. With American

¹⁵³ UNsanctioned Suffering, Chapter 1, p 1

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Mahmoud Mamdani, Good Muslim, bad Muslim : America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004 p

¹⁵⁵ Rick Gladstone, “War Rumors Buffet Markets: Oil Surges Again” *Associated Press*, August 7, 1990

economic interests defined as the greater good, the US was able to justify the sanctions regime as an obligation it owed to the defense of the world.

The sanctions were not lifted until March 22, 2003, three days into the American invasion that began the Second Gulf War. The Security Council resolution which dropped the embargo also empowered the CPA to redesign and rebuild the Iraqi political and economic system, providing it with a multilaterally approved mandate for any future reconstruction plans and giving the occupation the glow of international legal approval that the invasion itself so lacked.¹⁵⁶ Resolution 1483 announced that “all prohibitions related to trade with Iraq and the provision of financial or economic resources to Iraq established by resolution 661 (1990) and subsequent relevant resolutions...shall no longer apply.”¹⁵⁷ It further called upon all member states to “help meet the humanitarian and other needs of the Iraqi people by providing food, medical supplies, and resources necessary for reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq’s economic infrastructure.”¹⁵⁸ In particular, it called upon the CPA “to promote the welfare of the Iraqi people through the effective administration of the territory”¹⁵⁹ and “[to promote] economic reconstruction and the conditions for sustainable development.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Some writers have criticized Resolution 1483 as internally inconsistent because it calls for economic reconstruction and the establishment of a representative Iraqi government, but it also calls upon all member states to abide by the Hague Regulations of 1907, Article 43 of which states that military occupiers must “restore, an ensure, as far as possible, public order and safety, while respecting, unless absolutely prevented, the laws in force in the country.” This would make it illegal for an occupier to change the laws, as the CPA has done, seemingly with the authorization of Resolution 1483. For a longer discussion of the legality and internal consistency of Resolution 1483, see Daphne Eviatar, “Free-Market Iraq? Not So Fast.” *The New York Times*, January 10, 2004 p B9. For the text of the Hague Regulations of 1907, see Adam Roberts and Richard Guelff. Documents on the Laws of War. Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2000 pp 67-73.

¹⁵⁷ UN Security Council Resolution 1483 (March 2003) section 10

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. section 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. section 4

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. section 8e

The resolution also provided the CPA with the start-up funds it would need to begin rebuilding Iraqi infrastructure. It transferred all remaining funds in the Oil-for-Food Program's bank account, as well as all Iraqi government assets including those seized abroad, into a newly created Development Fund for Iraq. The CPA was given discretionary power over the DFI, which at its peak held a balance of over US\$20 billion.¹⁶¹ The Federal Reserve Bank of New York was named the Development Fund's banker, and activity within its account would be monitored by an oversight body composed of "qualified representatives of the [UN] Secretary-General, of the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, of the Director-General of the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, and of the President of the World Bank."¹⁶² With the Hussein regime toppled and the UN providing generously for the first weeks of its occupation, America began what President Bush called "the work of building a new Iraq."¹⁶³

In his first official message to the Iraqi people, Bremer reassured them that "we came here to give you...freedom, and to protect [it] as we help you build your own democratic future for your country... We, the coalition, are continuing to do all we can to improve the lives of all Iraqi citizens."¹⁶⁴ But within the first month of occupation, many Iraqi industries were ruined by a combination of free-market fervor and administrative incompetence. The sanctions had put Iraqi industry in a uniquely weak situation vis-à-vis potential global competitors. Astronomical inflation made technological upgrades an

¹⁶¹ Erik Eckholm, "Financial Controls in Iraq are Criticized by Overseers." *The New York Times*, July 16, 2004 p A10 and "The Iraq Reconstruction Fiasco." Editorial piece. *The New York Times*, August 9, 2004 p A14

¹⁶² UNSC Resolution 1483, section 12

¹⁶³ George W. Bush, "State of the Union Address, 2004." Available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/print/20040120-7.html

¹⁶⁴ "Text of Ambassador Paul Bremer's Message to the Iraqi People." July 3, 2003. Available at www.cpa-iraq.org

impossible fantasy and ground production of many non-essential items to a near halt. State-owned industries employed around 10% of the entire workforce and sustained hundreds of thousands of people through the hard sanction years on meager salaries which, if nothing else, were at least regularly paid.

Regardless of the hundreds of thousands of people who depended upon these industries to survive or of the potential shock of abrupt trade liberalization, the US was committed to bringing its free-market values to Iraq. Speaking in May 2003, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld attacked restrictions on the free-market as totalitarian, and hyperbolically told the Council on Foreign Relations that in the New Iraq, “market systems will be favored, not Stalinist command systems.”¹⁶⁵ By June 2005 the CPA put this vision into action, striking down the country’s tight trade regulations and opening it to a flood of cheap imports, many from other Gulf states. Unable to compete, Iraqi industry was dealt a crushing blow.¹⁶⁶

Less than a month later at a World Economic Forum summit in Jordan, Bremer explained the abrupt and overwhelming transition from near-total embargo to near-free trade. He told the audience of economists, venture-capitalists and Western CEOs that, for the United States

[our] most immediate priority [is] ensuring that political freedom is accompanied by economic freedom. The nation's liberation would be incomplete if Iraqis were secure in their persons, but not their property, if Iraqis looked forward to rising political representation, but stagnant living standards.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Donald H. Rumsfeld, “Council on Foreign Relations (Transcript)” May 27, 2003 Available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20030527-secdef0245.html>

¹⁶⁶ Edmund L. Andrews, “After Years of Stagnation, Iraqi Industries Are Falling to a Wave of Imports.” *The New York Times*, June 1, 2003, p A24

¹⁶⁷ Address by L. Paul Bremer to the “World Economic Forum Global Reconciliation Summit,” Shumeh, Jordan. June 23, 2003.

Bremer's appeals to "liberation" and "economic freedom" bore little resemblance to what was happening in the streets of Iraq. During the early weeks of his rule, the country was thrown into chaotic spasms of looting, gang violence, bombings and black-outs that made Iraqis neither secure in their persons nor their property. People feared for their lives, and the violence, chaos and breakdown of the electrical grid also shut down most local businesses and industries. After the triple shock of invasion, looting, and sudden trade liberalization, many simply never re-opened.¹⁶⁸

The Reconstruction Racket

Most Iraqis had no choice but to live with the hardships of occupation, although from within the relative safety of the Washington Beltway or Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, the American politicians and bureaucrats deciding the future of Iraq could easily ignore the nasty reality of life under occupation. The CPA argued that abrupt trade liberalization was going to improve Iraqi lives and raise the standard of living, but by the time the CPA was dissolved in June 2004 it was clear that this had not happened. In addition to jobs lost as a result of the shock of suddenly liberalized trade policies, 350,000 jobs were destroyed when Bremer signed Order 2 into law. This edict dissolved the Iraqi armed forces, defense and intelligence ministries and provided no severance or back pay to the hundreds of thousands of people who depended upon these salaries.¹⁶⁹ A week after the CPA gave power to the Interim Government, *The Boston Globe* reported

¹⁶⁸ Andrews, "After Years of Stagnation, Iraqi Industries Are Falling to a Wave of Imports." p A24

¹⁶⁹ Michael R. Gordon, "Debate Lingered on Decision To Dissolve the Iraqi Military." *The New York Times*, October 21, 2004 p A1. The text of Order 2 is available at http://www.iraqcoalition.org/regulations/20030823_CPAORD_2_Dissolution_of_Entities_with_Annex_A.pdf

that “the unemployment rate in Iraq is as high as 30%, while a similar percentage are considered underemployed, meaning more than half the country is either without work or making less than a living wage.”¹⁷⁰

This level of underemployment has changed little since the Hussein regime. The CPA’s reconstruction plans had created far fewer jobs than promised. When Baghdad fell, the CPA announced that soon 250,000 Iraqis would be set to work on reconstruction projects around the country. A month before Bremer handed formal sovereignty over to the Interim Government, that number was revised down to 50,000. When the handover occurred, fewer than 20,000 of those jobs had been created.¹⁷¹ What new jobs had been created were generally short-term, like construction work. Once the project was completed, the labourers were unemployed again.¹⁷²

The other major source of employment in the New Iraq is the new Iraqi army and police forces that the CPA and Department of Defense have tried to build from scratch. Their efforts have been beset by administrative, security and morale problems. A soldiers’ salary is generally between \$300- \$400 a month, although many recruits have gone without pay for months at a time. Morale is hurt by the irregular pay and the hostility and suspicion with which their American commanders treat them. A year after the dissolution of the CPA, *The Washington Post* reported that US soldiers refuse to share barracks, equipment or basic information with the Iraqi soldiers out of fear that they could secretly be insurgents or terrorists. American soldiers ride armored Humvees, use modern and well-cared for weaponry and sleep in air conditioned barracks while some of

¹⁷⁰ Bender, “US Hiring Goals Fall Far Short in Reconstruction” p A6

¹⁷¹ James Glanz and Erik Eckholm. “Reality Intrudes on Promises in Rebuilding of Iraq.” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2004 p A1

¹⁷² Bryan Bender, “Bush Sees ‘Steady Progress’ in Iraq, Bremer Outlines Plans for Next Four Months.” *The Boston Globe*, July 24, 2003 p A15

their Iraqi counterparts search for rebels in open-backed pick-up trucks, fight with jammed weapons held together by shoe-laces, and sleep on concrete floors in un-air conditioned sheds without walls. As one soldier remarked to *The Washington Post*, “We can’t tell these guys about a lot of stuff, because we’re not really sure who’s good and who isn’t...part of me says [the Iraqi army can] never [operate independently]. There’s some cultural issues that I don’t think they’ll ever get through. We like to refer to the Iraqi army as preschoolers with guns.”¹⁷³

Reconstruction efforts continued through the transfer of power in June 2004, although a number of newspapers and governmental and international research and oversight bodies gave the departing CPA some bad news. In June, the US General Accounting Office delivered a report to Congress warning that basic services like clean water, sewage treatment, and electrical service “in the country as a whole [had] not shown a marked improvement over the immediate postwar levels of March 2003, and [had] worsened in some cases.”¹⁷⁴ Very few reconstruction projects had actually been started in Iraq, despite an \$18.4 billion special Congressional appropriation given to the CPA for reconstruction projects in the fall of 2003. Since then, only 140 of the 2,300 promised projects had begun, and only \$5.2 billion of the total Congressional grant had been earmarked for defined tasks.¹⁷⁵ The White House Office of Management reported that just 2% of the money allocated by Congress had actually changed hands, and that nearly 50% of the money that had been allocated was being used to cover administrative

¹⁷³ Quote from Sergeant Rick McGovern, who leads military training exercises for the Iraqi Army’s Charlie Company. In Anthony Shadid and Steve Fainaru. “Building Iraq’s Army: Mission Impossible; Project in North Reveals Deep Divide Between U.S. and Iraqi Forces.” *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2005 p A1

¹⁷⁴ Rebuilding Iraq: Resources, Security, Governance, Essential Services and Oversight Issues. Washington DC: US General Accounting Office, June 2004 p 4

¹⁷⁵ Glanz and Eckholm, “Reality Intrudes on Promises in Rebuilding of Iraq.” p A1

and security costs.¹⁷⁶ Meanwhile, repairs on water and sewage treatment plants in Baghdad were reported to be months behind schedule, and the repair schedules for facilities in the south of the country had been totally scrapped and are now considered to be years away from functioning properly.¹⁷⁷

In July 2004, the oversight board of the Development Fund for Iraq criticized the Coalition Authority for the secrecy and lack of accountability with which it burned through the \$20 billion balance of the DFI. Rather than wait for the Interim Government to take over the account in July 2004, the CPA splurged much of the Fund on no-bid contracts to major American multinationals like the Halliburton Company. Halliburton was awarded a \$1.5 billion contract from the DFI's coffers, and the CPA and Department of Defense refused to provide the International Advisory and Monitoring Board on Iraq with any details about the transaction.¹⁷⁸ Illustrating the waste outlined in the White Office of Management report, rather than employ local Iraqis Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg, Brown & Root reportedly imported thousands of foreign workers to do simple tasks like clerical work and truck driving, for which it paid them excessive salaries upwards of \$100,000 to be sent back to their home countries.¹⁷⁹ Beset by rampant unemployment, poverty, administrative corruption, and a rebellion which has claimed over 12,000 civilians lives, it is difficult to see concrete proof of American claims that the invasion, occupation and reconstruction regime has made individual Iraqi lives much better.

¹⁷⁶ Reported in Bender. "US Hiring Goals Fall Far Short in Reconstruction." p A6 This is addressed in Quarterly Update to Congress, 2207 Report: July 2004 Washington, DC: White House Office of Management and Budget pp 9-14. Available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/2207_exec_summary_final.pdf

¹⁷⁷ Glanz and Eckholm. "Reality Intrudes on Promises of Rebuilding in Iraq," p A1

¹⁷⁸ Eckholm, "Financial Controls in Iraq are Criticized by Overseers." p A10

¹⁷⁹ Bender, "US Hiring Goals Fall Far Short in Reconstruction" p A6

After a decade of sanctions, the CPA had its work cut out for it, but propelled by an ideological commitment to free-market values and plagued by poor decisions, it badly mismanaged reconstruction efforts. It dissolved the Iraqi military in an act of short-sighted incompetence, unemploying and infuriating hundreds of thousands of trained soldiers and causing further hardship for their families. Driven by ideological fervor, the CPA submerged Iraq in a “shock therapy” regime that liberalized its trade policy in one fell swoop and wiped out what local businesses had survived the sanctions. The American reconstruction plan focused on luring foreign corporations to invest in Iraq, with many contracts awarded with no oversight from Iraqi bodies, rather than on providing the security for the Iraqis to organize their own communities. With their local industries collapsing and foreign multinationals importing a foreign workforce, many Iraqis were a captive audience to the reconstruction of their own country. Despite the suffering caused by the simultaneous shocks of occupation, rebellion, and free-market economic transformation, the CPA continued its reforms undeterred, and codified them in a series of edicts which determined the framework of the new Iraqi legal system.

Marketing “The New Iraq”

At the 2003 WEF summit in Jordan, Bremer promised that the United States would impose further economic reforms in Iraq which would “lower barriers to entry for new firms...lift unreasonable restrictions on property rights...[and] develop an open-

market trade policy.”¹⁸⁰ On September 19, 2004 the CPA delivered on its promises by imposing Orders 37, 38, 39 and 40. These edicts drastically changed the economic role of the state, and turned Iraq into one of the most liberalized economies in the world by imposing a free trade regime, like the one which the US hoped the GMEI would spread throughout the region. These created a great opportunity for multinational corporations from across the industrial world to benefit from “the opportunities available in [Iraq’s] market and the potential of its people”¹⁸¹ and turn a large profit. The edicts became the centerpiece of a CPA campaign to attract foreign investors, who were told that they played a pivotal role in the future freedom and happiness of the Iraqi people. It was all part of a campaign to market “The New Iraq.”

The new laws were explained simply and accessibly for eager Anglophone investors by a colorful pamphlet distributed by the CPA entitled *Doing Business in Iraq*.¹⁸² It outlines the free-market regime which the US imposed upon its conquered Oriental territory with the help of brightly colored type-face and sunny photographs of Western corporate logos transliterated into Arabic script. Order 37 is a “new tax law [which] provides a maximum marginal income tax rate of 15% for both corporations and individuals,”¹⁸³ a huge drop from the previous maximum income tax of 45% and one of the lowest tax rates in the world.¹⁸⁴ Order 38 addresses tariffs and trade, and “provides for free trade and a two-year 5% tariff to help finance reconstruction.”¹⁸⁵ Order 40 institutes wide-reaching banking reform, which, according to Iraqi Finance Minister

¹⁸⁰ Address by L. Paul Bremer to the “World Economic Forum Global Reconciliation Summit.” Shumeh, Jordan, June 23, 2003

¹⁸¹ “Doing Business in Iraq.” p 4

¹⁸² Available at the website of the Coalition Provisional Authority at www.cpa-iraq.org

¹⁸³ “Doing Business in Iraq.” p 2

¹⁸⁴ Becky Branford, “US Legacy for Iraqi Economy” BBC News, April 7, 2005.

¹⁸⁵ “Doing Business in Iraq.” p 2

Kamel al-Gailani, “permits six foreign banks to purchase up to 100% of local banks within the next five years. After five years, there will be no limitations on foreign bank entry.”¹⁸⁶

Finally, the glossy investment pamphlet introduces the centerpiece of the CPA’s free-market reforms, Order 39. This new law “promotes and safeguards the general welfare and interests of the Iraqi people...through the protection of the rights and property of foreign investors.”¹⁸⁷ In a sharp change from the formerly state-run economy, it announces that “the law permits 100% foreign ownership of businesses in all sectors except oil and mineral extraction. The foreign investment law permits unrestricted, tax-free remittance of profits. Foreigners and foreign-owned companies cannot purchase land, but land can be leased for up to 40 years.”¹⁸⁸ To make sure that international investors get the best possible deal, it is quick to add that “where an international agreement to which Iraq is a party provides for more favorable terms with respect to foreign investors undertaking investment activities in Iraq, the more favorable terms under the international agreement shall apply.”¹⁸⁹

Surrounded by unemployment, poverty, disease and insecurity, the CPA put Iraq on an ideologically-charged path to a free-market future, but paid little attention to the suffering of its past, and never bothered to ask about its wants or needs in the present. Four months later, when Iraqis went to the polls to vote for their first elected government in decades, they expressed their opinions about the free-market reforms *en masse*. The United Iraq Alliance, a coalition of Shi’a parties, won about half the seats in the

¹⁸⁶ “Press Statement: Iraqi Minister of Finance Kamel al-Gailani.” September 21, 2003. Available at www.cpa-iraq.org

¹⁸⁷ “Coalitional Provisional Authority Order Number 39” Section 2. Available at www.cpa-iraq.org

¹⁸⁸ “Doing Business in Iraq.” p 2

¹⁸⁹ “Coalitional Provisional Authority Order Number 39” Section 14. Available at www.cpa-iraq.org

Transitional National Assembly. It stakes out positions which starkly oppose the free-market policies of the CPA, and calls for US forces to leave the country. Their winning electoral platform also included promises for “a social security system under which the state guarantees a job for every fit Iraqi...and offers facilities to citizens to build homes,” as well as pledges “to write off Iraq's debts, cancel reparations and use the oil wealth for economic development projects.”¹⁹⁰

The US government proudly congratulated the Iraqi people for braving the threat of rebel attacks and going to the polls, but it had no interest in Iraqi solutions for the problems facing their country if they challenged America’s new mission in the region. One week after the vote President Bush told the world in his State of the Union Address,

We will not set an artificial timetable for leaving Iraq, because that would embolden the terrorists and make them believe they can wait us out. We are in Iraq to achieve a result: A country that is democratic, representative of all its people, at peace with its neighbors, and able to defend itself. And when that result is achieved, our men and women serving in Iraq will return home with the honor they have earned.¹⁹¹

The economic stances of the elected Iraqi politicians have earned no comment from President Bush or other prominent US leaders, nor have they had much influence on the efforts to rebuild Iraq. The honorable efforts of American soldiers and occupation administrators must not be questioned or interfered with by the opinions or votes of the people they rule.

In the choice between the free-market system and any other, undoubtedly “Stalinist” system, American politicians act as if they simply know what is better for the Iraqi people, like they knew what was best for the Iranian people in 1953. Their dogged

¹⁹⁰ Quoted in Naomi Klein, “Getting the Purple Finger.” *The Nation*, February 28, 2005. Available at <http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20050228&s=klein>

¹⁹¹ George W. Bush, “State of the Union Address” February 2, 2005. Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050202-11.html>

pursuit of the desired “result” in Iraq calls to mind arguments made by Lord Cromer, the British administrator of Egypt at the turn of the century. Using explicitly racist language which the US government would not indulge in today, he wrote about the best way to govern subordinate Oriental peoples.

The first question is to consider what these people, who are all, nationally speaking, more or less *in statu pupillari*, themselves think is best in their own interests, although this is a point which deserves serious consideration. But it is essential that each special issue should be decided mainly with reference to what, by the light of Western knowledge and experience tempered by local considerations, we conscientiously think is best for the subject race...¹⁹²

The Bush administration and its vice regal representatives in the CPA were so convinced of the universal validity of their free-market values that they never even subjected Iraqi opinions to the serious consideration that Cromer recommends. They treat free-market democracy as a value-neutral good that everyone should want, and when government representatives defend the invasion they rarely mention the stark economic changes imposed in Iraq.¹⁹³ The policies imposed by the CPA gave reconstruction a free-market velocity which would be hard to shake, and Orders 37, 38, 39 and 40 bind the vision of “The New Iraq” to the “American values” promoted since the first Protestant missionaries set foot in the Levant.

Once these new economic laws were codified, the CPA’s sales-pitch to the international community kicked into over-drive. Like a hotel concierge, it passed out slick business pamphlets that provided the contact information of hotels and realtors in

¹⁹² Evelyn Baring Cromer, *Political & Literary Essays: 1908-1913*. London, UK: MacMillan and Co., 1913 pp 12-14

¹⁹³ For example, speaking before the US Army War College, President Bush matter-of-factly told his audience “I sent American troops to Iraq to defend our security, not to stay as an occupying power. I sent American troops to Iraq to make its people free, not to make them American.” These words conceal the more than 100 undemocratic edicts imposed by the CPA or the major economic changes being promoted in Iraq. The text of Bush’s speech is available at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/05/print/20040524-10.html

each of Iraq's major cities, and quietly acknowledged the danger of the insurgency by also recommending a number of private security contractors who are also interesting in making money in Iraq. A phalanx of American and Iraqi politicians and bureaucrats unrolled the "Investment Roadshow,"¹⁹⁴ and spoke at conferences and summits, booked lunch meetings and gave PowerPoint presentations at business meetings all over the world. At first the US tried to punish countries that opposed the invasion by banning their corporations from participating in the reconstruction efforts, but eventually it forgave its erstwhile European allies and made its sales-pitch to French, Canadian, German and Russian firms as well.¹⁹⁵ For the American government and the CPA, rebuilding Iraq meant pitching a product, and marketing its vision of "The New Iraq."

Slick pamphlets like *Doing Business in Iraq* were one of the primary means of showing off America's new project to the world of international business. The brochure warmly tells its wealthy Western readers that

Iraq is an attractive investment...Despite decades of under-investment and an ensuing war for the liberation of its people, Iraq is rapidly recovering and on the road to a booming future....Iraq has close to 25 million people with a long-suppressed demand for modern goods and services which were denied to them for years...The best opportunities will be available to those who come early. Iraq's economy is booming and ripe for development. Many companies are already in Iraq establishing a business presence. Those who wait will be left behind.¹⁹⁶

Like any good ad, the brochure doesn't want to make its readers feel down. Its smooth paper and slick narrative completely conceal the existence of the sanctions regime, or the cruel insistence of the US and UK that they be maintained despite the documented deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people. Like other documents prepared by the CPA

¹⁹⁴ For more information, see the "CPA Business Center" website at http://www.cpa-iraq.org/business_center.html

¹⁹⁵ Elisabeth Bumiller, "Bush Defends Barring Nations from Iraq Deals." *The New York Times*, December 12, 2003 p A1

¹⁹⁶ "Doing Business in Iraq." p 1

since the 2003 invasion, it blandly refers to the decade of sanctions as a period of “suppressed consumer demand.” In the American narrative of Iraq’s future, the suffering caused by decades of war and embargo are not even worth mentioning, and Iraqi investment opportunities are talked about as if they were shares of a commodities market.

American officials billed investment in “The New Iraq” as the business opportunity of a lifetime, and as a rare chance to do a good deed for the people of the Middle East and “become a participant in Iraq’s future.”¹⁹⁷ A frequent speaker at “Investment Roadshow” events was Tom Foley, Director of Private Sector Development for the CPA, who presented the same PowerPoint presentation and made the same speech for business audiences across North America and Europe. Like his glossy promotional pamphlets, Foley’s feel-good speech conceals the sanctions regime behind the economic jargon of supply and demand and blandly compares it to a long nap. The CPA’s colorful PowerPoint presentation shoots out facts and figures, and highlights the potential for investment in the energy industry since Iraq contains 11% of the world proven oil supplies and the 11th largest natural gas reserves.¹⁹⁸ He psyches up the audience for the once-in-a-lifetime chance to beat out their competition and urges them to act now, “not just because you will have very good returns on your investments, but because there won’t be another situation any time soon when a market with this much potential opens up after such a long sleep.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ Tom Foley, “Tom Foley’s Remarks Encouraging Trade and Investment in Iraq.” p 12. Available at http://www.cpa-iraq.org/economy/investment_remarks.pdf

¹⁹⁸ “Trade and Foreign Investment Opportunities in Iraq” PowerPoint presentation, shown on “Investment Roadshow.” Slide 4. Available at http://www.iraqcoalition.org/economy/investment_roadshow.pdf

¹⁹⁹ Foley, “Remarks Encouraging Trade and Investment in Iraq.” p 12

Foley wraps up the speech with a motivational flourish and tells his audience that the success of the democratization project in Iraq is in their hands, and that it can make them rich.

So don't languish. Decide you are not going to miss the opportunity to be part of the reconstruction and future of Iraq., Iraq is going to be a big success. I have no doubt about that...Iraq's economy will be the engine that drives the long term institutional reforms which will bring a stable representative government and a fair and secure existence for all of Iraq's citizens. When this outcome has been achieved, you will want to be able to say you were a part of it. So don't miss this opportunity. Please come to Iraq now and participate in its future. Iraq's success is vital for all of us. I look forward to seeing you there soon.²⁰⁰

The same speech, with the same flourishes and chummy feel of two old business associates standing around the water cooler, was delivered to dozens of audiences at dozens of trade shows across the United States and Europe. In their speeches, Foley and other Authority officials pumped up roomfuls of businessmen by assuring them that the future of Iraq, indeed the very fairness of the Iraqi people's existence, depends upon their pursuit of the bottom-line.

The American reconstruction strategy in Iraq is centered on attracting foreign multinational corporations to invest there and turn a big profit, but the US government does not present it as solely a matter of self-interest. The CPA portrays trade with Iraq or investment in its infrastructure as an act of noble sacrifice in the service of American values. In his speech, Foley praises the Western investors for their "effort to liberate the Iraqi people," and in the comfort of their board rooms tell them that "your efforts and sacrifice will be well-rewarded...by the emergence of a stable and fair representative government in Iraq."²⁰¹ It appears that the degree to which America has made the Iraqis free can be measured by the return on their investments: the greater the profit, the more

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p 17

²⁰¹ Ibid.

democratic and grateful the country and its people will presumably be. Between the lines of the speeches and presentations made at the “Investment Roadshow,” the assumptions underlying the American occupation and reconstruction of Iraq are clear: the Orient must need them to make it free, and they need the Orient to make them rich.

Iraq and these businessmen need each other, they are told, because the Iraqis can’t make it on their own. Hearing or reading these words, one gets the impression that if the country is ever going to become free, it will need American capital to get there. Foreign intervention, investment and ownership of Iraq is not only justified, it therefore must be invited and welcomed since it is the only way that Iraqis will ever have the freedom and democracy which the US says it wants to help them achieve. As Edward Said wrote, on the topic of European civilizing missions in the 19th century, “Every writer on the Orient...saw [it] as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption....Thus whatever good or bad values were imputed to the Orient appeared to be functions of some highly specialized Western interest.”²⁰² The CPA did not listen to a diversity of Iraqi opinions, nor did the Bush administration pay attention to the different solutions proposed by Iraqi elected officials. Empowered by its loaded and universalistic idea of “liberal values,” it is sure that it knows what is best for the people of Iraq. Surely, they seem to say, if more Iraqis had been given more of a voice in the CPA, they would have agreed with their American administrators. But the occupation of Iraq has been propelled by the same high-handed attitude that has supported so many American interactions with the Middle East throughout history, which can be captured by that most cherished Orientalist mantra: the East could not speak for itself, so it had to be spoken for.

²⁰² Said, Orientalism p 206

Post-Script: Avoiding an Orientalist Future

In response to the 9/11 attacks, the President of the United States announced that freedom and democracy were under attack, and that to defend them America “must shake off decades of failed policy” and aggressively promote free-market and democratic reforms in the Middle East. To the casual observer, it may have seemed like an historic change was at hand. But this is not the case. The new focus on free-market democratization in the so-called “Greater Middle East” is powered by the formidable orientalist attitudes handed down to the current political establishment from its predecessors. Today, American leaders promote democracy and capitalism as a universally appropriate system because they understand these ideas to be important “American values” whose adoption abroad can strengthen the United States. As President Bush told the graduating class of the University of South Carolina in his 2003 commencement address:

Our nation is strong. Our greatest strength is that we serve the cause of liberty. We support the advance of freedom in the Middle East, because it is our founding principle, and because it is in our national interest. The way forward in the Middle East is not a mystery, it is a matter of will and vision and action... We’re determined to help build a Middle East that grows in hope, instead of resentment. Because of the ideals and resolve of this nation, you and I will not live in an age of terror. We will live in an age of liberty.²⁰³

This typical official description of America’s place in the Middle East is revealing. The Orient is portrayed as an angry and despotic place whose “mysteries” the Bush administration has been able to clearly decipher. Only if America acts strongly and

²⁰³ Bush, “President Bush Presses for Peace in the Middle East”

decisively to advance its principles and protect its interests can the mysteries of the East be pulled from the jaws of resentment and terror; only if America acts strongly can the region be delivered into a hopeful, democratic and capitalist future.

Unfortunately, American attitudes show little sign of changing in the near future. While the invasion of Iraq has become increasingly unpopular among the American public,²⁰⁴ it seems unlikely that the occupation will end any time soon. There are politicians in both dominant parties that have begun to call for a troop withdrawal or exit strategy on the grounds that the conflict in Iraq is hopeless and the toll on American lives is unbearably high. The Orient is a hopelessly violent place, after all, and we don't want our "kids" tangled up in it. As Rep Capuano told *The Boston Globe*, "Mass civil war [in Iraq] today, or mass civil war a year from now. What's the difference? Five hundred kids."²⁰⁵ But it appears that the rhetoric of the opposition party has not moved the debate's center of gravity further left. Reporting on a June 2005 Senate meeting between the Secretary of Defense and the Senate Armed Service Committee, *The Washington Post* wrote that "there appeared to be little support on either the Senate or House armed services committees for setting a timetable to withdraw U.S. troops."²⁰⁶ While neither party claims to want the US military to occupy Iraq indefinitely, it is unclear when exactly the occupation will end.

Orientalist attitudes have held powerful sway over the American relationship with the Middle East since the birth of the republic. Looking back over this history, we will never know how it may have been different if the peoples and societies of the region had

²⁰⁴ Robin Toner and Marjorie Connelly. "Bush's Support on Major Issues Tumbles in Poll." *The New York Times*, June 17, 2005 p A1

²⁰⁵ Susan Milligan. "Biden Lays Out Iraq Plan, Hits White House 'Credibility Gap'." *The Boston Globe*, June 22, 2005 p A2

²⁰⁶ Bradley Graham. "Rumsfeld Under Fire On the Hill." *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2005 p A1

been allowed to decide their futures without such persistent foreign interference. The lives of millions of people living in Palestine, Iran, Egypt, Iraq and elsewhere could have been very different if the United States and its allies had rejected the mantras of Orientalism and allowed them to speak for themselves. If this history reveals anything, it is that the United States must abandon its high-handed attitude and biased representations of the lives and experiences of the Orient and its residents, step back from the far-flung boundaries of its sphere of influence, and let the people of the formerly colonial world take control of the representations of their pasts, presents and futures.

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