

**Introduction: North Africa and the Horn in the Vortex of the US War on Terror**

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This issue started as an attempt to explore the impacts of the US-declared global ‘War on Terror’ on the region of North Africa. We were joined at ACAS for this purpose by Fouzi Slisli as a special guest co-editor who brought considerable expertise of the region. We wanted to be clear that it was a US conceived war on terror, albeit with many ally and proxy nations drawn in, and we intended to focus on North Africa as a region because of its connections to the Arab and Islamic worlds that have been so much of the focus of this military engagement. The boundaries of North Africa versus the Middle East, and between North and Southern Africa, are themselves problematic and used here only loosely. Boundary issues are in fact indicative of colonial legacies that are themselves central to the story told in this issue. It is in this context that we received several interesting pieces on Somalia and the Horn of Africa, which are of course not in North Africa explicitly, but we decided to include them here because of the parallel dynamics they are experiencing in the new post-9/11 US global order. As such, this issue begins with two essays on Algeria, then moves to an update on Western Sahara and three pieces reflecting on Moroccan politics in the current context, and concludes with three essays on Somalia and the greater Horn of Africa. In each regional context, the new global milieu of post-Iraq invasion US global military projection is being felt in important new ways, while imperial politics as usual continues unabated, if generally intensifying.

In fact, the entire African continent is undergoing a renewed and newly restructured US military and political presence in the wake of the expanding Middle East conflict and the increasingly desperate search for petroleum and other energy resources. As Daniel Volman warned in previous issue of the

Bulletin, AFRICOM is now upon us, and with it a growing US presence in Africa, closer ties with oil and natural gas rich nations, burgeoning US naval and military buildup and spending. As of October 2007, the global US military operation officially declares a new region to add to its existing five “commands,” a sixth region specific to Africa. Until now, the Pentagon divided the Western Hemisphere into USNORTHCOM and USSOUTHCOM, and the rest of the world into the US European Command [EUCOM], US Central Command [CENTCOM], and the US Pacific Command [PACOM]. Most of Africa was under EUCOM, northeast Africa from Egypt to Kenya was under CENTCOM, as though it were part of the extended Middle East, and Madagascar, the Seychelles and portions of the African Indian Ocean coasts were under PACOM. With the new AFRICOM, or African Command, the United States has restructured Africa as a region of vital US strategic significance unto itself, with the entire continent except for Egypt, which remains in CENTCOM, under this new command structure.

Our focus in this issue on North Africa and the Horn therefore highlights aspects of a more general trend in Africa. It is no accident that this new structure was ordered by Donald Rumsfeld while he was still Secretary of State, and it reflects his neoconservative vision of extending US hegemony into the future based on economic and political control of strategic fuel and geopolitical resources. New military budgets, bureaucracies and bases will simply increase the imperial network of client and ally states the US has cultivated in Africa since the Second World War. From an oil point of view, the Sudan/Chad nexus, and the Gulf of Guinea reaching to Angola in the south will be the key arenas of concentration, but the apparitional

War on Terror provides cover for almost infinite engagements, arms deals, base building, and interventions throughout and via the continent. Africom starts out under the auspices of the European Command, and will go independent in about a year, when it is more fully established. So it is in a FAQ on the EUCOM website that we see the question, “Is this an effort by the United States to gain access to natural resources (e.g. petroleum)?” As the saying goes, “If you have to ask...” The pat official answer on the website follows immediately, “No. Africa is growing in military, strategic and economic importance in global affairs. We are seeking more effective ways to prevent and respond to humanitarian crises, improve cooperative efforts to stem transnational terrorism and sustain enduring efforts that contribute to African unity and bolster security on the continent.”

The issue starts with Fouzi Slisli’s penetrating analysis of Algeria as a model for contemporary US politics and military intervention in the Middle East. He thus establishes Northern Africa as both the progenitor and the recipient of military calculations in the critical theater of the greater Persian Gulf region. Parallel with the incisive historical analysis of Mahmood Mamdani, in his recent *Good Muslims, Bad Muslims*,<sup>1</sup> Slisli identifies current US strategy in Iraq [and Afghanistan] as based on the Algerian model, in which Islamic factions were used as proxies in a terrible civil war. The US is now arming allies to fight Islamic rivals in a dizzying array of countries throughout the Middle East and northern Africa, in what Slisli tells us is being called the ‘redirection.’ Perhaps the only non-US exponent of this philosophy of modern divide and conquer is Quaddafi, who used it to set some of the current Darfur conflict in motion, but everywhere else, from Afghanistan and Iraq, to Algeria, Morocco and Somalia, the US fingerprint is in direct evidence. What is revealed is a kind of reverse blowback in which the Algerian model is imported to Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East, and then flow back into Africa again as this war on terror rages increasingly out of control.

The after-effects of these policies in Algeria are recounted in a short review, in the form of a press release, by Selima Mellah and François Gèze of Algeria Watch, which was founded ten years ago to monitor human rights issues in the wake of state-sponsored violence against the population. Reprinted here with special permission, ACAS Bulletin readers get to peer into the human rights struggle 15 years into the Generals coup d’Etat, which the authors here compare to post-Allende Chile and the Argentina of Videla with the difference that the Algerian Generals, supported by France and other intelligence agencies, stayed in the shadows as they wages a campaign of terror on civil society. On the one hand, their grim appraisal foreshadows what we can expect in a decade or more in Iraq and surrounding areas, and on the other, explains the context in which the US currently finds such a willing ally in its regional war on terror in the current Algerian regime. The question remains, at what pace do movements of mothers and children and other survivors of the disappeared, in the Latin American tradition, emerge from the rubble?

Turning to Morocco, we find another staunch US-ally in the war on terror. We begin our discussion with Western Sahara, where Morocco has been acting as the regional and imperially-sanctioned power against a staunch national Sahrawi resistance that has been compared to the Israel/Palestine conflict by numerous observers and participants alike. Jacob Mundy, co-author of a forthcoming book length discussion on the topic, provides a concise history of the conflict before explaining the manner in which Morocco has shifted its imperial discourse from the rhetoric of the Cold War to that of 9/11 and the specter of “terrorism.” Polisario rebels have been branded as allies of Algeria, al-Qaeda, and even Castro. And now, with Morocco an even closer ally in US global aspirations under the umbrella of its war on whatever and whomever it deems to be terrorist, the long stalled peace negotiations in this refugee-laden conflict are at a low point – further bolstering the inevitable comparisons with Palestine.

James Sater, writing from Morocco, explains that the stated US policy of fighting the global spread of Islamic terrorism by supporting democracy, while not always being fully truthful, is ironically creating conditions in Morocco where civil society grows even stronger and gains a foothold in which to challenge both the US and that of its ally, the Moroccan state. Mohammed Hirchi writes for us about situation within national politics of a moderate Islamic group, the Islamic Party of Justice and Development [PJD]. He too shows that, if US sponsored Moroccan state nationalism and its authoritarian policies continue unabated, this will ironically lend support within civil society for alternative regimes, such as that embodied by the PJD. This could also be the case with less moderate Islamic movements in society, precisely because of the repression they experience in the context of rhetorical openness and democracy – this is the case of *Adl wal Ihssan*, the Justice and Spirituality Association, which Hirchi touches on and which Fouzi Slisli provides even greater insight into. Because of its largely outlawed status and with its founder in and out of prison, Slisli's interview this summer with its current leader, Nadia Yassine is groundbreaking. We are privileged to carry his short synopsis here, as it casts light onto a movement that in numerous ways defies the Orientalist tendencies of reduction when it comes to Islamic movements in the context of the US war on terror. Yassine is a woman at the head of an Islamic movement, she is outspoken against government policies, but secular in her outlook of the state, and critical of current electoral politics in Morocco, as she is also of *Wahabism* as a movement in general. Seen from these various vantage points, Morocco is a nation-state very much in the vortex of the US global war on terror, and very much at the crossroads.

Finally, we turn to Somalia, and its neighbor Ethiopia, for our final three essays. We start with Ramle Bile's analysis of the US campaign against the Union of Islamic Courts, which it deemed to be linked to al-Qaeda, Hamas and/or Hezbollah. As we saw in the case of North Africa, in the new global war on terror,

such accusations make possible military interventions and other gross circumventions of international and local laws. As recounted and historicized in the review essay by Immanuel Wallerstein and reprinted here next, the US went about its post-“Blackhawk Down” invasion of Somalia via its newish regional proxy, Ethiopia. This was accomplished with covert US air support, Ethiopian ground troops, a newly installed Somali leader openly professing civilian carpet bombing, and secret detention and torture prisons in the invading neighbor state. As a result, one more Islamic organization which had stepped into the void of the state to provide security and services for citizens has been removed or displaced from power, without the US and its allies considering the consequences of such action. As a result, much as in Iraq, Palestine and Algeria before them, we are seeing “unexpected” popular resistance, and a return to lawlessness and civil war under the name of democracy. Yet, Western media fail to question any such distant unilateral and externally determined “regime changes” when they are done under the rubric of the war on terror. Finally, Dustin Dehez provides a close reading of events in Somalia from a perspective that the West has too long abandoned Somalis to the violence of small arms and a failed state. Whereas previous authors have suggested various flaws in the US war on terror, Dehez calls the US and its allies in the war on terror to abide by their own commitments and sees in this hope for a more stable future in Somalia and the region. Certainly, this will remain the subject of debate for our readers and the broader world community for some time to come. Our goal in this issue was to provide readers with information and analysis to assist in deciphering important developments and in bringing this perspective to wider audiences in their/our daily lives and work.

As we turn to the analyses of our contributors, let us leave you with the questions presciently raised about terrorism by Eqbal Ahmad in the period prior to 9/11. Ahmad, in Terrorism: Theirs and Ours,<sup>2</sup> exposes the shortsights of official views of terrorism, the most obvious of

which is that its definition hinges on which side of a conflict a particular movement is rather than any moral or human rights record – the one person’s terrorist is another’s freedom fighter refrain. Moreover, Ahmad then provides five broad categories of terrorism in his new critical definition, only one of which, political terrorism, get scrutiny in official discourse, while the most violent form, state terrorism is almost entirely overlooked [unless

clients go rouge]. As this issue is devoted to the impact of the war on terror in North Africa and the Horn, perhaps the reflections contained herein will challenge readers to reconfigure this terminology, perhaps as the “war we dare not call terror.” Let us know what you think.

1. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.
2. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001 [orig. 1998].

## The Algerian Civil War: Washington’s Model for “The New Middle-East”

Fouzi Slisli

Washington has much to learn from Algeria on ways to fight terrorism.<sup>1</sup>

This is a prescription for intra-Muslim civil war throughout the Middle East. Those involved would be seen as proxies tearing the Muslim world on behalf of Israel and the US.<sup>2</sup>

The American invasion of Iraq has clearly failed to produce the domino effect that would, as the architects of the war promised, bring all US enemies into line, and create a new Middle East where democracy would flourish. The invasion of Iraq, like Israel’s failed invasion of Lebanon in 2006, has made it clear in Washington, London and Tel-Aviv that conventional military power and hi-tech weaponry are impotent in the face of popular insurgencies. While this fact is widely accepted by experts on low-intensity warfare, hawks in the American, British and Israeli governments preferred to test its validity for the twenty first century. Now that they found out, at a great price one should add, a significant shift in US war strategy is in place. Analysts and government officials are calling this shift “The Redirection.”<sup>3</sup>

According to media reports, the US is now convinced that the biggest threat to its interests in the Middle East is the increasing influence of Shia Iran and its allies Syria and Lebanese

Hizb’Allah. With the help of the Saudi government, Washington is currently funding and arming various Sunni fundamentalist groups to confront Iran’s influence. Civil war scenarios are already unfolding in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq. It is obvious that the United States is setting Islamist groups against each other. What has been less obvious is the fact that the only time Islamists movements were fought by proxy through other Islamist movements is Algeria’s civil war of the 1990s. If that is the case, then Algeria’s civil war is Washington’s model for the “New Middle East.”

### I. The “Redirection”?

Reports have confirmed that the US has intensified covert operations in Iran using the obscure Sunni group Jundallah.<sup>4</sup> In Lebanon, the US has been funding and arming Sunni fundamentalists with links to al-Qaeda, like Fatah al-Islam, and actively promoting a confrontation between them and Hizb’Allah.<sup>5</sup> In Palestine, the United States has been arming and training factions of Fatah loyal to Mohammed Dahlan in the hope of provoking a confrontation with Hamas. In Syria, the US has been funding Abdel Halim Khaddam and the Muslim Brotherhood in the hope of provoking a confrontation with the Syrian regime. US Marines have been supervising the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia, and US covert operations are now underway in the African desert, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Analysts and government officials are openly calling this shift in strategy the “redirection.” Encouraged by Saudi Arabia, the United States has apparently decided that the biggest threat to its control of the Middle East are Shia groups in alliance with Iran and Syria like the Lebanese Hizb’Allah and the Iraqi Mehdi Army. As a result, the “redirection” would consist of using Saudi Arabian money and its standing in the Sunni world to do a rerun of the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s, this time against Shia, “Safavid” Iran. The truth of the matter is that Saudi standing in the Sunni world is not what it was in the 1980s. The vanguards of Sunni resistance groups, whether it is al-Qaeda, Hamas, or Islamic Jihad, do not consider Iran a bigger threat than America and Israel. They are also unlikely to consider Saudi Arabia and America as “protectors” of Sunni Islam. Here is how Ayman Zawahiri reacted to this idea:

Some have claimed that the governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan are protectors of the people of the Sunnah. Allah suffices us and He is the best of protectors. Since when are those who helped America to blockade Iraq and kill a million of its children protectors of the people of the Sunnah? Since when are those who supplied American forces with provisions and materiel, and provided them with bases, airports and storerooms to attack Afghanistan and Iraq helpers of the people of the Sunnah? From where did the planes which bombed Afghanistan and Iraq take off? From where did the forces which invaded Iraq set off? Who was it who agreed to the international resolutions to occupy Afghanistan and Iraq? Who was it who recognized the puppet regimes of apostasy and treason in Afghanistan and Iraq? Who was it who pursued and combated everyone who wanted Jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq? Who was it who recognized Israel and approved its usurpation of Palestine? Who is it

who tortures and punishes the Mujahideen and sets up secret prisons for America? And who, and who, and who? Yes, they are protectors of the American way (sunnah), Crusader way (sunnah) and Zionist way (sunnah). As for the way (sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), they are its enemies and the ones who combat it.<sup>6</sup>

The quote is long but it shows how many obstacles the governments of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt have to overcome before they can claim to be defenders of anything besides American interest. Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad, too, have always had better relations with the Syrian and Iranian governments than with those of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. If the US and Saudi Arabia want to organize a Sunni jihad against Shia ascendancy, as they once did against the Soviet Union, they will have to contend with the fact that the vanguard groups of Sunni jihad are categorically opposed to it. No wonder the US and the Saudis are working with obscure groups like Iranian Jundallah and Lebanese Fatah al-Islam.

An interesting aspect of this “redirection” effort is the fact that it is essentially run by deputy national-security adviser, Eliot Abrams, and the Saudi national-security advisor, Prince Bandar. Abrams and Bandar were both involved in the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s, and observers have noted that the “redirection” involves a rerun of the US war on communism in Latin America. Joseph Massad compared the way Palestinian Fatah has been collaborating with the US in toppling the elected Hamas government to Chile’s General Pinochet collaborating with the CIA in the early 1970s.<sup>7</sup> While the comparison is to some degree accurate, it ignores the fact that when fighting communism, the US had the added advantage of dealing with a Western ideology. Islamic political ideology is indigenous to the global south and, as such, it is still incomprehensible in the West and still largely seen through Orientalist (even Medieval) stereotypes.

If the US is promoting a civil war scenario in the Muslim world, and if this civil war is supposed to dispose of groups and states that oppose US dominance in the Middle East, then they need more expertise than what they used in Latin America in the 1970s. The only country where a civil war scenario was *engineered* (literally) to get rid of an Islamist opposition, and which the US government would consider a success story is Algeria. The Algerian civil war was the only precedent for fighting Islamist movements by proxy through other Islamist movements. Rather than a counter insurgency, Algerian generals called the civil war they engineered and have been running for over fifteen years now a “counter Jihad.” That is exactly what the United States seems to be doing.

## **II. The Relevance of Algeria**

If the era of casualty-free wars through aerial bombing and hi-tech weaponry is over, as Hicham El Alaoui notes, then the new battles are for the control and the allegiance of populations. The recent electoral victory of Hamas in Palestine, and the extent to which Hizb’Allah, the Mahdi Army and the Sunni insurgency have all entrenched themselves in the electoral politics and the societies of their countries, have made it clear to US war planners that they can either accept defeat and withdraw (as Israel did last summer), or change strategy. The US chose the second option. It is here that the Algerian civil war experience comes in.

The challenge that Palestinian Hamas, Lebanese Hizb’Allah, the Sunni resistance in the Anbar province of Iraq, and the Mahdi Army in the south of Iraq represent for United States and Israeli ambitions is not of the kind of challenge that al-Qaeda and its affiliates have represented so far. The latter have exclusively been a fighting force of at most few thousands, and have showed no interest in electoral politics or even in governance. The challenge that Hamas, Hizb’Allah, the Mahdi Army, and the Sunni resistance of Iraq constitute for American and Israeli ambitions in the Middle East is of a different kind. These Islamist movements have a large popular base

and a mass following that allows them considerable share in state power. This type of Islamist challenge manifested itself concretely for the first time in Algeria when the Islamist Salvation Front used legal means to get to power in 1991.

Before the end of the twentieth century, Algeria was the only Arab-Muslim country where an Islamist movement managed to mobilize a grassroots movement and win a landslide electoral victory. By the late 1980s, only Iran and Sudan saw the coming of an Islamist movement to power. But while Sudanese Islamists overthrew the existing regime, and while Iranian Islamists rode a popular uprising to power, Algeria’s Islamists were the first to win a parliamentary majority through legal means. The Algerian military, back then, refused to recognize the popular mandate of the FIS. They took power by force, and fought fiercely for the control of the population. The US and Israel today, too, refuse to accept the popular mandate of these groups. They are trying to take power by military force, and are embarking on a clandestine adventure to control the populations. The objective of the US and Israel, and one should not forget the governments of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, is the “eradication” of these Islamist movements in a military sense of the word. The one Muslim country that has pursued an existential civil war with a grassroots Islamic movement with the purpose of “eradicating” it is Algeria.<sup>8</sup> While media reports have often noted the Bush administration recurrent interest in “learning” from the Algerian civil war, the nature and extent of that interest have generally been kept out of public view. As it was the case with the Algerian civil war, the real story will have to be reconstructed by comparing, as they say, yesterday’s leaks with today’s lies.

Since the invasion of Iraq, Analysts and government officials have often cited Algeria as a useful case and a relevant precedent to learn from. As soon as it became obvious that the Iraqi resistance was there to stay, Pentagon officials got interested in the Algerian war of

national liberation. *The Washington Post* reported that the Pentagon was screening Gillo Pontecorvo's classic film *The Battle of Algiers*.<sup>9</sup> For the US military, the Algerian war of liberation provides the closest parallels and the most useful lessons on the strategies, the strengths and the weaknesses of a popular resistance movement facing a Western occupying power.

More recently, it was reported that George W. Bush was reading Alastair Horne's classic *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-62*. Henry Kissinger had apparently recommended it to the president.<sup>10</sup> After the attacks of September 11, 2001, Algeria was also one of the first countries the United States turned to in order to learn how to fight Islamic militancy. Washington, as undersecretary of state William Burns put it in December 2002, "has much to learn from Algeria on ways to fight terrorism."<sup>11</sup> It did not matter that the Algerian government had acquired one of the worst human rights records on earth, or that its security forces have been heavily implicated in some of the worst massacres of civilians. Torture techniques that were notorious in the basement of the Chateaneuf police station and the garage of the Cavignac police station in central Algiers (sexual violence, chemical suffocation, blowtorching of faces and bloating with salted water) soon started showing up in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.<sup>12</sup> There is reason to believe, today, that Washington is not only borrowing torture techniques from Algeria, but the whole sinister program of eradication that the Algerian junta has used for fifteen years to terrorize its populations, especially the poor. The Algerian generals who devised and run this program routinely referred to it as "counter jihad."

### III. Counter Jihad: The Counterinsurgency of "Eradication"

The rise of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algerian politics in the late 1980s was swift and unexpected. By the time France, the United States and Britain realized what was going on, the FIS had already won the local elections by a landslide and was set to win the legislative elections. Before those elections

took place, though, the Algerian army took power by force, cancelled the elections, and banned the FIS. French and American reactions were diverse and inconsistent. At first, France could not condone the coup d'état or publicly support it, but it clearly saw it with a willing eye. As President Mitterand said, "fundamentalism does not appear to be the surest way to reach democracy."<sup>13</sup> Up until 1993, the French administration was not sure, though, that the generals of Algiers could halt the tide of Islamism sweeping Algeria. While Mitterand and his foreign affairs minister, Roland Dumas, quietly supported the generals, they were also bracing themselves for the possibility that Islamists might win the civil war. Similarly, when the Clinton administration allowed Anwar Haddam to represent the FIS freely in Washington, it was obvious that the US did not want to be left out in the event of an Islamist victory in Algeria.

Until 1994, the Algerian junta was still finding it hard to control the Islamist insurgency. The country was paralyzed by its massive foreign debt, and international donors were requesting the introduction of constitutional structures before approving new loans. To get the funds it needed to "eradicate" the Islamists, the junta decided to show that Algerian Islamism was primarily a threat to the West. To that end, the Algerian secret services created their own Islamist groups. Instead of a counterinsurgency campaign, Algerian generals appropriately called it a counter jihad. The fact has been clearly established that some of the notorious Islamic Armed Groups (GIAs) were creations of the Algerian secret services (DRS). On the domestic front, their purpose was to commit atrocities in the name of Islam that would discredit the FIS. On the international front, the aim was to convince the West that Islamism needed to be "eradicated." These are the groups who came out with a *takfiri* ideology (excommunication), and declared civilian populations, intellectuals, musicians and artists to be legitimate targets. These are the groups who smashed babies against walls, hacked defenseless civilians, and put toddlers in ovens. These are the groups who raped, pillaged, and massacred entire villages

undisturbed, while the screams could be heard from large military barracks nearby. Not once, as is well known, did the army intervene to rescue those people who sometimes were only few hundred feet away. It was not an accident that the terrorized communities always happened to be the ones that massively voted for the FIS in the 1992 elections.

After fifteen years, the Algerian junta has left a trail of evidence and countless contradictions that have allowed analysts to piece together their eradication strategies. A wave of defectors in the ranks of the Algerian military and security services, many of them wrote accounts of their involvement, allowed a very precise corroboration of the evidence.<sup>14</sup> Many atrocities that were committed between 1993 and 1998, allegedly by Islamists, turned up to be covert operations of Algerian secret services (DRS). A few high profile cases would be enough to establish the point. In 1996 seven French monks were kidnapped in the Medea region south of Algiers. Betraying their contempt for Algerian sovereignty, the French secret services (DST) attempted to contact the Islamist kidnappers directly. What they discovered was the shocking evidence that the Algerian government was engineering the civil war. Jamal Zitouni, the notorious leader of one of the main Armed Islamic Groups (GIAs) – the one that kidnapped the monks and was responsible for other gruesome atrocities - it turned up, was an agent of the Algerian government. The suspicion is strong still, today, that when Zitouni decided to murder the monks, the Algerian junta was actually punishing France for going over their head to contact the kidnappers.<sup>15</sup>

Another high-profile case was the slaughter in 1994 of seven Italian seamen. They were found with their throats cut on board their ship (the *Luciana*) at the port of Jenjen, east of Algiers. The massacre happened, conveniently for the junta, on the eve of the G7 summit in Naples, and was predictably blamed on “Islamic extremists.” Numerous defectors from the Algerian security forces told *Le Monde* and *The Observer*, though, that the crime was planned and instigated by Generals

Mohammed Mediane, aka “Tewfik,” and Smain Lamari. Again, defectors’ accounts have corroborated each other and the details matched. Primary investigations also showed the port to be under heavy control of the Algerian army. It would have been impossible for an Islamist group to kill the seamen, steal tons of merchandise, and escape unnoticed.<sup>16</sup> The terrorist bombings in Paris in 1995 – one at the Saint Michel metro station and one at the Maison Blanche - were also the work, it turned up, of the Algerian shadowy Directorate of Infiltration and Manipulation and the Directorate of Information and Security.<sup>17</sup>

With the spectacularly gruesome massacres of civilian communities that had massively voted for the FIS, especially in the towns of Bentalha and Rais, the West was ready to give the junta enough billions and weapons to “eradicate” the Islamists.<sup>18</sup> Counter jihad, as a form of counterinsurgency, had borne its fruits for the Algerian Junta. The Algerian population was debilitated by the intensity and gruesomeness of the violence, international public opinion was outraged against the Islamists, and Western powers were ready to send the IMF and World Bank. What’s more, most of the violence that the Islamists were being blamed for was actually targeting what was left of the legitimate Islamist resistance, and the population at large who supported it. Many birds were hit with one same stone.

From 1994, the French government threw in its lot on the side of the Algerian junta once and for all. The hard-line idea of eradicating Islamism triumphed. Roland Dumas, the French foreign minister at the time, declared France’s “political backing of the leaders of today’s Algeria.” He pledged France’s economic support “as well as the backing of Algeria on the international scene.” “Friendship,” he said, “must be expressed otherwise than just with words.”<sup>19</sup> Socialist leader Claude Cheysson spoke for most French liberals when he said that democracy in Algeria, as a result of the army coup, “was safe for the time being.”<sup>20</sup> Western intellectuals (and westernized Algerians) who embraced, condoned and defended the unsavory military



junta were legion in the nineties. Little did they know that they were providing precious cover for a massive military onslaught on a largely poor and unarmed population of Algeria.<sup>21</sup> Little did they know that they were victims of a murderous, depraved and reactionary maneuver that some generals devised in order to stay in power.

By Western standards, the coup and the civil war in Algeria were a success. Algeria was “saved” from falling into the hands of Islamic “extremists.” The idea of Jihad was turned against itself, and Islamist groups were pitted against each other. The Islamic party that won the elections (FIS) was the primary target of this violence. The other main target was the population that massively voted for them. Islamism was demonized in the eyes of both the Algerian population and of the populations of the West. Western governments were forced to support the illegal coup and the junta behind it. In exchange, Algeria’s large reserves of gas and oil kept flowing freely and cheaply to the West. The civil war also disposed of what French public opinion routinely refers to as “Algeria’s demographic excess.” Equally important, it paved the way for IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs. In short, Algeria remained a safe French (and now American) backyard.<sup>22</sup>

#### **IV. The Algerian Model in Washington’s “War on Terror”**

It is clear that the unintended consequences of the invasion of Iraq include the spread of Iranian influence in Iraq and the Middle East. The unintended consequences of the failed Israeli invasion of Lebanon in July-August 2006 include the emergence of Hizb’Allah as an undisputed champion of Islamic causes and a formidable and highly disciplined guerrilla group. The hawks in Washington and Tel Aviv are convinced now that the United States should shift its war strategy in the Middle East. The central component of the new strategy, as Seymour Hersh and others reported, is the large-scale use of clandestine operations throughout the Muslim world. These operations aim at bolstering various shadowy Sunni fundamentalist groups and the

Palestinian group Fatah to provoke various civil wars scenarios in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. To work around congressional oversight, the architects of this strategy are using Saudi funds and the billions that have been unaccounted for in the budgetary chaos of Iraq.

Inside the Bush administration, the key players in this adventure are Dick Cheney, the deputy national security adviser Elliot Abrams, and the departing Ambassador to Iraq (and nominee for United Nations Ambassador) Zalmay Khalilzad. Dick Cheney’s office is coordinating these operations behind the back of Congress and the CIA. Outside the United States, the shadowy Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi national security adviser, is the main coordinator. Abrams and Bandar were both involved in the Iran-Contra scandal in the 1980s. Back then they helped the Reagan administration illegally fund the Nicaraguan Contras from secret arms sales to Iran and from Saudi money. Prince Bandar brings considerable Saudi funds to the table. He also brings useful Saudi connections to the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi groups. He was also involved, it should be remembered, in coordinating the effort of Arab fighters who joined the Mujahedeen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Saudis have apparently assured the White House that they will keep a very close eye on the fundamentalists this time. The White House, as an intelligence official put it to Seymour Hersh, are not against the “Salafis throwing bombs”; they just want to make sure they throw them at the right people: Hizb’Allah, the Mahdi Army, Iran, and Syria.<sup>23</sup>

In Lebanon, the United States has already pledged two hundred million dollars in military aid and forty million dollars for internal security. The money is intended to bolster the government of Fouad Siniora against the Hizb’Allah led opposition. As it was the case in the early phase of the Algerian civil war, many obscure and radical Sunni groups are emerging in northern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and around Palestinian refugee camps in the south. The US is now providing

these groups with clandestine military and financial support in the hope of provoking a confrontation with Hizb'Allah. One notable Sunni extremist group that is now the recipient of US clandestine support is Fatah al-Islam. The group is based in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, and has recently been offered money and weapons "by people presenting themselves as representatives of the Lebanese government interests – presumably to take on Hizb'Allah."<sup>24</sup>

Saad Hariri, the Sunni majority leader of the Lebanese parliament and a US ally, has already spent thousands of dollars to bail members of Sunni fundamentalist groups from jail, many of whom are known to have trained in al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. Hariri also used his influence to obtain amnesty to twenty-nine Sunni fundamentalists, some of them suspected of plotting bombs in the Italian and Ukrainian embassies in Beirut. "We have a liberal attitude that allows al-Qaeda types to have a presence here," a senior official in Siniora's government told Seymour Hersh. Hariri also arranged a pardon for the Maronite Christian militia leader, Samir Geagea, who has been convicted of many atrocities against civilians as well as four political murders, including the assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami in 1987.<sup>25</sup> Geagea is already on the offensive. He held a press conference, last week, to say that Hizb'Allah has become a burden on the Lebanese state.<sup>26</sup>

In Palestine, the US has been intensely promoting a coup against the democratically elected government of Hamas. With the "friendly" governments of Jordan and Egypt, the US has been providing military assistance to faction of Fatah loyal to security chief and CIA man Mohammed Dahlan. Israel has been helping by arresting members of Fatah who oppose confrontation with Hamas.<sup>27</sup> Besides burning the building of the Palestinian Legislative council, shadowy Fatah operatives also burned the prime Minister's office, shot at his car, and burned offices in different ministries and harassed Hamas ministers. In a move very reminiscent of Algeria's dirty civil war, undercover thugs burned Palestinian

Christian churches during the controversy surrounding the Pope's racist comments on Islam. Those who sanctioned the arson were obviously hoping, as did the Algerian generals who sanctioned the killing of the French monks in 1996 and the Italian seamen in 1997, that the world would blame the Islamist. As I write, the AFP is reporting that a Christian library in Gaza has been bombed in a strange pre-dawn attack.<sup>28</sup> Reuters is reporting that a completely unknown group by the name of Tawhid and Jihad has executed kidnapped BBC reporter, Alan Johnston.<sup>29</sup> Hamas has duly condemned these attacks and has consistently provided protection to Palestinian churches and helped release kidnapped foreign journalists.

The United States is also providing clandestine support to the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and Abdul Halim Khaddam, the former Syrian Vice-President who defected in 2005. Again, the goal here is to undermine the Syrian government of Bashar Asad.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the US is funding and arming the shadowy Sunni fundamentalist group, Jundallah, to mount a bombing campaign inside Iran.<sup>31</sup>

Much like the Algerian junta, Washington is creating its own Islamist groups and developing its own "eradication" program. All the pieces seem to be in place for a large-scale campaign of sabotage, bombings, kidnappings and assassinations whose aim it would be to discredit the resistance movements in the Islamic world and demonize them in the eyes of the public. Unlike Algeria, though, the scope of American counter-jihad includes the entire Muslim world. The atrocities, slaughter and mayhem are likely to be far bigger than they were in Algeria. It remains to be seen whether civil societies, the intellectuals, the media, and the genuine Islamist resistance groups will fall into this insidious trap that latter-day colonialism seems to be putting the final touches on.

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### January 1992-January 2007: 15 years of atrocities and impunity in Algeria

By: Salima Mellah and François Gèze

Press Release, January 11th 2007, reprinted with kind permission from Algeria-Watch  
[http://www.algeria-watch.org/en/aw/15\\_years.htm](http://www.algeria-watch.org/en/aw/15_years.htm), [Translated from French original].

Fifteen years ago, a handful of Generals at the heart of power, in "safeguarding democracy", aborted an historic opportunity by canceling the first relatively free elections in independent Algeria. The elections that were about to mark the ushering into power of the Salvation Islamic Front (FIS), were ended by the Generals' actions with the fervent support from its civilian clients and more discreetly that of France. It was, in all but name a coup d'Etat mirroring in its objectives of preserving the ruling elite's privileges, those of Pinochet in Chile in 1973 and Videla in Argentina in 1976. But where the Algerian Generals differed from their predecessors in South America and elsewhere: they knew to remain in the shadows, over the years, fabricating the façade of a pseudo-democracy while unleashing a clandestine state terror campaign of horrendous violence against the population inspired by the methods of disinformation and manipulation learned from their masters, the French military theorists of the "modern warfare", and the specialists in the Soviet KGB.

This atrocious masquerade had three main characteristics:

- a terrifying "killing machine" - performing routine acts of torture, extra-judicial executions, run by the army's secret service (the DRS), as well as its "special forces". In

one decade they were responsible for the deaths of 200,000 people, the disappearances of 20,000 others, tens of thousands of torture victims, and a million and half displaced people;

- a machinery of disinformation - on a scale that draws few parallels throughout the 20th century - ascribing most of the violence to "Islamist hordes", in order to mask the fact that, partially after 1992 and fully since 1996, armed groups acting "in the name of Islam" were manipulated and controlled by the DRS;

- the complicity of the "international community" - primarily the political elite in France and a broad swathe of the French media who, whether guided by blindness or self-interest, have uncritically relayed the gross deceptions manufactured by the Algerian administration.

Fifteen years after the coup d'Etat of January 11th 1992, Algeria-Watch, a non-governmental organisation created in 1997 to fight against the human rights violations in Algeria and the government's propaganda machine, can only draw a disturbing picture from this dark period.

Conditions in Algeria have noticeably changed, albeit superficially. With the constant hammer blows of massacres, disappearances and kidnappings, gruesome torture, and the

displacement of populations, the Algerian regime succeeded in breaking civil society, subduing any real possibility of an open and coordinated political opposition. This monopoly of power has allowed the Algerian regime to issue in February 2006 a self-imposed "amnesty" for its own crimes, with the announcement of a phoney national "reconciliation", primarily aimed at validating the lies of the "dirty war" and prohibiting the victims of state terror access to truth and justice: criminals, "Islamists", and military torturers, profiting from impunity, can now devote themselves quietly to their lucrative "business interests".

But behind the "transition" to a "civil" government with its "democratic" façade, managed by a marionette president, intended to dupe an international community indifferent to the suffering of Algerian citizens, the orchestrators of the "Red decade" today still remain the sole masters of Algeria: they are Major General Mohammed "Tewfik" Médiène, the immovable chief of the DRS since September 1990, and his long-serving sidekick, Major General "Smaïn" Lamari. Their iron grip on both the country and its wealth, has allowed them to systematically milk the country for the benefit of their children and their clients.

Under their Mafia-like supervision, any forms of free political expression have been banished, with practically no oppositional political party worthy of the name currently existing: most have been co-opted by the system, the others prohibited, infiltrated or marginalized. So-called "freedom of expression" is meaningless: the audiovisual media, overflowing with state sanctioned political waffle, remains under the strictest supervision of the authorities; and the "independent" newspaper industry is fearful of publishing anything unauthorized under the watchful eye of the shadowy godfathers and the DRS. The freedom of assembly is a far off dream: only government officials and those who are considered malleable by the authorities are allowed to meet. Since 1992, the draconian State of Emergency and "anti-

terrorist" legislation, still in use, provides a so-called legal framework to these restrictions despite being unconstitutional. But the smothering of both individual and collective freedoms, is also pursued through other means borrowing from the chilling traditions of the Mafiosi: clientelism, corruption, threats, assassinations...

At an economic level, due to the dramatic rise in oil and gas prices, Algeria passed from a heavily-indebted basket case to the coveted pinup of the American, European, Russian and Chinese multinational suitors, not only for its hydrocarbons, but also for the great investment opportunities of her 70 billion dollars of cash reserves. And because of its "long experiment" in the antiterrorist struggle since 9/11, it has become a willing ally in the US administration's "Global War on Terror". Since 2001, Algiers has witnessed the unceasing dance of a succession of political leaders and military chiefs representing all Western powers, led by France and the United States, arriving to woo the Mafia-type power in the hope of securing mouth-watering contracts.

Yet in the meantime, with the exception of oil and gas sectors, the Algerian economy is in a state of advanced decomposition. The near complete failure of its privatization programme of public services, spanning nearly ten years, is a compelling evidence of the regime's economic incompetence. The increasing despair of a population plunged into a nightmare spiral of misery is in the face of the scandalous enrichment of a small minority through clientelism and corruption (bound inseparably to the organized violence of the Red decade.)

What can one do when a family has only one monthly wage of 15,000 dinars (EUR150 /£100) whereas a kilogramme of meat costs 500 dinars? When children do not go to school because their parents are unable to afford the transport or necessary equipment? When patients die in hospitals for lack of basic services or medicines, or because more and more doctors are fleeing the country? When the age of marriage is over 30 because of the

lack of affordable housing? When three generations are crammed into a decayed apartment of two or three rooms without hope of a better life? When the only dreams which enthralls both young and older citizens are of escape, through drugs, by boat (to Europe), or suicide?

For the last fifteen years, a whole generation of Algerians has only experienced this despair. It explains from the beginning of 2000, the incredible intensification of violent riots in the urban peripheries and rural districts, and has become the only form of protest left to the powerless. In confronting this threat the regime not only restricts itself to violent police and judicial repression. It also deploys terrorist groups like the GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat), clandestinely controlled by the DRS whose blind attacks strike almost predictably the main centres where the social unrest and riots occur (the "terrorist" violence that is also used in gangland killings in the internal power struggles as was the case in December 2006 with the attack against the American firm BRC, nearby Algiers).

Lastly, confronted by a society that disgusts them, the DRS Chiefs are still prepared to operate the "killing machine" they themselves constructed during the 90s. Although working at low capacity, "suspects" still disappear for months in the secret DRS centres where they suffer atrocious forms of torture. And once they reappear, they stagnate in prison waiting for a trial at the whim of the men in the shadows.

In spite of this desperate situation, glimmers of hope still remain. The spirit of resistance has not been extinguished, even if its public forms of protest have been banished to the margins. This speaks volumes for the courage of a people whose last three generations were subjected to continuous state oppression. How otherwise can we understand the strikes called almost daily by workers and civil servants, who refuse to sink deeper into precariousness and misery? How otherwise can we interpret the gatherings of mothers, fathers and wives of the disappeared, who refuse to conceal the truth regarding the fate of their relatives in exchange for hush-money of a few thousands dinars?

Similar experiences in other countries, like Argentina, have demonstrated that through the obstinate courage of the mothers, and then the children of the disappeared, those responsible have finally been "caught up" by the people's justice three decades after the military junta's putsch. It is this conviction which fuels the struggle of today's Algerian resisters, and sustains the solidarity of Algeria-Watch: as time passes so the impunity of the guilty diminishes when confronted with the howls of pain, and the demands for life and respect of dignity. The movement of resistance that today is perceived as atomized, timid and suicidal, one day will erupt and sweep away the regime, its kleptocracy, its killing machine and its unjust justice.

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**How the 'War on Terror' Undermined Peace in Northwest Africa:  
The Western Sahara Conflict After 9/11**

Jacob Mundy

On a rocky plain in the Saharan desert, just outside of the dusty military town of Tindouf, Algeria, sit four refugee camps first established in 1976. These camps house nearly half the

native population of Western Sahara. These Sahrawis, as they like to call themselves, bide their time, waiting -- as they always have -- for Morocco to leave Western Sahara so that they

can go home. Though the fundamental problem remains the same, the conditions that underlie their exile often change. When they arrived over thirty years ago, it was the Cold War that brought them there. Now it is the 'War on Terror' that helps keep them there.

Whether we like it or not, the effects of September 11, 2001, can be witnessed in some of the remotest spaces of the Earth. In this essay, I will outline two ways in which post-9/11 U.S. policy has affected the Western Sahara conflict between the occupying power, Morocco, and the Polisario Front, a Sahrawi nationalist independence movement. The most obvious effect of the 'War on Terror' is rhetorical; a shift in the way Morocco now characterizes the conflict. Yet this mutation, as I will argue, is mere substitution. Moroccan efforts to securitize the discourse in its favour are an old trick that unfortunately works in Washington. Secondly, I will describe how and why the George W. Bush administration undermined the UN peace process in Western Sahara in the name of the 'War on Terror'. However, I will start with a brief background of the Western Sahara conflict.

#### **A Western Sahara Primer:**

Fourteen days after the International Court of Justice called for a referendum on independence in Western Sahara, the Moroccan military commenced an invasion on October 30, 1975. Though Madrid had administered Western Sahara since 1884, the immediate post-Franco government decided to hastily abandon the Territory to Rabat and Nouakchott, to avoid becoming embroiled in a 'colonial war'. The Polisario Front independence movement, formed in 1973 to fight Spanish colonialism, was forced into exile along with half of the native population. From its base in Algeria, Polisario waged a fifteen year guerrilla struggle to drive out, first, Mauritania (in 1979) and, secondly, Morocco. Yet with firm aid and support from the United States, France and Saudi Arabia, Morocco was able to keep Polisario's fighters at bay while slowly gaining control of the territory. By the 1991 UN sponsored cease-fire, Morocco had won control of most of the territory.

The United Nations peace process in Western Sahara began in the mid-1980s when Morocco withdrew from the Organization of African Unity (OAU) over the admission of Polisario's Saharan Arab Democratic Republic as a full member-state. Until then, the OAU had been at the forefront of the Polisario-Morocco negotiations, and had won a major concession from Morocco: Rabat agreed to participate in a referendum on independence.

In the 1990s, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) attempted to implement a plan the parties had tentatively accepted in 1988. The goal was to hold a plebiscite allowing the native Western Saharans to choose either full independence or integration with Morocco. Ever constant were disagreements on who should even be allowed to apply to vote and then the process by which ethnic Sahrawis native to Western Sahara could be 'identified'.

That plan was thrown to the wayside in early 2000, perhaps owing to an East Timor effect in the UN Security Council (i.e., a disinclination towards contentious referenda). Furthermore, King Hassan II of Morocco, who naively thought the referendum's outcome would favour Morocco, died in mid-1999. His son, Mohammed VI, soon took independence off the table.

Frustrated with the international community's disregard and their own status as second-class citizen in Morocco, the Sahrawi independence movement has spawned its own 'Intifadah' protest movement in the streets of the Moroccan occupied Western Sahara. Though normally non-violent, this summer saw the first Sahrawi attack on Moroccan police with Molotov Cocktails in the major city of al-'Ayun (Laayoune).

Comfortable with its support from Paris, Washington and Madrid, Morocco has proven more and more intransigent in recent years. Though Morocco describes its recent 'autonomy' proposal as a concession to Polisario, Rabat now believes that it can

unilaterally impose a solution in Western Sahara and receive the international imprimatur. Morocco's belief that it can -- literally -- get away with murder in Western Sahara is an effect of recent U.S. policy

**The Moroccan Discourse on Western Sahara after 9/11: Old Wine, New Bottles**

When pressing its case for Western Sahara to foreign patrons, Moroccan regime has also attempted to de-legitimize Polisario in various ways. The most common tactic is Rabat's frequent attempts to highlight Polisario's links -- real, ideological and imaginary -- to groups, persons and countries at odds with U.S. foreign policy.

The Moroccan regime has never seen Polisario as a legitimate independence movement. Above all else, Polisario is, for most Moroccans, a creation of the Algerian state, an arm of the Algerian army. This premise, unsupported as it is by the actual history of Western Saharan nationalism, which long predates Algerian support, nonetheless remains a firm cornerstone of the Moroccan nationalist imaginaire.

During the Cold War, when the armed conflict in Western Sahara was at its peak, Morocco often attempted to portray the conflict as a proxy war between East and West. Whether calling attention to Polisario's Libyan-supplied Soviet arms or its good relations with Cuba, Rabat spared no argument to win backing from the United States. Under the Reagan administration, Morocco was able to regain the ninety percent of the territory, which it had lost during the first four years of the war (1975-1980), thanks in large part to the generous arms it received in the 1980s from the United States.

Having long ago figured out how to push the United States' security buttons, the Moroccan regime wasted little time attempting to deploy post-9/11 rhetoric to maintain and increase U.S. support. Instead of maligning Polisario as radical left, the Moroccan government now portrays Polisario as susceptible to 'Jihadism'. And once it became clear that U.S. was

actively and directly involved in the security affairs of central Saharan and Sahelian nations (i.e., the Pan-Sahel Initiative and the \$500 million Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative), it was only a matter of time before the Moroccan regime started using guilt by geographical association to tie Polisario to armed Islamic groups allegedly active in the region (e.g., GSPC, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, now al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghrib).

Likewise, the governments of Niger and Mali are attempting to brand former Tuareg rebels as al-Qaida lackeys; nor has the Mauritanian government missed an opportunity to manufacture some post-9/11 sympathy and aid from the United States by playing up its Islamic dissidents as GSPC 'terrorists'.

What is even more incredulous about Morocco's recent approach is that Rabat has continued to use Polisario's good relations with Cuba to gain backing from Cuban exile groups and anti-Castro members of congress. One might wonder if any other organization besides Polisario has been accused of having ties to both Fidel Castro and Osama Bin Laden. (One might also wonder if Washington, D.C., is the only place in the world where such a claim could be believed.) The Moroccan government has also used its half-dozen hired U.S. lobbying firms to build-up support from pro-Israel members of congress by stressing Morocco's long-standing good relations with Israel. The argument is quite simple: What is bad for an ally of Israel is bad for Israel, and so supporters of Israel should support Morocco in Western Sahara.

There is, however, an aspect to Moroccan rhetoric that Western powers are starting to take seriously. On the one hand, most policy-makers who have some experience with the Western Sahara conflict know full well that Polisario is not in bed with al-Qaida. Yet the post-9/11 Moroccan discourse has made use of the 'failed state' anxiety so many Western capitals harbour towards Africa. Rabat's efforts seem to have paid off. In the context of Western Sahara, there is an emerging



consensus that a new weak Saharan state might become a safe haven for terrorism. As no one is quite sure how an independent Western Sahara will fair (politically and economically), no Western power now wants to take the risk. In the 1970s, it is rumoured that Henry Kissinger articulated his support for a Moroccan take-over of Western Sahara by saying that it was not in the U.S. interest to have an Angola on its Eastern flank. Today one could plausibly imagine someone saying that it is not in the national interest to have an Afghanistan on the U.S. eastern flank.

### **The Peace Process in the Shadow of 9/11**

From 1997 to 2004, the Western Sahara peace process was under the direction of former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker. He originally accepted the assignment as a favour to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In mid-1997, he got Morocco and Polisario to sign a series of agreements that would guarantee the implementation of the 1991 UN Settlement Plan. The Houston Accords, as they were called, guided the peace process until the Security Council threw them away in 2000. Baker then embarked on a series of mostly indirect negotiations on a non-zero-sum solution -- an alternative to a referendum on either independence or integration. The idea of autonomy for Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty surfaced as the ideal, middle-of-the-road solution. Yet the major stumbling block remained: the right to self-determination, including the option of independence.

Baker submitted his first alternative proposal in 2001, which offered Western Sahara five years of significant autonomy. At the end of the five-year period the population would participate in an undefined 'final status' vote (i.e., without the explicit choice of independence), polling both native Western Saharans and Moroccan settlers. Though Morocco embraced the proposal, Polisario vehemently denounced it. Instead of endorsing Baker's proposal, the Security Council, in early 2002, would only state that it supported any proposal that provided for self-determination (i.e., a referendum including independence).

Baker's second alternative proposal was given to the parties in early 2003. This time, Baker sweetened the deal for Polisario by broadening the autonomy and explicitly calling for independence as one of three options on the final status referendum, along with integration and continued autonomy. For Morocco's benefit, Baker allowed the majority Moroccan settler population to participate in the vote, thus giving Rabat the demographic edge in the referendum. Though Polisario was still uncomfortable with the idea of living under Moroccan sovereignty for five years, the liberation movement stunned most observers and accepted the proposal. Upset that Baker had put independence back on the table, King Mohammed VI protested to Presidents Chirac and Bush directly, including a reportedly tense sideline meeting with the latter in the General Assembly. Yet Morocco's stiff rejection of a proposal that seemed like a clear give-away to Rabat led most observers to conclude that Morocco is not even sure how its own settler population would vote in an independence referendum in Western Sahara.

With Polisario on board, Baker wanted the Security Council to strongly endorse his plan, so as to signal to Morocco that there was only one way forward. Since 2002, Baker had concluded that sooner or later the Security Council would have to ask either Polisario or Morocco -- or both -- to do something that neither wanted. For Baker, the Security Council's calls for a mutually agreeable solution were a pipe dream. Sooner or later, Baker would need to twist some arms, and he would need the Security Council's support and blessing to make his threats real. Undercutting Baker, the Secretary-General's own Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, the Security Council would not endorse the proposal.

In the following months, Baker worked with Morocco to develop a counter proposal. The first Moroccan 'non-paper' came in late 2003, yet offered very little autonomy and no referendum of self-determination. Baker pressed Morocco to enhance the autonomy and clearly spell out what kind of referendum it

could tolerate. The second Moroccan counter-proposal, according to reports, did not even attempt to meet Baker halfway on autonomy, and even less so regarding self-determination. Frustrated with Morocco's intransigence and the Security Council's unwillingness to push Morocco (even under Chapter VI), Baker resigned in June 2004. Since then the peace process has further deteriorated.

There were two main sources of Morocco's growing intransigence during the final years of the Baker-administered peace process in Western Sahara. One -- a factor that has always been present since 1975 -- is the almost unconditional support Morocco receives from France. Yet under the final years of the Chirac presidency, this support seemed limitless. Indeed, it was clear that Chirac saw himself as Mohammed VI's godfather. It might also have had something to do with Chirac's relationship with a certain female member of the Moroccan royal family.

The second factor behind Morocco's intransigence in Western Sahara is the United State's post-9/11 policies towards Northwest Africa in the 'War on Terror'. Morocco, always a pivotal ally of the United States, has become an indispensable to the Bush administrations regional designs. Playing to the neo-conservatives (i.e., Eliot Abrams, head of Middle East in the National Security Council), Morocco portrays itself as a liberalizing and democratizing country yet offers its security services in the fight against armed trans-national Islamic networks. Not only is it clear that Morocco is one of the major routes the CIA has used in its extraordinary rendition programme, there is growing evidence that prisoners of the U.S. have been sent to Morocco for information extraction. An EU official once summarized the U.S. attitude towards Morocco in Western Sahara by asking, 'You don't criticize the country that tortures for you, do you?'

Not only is Morocco an ally in the 'War on Terror,' it is a major site and exporter of it. The coordinated suicide bombings of 2003 and the botched ones of 2007, along with the

number of Moroccan 'jihadists' participating in the Iraqi and Algerian insurgencies, not to mention the 2004 Madrid bombings and other European al-Qaida cells, suggest that something ominous is lurking behind Morocco's peaceful façade. For these reasons, the Bush administration feels all the more compelled to support Morocco in Western Sahara.

The clearest sign that the United State's 'War on Terror' had undermined the Western Sahara peace process actually came in June 2004, the same month Baker resigned. Coincidentally, the U.S. awarded Morocco a bilateral free trade agreement and major non-NATO ally status, making Morocco a top security priority like Japan and Israel. Even though Morocco's foreign minister bragged that Baker's resignation was due to his country's tenacious foreign policy, the Bush administration still thought fit to shower Morocco with gifts. Rather than support the work of Baker, the man who helped 'W' win Florida, the second Bush administration opted to bolster a stumbling ally in the 'War on Terror'. The White House's blatant disregard of the recommendations of 2006 Iraq Study Group was not the first time the Bush administration dismissed Baker.

### **Final Thoughts**

Thanks to the myopic policies of the second Bush administration, the prospects for a resolution to the Western Sahara dispute in the near future are grim, to say the least. The worst-case scenario -- a return to armed conflict between Morocco and Polisario -- seems more probable now than at any other time since the 1991 cease-fire. Given that conflict management resources are stretched so thin, the international community will apparently have to learn to stomach a high level of instability and violence, especially in Africa. Just as the effects of 9/11 can be seen almost everywhere, the damage caused by the 'War on Terror' is equally pervasive.

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## US War on Terror: Reactions from Morocco's Civil Society

James N. Sater

### Introduction

'Terror' and 'civil society' are two highly controversial concepts that lack analytical precision. Both are highly value laden, terror is inherently negative and often used to defame one's opponent;<sup>1</sup> civil society is inherently positive, originally associated to the self-image of European bourgeois society in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Both concepts are analytically related, as the successful implementation of 'civility' in societies negates or, at least, reduces the possibility of the use of terror as a means to an end. It is therefore not a surprise that the so-called War on Terror included an instrumentalist approach aimed at democratization of the Middle East and North African (MENA) region by strengthening civil society. This was not only because of civil society's idealization as a bulwark against terrorism, but also as the lack of democracy,

and US support to authoritarian rulers in the Middle East as part of its traditional containment policy, have been identified as one of the underlying reasons for the rise of terrorist groups in MENA. The result has been the 'hybrid character' of the Bush administration's foreign policy toward the Middle East since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, as Singh so well observed:

Metaphorically, Jacksonianism and Wilsonianism had been melded into a new hybrid, one unafraid to project American power and American values – indeed one that saw the combination as inextricably linked for the preservation of American security. In this regard, the traditional biases of foreign policy approaches were subverted. The Bush Doctrine

embraced liberal idealists' faith in (American) values, agreeing that the form of domestic regimes bore directly on their foreign policies and that 'democratic peace' proponents had it right.<sup>2</sup>

Especially in MENA, this Wilsonian twist of the 'Bush doctrine' was reinforced with what Singh called 'hardheaded, realist means to yield idealism without illusions,'<sup>3</sup> referring to the US willingness to use force and unilateral action if necessary.

This short essay seeks to illustrate that it may not necessarily be the inconsistency of the US approach to fight terror that is likely to lead to failure, but the particular character of the Middle East international system where both strategies have been applied. The reason is that both aspects of the War on Terror met a particularly fragmented regional system marked by what international relations scholars termed a long history of penetration by European colonial forces *before* the rise of Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and by the US *since* the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup> A particularly weak state system meant that suspicion if not hostility to increasing US ideological and military penetration which the War on Terror entails, is not so much articulated by weak state leaders and regional alliances (such as the Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab Maghreb Union). Rather societal organizations that often make the penetration of the Arab system by the US and its traditional ally Israel their main mobilizing force, have become the main protagonists of this resistance using Islam as their main ideological resource (Hizb'allah in Lebanon, Hamas in Palestine, and other emerging Islamic parties and movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt). Ironically, as this article seeks to illustrate using Morocco as an example, this also includes those organizations that the US is primarily interested in promoting, civil society and pro-democracy organizations that are crucial in supporting the Wilson-inspired democracy promotion agenda.

### **Moroccan Civil Society and the War on Terror**

In Morocco as elsewhere in the Arab-Muslim world, the confusion of the so-called War on Terror with anti-Muslim, anti-Arab policies is paramount, especially as they relate to US policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and US policies in Iraq. When Richard Perle, a leading Republican figure and former assistant secretary of defense mentioned as early as in November 2001 Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Libya, Somalia and North Korea as possible target countries, included in 'phase two' of the War on Terror (after Afghanistan), all but one of these countries were either Muslim or Arab.<sup>5</sup> The religious and civilizational connotation of this observation has been crucial. In addition, the rhetoric of human rights as part of universal values that the US now projects, as well as 'democratic transitions' as part of its War on Terror, smacks of hypocrisy when secret prisons are reported to have operated in Morocco, the European Union, and elsewhere, not to mention conditions in US run prisons in Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay – beyond national or international protection and control.

On the other hand, the attitude of Morocco's civil society towards the War on Terror goes beyond simple anti-American rhetoric and is multifaceted: First, Morocco's foreign relations have been constructed as generally pro-Western and moderate, rendering Morocco a natural US ally. In addition, Morocco experienced acts of terror in May 2003, which traumatized not only a secular elite but large parts of the population, rendering Moroccans hostile to 'terrorism' – loosely defined. Second, a large number of Moroccan nationals were involved in terror acts in Madrid and elsewhere, raising questions as to Morocco's strategy for preventing its nationals from being involved in acts of terror. The Moroccan government reacted with an important public relations campaign that has at its core '*Ne Touches Pas A Mon Pays*' (Don't Harm My Country), creating an internal enemy that transcends Morocco's 'civil' society. The aim was to first discourage Moroccans from being involved in acts of terror, second to create

consensus concerning the punishment of transgressors – those 2,000 Islamists that had been kept in prisons without fair trial in the aftermath of May 16, 2003, the date of the Casablanca bombings that killed more than 40 people. As a result, it should have been fairly easy to build upon pro-US sympathies in its War on Terror. However intrinsic problems of US foreign policy have prevented this from materializing.

The main problem with post-9/11 US foreign policy – the Bush doctrine – remains its core assumption that rules such as multilateralism that apply to the rest of the world need not apply to US foreign policy. Although this has been a constant in US foreign policy, the idea that the world needs a strong US that leads it, regardless of criticism or inconsistency, has been given even more importance by the Bush administration: As President George W. Bush put it to the graduating cadets at West Point in 2002 ‘America has, and intends to keep, military strengths beyond challenge – thereby making the destabilizing arms races of other eras pointless, and limiting rivalries to trade and other pursuits of peace.’<sup>6</sup> From the perspective of MENA countries, this meant that the US military hegemony is being regarded as a significant threat to national sovereignty and nationalist sentiments, reinforced by the occupation of Iraq *and* the virtual military hegemony that Israel has enjoyed with the isolation and then occupation of Iraq since the early 1990s. The irony of this is that ultimately, the US continues to rely on partners and therefore multilateralism, even if it has the power to impose its views more so than other states. This is illustrated by its long-term strategy of dealing with global terror.

As part of its War on Terror, the US uses a two-fold partially inconsistent strategy of targeting a potential Islamist anti-American resurgence by repression – thereby lending support to authoritarian states – and creating a civil space inside Arab-Muslim countries in which conflicts can be articulated. Strengthening civil society, an independent media, as well as constructive dialogues between Islamists, state actors, and secular

organizations has become part of a strategy of creating civil, ultimately less unruly, controllable space.

To achieve the latter, more long-term objective, the Bush administration significantly increased development budgets including projects that aim at ‘democratization.’ Although Morocco has traditionally figured high on the list of US aid recipient countries in the Arab world, second only to Egypt, towards the end of the 1990s US Overseas Development Aid (ODA) was at the same level as that of Germany, accounting for approximately 4.5 percent of overall ODA that Morocco received.<sup>7</sup> The increase of the budget from US \$ 10.250 million in 2000, to US \$ 19.107 million in 2006 illustrates that especially after the Casablanca attacks of May 16, 2003, Morocco has moved higher on the list of US preoccupations. This includes the democracy promotion agenda as for the first time USAID prioritizes ‘Government Responsiveness for Citizens’ in its 2004 Strategic Plan for Morocco.<sup>8</sup> In 2006, ‘Government Responsiveness for Citizens’ (read democracy promotion) takes with US \$ 6.440 million about one third of overall US ODA.

It is here that civil society’s response to the US War on Terror is crucial: as recipients of increasing aid, organized groups outside of the immediate reach of the state – the independent media, Islamic groups and political parties, as well as human rights organizations – are highly sensitive and critical to US strategies in the Middle East but at the same time attracted to the increasing attention with which the US is wooing them. In addition, despite constant official reaffirmation that the Moroccan-US friendship agreement dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is the longest, unbroken of such treaties that the US has with any other foreign country, the Moroccan population is very influenced by anti-American sentiments due to events in the Middle East.

A short survey of the Moroccan press indicates this point: Out of 100 articles reviewed by the French embassy that appeared in the Moroccan

press in 2006 – using two keywords: ‘International Affairs’ and the ‘United States’ – around 60 percent of all articles deal with Iraq, Israel, prison conditions in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, and are generally hostile to US policy in the Middle East including its War on Terror. Articles that are not related to these topics deal with a Free Trade Agreement that Morocco signed with the US, a visit by the then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in February 2006, increasing security co-operation between the US and Morocco, or the US ‘manipulation’ of Morocco’s electoral process by publishing a pre-election survey that grants the Islamist *Parti de la Justice et du Développement* (PJD) 47% of votes.<sup>9</sup>

What is striking is that the US receives very little or no attention by the media if it does not relate to Arab-Islamic affairs, i.e. Iraq, anti-Islamism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict, or to issues that involve Morocco directly. This means that US Middle East policies that strengthen the US presence in the Middle East ultimately undermine US policies as they relate to its more long-term strategy of its War on Terror, including its aim to officially support Morocco’s democratization process. Whereas former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared to the Moroccan media that ‘the voice of His Majesty Mohamed VI is that of reason, modernization, and tolerance’, adding that ‘reforms in Morocco illustrate that democracy and tolerance are perfectly compatible with Islam,’<sup>10</sup> protests in front of the parliament organized by Morocco’s leading human rights organization *Association Marocaine des Droits Humains* (AMDH) brandished the visit with the following slogans: ‘No To Morocco’s Integration In The US Imperialists’ Security And Military Plans’, and ‘Guantanamo: A Crime Against Humanity.’<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, both articles appeared in the same issue of the government newspaper *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, indicating high level disagreement with US policies in the Middle East.

In addition to these possibly predictable protests by human rights organizations that are outside of the established political field (and

subject to repeated repression by the Moroccan state), broader criticism also includes more integrated groups with links to the government. In September 2006, a government circular to foreign embassies in Morocco asked for the end of support for civil society organizations other than those that are officially sanctioned by the Moroccan state as public utilities (*utilités publiques*). Programs that include support to civil society should be run by the Moroccan state. Although details of the circular have not been spelled out, and it has caused great confusion among local NGOs, in its initial response the Moroccan journalists’ union *Syndicat National de la Presse Marocaine* (SNPM) advocated greater control of embassies’ involvement in civil society, as the risk of manipulation was seen as great. Its secretary-general Younès Moujahid specifically targeted the US embassy and an important aid program with which journalists should be better trained and supported. In his opinion, the US was ‘infiltrating’ the Moroccan media in order to improve the image of the US in Morocco, and to use Moroccan journalists against the Moroccan state in disputed issues. According to the newspaper *At-Tajdid*, the journalists’ union SNPM and the Moroccan human rights association AMDH prepared a document that calls for a boycott of the US embassy in Rabat in order to limit their impact on the autonomy of civil society.<sup>12</sup>

### Conclusion

From this account, it seems clear that the long-term strategy of increasing civil space and associated moderate discourse inside Arab-Muslim countries is about to fail even in a country that has historically known little anti-Americanism due to its moderate official ideology and its comparative distance from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Increasingly, activities that are financed by the US are met with suspicion if not hostility. Civil society’s ‘independence’ from the state – a highly celebrated characteristic among local activists in Morocco – ever more includes independence from actors that have a strategic interest in increasing the very same actors’ visibility in the Moroccan political scene. Visits of US officials such as former Secretary

of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that frequently praise Morocco's 'civil' society and the King's position as that of 'reason, modernization, and tolerance' ultimately undermine the credibility of US efforts to support Morocco's reform process.

This means that the recent US democracy promotion strategy is being perceived as just another aspect of overall US Middle East Policy and therefore another facet of the Middle Eastern state system's penetration. It is rejected as it is associated with US and Israeli military hegemony in the Middle East, highlighting the importance of pan-Arab and pan-Islamic sentiments that continue to be prevalent in MENA. Officially the Moroccan state as most other Arab states, continues to be part of a pro-US alliance against terror; a Free Trade Agreement with the US came into force in 2005 despite Morocco's disagreement with the US invasion of Iraq. However, the underlying tensions are now being expressed by social groups with arguably larger margins of maneuver. The implication of this has been aptly pointed out by Ehteshami: The result of the US democratization drive seems to be that it de-democratizes the MENA even further, as its double standards only help to embolden radical and conservative forces, whilst it undermines the moderate and progressive reformers. If, as in the case of civil society organizations and other 'democrats', policies aim at strengthening their visibility, the first action undertaken is 'to condemn the US superpower for its occupation of Iraq, for the behaviour of its troops and political agents there, for its unconditional support for Israel and blatant disregard for international law and norms in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and for its continuing support for many of the region's authoritarian regimes'<sup>13</sup>

A last point concerns this above mentioned linkage of US Middle East policies and its War on Terror. The US made a point before the overthrow of the Iraqi regime under Saddam Hussein that it first needed to install a viable, democratic state in Iraq before pressuring Israel to allow the creation of a viable Palestinian state. The reasoning behind this

logic was that it would be easier to pressure Israel once its ultimate threat, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, had been eliminated.<sup>14</sup> In fact, this policy of *sequencing* proved illusory not only for the creation of a functioning Palestinian state: It only supported an Israeli position framed as fighting terrorism in the Palestinian territories, thereby lending support to the election of Hamas and increasing violence in the occupied territories. It also proved illusory because the US continues to underestimate the importance of a viable Palestinian state for its overall policy of fighting terrorism, including its instrumentalist view of civil society to achieve this aim.

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<sup>1</sup> David J. Whittaker: *The Terrorism Reader. Second Edition*. (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Singh: 'The Bush Doctrine' in Mary Buckley and Robert Singh: *The Bush Doctrine and the War on Terrorism; Global responses, global consequences* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See Raymond Hinnebusch: 'The Middle East Regional System' in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami: *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2002) pp. 29-53.

<sup>5</sup> Anoushiravan Ehteshami: 'The Middle East: Between ideology and geo-politics' in Mary Buckley and Robert Singh: *The Bush Doctrine and the War on Terrorism; Global responses, global consequences* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 110.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Jervis : 'Understanding the Bush Doctrine' in G. John Ikenberry: *American Foreign Policy. Theoretical Essays*. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), p. 584.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.usaid.gov>.

<sup>8</sup> USAID – Morocco Country Strategy Plan 2004-2008, pp. 37-46. Available at [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PDABZ612.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDABZ612.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.ambafrance-ma.org/presse/index.cfm>.

<sup>10</sup> *Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb*, February 13, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *At-tajdid*, September 13, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Ehteshami, 2006, op.cit. p. 117.

<sup>14</sup> Hall Gardner : 'Preclusive War with Iraq : Regional and Global Ramifications' in Hall Gardner (ed): *Nato and the European Union. New World, New Europe, New Threats* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2004), p. 282.

## Political Islam in Morocco: The Case of the Party of Justice and Development (PJD)

Mohammed Hirchi

The impact of America's War on Terror on the evolution of the Moroccan democratic initiative and especially on its impact on the moderate Islamic Party of Justice and Development (PJD) is important to comprehending the current political conditions in Morocco. This analysis will look at the evolution of the PJD since the Casablanca bombing in 2003 and will explain how this event has created new political dynamics between the government and the party.

### Background

The moderate Islamic Party of Justice and Development (PJD) was founded by Dr. Abdelkrim Al Khatib, a politician known for his sympathy with the Monarchy, under the name of the MPDC (Popular Democratic and Constitutional Movement). The party was known for its political amnesia for many years until various members of a clandestine association *Chabib Islamia* (Islamic Youth), who later formed the MUR (Movement for Unity and Reform), joined the party, with the blessings of former interior minister Driss Basri. In 1988 the party officially became the PJD. Some scholars argue that the PJD name was inspired by the Turkish Party of Justice and Development. The Moroccan party differs from the Turkish PJD, however, in its brand of liberalism and modernity.

On September 27, 2002 during the legislative elections, the PJD took 42 out of 325 seats, winning most of the districts where it was

represented. Since 2004, the party's leader has been Saadeddine Othmani, a charismatic and a well respected politician. The PJD accepted the political game by participating in the political system and recognizing the institution of the monarchy, unlike Al Adl Wa Al Ihsane (Justice and Spirituality), a radical Islamist Organization that has refused to participate in the process of democratization that Morocco is going through.

Before the 2003 Casablanca bombings, the party used to publish harsh criticism and violent diatribes targeting Morocco's opening to Western values in the MUR's newspaper *Attajdid* (The Renewal). Since 2003 the party has been redefining its criticism and gives the appearance of having softened its political stances by adopting a more moderate rhetoric. Under pressure from the palace, the leaders of the PJD were urged to redefine their political discourse and to embrace the politics of modernization that constitute an important ideological tool for the new monarchy. Because of Mohammed VI's agenda to develop a modern state with viable democratic institutions, Morocco became an attractive country to Western Europe and to the United States. As stated by Marvine Lowe,

As one of a handful of Arab countries which Washington can comfortably consider a friend, Morocco is viewed as a cornerstone for the American policy of promoting democracy in the



region. Caught between the process of democratization and the growing momentum of political Islam, Morocco is a place that anyone concerned with the future of democracy in the Arab world should be watching closely.

The complication of the political games in Moroccan national politics should be understood within the context of the social and the economic strategic vision adopted by the palace and the government. It should also be articulated in the global context of the war on terror and of its impact on the evolution of the Islamist parties in Morocco. In order to grasp the evolution of Moroccan society toward a democratic stage, we should look at this evolution in its historical dimension.

After the death of King Hassan II, known for his autocratic and authoritarian regime, Morocco has gone through drastic political changes. In the last years of his reign, Hassan II's political openness was crucial to the changes that were going to take place after his death. By offering the post of the prime minister to Abderrahman Youssoufi, the opposition leader of the socialist political party, Hassan II understood the historical necessity of change and of creating a new political atmosphere adapted to the liberal tendencies of his son. The heir to the throne, Mohammed VI, a well esteemed prince known for his political and democratic openness, took over in a smooth political transition. The regime change brought hope to the people of a country who were accustomed to living in a state of fear and insecurity under the ideology of the *Makhzen*. The *Makhzen* ideology, incarnated in the person of the interior minister Driss Basri, was based on oppression, humiliation and violation of the most basic human rights. In the early 1990s, Hassan II launched a political project that allowed opposition parties to freely participate in the new political process to pave the way to a smooth transition to the heir of the throne.

Reacting to the rise of Islamism in his own country, King Hassan II was able to avoid

many of the problems facing other Arab countries at the time by successfully playing Islamist parties against the left, whom he saw as his main opponents. These measures kept Islamist groups at bay for most of King Hassan II's 38-year reign. However, the prominence of political Islam started to grow again in the late 1990s as King Hassan II started opening up the government to opposition parties in order to ensure an orderly succession to the throne for his son Mohammed VI. This rise in popularity and appeal among Morocco's Islamist parties was strengthened by the political relaxation carried out by King Mohammed VI upon his ascension to the throne in 1999. As a result of the king's new policies, such as tolerating an independent press, Islamists benefited greatly from the freedom to exploit the government's numerous unfulfilled promises. (Howe)

### **Democratization After 2003**

Morocco's political openness is coupled with multiple attempts to democratize society and to enhance a spirit of responsibility, ethics and nationalism. In this political context, parties that were banned under Hassan II, especially Cheikh Abdesslam Yassine's radical movement *Al Adl Wa Al Ihsane*, started to emerge as anti-establishment parties embodying dissidence, contestation and a staunch criticism of the monarchy. On the other hand, the PJD's moderate tone allowed it to continue to enjoy popularity among a large segment of the Moroccan population. The PJD's ideological stances and its political position within the framework of the Moroccan political arena appeal to people who are disenchanted with the rhetoric of the secular parties. However, after the 2003 terrorist acts in Casablanca, the PJD was targeted by the security apparatuses as one of the movements that contributed to the spread of a culture of religious intolerance. As stated by Marvine Howe,

The debate over the PJD has intensified in recent months as the party has adopted a more assertive attitude. The Islamists lowered their profile after the 2003 Casablanca attacks, which led to a torrent of

criticism that the PJD was contributing to a climate of intolerance. The attacks also provoked a new law banning political parties based on religion, leading the PJD to emphasize that it was no more than a party with "Islamic references."

We should wait until the legislative elections to see the outcome of governmental manoeuvres to contain the propaganda machine of the PJD. Because the PJD is viewed as a moderate political party by the United States and the European Union, it benefits from the support of the international community and from a growing number of Moroccan sympathizers. In this perspective, the PJD has succeeded in promoting an ideology that condemns political violence and recognizes the centrality of the structure of monarchy. Moreover, members of the PJD embrace social initiatives that have a strong impact on voters. Its charitable associations are very involved in social work in the whole country.

According to Roula Khalaf, earlier in 2006 polls showed that 47 per cent of the electorate embraced the party's ideology. The PJD's rise illustrates the trend across the Arab world where Islamist movements enjoy popularity because of their dedication to social justice coupled with a staunch opposition to American imperialism and a sustained criticism of failed social policies and initiatives of the coalition government in place. It is clear to Islamic scholars that the PJD defines itself as a political party that values communications, dialogue and negotiations and condemns any resort to violence as a means to political, social and economic gains.

In this perspective, PJD leaders' resort to an ideology of proximity is associated with the party's harsh criticism of the government's failure to provide jobs and security to a growing number of Moroccans. Lahcen Daoudi, one of the top leaders of the movement, an economist by training and a significant political capital for the PJD, argues that the government is not performing and that Moroccans are looking for a political

alternative. They are seeking a way out that is undoubtedly associated with the party's reformist agenda and with a redefinition of the government's priorities and previous initiatives. As an opposition party, the PJD criticizes the amnesia of a coalition government unable to implement economic structural changes.

Despite its popular appeal, however, the PJD remains a very controversial political party. The two main secular parties, the leftist Socialist Union of Popular Forces and the nationalist *Istiqlal* (Independence) argue that the moderate tone of the PJD is only a strategic move to win the upcoming legislative elections. They view the PJD's political philosophy as anchored in a radical ideological framework. If the movement succeeds in building bridges beyond the national borders, it is still subject to criticism in a culture of Islamophobia.

Government officials as well as secular rivals accuse the party of embracing a radical ideology while presenting itself to the world with a moderate face. For example, Nabil Benabdallah, the minister of communication and a government spokesman, believes that the PJD's ideology undermines the vision of modernity promoted by the king, including a 2004 Family Code that strengthens women's rights. The party's reactions to *Marock*, a controversial movie made by a young Moroccan woman film maker, are also revealing of the PJD's deceptive position to issues of women's anticipation, fasting, inter-ethnic/religious relationships, etc.

As a moderate state, Morocco has emerged as one of the most trusted Arab countries for the United States. Its new political culture has allowed it to occupy a leading position among the Arab nations that are in the process of modernizing their political institutions. However, this political opening is urging the palace and the government to redefine their political rhetoric and priorities. After attempts to implement a fully democratic electoral culture, the government is very aware that the radical Islamic movements might capitalize on

this opening and be the first political parties to benefit from it. In this respect, new strategies and alliances have been taking place to contain the popularity of PJD and to minimize its political impact during the upcoming legislative elections. On the other hand, the leaders of the party multiply their social appearances and activities nationally and internationally to promote their political agenda. Othmani's previous visits to the United States, Spain, and other European countries were the product of this strategy.

Leaders of the PJD are very aware of their political role in a country in the process of redefining itself. Since his ascension to the throne, King Mohammed VI has been striving to develop a strategic vision that will enhance Moroccan economic development to encounter the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the increase of youth unemployment, illegal immigration and drug trafficking, the PJD movement takes advantage of this historical situation to anchor its oppositional rhetoric within the framework of a country incapable of transcending its imminent contradictions. As a result, the party is well positioned to acquire the confidence of the voters.

#### **PJD's prospects for the future**

According to national and international political observers, the PJD enjoys a very promising position in the Moroccan political landscape. Since the 2002 elections, the Islamist party continues to attract individuals from different strata of the Moroccan society. Its Islamic ideological referential is engrained within the context of a society striving to reconcile between tradition and modernity. The PJD leadership is very conscious of this fundamental polarity in Moroccan politics and culture. Since its inception as a political party, the PJD has been using a reconciliatory political rhetoric. The party tries to stay in tune with the modernizing strategies of the palace and to participate in the promotion of the ideals of an open and democratic state. Many political analysts are skeptical about the party's ability to reconcile between these two drastic political agendas, arguing that even though PJD leaders embrace an "open"

interpretation of Islam, their political success in the June 2007 elections may pave the way for more radical Islamist movements in Morocco. Some observers believe that their electoral success will certainly benefit *Al Adl Wa-Al Ihsan* (Justice and Charity), the most controversial Moroccan Islamist party.

However, some prominent PJD leaders urge the secularist critics to avoid deepening the polarization in society. For example, Dr. Daoudi argues that the PJD is a barrier against radicalization and weakening it will only benefit radical movements. According to Marvine Howe, this moderate Islamist party can be seen as a "buffer against al-Qaeda-inspired groups that have sought to mobilize impoverished Moroccans" such as those who were involved in the 2003 Casablanca bombings. From this perspective, one could argue that the PJD can be used by the Moroccan government and by the United States as a barrier to the development of radical violent Islamic movements that would challenge the monarchy. The US sees in this political party a promising departure from movements with an anti-imperialist and an anti-western stance. With an awareness of the evolution of fundamentalist groups around the Arab world as a result of their involvement in Iraq and Palestine, the United States is capitalizing on political parties that embrace moderation, tolerance and openness toward the West. As mentioned earlier, PJD has already taken many steps in this direction. Al Othmani's trips to the US and Europe testify to the tendency of the party to articulate its tribulations within a moderate alternative.

As a moderate party, the PJD appeals to a variety of voters from different social and economic classes. The party's benevolent associations are visible in the poorest areas of the big cities, such as Casablanca, Rabat, and Marrakech. The proximity strategies that the PJD has celebrated since its inception as a political organization are beneficial for a positive reputation of the party. The PJD's good sense of organization and management is well respected by its opponents and its one of its major strengths.

### **PJD and the National Politics**

The PJD currently has 42 out of 325 seats in the Chamber of Representatives won in most of the districts where it was allowed to compete during the legislative elections of 2002. Besides, the party participates in the government of about 60 municipalities, including Casablanca and Rabat and controls 14 municipal and village councils, including the city of Meknes. On the national level, the PJD representatives attempt to improve public services, redefine priorities for public spending, fight corruption, and reach out to the public. As reflected in the party's title, the PJD's motto is social justice and economic development; two major areas that need improvement in a country with a high level of illiteracy and unemployment. The organization's electoral program has five pillars: authenticity, sovereignty, democracy, justice and development.

**Authenticity:** the concept of authenticity means the revival of an Arabo-Islamic tradition. Morocco, according to the leaders of the party, is sliding toward all forms of corruption; prostitution, drugs, etc. that destroy the fabric of an Islamic society. In order for the country to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it needs to embrace an ideology of reconciliation with its historical past.

**Sovereignty:** Like other political parties in Morocco, sovereignty is a sacred concept that needs to be integrated in the program of any party that promotes integration and nationalism. The PJD like other major national parties recognizes the "Moroccanness" of the Western Sahara. It also promotes the integration of all the northern enclaves (Ceuta and Mellilia) to the motherland.

**Democracy:** Morocco is going through a period of democratization of various institutions, including the creation of a number of organisms that promote human rights. The King's controversial revision of women's status is articulated within this perspective. The PJD encourages these initiatives, except the redefinition of women's status, and

proposes to continue in this direction in order to build a new Morocco attractive to foreign investment and tourism.

**Justice:** With the empowerment of the position of the prime minister, the PJD hopes that the minister of justice will be nominated by the prime minister instead of the king. The justice ministry is one of the sovereignty ministries under the Palace's control. If the PJD wins in the upcoming legislative elections of June 2007, and in the case that the king appoints the leader of the party as the prime minister, the question of the reinvention of a new Justice department may well be raised. The revision of the constitution is one of the most important components of the party's political agenda.

Since becoming king, Mohammed VI took many initiatives to modernize Morocco. His development strategies encompass a variety of economic sectors. The king's strategic involvement in these endeavors is aimed at developing the country as well as at inhibiting the rise to power of oppositional parties, especially the PJD. In this respect, the PJD will need a strong economic package to offer to voters before elections day.

### **Conclusion**

The American war on terror has certainly created a tense political environment in contemporary Morocco. Due to this ideology of war, the Moroccan government has felt the obligation to redefine its relationships to the main Islamic political movements and especially the Party of Justice and Development. However, the leaders of this party continue to promote their political agenda by offering a moderate interpretation of their political platform. In the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca bombings, the government has engaged in its own war against Islamic extremism. The idea of integrating the PJD into the government, in the event that they win in the upcoming legislative elections, has provoked deep concern in the palace and beyond.

Currently, Mohammed VI is at a historical watershed, faced with two options. His first option is to integrate into his political agenda the growing voices of change by pushing for more economic, social and democratic reforms. His second option is to continue enjoying executive power by maintaining the politics of the status quo. If the king opts for the second strategy, the PJD will have a strong chance of gaining a majority in the upcoming parliamentary elections by appealing to the disenchanted segments of the Moroccan population.

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**Meeting with Nadia Yassine:  
Non-Violent Islamists who Threaten the Regime in Morocco**

Fouzi Slisli

"Fil Maghrib la tastaghrib/In Morocco do not be surprised," says an old Moroccan saying. This is true even in politics. Where else would one find the largest Islamist movement in the country having a woman as its most outspoken member? Where else would a grandmother preaching non-violence and democracy constitute the biggest threat to the regime? The lady in question is Nadia Yassine. The movement is the banned Islamist group *Adl wal Ihssan* - Justice and Spirituality Association (JSA). In August 2007, on the eve of the Moroccan legislative elections, I had the opportunity to visit and interview Nadia Yassine with colleagues from *The Economist*, *BBC World*, and *MacClatchy Newspapers*. At the time, the media was still debating her last court appearance, lips taped with a red X to symbolize the government's attempt to silence her. She had declared to the press that monarchy was not suitable for Morocco, that she prefers a republic, and that the regime (known by its traditional name *Makhzen*) was

near collapse. In Morocco, where the constitution defines the person of the king as "sacred," Yassine's statements were bound to get her in trouble. She and the editors of the weekly where her statements were published now face up to 5 years in prison.

Yassine invited us to meet her at her house in the poor city of Salé. She lives across the street from the infamous prison of Salé. She had moved there to be close to her father Abdessalam Yassine, founder and spiritual leader of the movement, when he was incarcerated by the late king Hassan II. Her husband, Abdallah Chibani, came to meet us by the prison. He is also in the party's senior leadership, and had also been incarcerated in that very prison. In more than one way, Yassine and Chibani are not the typical Islamist couple. It was him who waited on us and brought us trays of tea and Moroccan sweets, while Yassine sat down and talked national, regional and world politics to us. As

an Islamist party, *Adl wal Ihsan* is unique for having such a strong presence of women at the leadership level. The Women's association that Yassine founded and built since 1983 is an energetic force within the party and is represented at the most senior level of party leadership.

*Adl wal Ihsan* is also unique in its style of militancy. JSA has been consistent, loud and unapologetic in its rejection of the king's claim to power, and has actively worked to oppose it. "We undermine the system, slowly but surely," Yassine was quoted saying in *The Boston Globe*, "we put into question the legitimacy of the Islamic claim of the regime. We contest the legitimacy of their power."<sup>1</sup> JSA, though, is a non-violent organization. It practices grassroots politics and has a huge network of charities, associations, and clubs spread across Morocco and at all levels of civil society. The party aspires to provoke concrete social and political change following Abdessalam Yassine's concept of "*qawma*." As his daughter explained, the word is used in reference to the Moroccan people and means overcoming of, or rising up against, "ignorance, enslavement, feudalism, poverty, and fears." Rather than the concept of "revolution" which, she said, involves violence and blood letting, *qawma* involves a peaceful transformation of society. Long term educational programs, and patient grassroots politics and social work are the methods JSA uses to affect this transformation. The pursuit of this educational program and non-violent grass roots politics is considered by Nadia Yassine and her movement a *jihad*.

The group first came to prominence at the height of what Moroccans commonly call "Les Années de Plomb/ The Years of Lead" – the repressive era in the 70s and 80s under the late king Hassan II. Abdessalam Yassine, who was then a regional school inspector and a Sufi mystic, addressed an open letter to Hassan II challenging his legitimacy and requesting accountability. Incarcerations, house arrests and bans all failed to curb the party's popularity, especially among the poor. Abdessalam Yassine was incarcerated for six

years, and was then placed under house arrest. He regained his freedom again in May 2000 by order of the new king, Mohammed VI. Yassine immediately addressed another open letter. "Redeem your father from torment," he demanded of the young king, "by returning to the people the goods they are entitled to." The royal fortune, Yassine said, was equivalent to Morocco's foreign debt.<sup>2</sup>

Besides refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the king, *Adl wal Ihsan* also refuses to participate in elections or take part in the government. On the eve of new legislative elections, Nadia Yassine was categorical in her dismissal. The elections "are a non-event for us," she said. While Morocco has taken important steps to democratize and allow wide participation in the political process, and while the legislative elections of September 2007 have been certified as clean and fair by international observers, the king still maintains the lion's share of power, controls the most powerful cabinets, and his person, according to the constitution, is "sacred." The king is executive leader of the state, military chief and religious leader all at the same time. Many Moroccans consider the elections no more than superficial ornaments in the king's absolutist regime. In Morocco, as the French *Libération* succinctly put it in a headline, "the King Rules, Moroccans Vote." JSA refuses to take part in a system that is, in Nadia Yassine's words, "by definition rigged and does not allow true participation."

JSA promotes democracy and remains interested in participating in politics, said Nadia Yassine, but not at any price. Her movement, she said, refuses to give the government the satisfaction of integrating them into the system. The strength of the movement is in its grassroots politics, and its closeness and attentiveness to the problems and needs of Moroccans. Participation in what she calls Morocco's "theatrical democracy" and the king's "politics of appearances" would alienate the movement from its grassroots. That, she said, is a price JSA categorically refuses to pay.

Nadia Yassine's views on international politics were not predictable either. She considers the spread of Saudi *Wahabism* a sort of adolescence that the Islamic world is going through. It will eventually die away and sober political programs will come to replace it. The education and spiritual training that members of her movement go through, she says, makes them immune to *wahabism*. And while she

supports the right of the Islamic resistance in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq to defend their land and their people from colonialism, she does not agree with some of their social programs, especially their attitudes towards women.

1. November 06, 2005.

2. *World Press Review*, (Vol. 49, N. 11).

## **In Pursuit of al-Qaeda in Somalia: A Critical Analysis of U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Somalia**

Ramla Bile

### **Introduction**

In an attempt to monitor and curb terrorist activity in East Africa, the United States launched an aggressive campaign against the Union of Islamic Courts—a rising political force in Somalia, including a direct invasion, which ensued a failed attempt by the CIA to defuse the movement. In this effort to weave the Horn of Africa into this ever-exhaustive war on terrorism, there has been a tendency to demonize the UIC and portray the organization as another menacing and monolithic Islamist movement without doing justice to the complexity of Somali politics. It is often the case that the UIC is inappropriately linked with other Islamist movements, such as al-Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah. Such allegations have largely been reported as fact in media outlets even though supporting details remain weak. Publications and news stories with headlines, such as, “The Hunt for al-Qaeda in Somalia,”<sup>1</sup> “Al-Qaeda Threat Seen Looming if Government Fails,”<sup>2</sup> and “U.N. Says Somalis Helped Hezbollah Fighters,”<sup>3</sup> dominate media discourses and perpetuate the idea of a menacing movement emerging in Somalia. Additionally, much of the existing representations of the UIC in Western media invoke an alarmist sense of urgency to act and dismantle the group. In this paper, I argue that the U.S. approach to Somali politics has largely been shortsighted and uncritical. I deepen this argument by examining the tactics

employed by the U.S. and the ramifications of such policies.

### **U.S. Policy in East Africa**

In general, U.S. foreign policy towards Somalia is characterized by strong disapproval of UIC. This condemnation manifests itself in two forms. The first is an aggressive military campaign, which developed into support for the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia. The second is a propaganda assault in which there exists strong demonization of the UIC in political, and consequently media circles. Somalia became an area of interest after senior members of the Bush administration conveyed that instability in Somalia posed a significant terror threat for the United States,<sup>4</sup> and on May 2006, a U.S. spokesperson openly confirmed that the president would not allow Somalia to exist as a safe haven for terrorists.<sup>5</sup> U.S. officials also conveyed that five al-Qaeda operatives, including some connected with the U.S. embassy bombings in Nairobi and Tanzania were in Mogadishu.<sup>6</sup> This was perhaps the beginning of the formal declaration of opposition against alleged terrorist elements in Somalia. Though the U.S. openly expressed concern regarding Somalia's status as a failed state and also regarding the question of the five al-Qaeda operatives, it became clear that there was more anxiety over the increasing popularity of the UIC and the

existence of Islamist politics in Somalia. Instead of pursuing a more surgical approach to the issue of the al-Qaeda operatives or attempting to mediate collaboration between the UIC and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) for a more stable Somalia, the U.S. took a different course.

On February 2006, Washington began its campaign to exert political pressure on the UIC through the CIA funded “Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism in Mogadishu” (ARPCT). The alliance created a coalition of warlords to monitor and defuse Islamist politics in the capital.<sup>7</sup> This network was eventually defeated by the UIC, and this defeat was followed by a deepening of U.S. involvement in Somali politics via neighboring Ethiopia. In recent months, Ethiopian presence on ground has escalated. As early as July 2006, Ethiopian forces were seen crossing into the country and in October, Meles Zenawi declared that the state was “technically at war” with the UIC.<sup>8</sup> In November, the UIC conveyed that Ethiopia was shelling a town in Bandiradley<sup>9</sup> and the UIC launched an attack in response. Ethiopia does not admit fighting until December 24, 2006, and then claims that it was an act of “self-defense,” as the states actions received little criticism from abroad, in addition to the blessing of the U.S. government. Aside from the green light Washington gave to Ethiopia, the U.S. itself has actively participated in air strikes in the south. The attacks by foreign elements and those by the national army have been dismissed by the United Nations. The internationally recognized and U.S. and Ethiopia backed Somali president, Abdullahi Yusuf, has openly expressed that his troops will shell civilian areas in order to eradicate rebel forces. Even so, Yusuf has been free of adequate criticism by international governmental bodies and human rights organizations alike.<sup>10</sup> The latest assault on the Somali people is the utilization of Ethiopian prisons. Nowadays, it seems that carrying out the “war on terror” includes the service of interrogators and the use of detention centers; the conflict in Somalia is certainly no exception. But given the disturbing history of

prisoner abuse in Ethiopia, the future of hundreds of individuals captured from Somalia and Kenya is a grave concern for Somalis.<sup>11</sup>

The collective impact of these various pressures has been the most draconian events to ensue since the Somali Civil War. Since the initiation of ground combat, chaos has unfolded in the capital. Hundreds of Somalis have perished in the hands of Ethiopian troops and TFG soldiers. Mass displacement continues to spillover neighboring countries and towns, and many of the city’s two million inhabitants are seeking refuge elsewhere. Astonishingly, the reverberations of the human suffering of this conflict have yet to be experienced beyond the regional borders Somalia, with the exception perhaps of the vibrant Somalia Diaspora abroad. This disregard can perhaps be attributed to the framing of the discussion. The tragedy that results from this propaganda assault is that the death of the other suddenly becomes justified, as the conflict is seen as a necessary component to the greater “war on terror.” Instead of mourning for the dead, a lost life suddenly becomes “collateral damage.” And since the culmination of the Cold War, politicking in this era of globalization has replaced “the enemy” from the communists to the Islamists. More recently, the events on 9-11 invoke a sense of urgency and fear that has not previously existed. By effectively using the rhetoric of post 9-11 discourse, it becomes easier for individuals to accept the fall of Mogadishu and the loss of Somali life. Likewise, U.S. approach to the political factions in Somalia has relied heavily on the exploitation of the fear of the Muslim other. Moreover, by creating false binaries, such as, “good, secular Muslim” versus “bad, extremist Muslim,” and imagining an al-Qaeda connection that did not exist, the rhetoric against the UIC becomes a powerful political and military tool. Ultimately, the construction of such a polarizing factions leads to unchecked power and uncritical alliances.

### **U.S. Policy and the Miscalculation of Intra-Somali Politics**



The recent attacks on Somalia, although largely labeled “successful,” were shortsighted, as it failed to do justice to the political context in Somalia and socio-economic realities that Somalis face. The excursion achieved the shallow objective of ousting the UIC temporarily from one area without establishing stability or eliminating any of the existing condition, which plague the Somali populace. The fighting did not draw out peace, security or order. In fact, since the direct invasion of Ethiopian forces, Mogadishu has returned to its anarchic—post bellum status quo and the U.S. has chosen to unconditionally align itself with an unpopular force.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the resurfacing symptoms of the old anarchy, Somalia has recently experienced its first suicide bomb, in addition to an overall escalation in what some identify as insurgency attacks. Despite that, the bombardment on civilians and the destruction of the city is indeed contributing to the resistance that the TFG and Ethiopian forces confront. Although many Somalis did not initially embrace the UIC or its policies, even more are fundamentally opposed to the Transitional Federal Government for its ineffectiveness and corruption. Members of the TFG parliament include ruthless warlords previously supported by the U.S. Additionally; its membership can be deduced to clanmanship—a dangerous practice for a country already torn by tribal loyalties.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Prime Minister Gedi and the TFG have no authority in Mogadishu; they have long attempted to command Somalia from Nairobi, Kenya. For leaders who until recently did not dare reside in the country they supposedly rule, it’s clear that they are disconnected from the vast majority of the people.

Since the recent events, the Somali populace is understandably skeptical of this regime, which allowed Ethiopia to destroy the infrastructure of its own country, especially given the context of the historically bloody border between Ethiopia and Somalia—a history that is without a clear reconciliation process. The decision to embrace Ethiopian troops at the expense of Somali lives is not well received by

Somalis. In addition to this skepticism, there is the fear of Ethiopian influence in the country. And while this influence does exist, the mere presence of this perception of power and influence brings about tremendous outrage. This is perhaps most evident in the riots and protests against the TFG, Ethiopia and the Americans that have been erupting in Somalia’s capital,<sup>14</sup> and as articulated previously, the inception of newer resistance in Mogadishu.

Both political figures and the media exploited what Maxine Rodinson refers to as theologocentrism—a term used to describe how some professionals wrongfully use Islam to explain and describe the actions of Muslims. I contend that the actions and the debate surrounding the UIC as a whole demonstrate a promotion of Orientalist notions about Islam, specifically an attempt to manufacture a monolithic Islam. The term theologocentrism refers to a Western school of thought, which discusses all observable events about Muslims to Islamic theology.<sup>15</sup> The practice of this approach narrows the rise of the UIC to a strictly religious development; it ignores the context of lawlessness in Somalia and the role of the UIC in establishing a nationalist and more effective alternative to the TFG. It’s ignores the crucial context from which the UIC emerged. The UIC was able to glean support from Somalis for pragmatic reasons. The organization quickly becomes known for its honesty, as well as its success in providing much needed security. The UIC launched a strong weapons confiscation campaign, reopened the airport and seaport and established policies that attempted to limit drug use.<sup>16</sup> The UIC essentially established order and governance that has not existed since the fall of the Siad Barre regime. Regrettably, the smear campaign against the UIC not only fails to consider the diversity within the UIC or recognize the UIC as a popular, nationalist movement, but it rationalizes the unsubstantiated assaults on Somalia from various forces. Ultimately, such discourse prevents critical diplomacy from taking course.

## **Conclusion**

I maintain that the exaggerated fears and the shortsighted incorporation of Somalia by the U.S. into the “war on terror” not only pushes the state near total collapse, but also compromises the prospects of regional stability, in addition to breeding more radical elements of discontent and advancing the U.S. towards an increasingly isolated world. The flagrant human rights violations, from the indiscriminate bombardment of civilian neighborhoods to the existence of detention centers in Ethiopia mimic the failed policies the U.S. employs in Afghanistan and Iraq. To avoid similar conditions in Somalia, it behooves the U.S. government to work towards a more neutral approach in the region. For a sustainable Somalia, it’s crucial to win hearts and minds—something the TFG, Ethiopian officials and the U.S. have yet to achieve from this military venture. When waging the “war on terror” exceeds the boundaries of democratic values and pushes struggling nations further collapse, it’s important to question how proportional such strategies are, especially as U.S. foreign policy continues to engage in destructive interventionist campaigns in the broader Islamic world.

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## Ethiopia Rides the Tiger

Immanuel Wallerstein

The Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, must have been studying the magnificent successes of the U.S. preemptive invasion of Iraq and Israel's recent foray into Lebanon. He has clearly decided to emulate them. His argument is exactly that which was given by George W. Bush and Ehud Olmert. We must attack our neighbor because we have to keep Islamic terrorists from pursuing their *jihad* and attacking us.

In each case, the invader was sure of his military superiority and of the fact that the majority of the population would hail the attackers as liberators. Zenawi asserts he is cooperating in the U.S. worldwide struggle against terrorism. And indeed, the United States has offered not only its intelligence support but has sent in both its air force and units of special troops to assist the Ethiopians.

Still, each local situation is a bit different. And it is worth reviewing the recent history of what is called the Horn of Africa, in which countries have switched geopolitical sides with some ease in the last forty years.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Ethiopia was a symbol of African resistance to European imperialism. The Ethiopians defeated the Italian colonial troops at Adowa in 1896 and the country remained independent. When Italy tried again in 1935, Emperor Haile Selassie went to the League of Nations and pleaded for collective security against the invasion. He received no help. Ethiopia then became the symbol of Africa throughout the Black world. The colors of its flag became the colors of Africa. And at the end of the Second World War, Ethiopian independence was restored.

In the difficult genesis of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, Haile Selassie

used his prestige to play a key role as intermediary between differing African states. The OAU established its headquarters in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. But if Ethiopia served this symbolic role throughout Africa, it also had an oppressive and aristocratic state machinery. And when acute famines began to plague the country in the 1970s, internal discontent mounted rapidly. In 1974, an army officer, Mengistu Haile Mariam, led a revolution against the "feudal" monarchy and established a military government which soon proclaimed itself Marxist-Leninist.

Before Mengistu, relations between the United States and Ethiopia had been warm. Ethiopia's neighbor, Somalia, had strained relations with the United States. It also had a military government under Siad Barre. However, it called itself "scientific socialist" and had fairly close relations with the Soviet Union, offering it a naval base. After the 1974 coup, when Mengistu proclaimed his government Marxist-Leninist, the Soviet Union dumped Somalia and embraced the larger and more important Ethiopia. So the United States embraced Somalia in turn, and took over the naval base.

To understand what happened next, a few words of ethnic analysis of the two countries is needed. Ethiopia is an ancient Christian kingdom, long dominated by Amhara aristocrats. There is another large Christian group, the Tigre, who speak a different language. There are also two other quite large groups in the country - the Oromo (half of whom are Muslim) and the Muslim Somalis. In addition, at the end of the Second World War, Ethiopia absorbed the coastal Italian colony of Eritrea. Under Haile Selassie, only the Amhara counted, and Eritrea was waging a war for its independence. Without Eritrea, Ethiopia is landlocked.

Somalia was quite different. There had been two colonies - Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland. Italian Somaliland became independent in 1960 in the course of liquidating Italian colonies, and British Somaliland was added onto it. In the 1960s, when ethnic conflicts began to plague many African states, it was commonly said that the one African country that would never know ethnic conflict was Somalia, since almost everyone in the country was ethnically Somali, spoke Somali, and was a Muslim.

People in both countries chafed under the respective dictatorships. And when the Cold War ended, neither government could survive. Both Mengistu and Barre were overthrown in 1991.

What replaced Mengistu was a Tigre liberation movement, which at first spoke a "Maoist" nationalist language. As a way of distinguishing itself from the Mengistu regime, it acceded to Eritrea's independence, only to regret this later. Christian (if not Amhara) dominance soon became the major theme of the new government and Oromo and Somali uprisings began. Human rights activists do not consider Zenawi's government much better than Mengistu's.

In Somalia, the "perfect" ethnic state fell apart, as Somali clans began to fight each other for power. After 1991, the United States began to embrace the new leader of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, who abandoned his "Maoism" altogether. Somalia was left out in the cold. When the United States sent in troops on a "humanitarian" mission to quell disorders, the United States got the brutal drubbing we now

call "Blackhawk down," and it withdrew its troops. A long multi-sided civil war continued. In 2006, a group called the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) took over the capital, Mogadishu, and expelled the feuding clan leaders, restoring relative peace for the first time in more than a decade.

The United States saw the UIC as a replica of the Taliban and allied to Al-Qaeda. So did Zenawi. So Ethiopia decided to invade, oust the UIC, and prop up the powerless central government that had existed on paper since 2004 but had been unable even to enter the capital city. There we went again. Of course, Ethiopia (with the United States) has won the first round. The UIC has abandoned Mogadishu. But the Somalis aren't welcoming the Ethiopians as liberators. The clan leaders are fighting each other again, and Mogadishu is again in turmoil. The Ethiopia government is facing troubles not only in Somalia but now increasingly at home as well.

As Israel had to withdraw from Lebanon, and as the United States is going to have to do in Iraq, so Ethiopia will have to pull back soon from Somalia. The situation within Somalia will not have been improved because of its preventive attack. Preventive attacks are always a potential boomerang. Either one wins overwhelmingly or one loses badly.

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## **Winning Another Front in the War on Terror – What the West Could Do Better in Somalia**

By Dustin Dehéz

### **Introduction**

Right after 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan

Somalia surfaced on the international agenda again. After nearly fourteen years without any

central administration Somalia seemed to have become what some observers have called a second Afghanistan, a failed state that could serve as a potential safe haven for terrorists with links to Al-Qaeda or Al-Qaeda itself. However, international attention shifted to Iraq rather than Somalia, and the U.S.-administration, that had initially been keen to tackle the problem of failed states, set out to change the whole Middle East by intervening in Iraq. But why was Somalia dropped as a major source of concern by the U.S. administration again? Part of the answer is that the U.S. was looking for a means to fundamentally change the Middle East region, which it considered as the major source of threats to its national security. The whole concept of the Broader Middle East Initiative was designed to inspire a process of democratic transformation in the region. The war in Iraq can be seen as part of that particular campaign, although it soon overshadowed the whole initiative. Africa came only second on the agenda. Moreover, another military intervention in Somalia could have caused heavy casualties. Therefore the U.S. administration looked for a way of containing the problem of state failure in Somalia and chose to establish a maritime mission on the Horn of Africa in order to monitor the movements into Somalia and into the Middle East region. But by adopting this strategy the problem of Somalia will not be solved, quite on the contrary the Horn of Africa will remain as volatile and insecure as ever. Keeping in mind the limited resources now available, what could the West do better in Somalia?

### **Recognising Somali Efforts**

The beginning of the 1990s brought considerable change to the Horn of Africa. The influx of cheap weapons and small arms from the former Soviet Union and its allies destabilised the region in the early 1990s, while many countries in the Horn had to rebalance their foreign policy as the collapse of the Soviet Union robbed them of their closest ally. At the same time a long history of deterioration in Somali politics washed away the dictatorship of Siad Barre leaving Somalia,

once the most influential power in the Horn, to chaos and anarchy. However, the north-western province of Somaliland went through a process of peaceful conflict resolution. While Somalia had been a former Italian colony, Somaliland had been a British protectorate before it entered a union with the former Italian part in 1960. After Barre was ousted from power in 1991, Somaliland declared its independence again and has since been establishing a functioning democratic order. A new constitution was introduced after a referendum held nationwide in May 2001 and the presidential elections in April 2003 which were considered being free and fair. But although the Somalilanders managed to maintain political stability and even introduced democratic reforms the international community is still reluctant to acknowledge the efforts being made by Somalis without foreign help and the considerable success they had in doing so.

What the West could do better in this instance is to finally acknowledge the progress being made by Somalilanders; meanwhile Somalilanders developed a strong feeling of nationalism towards their country. Fourteen years of independence and relative prosperity produced a national dynamic, a reluctance to accept any central authority that could possibly emerge in Mogadishu or anywhere else in the South of Somalia. A success of the current peace process in the South – although the Transitional Government was relocated from Kenya to Jowhar near Mogadishu, a success remains highly unlikely – would necessarily lead to a war between Somaliland and Somalia as soon as the new administration would set out to tighten its grip on the country. International recognition of Somaliland is not only a prerequisite for any successful peace process within Somalia but would also show the West's willingness to readily acknowledge indigenous efforts for stability. Moreover, international recognition of Somaliland would not pose a precedent for state secession in other parts of Africa. As Somaliland has been a single entity before independence its recognition would be in line with the international communities' politics of

maintaining the colonial borders in Africa. Like in Eritrea's case for national independence in 1993 colonial borders would be restored rather than destroyed. An independent Somaliland would also offer an ideal base for strengthening East African governments in their stance against terrorism and Somaliland could easily be integrated in the US' East African Counter Terrorism Program (EACTP) that already unites Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Tanzania in the global struggle against terrorism. So far only the U.S. and the United Kingdom are considering international recognition, but doing so would require an active U.S. policy in overcoming especially Italy's aversion of an independent Somaliland.

### **Combating Terrorism**

The 1998 attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam by Al-Qaeda left 224 people dead, most of them Africans. The embassy bombings proved to be one of the deadliest attacks until 9/11. However, the reaction of the Clinton-Administration was a confused mixture of a rapid military retaliation and a half-hearted political initiative to offer military instruction for African-peacekeepers in the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) that was meanwhile succeeded by the African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Programme (ACOTA). It soon became clear that terrorism was a problem not only of Arab origin. The attacks on U.S. forces in Somalia during mission 'Restore Hope', the Embassy bombings, the attempted shooting down of an airplane at Mombassa airport in 2002 and the attack on an Israeli owned hotel complex again in Mombassa showed that the problem of terrorism in Africa will not simply disappear. On the core of the increasing number of terrorist incidents in East Africa lies a longer lasting strong drive towards further Islamisation of the East African coast sponsored by Saudi Wahabbism as well as Sudanese fundamentalist imperialism. Whilst many West African states are already being Muslim the attention of Islamic fundamentalists shifted towards East Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s. State failure in Somalia provided a fertile ground for

movements like Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI), an Islamic organisation being held responsible for a number of attacks on American forces during mission 'Restore Hope' and for other terrorist attacks in East Africa. Al-Ittihad was sponsored by the Islamic Sudanese government in the early 1990s, and the U.S. administration subsequently focused on containing Sudanese influence in the region. As Walter Kansteiner, former Assistant Secretary for African Affairs put in 2002 with regard to state failure in Somalia:

“What better place for the seeds of international terrorism and lawlessness to take root?”

In fact, this rhetoric question shed some light on events unfolding in Somalia in 2006. Virtually at the beginning of this year did Islamists of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) challenge the authority of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). For the first time in the past one and a half decade is Mogadishu no longer divided between various warlords but under the firm control of one group, the Islamists. At the end of 2006 it looks as if the seeds are finally taking roots.

With international attention focused elsewhere another conflict, the bloody border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia from 1998 to 2000 went by largely unnoticed by the U.S. and the international community. While a wide range of conflicts in the Horn remained unsettled, 'purer' versions of Islam could attract people looking for some sort of identity and stability. Moreover, the spread of Islamisation never really stopped. Apart from a Christian Ethiopia nearly all East African states are today Muslim or Muslim dominated, with an overwhelming majority belonging to Sunni Islam: As the scholar John Nyuot Yoh recently noted:

”The emerging latent rivalry between the Sunni and Shiite versions of Islam along the eastern coast of Africa might well pose a threat in some countries in the Horn where the numbers of

Muslims and Christians differ widely.”

The East African coastal strip has indeed become an area most suitable for terrorist activities ranging from money laundering to carrying out attacks on Western targets. State dysfunctions, informal economies, and weak security infrastructures allow for an easy penetration of East African States by terrorist networks. What is more is that there is an inviting range of possible targets in these states: Embassies, liaison offices, and Western based Non-Governmental Organisations. The recent attacks on employees of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Somalia show how difficult it could become to serve the people in such an insecure environment. Especially Somalia should be of concern in this regard as a new terrorist group has recently emerged in Mogadishu under the alleged leadership of a certain Aden Hashi ‘Ayro. The group is being held responsible for the killing of four aid workers in Somaliland in 2003 and 2004 and is suspected of having links to Al-Qaeda.

Despite the insurgency in Iraq, parts of Africa and especially the Horn of Africa could still become a potential safe haven for terrorists as well as potential targets for terrorist attacks. Countries such as Kenya and Somalia have become a transit hub for fundamentalists from all over the world. Combating terrorism therefore requires a bunch of initiatives that could easily be started and should aim at:

- 1 making harbours and airports more secure,
- 2 promoting a system that could effectively prohibit money laundering,
- 3 promoting good governance,
- 4 and finally put an end to de facto free trade of small arms

These initiatives could allow for a better monitoring of the movement of people and goods, funding of terrorism could be seriously hardened and would finally support African governments in their attempts to fight terrorism and achieve greater in depth control of their national territory. Although many African countries are part of the international coalition against terror, they lack the means to

effectively combat terrorism. Even though the U.S. national security strategy considers failed states as a threat to its national security the U.S. has so far been relative reluctant of getting involved in failed states or post conflict policing. As the U.S. military capacities are now largely bound in the Middle East the U.S. should seriously enhance its training efforts with African troops, as Gayle Smith, put it:

“If the United States is unwilling to commit troops to peace-keeping in Africa, then I think we have to be prepared to seriously support African Nations that are prepared to fill the gap.”

If these initiatives could be started multilaterally, national security would be enhanced and the international prestige of the United States would possibly improve.

### **Bringing Stability into the Region**

The major obstacle to lasting peace in the Horn and in Africa in general is the free availability of small arms. Yemen has served as the supermarket for small arms trade to Somalia for years, despite a UN arms embargo. Although the maritime mission Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HoA) already monitors the region, the influx of small arms into the Horn from Yemen has never really ended. The limited authorities of the naval mission do not allow for the stopping of suspicious vessels leading directly to a continuing breakdown of the UN arms embargo against Somalia. Given the fact that Yemen and Somalia are either failed or failing states, the only way of stopping the free trade of small arms is during its journey on the sea. Therefore the international community should seriously consider that in combating terrorism it will be necessary to police the important waterways and, in doing so, the international community must give the participating naval forces the means to fulfil the assigned tasks effectively. By broadening the mandate of the Joint Task Force the Operation Enduring Freedom could contribute to multilateral efforts to combat the trade of light weapons that were being made under the auspices of the

United Nations (UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects – UNPoA) and on the multilateral initiative of East African countries (as formulated in the Nairobi declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons).

In bringing stability to East Africa the West can again contribute to measures being taken by Africans themselves. Thirteen East African countries are currently in the process of establishing an East African Standby Force (EASBRIG). To support this development the West should assist the participating countries on a wider scale. The American ACOTA Initiative and the French Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capacities Programme (RECAMP) are already leading in the right direction but in order to avoid another clash of French and U.S. interests in Africa these initiatives could be melt under the aegis of NATO. This would allow for significant contribution by new and small members of the Transatlantic Community. What should be envisaged is a Partnership for Peace for Africa, a way of offering military instruction, technical support and logistical competence to partners rather than recipients. Still the costs of such measures would be limited especially as the burdens would be shared among the NATO member countries.

Regional integration should be another essential part of any effort to achieve a lasting and sustainable peaceful environment in the Horn of Africa. A good way of promoting regional integration would be to bring in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which is still a weak regional organisation founded originally in 1993 to promote food security. Renamed in 1996 it had to focus primarily on security issues in the Horn; in the meantime the Sudan and Somalia peace processes have become the major focus of the IGAD as continuing political instability persists as the major obstacle to enhanced food security. While the United Nations was preoccupied with the violent border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, IGAD focused

on the peace process in Sudan. A peace treaty between the Sudanese government and the SPLM/A in Southern Sudan could open a way of ending the insurgency of the Lords Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, leaving Somalia as the remaining major threat to lasting security in the Horn. Especially Djibouti and Kenya had been very keen to initiate a peace process in Somalia but so far every effort to bring the contending parties together failed. The current 14<sup>th</sup> attempt to establish a new government for Somalia is sponsored by IGAD and has so far been the most successful initiative to restore order in Somalia reaching a climax with the relocation of a Transitional Government and Transitional Parliament to Jowhar near Mogadishu. But the return of the two provisional bodies to Somalia caused deep divisions between two varying parties in the transitional institutions over the question where the government should be based; in Mogadishu or Jowhar until the security situation in Mogadishu improves. This dispute meanwhile led to a serious encounter with some observers fearing an armed conflict between the two parties. As nearly all figures in the transitional institutions are warlords and the Prime Minister Abdullah Yusuf is regarded by most Somalis as an Ethiopian puppet the new government lacks authority and legitimacy. If the peace process shall be successful it cannot rely on warlords longing for peace but must be prepared with the help of the international community. An unavoidable prerequisite for lasting peace apart from recognizing Somalia is the prevention of further small arms trade. The Joint Task Force could easily be integrated into this task. Effectively stopping the arms influx to Somalia will make it much easier to achieve a peaceful settlement.

### **Conclusion**

As the Horn of Africa is located in a strategic zone with access to two of the most important waterways in the world, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the limited intervention by the international community is more than debatable. But with a bitter insurgency in Iraq and a state-building mission in Afghanistan the West's resources are strained. However, the



international community cannot afford to leave any continent behind in the war on terror, nor can it afford that another safe haven for terrorists emerges while the West tries to rebuild Afghanistan. While failed states from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Liberia and Somalia can easily be penetrated by terrorist network organisations like Al-Qaeda, rebuilding failed states is a major task that stresses the financial and military resources of the U.S. and its allies over years. On this point terrorists can claim a strategic advantage. But the West can still try to balance this

disadvantage by relatively modest and financially cheap means. Doing so would first of all require a greater political willingness, a greater awareness of how easily weak and failed states in East Africa can be penetrated by terrorist networks and better multilateral co-operation in bringing together East African governments and the West.

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