

A History of Great Britain and the U.S. in the Middle East: An Effort to Understand the Attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon

by Alan Singer

Alan Singer is an historian, editor of *Social Science Docket*, and an Associate Professor of Secondary Education at Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York. He wishes to thank Drs. Magnus Bernhardsson and Maureen Murphy of Hofstra University, Dr. Martin Eisenberg of Queens-CUNY, Dr. Ervand Abrahamian of Baruch-CUNY and Michael Pezone of Law, Government and Community Service High School, Queens, New York for comments on earlier versions of this article.

In the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, I visited schools and spoke with large numbers of students, teachers and parents in the New York metropolitan area. Following expressions of upset and anger, two issues continually arose. Though they articulated it in different forms, many people were trying to understand why a radical organization with roots in the Middle East and Islamic fundamentalism had targeted the United States. A few, especially secondary school students, wondered whether it was acceptable in a time of national emergency to question or protest against government actions.

In an effort to address these questions, teachers affiliated with the Hofstra University New Teachers Network tried to help students distinguish between fact and opinion, substantiated information and rumor, and emotion and reason. We challenged stereotypes and stressed the difference between Islam, a religion of over a billion believers, many of whom live in the United States, and the actions of one organized group or a few individuals. We also maintained that citizens and residents of a democratic society (many of our students are immigrants) have an obligation to question its leaders and that questioning government policies in no way implies support for attacks on the United States.

Teachers tried to lay the basis for a long term investigation of why the attack took place so students could analyze underlying and immediate causes, understand why people in other countries believe they have been harmed by the United States and its allies, and participate in discussion of United States policy decisions. Many teachers assigned students to use the internet to collect newspaper articles from around the world in a search for diverse perspectives overlooked in the local and national media.

One serious difficulty we faced was finding material on the history of the United States' role in the Middle East that was reasoned, informed by supporting evidence, took a critical stance, and was accessible to an audience of non-specialists. What follows is an effort to summarize 150 years of history in a part of the world which, depending on how you define the region, spans two continents (North Africa and South-West Asia), has over 500 million people from diverse linguistic, ethnic and religious groups, and includes as many as thirty countries. This essay primarily focuses on the regime bounded by the Nile River in Egypt and the Oxus River in Afghanistan. I find it is useful to divide the 150 year time span into four historical eras. Significantly, in all four eras, the interests of the region are dominated by the concerns of the world's military and economic superpowers, not of its indigenous, primarily Arab and Islamic people.

Sources on the British and U.S. Role

Discussion of the British role in the Middle East is largely drawn from Albert Hourani (1991), *A History of the Arab People*; David Cannadine (2001), *Ornamentalism, How the British Saw Their Empire*; Mark Gasiorowski (1991), *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran*; and Said Aburish (1997), *A Brutal Friendship, The West and the Arab Elite*.

My primary source on the United States role in the Middle East was Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser (1995), *A Sense of Siege, The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*. This study was sponsored by RAND, a nonprofit, mainstream institution created by the United States military, that supports government policy and decision-making through research and analysis. I also used William Blum (1995), *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II* and the books by Hourani, Gasiorowski and Aburish. Blum, who was formerly associated with the Central Intelligence Agency, is an active opponent of United States policy in the region.

- **Empires in Conflict, 1869-1919:** The Suez Canal, which opened in 1869, links colonial India with Europe. Great Britain, Czarist Russia, the Ottoman-Turkish Empire, Germany and France maneuver for primacy in North Africa and South Western and Central Asia.
- **British Hegemony, 1919-1945:** Victorious in World War I, Great Britain and its French ally reorganize the map of the Middle East to suit their imperial needs. The people of the Middle East are denied the self-determination promised by Woodrow Wilson's 14 points. During this period, there is a shift from geopolitical concerns to economic exploitation with the discovery of huge oil reserves in the Persian Gulf.
- **United States Dominance and Cold War, 1945-1989. With the end of World War II, the United States supplants Great Britain as the dominant western power in the region. Its primary concerns are securing access to Middle Eastern oil, support for the state of Israel, the containment of communism and undermining the Soviet Union and its allies.**
- **New World Order, 1989-2001.** With the collapse of the Soviet Union the United States and its allies try to maintain stability in the region, but at the same time withdraw support from governments and social movements that are now seen as hostile or superfluous to U.S. goals. The situation is complicated by the discovery of new oil reserves in Islamic regions of the former Soviet Union, the continuing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the growing gap between wealthy and poor nations as a result of globalization.

I believe that as readers examine this history, two underlying themes emerge:

1. Great Britain and the United States pursued imperialist policies manipulating the governments and people of the Middle East to further their own national interests.
2. Resentment over British and U.S. actions directly and indirectly contributed to unrest in the region and the emergence of militant opposition groups.

Empires in Conflict (Era I)

Most high school students in the United States are familiar with the 1904 cartoon of Theodore Roosevelt standing astride the West Indian Islands, holding a big stick and declaring the Caribbean Sea an American protectorate. Roosevelt's pronouncement was enforced by American military incursions in the region 34 times between 1898 and 1941 (Williams, 1980).

In much the same way, the Middle East was an outpost of the British Empire during this period. The British Lion can fairly be described as standing astride the region with one hind paw in North Africa, another in the Sinai region, and forepaws in Iran and Pakistan. Even the term the Middle East defines this part of the world as half way between Great Britain and its eastern colonies on the Indian subcontinent.

Protection of the Suez Canal and the water route between India and Europe as a lifeline of empire was a fundamental tenet of British foreign and military policy. To achieve its goals, Britain used a colonial model developed for governing the Indian Princely States. It involved nominal self-government by local noble clients under direction of the British High Commissioner or Consul-General who ensured order and protected British interests at minimum expense (Cannadine, 2001).

To maintain control over the region, Great Britain invaded Egypt in 1882 and governed it either directly or indirectly until 1952. Even after Egypt gained nominal independence in 1922, the country and its monarch remained within the British imperial sphere of influence; a 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty solidifying British control over the Suez Canal Zone. It was not until 1951-2 that an Egyptian army rebellion led by Colonel Gamal Nasser forced the king to abdicate that the British hold over Egypt was finally broken.

On the Arabian Peninsula, Britain signed treaties with selected monarchs at the end of the 19th century, including the Sultan of Muscat, Sheiks of the Trucial Coast of Oman, the ruler of Bahrain and Sheiks of Qatar and Kuwait. In exchange for declaring them the legitimate rulers of these territories, the monarchies accepted British dominance in the region. Kuwait, which under Ottoman rule had been a province of Iraq, was placed under British protection in 1897 and remained under British control until 1961.

Great Britain used World War I and the Ottoman alliance with the Central Powers to further its imperial interests in the Middle East by manipulating pliant Arab leaders. A 1916 rebellion against Ottoman rule was sponsored by Britain's Arab Bureau in Cairo. It relied on British financing, mercenaries and former officers from

the Ottoman army, but there appears to have been little mass support. The leading Arab participants were from the Hashimite Arab clan under the leadership of Sharif Hussein of Mecca and his sons Abdullah and Faisal. At the same time that British colonial officials were assuring the Hussein family it would rule a unified Arab nation in the region, Great Britain negotiated the Balfour Declaration with European Zionists promising a Jewish homeland in the Middle East and secretly signed the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement with France to create a network of smaller states under European domination. Meanwhile, another portion of the British foreign service was making similar promises to Hussein's arch-rival, Ibn Saud.

Two other concerns also shaped British involvement in the Middle East during the war. The British Navy switched from coal to oil as its primary source of fuel; as a result, potential oil supplies in the region were of strategic importance. In addition, British success in separating Arabs and Turks divided the Islamic world and helped quell Turkish efforts to stir unrest among India's Muslim minority.

British Hegemony (Era II)

After World War I, Great Britain and France used mandates established under the auspices of the League of Nations to extend their colonial control over the region. The mandates granted the victorious European powers temporary control over the Arab lands and they were supposed to prepare their charges for independence. At the Cairo Conference of 1921, T.E. Lawrence (popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia) and Winston Churchill (the newly appointed British Colonial Secretary) organized dependent royal regimes in the Jordan and Tigris-Euphrates valleys. Abdullah became Emir of Transjordan under British supervision.

Sharif Hussein's younger son, Faisal, was rejected by France as ruler of Syria. However, Great Britain named him King of the newly created country of Iraq, which was consolidated from the former Turkish provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. While the area's majority Shiite Muslim population opposed the imposition of a Sunni Muslim king, a rebellion was suppressed. In the 1930s, a series of negotiations culminated in an Anglo-Iraqi Treaty that granted Iraq formal independence in exchange for its pledge to coordinate foreign policy with Britain. When a pro-German faction in the Iraqi army rebelled in 1941, Britain launched a counter-coup that returned its allies to power.

On the Arabian Peninsula, Sharif Hussein lost his British support when he refused to accept the dictates of the Cairo Conference. He and his supporters were driven out of Arabia in 1924 by forces loyal to the House of Saud. In 1927, Ibn Saud, a member of the Wahabi sect, an especially austere branch of Islam, signed a treaty with Britain recognizing its power in the region and acknowledging his local authority.

Iran, a non-Arab country in the Middle East that remained independent of the Ottoman Turks had a similar experience with British imperialism. In the 1870s, British companies secured monopoly control over Iranian railroad lines and mines. In 1907, Czarist Russia and Great Britain signed a treaty establishing a joint protectorate over Iran. When local leaders balked, Russian and British troops ensured their cooperation. In 1921, an army rebellion against Iran's constitutional government brought Colonel Reza Khan to power and he was declared Shah, or king, in 1925. Reza Khan, who tried to steer an independent Iran nationalist path was forced out by a joint Soviet and British force in 1941 and replaced as Shah by his son.

The political alignment in the Middle East was complicated during this period by the discovery of oil in the Persian Gulf. An informal 1928 agreement between Great Britain and France initially governed oil exploration and production. The United States did not play a significant role in the region until Standard Oil of California bought oil rights from depression-starved Saudi Arabia in 1933 for \$250,000. In 1938, Standard Oil organized a consortium of American companies into the Arabian-American Oil Company in order to better exploit oil resources.

U.S. Dominance and Cold War (Era III)

After 1945 Great Britain, severely weakened by World War II, the declining importance of naval power, the rise of nationalism in the Middle East, on the Indian sub-continent and in Africa, was eclipsed by the United States as the dominant western power in the area. The United States, which until that point was looked upon favorably in the Islamic world, was primarily concerned with securing access to oil and blocking possible Soviet advances. Its foreign policy in the region continued the British approach of supporting undemocratic and unresponsive regimes in the name of regional stability. This included support for a government in the United Arab Emirates that restricts

citizenship to less than 20 percent of its population; Kuwait, where only 35 percent of its population are citizens entitled to any rights; Saudi Arabia, whose government is run as a private corporation by a Wahabi minority that includes only 20% of its people; a government in Lebanon dominated by its Maronite Christian minority; and a government in Israel that has occupied neighboring territories since 1967 and denied legal rights to over 3 million Palestinians.

In the 1950s, George Kennan, Director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff explained the principle tenets of American foreign policy as:

1. "Our own national interest is all that we are really capable of knowing and understanding."
2. "The pursuit of our national interest can never fail to be conducive to a better world."

For fifty years, these assertions have remained the central pillars of United States foreign policy in the Middle East under eleven Presidents from Harry Truman through George W. Bush. In March, 1957, President Eisenhower declared that "(t)he United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East." In January, 1980, President Carter stated that "(a)n attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

The pursuit of American "national interest," however, has not benefited much of the world, especially the vast majority of the people of the Middle East. The ruling Saudi family, maintained in power by American arms and oil companies and defended by United States troops during the 1991 Gulf War, includes 50 billionaire princes and between seven and nine thousand other male members who participate in governing the country and managing its economy. Under their stewardship, billions of dollars are spent annually to support the royal family, per capita income in Saudi Arabia dropped from \$14,200 in 1982 to only \$6,000 in 1993, and the country incurred an international debt of over \$60 billion.

Throughout the post-war period, the United States used its military and covert forces to intervene in the internal affairs of independent Middle Eastern countries and in intra-Arab disputes to promote perceived United States interests. In each case, the Cold War against the Soviet Union was used to justify suppression of popular movements. In 1951, Iranian Prime Minister Mossadegh led a parliamentary effort to take over the British owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, part of a general movement in the Third World to nationalize foreign assets. Britain responded by blockading Iranian ports, freezing funds held in international banks, and supporting right-wing radical Islamic opposition to Mossadegh's government. Finally, in 1953, British and United States intelligence services engineered Mossadegh's overthrow and returned power to the Shah.

During the next decade, the United States sent marines into Lebanon to stabilize its pro-Western Christian government against pan-Arab Islamic opponents. It used secret C.I.A. payments to maintain the government of Jordan, supported coups in Syria and Iraq, funded Saudi efforts to overthrow Nasser in Egypt, and supported Turkey's forces and Kurdish guerrillas operating in northern Iraq. At times, when it suited the United States, it switched sides in midstream. In the 1970s, the U.S. opposed Saddam Hussein of Iraq when he sought closer ties with the Soviet Union and then covertly supported him in a 1980s war against Iran. In the 1990s, the United States went to war against Iraq and maintained a devastating economic embargo after Iraq invaded neighboring Kuwait.

Perhaps the sharpest point of United States contention with Middle Eastern governments and Islamic and Arab peoples is U.S. support for Israel. In 1947, Great Britain announced it would withdraw from Palestine and turned decisions over its future to the newly established United Nations. In 1948, the United States endorsed a U.N. proposal to partition the Palestine Mandate into Jewish and Arab states, recognized an independent state of Israel, and supported it in a war against forces from neighboring Arab countries. In 1967, during the Six-Day War and during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the United States provided Israel with intelligence and military resupply in the middle of the conflicts. In 1982 the United States sent marines into Lebanon to oppose Syrian forces after an Israeli invasion attempted to destroy the Palestine Liberation Organization. It continues to provide Israel with billions of dollars in aid annually while the Israeli army occupies Arab territories on the west bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza coast.

Many observers believe that the U.S.-Israeli alliance is at the center of Arab and Islamic opposition to the United States (Chomsky, 1999). However, Israel is only one of a large number of client states in the region dependent on the United States for support. If Israel did not exist, I believe Arab and Islamic movements

challenging undemocratic governments supported or tolerated by the West would still view the United States as their principle enemy.

Islamic Radicalism

Throughout this period, the United States manipulated radical religious groups to undermine left-wing and nationalist opposition to U.S. interests. At the start of the Cold War, it supported conservative Iranian Islamic groups counter to efforts by the Iranian pro-Communist Tudeh Party to build a left-wing majority coalition in the government. Following nationalization of the Suez Canal and pro-Soviet overtures by Nasser, the CIA cooperated with the staunchly anti-communist Muslim Brotherhood in an unsuccessful effort to undermine Egypt's leader. The Muslim Brotherhood continued to be financed by the pro-western King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, and after Nasser's death in 1970, its imprisoned leaders were released by his successor, Anwar Sadat. The movement spawned the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which later turned against its two benefactors. It was responsible for the assassination of Sadat and suspected of involvement in the murder of Faisal.

In the 1980s, the United States and Saudi Arabia funneled roughly \$5 billion through Pakistan to provide weapons, training and logistical support to religious radicals battling against a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan and against the Soviet Army. Aid included shoulder-fired Stinger missiles and armor piercing .50-caliber sniper rifles capable of shooting down helicopters.

U.S. support for the Afghani rebels produced a series of unanticipated consequences. The economic and military costs of involvement in Afghanistan were major factors leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Heroin produced by the rebels to finance their struggle poured into U.S. cities and undermined its "war on drugs." An anti-Soviet faction, the Taliban, eventually established a strict, religious, anti-modernist society that supports attacks on the West and denies women basic rights. In addition, one of the Islamic militants who took up arms against the Soviet invaders of Afghanistan, a Wahabi citizen of Saudi Arabia, was Osama bin Laden.

New World Order (Era IV)

Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States has continued to intervene in the Arab world. In 1990-1991, its troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia as part of a campaign to drive the Iraqi army out of Kuwait. Throughout the 1990s, the United States conducted periodic air and missile strikes against Iraq in which civilian loss of life occurred. It was also active in supporting unrest among Iraq's ethnic minorities and exiled opposition groups. The presence of Western military forces in the land of Mohammed, Mecca and Medina was one of the "provocations" cited by bin Laden as justification for his campaign against the United States.

The coalition building leading up to the military incursion into Afghanistan by the U.S. and Great Britain following the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks relied on some of the same tactics the United States had previously used to secure its interests in the region. In exchange for joining the coalition against bin Laden and his Al Qaeda organization, the U.S. agreed to lifting United Nations sanctions against Sudan for having supported terrorism, Pakistan received \$500 million in military and economic assistance from the United States, and Jordan was given special trade privileges. Much was made of the willingness of Russia and China to support the anti-terrorist coalition, but both countries appeared to use it as an excuse to suppress internal dissent among their own Islamic minorities. Russia has battled Islamic separatists in Chechnya and Dagestan in its Caucasus Mountain region since 1994 and China is concerned about an Islamic and nationalist revival among ethnic Uighurs in the western territory of Xinjiang.

Part of the motivation for U.S. military action in Afghanistan and a reason for assembling a broad coalition including Islamic nations may be interest in protecting access to the oil and natural gas resources of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia. According to testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives in March 1999, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan together have 15 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Afghanistan may also have significant oil and gas deposits (Devraj, 2001).

Topics include: Basic Beliefs, Religious Obligations, Muslim Society and ideas for “Teaching with Sensitivity.”

Conclusions

According to Chalmers Johnson, author of *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (2000), “blowback” is a CIA term used to describe the unintended consequences of United States international activities that have been kept secret from the American people. For example, reinstalling the Shah in power in 1953 brought twenty-five years of tyranny and repression to the Iranian people, contributed to the Iranian Islamic revolution at the end of the 1970s, led to the staff of the American embassy in Teheran being held hostage for more than a year, and convinced many people across the Islamic world that the United States was an implacable enemy.

In Afghanistan the United States is now suffering “blowback” from its sponsorship of opposition to a pro-Soviet Afghan regime. Recruiting, training and equipping Osama bin Laden and other young Islamic men as freedom fighters contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also the desolation of Afghanistan, a terrorist campaign against American military and civilian targets, and may cause long-term problems for the U.S. economy.

The RAND Institute study, cited earlier, offers a series of conclusions about United States involvement in the Middle East during the second half of the twentieth century that are critical of U.S. policies and lend support to Islamic views of the situation. Fuller and Lesser believe that despite American assertions of broader democratic goals, “relations between Islam and the West after 1945 were subsumed by the geostrategic and ideological competition with the Soviet bloc. Western concern about instability in Muslim regions was inextricably linked to the broader question of how Middle Eastern regimes might choose to advance or impede the containment of Soviet power”(21).

According to the RAND study, “(t)he Islamic world feels itself under siege from the West in numerous vital political, military, cultural, social, and economic realms. This feeling of siege has several sources: the perception of victimization and Western onslaught based on historical and psychological grounds, ...; “objective” internal pressures generated by the process of modernization and related social and economic tensions...; and conscious, direct pressure from the West in the policy arena” (81). These feelings are legitimized by Western actions that feed Islamic perceptions of misuse and betrayal.

Israel remains a particularly sore point for a number of reasons. According to the RAND sponsored study, it is viewed in Islamic circles as a direct Western intrusion on the non-Western world, in much the same way as the Crusades were at the start of the last millennium or the establishment of white settler societies were in Southern Africa. Israel owes its existence to the West because of European persecution of Jews, massive funding by the United States government and private citizens, and its use of American arms, technology and military doctrine in wars against its Arab neighbors.

Fuller and Lesser also warn that Americans risk becoming victims of our own propaganda machine. While “(t)he phenomena of political violence and radical Islam are closely connected in Western perceptions, . . . terrorism of an overtly Islamic character represents only a fraction of the world total . . .” Between 1982 and 1994, Shiite Islamic groups were “responsible for roughly 8 percent of all international terrorists incidents.” “Islamist groups” are frequently described by “authoritarian regimes as terrorist or radical simply as a pretext to eliminate the political movement as an opposition group” (118). They caution that “(u)nless political systems” in the Middle East “are opened up to a broad variety of competing forces, Islamists are the most likely inheritors of power when authoritarian regimes break down” (118).

The United States government and the American people must become concerned with a global economic system that produces gross international inequalities. It is a system, maintained by United States military power, that permits one nation, with 5 percent of the world’s people, to consume 35 percent of its resources. It is a system that consigns millions of people to the refugee camps, battered cities and desiccated villages and fields of the Middle East and produces waves of young people with little hope of advancement and very little to lose.

Charles Cronin, Lawrence, NY, recommends the following websites to provide students with multiple perspectives on events in the Middle East. The Palestine Times (www.ptimes.com) web site has many easy to read articles that reflect the Palestinian perspective of what is happening in the Middle East. The Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com) web site contains articles written from the Israeli perspective. Students can also compare articles with U.S. media

References

- Aburish, Said (1997). *A Brutal Friendship, The West and the Arab Elite*. NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Blum, William (1995). *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press.
- Cannadine, David (2001). *Ornamentalism, How the British Saw Their Empire*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (1999). *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Devraj, Ranjit (2001, October 6). "The Oil Behind Bush and Son's Campaigns." *Asian Times*.
- Fuller, Graham and Lesser, Ian (1995). *A Sense of Siege, The Geopolitics of Islam and the West*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Gasiorowski, Mark (1991). *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.
- Hourani, Albert (1991). *A History of the Arab People*. N.Y.: Warner Books.
- Johnson, Chalmers (200). *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*. NY: Henry Holt.
- Kennan, George (1951). *American Diplomacy: 1900-1950*. NY: New American Library.
- Williams, William A. (1980). *Empire As A Way Of Life*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Yoder, Amos (1986). *The Conduct of American Foreign Policy Since World War II*. NY: Pergamon Press.

Why Is the United States Active in "Middle Eastern" Affairs? Principles Underlying Post-World War II U.S. Foreign Policy

On October 6, 2001, President George W. Bush claimed that the goal of American foreign policy was to "defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear." Examine the statements defining United States foreign policy during the second half of the twentieth century. Based on these statements, what are the fundamental principles of U.S. foreign policy? In your opinion, did President Bush make an accurate claim? Explain.

- National Security Council Paper Number 68 (January, 1950). "Our overall policy at the present time may be described as one designed to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish. . . . (T)he cold war is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake."
- George Kennan, Director, State Department Policy Planning Staff (*American Diplomacy: 1900-1950*. New York: New American Library, 1951). "Our own national interest is all that we are really capable of knowing and understanding, . . . the pursuit of our national interest can never fail to be conducive to a better world."
- Eisenhower Doctrine (March , 1957). "The United States regards as vital to the national interest and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East."
- Carter Doctrine (January, 1980). "The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War . . . The Soviet Union is now attempting to consolidate a strategic position, . . . that poses a grave threat to the free movement of Middle East oil. . . . An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."
- Reagan "Evil Empire" Speech (March, 1983). "There is sin and evil in the world and we're enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might."

- Clinton/ Albright Doctrine (May, 1996). Lesley Stahl of CBS television news was interviewing Madeleine Albright, United States ambassador to the United Nations, on “60 Minutes.” Albright maintained that United States economic and military sanctions against Iraq had yielded important concessions from Saddam Hussein. Stahl asked: “We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And you know, is the price worth it?” Albright responded, “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it.”
- Democratic Senator Zell Miller, Georgia (*NYT*, September 11, 2001). “I say, bomb the hell out of them. If there’s collateral damage, so be it.”
- George W. Bush (October 6, 2001). “Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. . . . We’re a peaceful nation. Yet as we have learned so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today’s new threat the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it. . . . We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.”

A Chronology of Western Intervention in the “Middle East”

Source: G. Fuller and I. Lesser (1995). *A Sense of Siege, The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (RAND Study).
Examine the list below. How would you respond to the charge that the history of United States involvement in the Middle East represents fifty years of imperialism?

- 1953. British and United States intelligence organizations overthrow Iran’s elected Prime Minister and restore the Shah to power.
- 1956. In response to nationalization of the Suez Canal, Great Britain, France and Israel invade Egypt.
- 1958. United States Marines sent to Lebanon to protect a pro-Western government identified with the Christian population but with little Islamic support.
- 1967. During the Six-Day War between Arab states and Israel, the United States supports Israel with military intelligence and supplies.
- 1973. The United States provides extensive military and intelligence support to Israel during the Yom Kippur War.
- 1974. The United States provides covert aid to Iraqi Kurdish rebels against the government of Saddam Hussein, which sought a closer relations with the Soviet Union and was hostile to Iran and the U.S. supported Shah.
- 1982. United States Marines in Lebanon to oppose Syrian forces following an Israeli invasion.
- 1985. United States air strikes against Libya in response to a terrorist bombing in Germany.
- 1986. During the Iran-Iraq War, the United States assists Kuwaiti oil shipping in and out of the gulf, clashes with Iran, and shoots down of an Iranian civilian airliner.
- 1990-1991. Following the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait, United States troops are sent to Saudi Arabia, attack and defeat Iraq, and subject the Iraqi people to a punishing economic embargo.
- 1992-1993. The United States military leads United Nation’s forces in Somalia on a humanitarian mission that becomes embroiled in a civil war.
- 1993. The United States continues air and missile strikes against Iraq which cause civilian casualties and supports exiled Iraqi opposition groups.
- 1995. Nine of thirteen United States supported United Nations peacekeeping operations, representing two-thirds of the U.N. troop and police strength, are either in Muslim countries or involve Muslim interests directly: the Sinai (since 1967); India-Pakistan (Kashmir since 1949); Cyprus (since 1964); Golan Heights (since 1974); Lebanon (since 1978); Iraq-Kuwait (since 1991); Western Sahara (since 1991); Yugoslavia (since 1992); Somalia (since 1992).
- In the second half of the 20th century, the United States either openly or covertly supported selected Middle East regimes in inter-Arab politics: Lebanon and Jordon against Nasser’s Egypt; the Shah’s Iran against Iraq; Iraq against Khomeini’s Iran; Kuwait against Iraq; Saudi Arabia against Nasser’s Egypt and Saddam’s Iraq; North Yemen against South Yemen; Egypt against Libya; Morocco against Algeria; and Israel against all regional states.

Comparing Texts: Bush and bin Laden debate United States Air Strikes in Afghanistan

A Statement by United States President George W. Bush

The following is an edited version of a videotaped statement by President George W. Bush explaining United States air strikes in Afghanistan, Oct. 6, 2001. Source: *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001, B6.

The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people. And we are the friends of almost a billion worldwide who practice the Islamic faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing murder in its name.

Today we focus on Afghanistan. But the battle is broader. Every nation has a choice to make. In this conflict there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocents, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril.

I'm speaking to you today from the Treaty Room of the White House, a place where American presidents have worked for peace. We're a peaceful nation. Yet as we have learned so suddenly and so tragically, there can be no peace in a world of sudden terror. In the face of today's new threat the only way to pursue peace is to pursue those who threaten it.

We did not ask for this mission. But we will fulfill it. The name of today's military operation is "Enduring Freedom." We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear.

The battle is now joined on many fronts. We will not waver, we will not tire, we will not falter and we will not fail. Peace and freedom will prevail. Thank you. May God continue to bless America.

A Statement by Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden

The following is an edited version of a videotaped statement by Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden in response to United States air strikes in Afghanistan, Oct. 6, 2001. Source: *NYT*, Oct. 7, 2001, B7.

What America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted. Our Islamic nation has been tasting the same for more than 80 years, of humiliation and disgrace, its sons killed and their blood spilled, its sanctities desecrated.

A million innocent children are dying at this time as we speak, killed in Iraq without any guilt. We hear no denunciation, we hear no edict from the hereditary rulers. In these days, Israeli tanks rampage across Palestine, in Ramallah, Rafah and Beit Jala and many other parts of the land of Islam, and we do not hear anyone raising his voice or reacting.

In a nation at the far end of the world, Japan, hundreds of thousands, young and old, were killed and (they say) this is not a world crime. To them it is not a clear issue.

I swear to God that America will not live in peace before peace reigns in Palestine, and before all the army of infidels depart the land of Mohammed, peace be upon him.

God is the Greatest and glory be to Islam.

Questions

- President Bush states that America is a friend to the Afghan and Islamic people around the world. In your view, why is he making this point?
- President Bush claims "We defend not only our precious freedoms but also the freedom of people everywhere to live and raise their children free from fear." In your view, is this a legitimate claim?
- Osama bin Laden claims that what "America is tasting now is only a copy of what we have tasted." In your opinion, what does he mean?
- When bin Laden says Islamic people have faced "humiliation and disgrace" for more than 80 years, he is referring to the period just after World War I. In your opinion, why does he trace the start of this conflict back to that era?
- What are bin Laden's conditions for peace between the United States and the Islamic world?
- Both Bush and bin Laden call on God for strength and support. How do you respond to their invocation of God for their causes? Explain.

A History of Wartime Laws

(Sources: *Newsday*, October 2, 2001; *The New York Times*, November 10, 2001)

Throughout United States history, wartime laws have infringed on civil liberties.

- **ALIEN ENEMY ACT:** One of the Alien and Sedition Acts passed in 1798 in anticipation of war with France. It authorized the deportation of “alien enemy males of 14 years and upwards.”
- **CIVIL WAR:** Suspended the writ of habeas corpus - the right to know why a person is detained to ensure that the imprisonment is not illegal. In 1861, President Abraham Lincoln revoked the right for secessionists and those suspected of disloyalty. Congress expanded the suspension of the right in 1863.
- **ESPIONAGE ACT OF 1917:** Punished spying and wartime sabotage, obstruction of recruiting for the armed forces or for causing insubordination, disloyalty or mutiny in the military. It also punished those making seditious comments. Enforced during World War I and World War II.
- **PALMER RAIDS:** Under the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918, hundreds of foreign radicals from enemy countries (Germany and Austria-Hungary) were arrested or deported during World War I through 1920 during the Red Scare. General Mitchell Palmer’s tenure as “alien property custodian” also included confiscating their property and selling personal belongings and other assets.
- **SMITH ACT:** Penalized anyone who knowingly or willfully advocated overthrowing or destroying the government by force or violence. Also known as the Alien Registration Act because it required aliens to register and be fingerprinted. Upheld in 1961 by the Supreme Court, which ruled later that advocating government overthrow without violence was an abstract idea that did not violate the law, thus curtailing its use.
- **EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066:** Allowed Army to exclude “any or all persons” from designated military zones. The order became the impetus for internment camps for 110,000 Japanese-Americans until the end of 1945. Rescinded in 1975.
- **McCARRAN ACT:** Also known as the Internal Security Act, required organizations associated with communism to register with the attorney general. Members of such organizations were denied passports and were blacklisted from government and defense contractor jobs. Also allowed for detention in time of emergency such as war or insurrection. Established Subversive Activities Control Board that stopped functioning in 1968. Law was dismantled in 1970s.
- **FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SURVEILLANCE ACT:** Passed in 1978 in response to increased terrorist activity around the world. It authorized electronic eavesdropping and wiretapping in the collection of “foreign intelligence” information. The act creates a special court composed of seven federal judges, meeting in secret, that considers applications from the Department of Justice and intelligence agencies.
- **ANTI-TERRORISM ACT:** Proposed after the Oklahoma City bombing and signed into law by President Bill Clinton, this act authorized \$1 billion to be spent on fighting terrorism in the United States and reserved the right of the government to deny entrance to any foreigner who was believed to be associated with a terrorist organization.

Examine the nine actions described above.

1. Which of these actions do you consider justified? Explain.
2. Which actions do you consider unjustified intrusions on American rights? Explain.
3. Write an essay explaining your views about infringing on civil liberties during the time of war. In your essay, refer to specific laws and rights.

Rigoberta Menchu's Open Letter to George W. Bush, September 26, 2001

Source: www.globalresearch.ca/articles/MEN109A.html

Instructions: Read the letter by Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchu, a Guatemalan activist and United Nations official, to United States President George W. Bush. Write a letter in response addressed to either Ms. Menchu or President Bush.

Mr. George W. Bush
President of the United States of America
Washington DC, USA

Your Excellency, Mr. President:

In the first place, I want to reiterate to you the solidarity and condolences I expressed to all your people on Tuesday, September 11 when I became aware of the painful occurrences that had taken place in your country, as well as to share my indignation and condemnation of the threats these acts of terrorism constitute. In recent days I have been following the evolution of events, using my best efforts so that the response to them would be reflection, not obsession; prudence, not rage; and the pursuit of justice, not revenge. I invoked the consciousness of the world's peoples, the communications media, the eminent personalities with whom I share an ethical commitment to peace, the heads of state and leaders of international bodies, in order that prudence illuminate our acts.

Nevertheless, Mr. President, upon listening to the message you gave to the Congress of your country, I have been unable to overcome a sensation of fear for what may come of your words. You call upon your people to prepare for "a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have ever seen" and for your soldiers to save their honour by marching to a war in which you intend to involve all of us, the peoples of the world. In the name of progress, pluralism, tolerance and liberty, you leave no choice for those of us who are not fortunate enough to share this sensation of liberty and the benefits of the civilization you wish to defend for your people, we who never had sympathy for terrorism since we were its victims.

We, who are proud expressions of other civilizations; who live day to day with the hope of turning discrimination and plunder into recognition and respect; who carry in our souls the pain of the genocide perpetrated against our peoples; finally, we who are fed up with providing the dead for wars that are not ours: we cannot share the arrogance of your infallibility nor the single road on to which you want to push us when you declare that "Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."

At the beginning of this year, I invited the men and women of the planet to adopt a Code of Ethics for a Millennium of Peace sustaining that:

1. There will be no Peace if there is no Justice
2. There will be no Justice if there is no Equity
3. There will be no Equity if there is no Progress
4. There will be no Progress if there is no Democracy
5. There will be no Democracy if there is no respect for the Identity and Dignity of the Peoples and Cultures

In today's world, all these values and practices are scarce; nevertheless, the unequal manner in which they are distributed does nothing but generate impotence, hopelessness and hatred. The role of your country in the present world order is far from being neutral. Last night, we hoped for a sensible, reflective and self-critical message but what we heard was an unacceptable threat. I agree with you that "the course of this conflict is not known," but when you declare that "its outcome is certain," the only certainty that comes to me is that of a new and gigantic useless sacrifice, of a new and colossal lie.

Before you cry "fire," I would like to invite you to consider a different kind of world leadership, one in which it is necessary to convince rather than to defeat; in which humanity is able to demonstrate that in the last thousand years we have surpassed the meaning of "an eye for an eye" which justice had for the barbarians who sank humanity into medieval obscurantism; and that there is no need for new crusades in order to learn to respect those who have a different conception of God and the work of His creation; in which we would share in solidarity the fruits of progress, taking better care of the resources still remaining in the planet and that no child lack bread and a school.

