

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ANTI-AMERICANISM AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

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ABSTRACT

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“Nous Sommes Tous Americains!” Such was the September 13th, 2001 headline on the front page of the French newspaper Le Monde – declaring “We Are All Americans!” This symbolic statement captured the mourning, empathy and support felt the world over for Americans in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. This verbal embrace was reminiscent of President Kennedy’s famous “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech to a divided and beleaguered Germany in 1963 – both statements designed to show support for countries suffering their respective wounds of war.

Yet much has changed since the September 11th terrorist attacks on American soil. The global warmth felt towards America has largely faded. Indeed, on the first anniversary of the September 11th attacks, the same French columnist wrote another piece, only this time the headline was “We Are Still All Americans – But Not Every Day Now.”

This change in attitude has left many to wonder what has happened and to ask the question – where did all the empathy go? At the heart of this thawing seems to be a growing sentiment of anti-Americanism across much of the international landscape – particularly in Europe and in Muslim nations of the Middle East and Central Asia. This Strategy Research Paper will study the various facets of anti-Americanism today, offer an answer to the often asked question “Why are we hated?”, and frame a set of recommendations to reverse this growing trend of anti-American sentiment.

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ANTI-AMERICANISM AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

“Nous Sommes Tous Américains!” Such was the September 13th, 2001 headline on the front page of the French newspaper Le Monde – declaring “We Are All Americans!” This symbolic statement captured the mourning, empathy and support felt the world over for Americans in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks. This verbal embrace was reminiscent of President Kennedy’s famous “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech to a divided and beleaguered Germany in 1963 – both statements designed to show support for countries suffering their respective wounds of war.

Yet much has changed since the September 11th terrorist attacks on American soil. The global warmth felt towards America has largely faded. Indeed, on the first anniversary of the September 11th attacks, the same French columnist wrote another piece, only this time the headline was “We Are Still All Americans – But Not Every Day Now.”

This change in attitude has left many to wonder what has happened and to ask the question – where did all the empathy go? At the heart of this thawing seems to be a growing sentiment of anti-Americanism across much of the international landscape – particularly in Europe and in Muslim nations of the Middle East and Central Asia. This Strategy Research Paper will study the various facets of anti-Americanism today and offer an answer to the often asked question “Why are we hated?”

In order to build a set of recommendations stemming from this analysis, this paper will also examine the question “why are we admired?” Many facets of our society are still held in high regard throughout much of the world, and when people vote with their feet, America wins in an immigration landslide. In addition, we will see what Americans think as compared to the rest of the world, and in doing so will identify the similarities and differences of opinion. This three-tiered approach will be used to frame a set of recommendations for how to reverse the trend of growing anti-American sentiment felt throughout much of the world.

DOES THIS ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT REALLY MATTER?

Should the United States be concerned with what the rest of the world thinks? This is a valid question in its own right, and the answer is both yes and no.

First, anti-Americanism is really a plural term, for there are multiple varieties of global resentment towards the United States. Some aspects we have to accept as an unavoidable price that we will pay for leadership as the sole economic, military, and political superpower. Other aspects must be carefully analyzed and used to help shape our policies and leadership

decisions. Let's take a broad brush approach before delving into the detailed nuances of anti-Americanism.

Anti-American sentiment is not a new phenomenon. Great power and great wealth are perhaps never popular to those on the outside looking in, and they will generally elicit feelings of both envy and resentment. This is simply human nature. "The rich hegemon will usually be unpopular, deservedly or not,' says Lewis Manilow, a veteran public diplomacy specialist.' Americans want to be loved, but isn't it more important that we tell the world where we stand and follow up with appropriate action?"¹

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage has this description - "We've got influence, power, prestige and clout beyond any nation in the history of the world. It brings forth a certain amount of envy."² In a similar light, Jairam Ramesh, an Indian politician who gave a speech three years ago at the Asia Society of New York City, titled his talk "Yankee Go Home, But Take Me With You,"³ an interesting paradox in and of itself. It is safe to say and important to acknowledge that we will never be universally liked, and to some degree envy will manifest itself in the form of resentment.

However, the kind of anti-Americanism that would compel nineteen human beings to pilot commercial airliners into three iconic American buildings, killing thousands of innocent civilians in the process, is an entirely different thing and must be closely analyzed. We must understand what fuels this hatred, and use this knowledge to frame a counter-strategy that will dry up the pool of potential terrorist recruits that seek to destroy our country and the economic system upon which it is built.

We cannot win the war on terror with a "go it alone" approach. In order to defeat the asymmetric and dispersed nature of a terrorist network we will need international cooperation. This new kind of war must be fought on a variety of fronts and with more than just military operations. It must also be fought with international intelligence sharing, police actions, banking, economic cooperation, and diplomacy. Quite simply, winning the global war on terror will require a global cooperative effort. The rising tide of anti-American feelings, both within the general international population and among a variety of world leaders, many of whom have been historic allies, will not serve us well.

Looking beyond the war on terror, the United States is entering its second decade as the sole global superpower. In the long term, remaining a world leader and dominant force will likely require more finesse than it took to get there. The balance of power during the Cold War was a stable equilibrium – in a sense countries took sides and watched the two giant sumo wrestlers grunt and push one another around the international ring. On the other hand, today's

unipolar world is much more an unstable equilibrium, and as Professor John M. Owen so aptly states, “The United States may not do whatever it likes and blithely assume that it will never generate counterbalancing.”⁴ Simply stated, it is not in our long-term interest to foster an environment whereby nations might feel compelled to form alliances against us rather than with us.

So, does it really matter what the world thinks? In some very important aspects, the answer is a resounding “yes”. In his paper titled “Winning the War of Ideas”, Antony J. Blinken echoes the preceding arguments nicely:

“Never has a country been more powerful by traditional measure: military might and economic prowess. Yet, never has a major power been so dependent on the active cooperation of others to defeat its enemies and to advance its interests. Left unattended, those who criticize U.S. policies or resent U.S. power today are less likely to stand with the United States tomorrow. In the extreme, a failure to address foreign grievances risks broadening the base from which the country’s enemies draw sanctuary, support, and successors.”⁵

WHAT DOES THE WORLD THINK?

Several significant and comprehensive studies of world opinion have been conducted in the past two years.⁶ These reports provide a frame of reference for the broad mass of public opinion in the Middle Eastern countries.

As might be expected, opinion of the United States varies greatly around the world. Starting in July 2002, the Pew Research Center interviewed a total of 38,263 people in 44 different nations. The Pew Global Attitudes survey, What the World Thinks in 2002, finds that between 1999/2000 and 2002 favorable ratings of the United States have fallen in 19 out of 27 countries where benchmark polling data are available. In the narrative introduction of this most recent study, the authors state that

“Discontent with the United States has grown around the world over the past two years. Images of the U.S. have been tarnished in all types of nations: among longtime NATO allies, in developing countries, in Eastern Europe and, most dramatically, in Muslim societies....True dislike, if not hatred, of America is concentrated in the Muslim nations of the Middle East and in Central Asia, today’s areas of greatest conflict.”⁷

That notwithstanding, although there has been a downward trend in public opinion where benchmark data is available, the United States is viewed favorably by much of the world. According to the most recent Pew study, the U.S. is viewed favorably by majorities in 35 of the 42 countries. In general, the U.S. received favorable ratings in the surveyed countries in Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Not surprisingly, the ratings were

unfavorable in the surveyed countries in the Middle East – which included Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, and Egypt.⁸

Similar results were found in a study conducted by Dr. James Zogby titled “What Arabs Think”, in which Arab respondents from Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Morocco, Egypt, and Israel were asked how they felt about other countries in the world – which included the United States. On this particular point, an average of 71% of respondents had an unfavorable opinion of the United States.⁹

One significant change since the most recent Pew research study is the rise in anti-American sentiment in South Korea. In reaction to both the tragic death of two young Korean girls that were crushed by a U.S. Army military vehicle, as well as the divergence between the Republic of Korea and the United States governments regarding policy direction on North Korea, the favorability ratings among South Koreans has dropped significantly. According to a recent opinion poll conducted Korea Gallup, a majority of Koreans (over 53%) have an unfavorable opinion of the United States, while just 37% have a favorable opinion.¹⁰

IN FOREIGN POLICY, PRESIDENT BUSH IS SEEN AS A UNILATERALIST

Although much of the world still holds a favorable opinion of the United States, President Bush is widely seen as taking a unilateral approach to international affairs. According to Marjorie Thompson, an American who heads the C3I Consulting Group in London, “People here were shocked and horrified by September 11th. But since then, they’ve come to believe that the United States is using that as an excuse for a unilateral foreign policy, and they’re starting to make sweeping anti-American comments.”¹¹

There is a similar pattern of thought concerning the President’s approach to the War on Terror. When asked “Do you think the U.S. is taking into account the interests of its partners in the fight against terrorism or do you think the U.S. is acting mainly on its own interests?” – 62% of non-U.S. respondents throughout Europe, Russia, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East thought the United States was acting mainly on its own interests. Interestingly, 70% of Americans polled thought that the U.S. was taking into account the interests of its partners.¹²

The potential alienation that results from the perceived unilateralism could come at a significant cost, particularly when America needs its allies most in order to win the War on Terror and to assist in the rebuilding effort should a war with Iraq prove inevitable. Ivo Daalder, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, said “There are many problems that cannot be solved without a significant degree of cooperation. What you fret away with this unilateralism is the goodwill of others to cooperate.”¹³

CHARGES OF UNILATERALISM STEM FROM POLICY DECISIONS

By now the list of President Bush's unpopular foreign policy decisions is somewhat familiar within the anti-American circles. Examples include the perceived lopsided approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the administration's approach to the situation in Iraq; the lack of U.S. support for the Kyoto Protocol on climate change without offering an alternative; withdrawal of U.S. support for the International Criminal Court – a treaty that the U.S. had ratified under the Clinton Administration; the withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and concurrent pursuit of missile defense; trade policies and the latest imposition of steel tariffs and farm subsidies; and lack of support for the international ban on land-mines.

Taking a separate look at one of these issues, the President's decision to abandon the Kyoto protocol on climate change was neither popular at home nor abroad. By a margin of 44% to 29%, Americans disapproved of Bush's decision (with nearly one quarter of the respondents having no opinion), while Europeans disapproved of his stance by an eight to one margin.¹⁴ This overwhelming rejection of the President's decision by the European community is in keeping with the European focus on the environment. A recent poll by the Chicago Council of Foreign Relations and the German Marshall Fund of the U.S showed that Europeans still consider global warming to be a greater danger than fundamentalist Islam.¹⁵

What riled the international community was not just the fact that the Bush administration repudiated the protocol that President Clinton had previously signed in 1998, but that it did so without offering a suggested path forward. The fact that the United States withdrew its support and, in a sense, just got up and left, truly fueled the resentment towards the U.S. Although there was likely good reason for the Bush administration to pull their support, the resulting backlash reflected the anger towards what was perceived as American indifference on this issue on which there are 178 other signatories.

The potential fallout from this decision goes beyond the issue of greenhouse gasses, as John Lewis Gaddis sums up nicely - "A nation that sets itself up as an example to the world in most things will not achieve that purpose by telling the rest of the world, in some things, to shove it."¹⁶ It would have served us well to stay engaged on this issue, and shape it in a way that would be more in line with our interests.

ON IRAQ – A FESTERING DEBATE

Perhaps no other recent policy issue has stirred public opinion in the international arena more than the President's pursuit of a "regime change" in Iraq. Early in the 2002 calendar year, tough talk from the Bush administration gave clear indications that the President was intent on

forcibly removing Saddam Hussein from power. This policy sparked much heated debate, both domestically and in the international arena. The motives behind this policy initiative were in question, allies were feeling pressured to fall in line with the President, and early indications were that the administration was prepared to undertake the regime change with a “go it alone” approach, if necessary.

This tough talk caused concern at home and abroad. Much of the international community was openly against the direction of the President’s policy – both in terms of content and rhetoric. The President’s decision to take this issue to the United Nations quelled the fear for some, but there were still rumblings of American bullying – and that any combined effort to oust Hussein would be less a coalition of the willing than one of the dragooned. “‘The whole debate is about two issues,’ said an envoy whose country is one of the five permanent Security Council members. ‘One is Iraq. The other is U.S. Power in the world. The second issue is the bigger part of the debate.’”¹⁷

The current mood, both within the United Nations and the international community, is in sharp contrast to that felt during 1990 when President George H.W. Bush was rallying the world to oust Hussein’s invading forces out of Kuwait. “In 1990, ‘there was great excitement that the most powerful country was gathering together the world community to meet this challenge,’ recalled David Malone, a former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations who now heads an independent New York think tank focused on U.N. activities. ‘That excitement and support have been replaced by apprehension and fear. The Security Council is operating under great pressure to accommodate the United States, but the trouble is, the administration is seen as the ugly American,’ Malone said. ‘They don’t make their case. They just bully when they can.’”¹⁸

In addition to the international concern about the administration’s heavy-handed approach, there was widespread suspicion among Europeans regarding U.S. intentions in Iraq. In November/December 2002, the Pew Research Center conducted a six-nation follow-up survey on Iraq, with some interesting and diverging results. The survey was conducted in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Turkey. According to the Pew survey, “Large percentages in each country polled think that the U.S. desire to control Iraqi oil is the principal reason that Washington is considering a war against Iraq. In Russia 76% subscribe to a war-for-oil view; so too do 75% of the French, 54% of Germans and 44% of British. In sharp contrast, just 22% of Americans see U.S. policy toward Iraq driven by oil interests. Two thirds (of Americans) think the United States is motivated by a concern about the security threat posed by Saddam Hussein.”¹⁹

The survey also uncovered a divergence in opinion concerning the desired endstate of the administration's policy. While majorities of those polled in all six nations agreed that Iraq is a moderate/great danger, a majority in only the U.S. favored using force to remove Saddam from power. Britain was evenly split, and majorities in the four remaining countries were opposed to the use of force to remove Hussein.

Hence, the Bush administration's policy decision for a regime change in Iraq tended to fuel the anti-American feelings in much of the world. The desired outcome was in dispute, the intentions drew widespread suspicions, and the approach was considered heavy-handed and highlighted the unilateralist image that had been developing.

THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ISSUE

In the Middle East, the Bush administration's focus on Iraq is viewed as an obsession of the United States. In that region of the world, the obsession is not Iraq, but rather the Israel-Palestine issue. The Arab leadership is unanimous in the belief that this conflict is the region's most pressing problem, and they feel that this issue should be handled before any other. A Western ambassador based in the Middle East summarizes the feeling in the region like this, "Out here, people think Americans willfully or otherwise ignore their single most important grievance."²⁰ The Zogby study substantiated the primacy of importance of the Palestinian issue among Arabs. When asked to rank order a listing of ten political issues, Arab respondents on average ranked the issue of Palestine third, behind civil/personal rights and health care.²¹ From the Arab perspective, we have put their primary concern on the back burner, with no evidence of recent effort by the U.S. to make substantive progress in that arena.

Not only is our focus on Iraq viewed as upside down when compared to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, but also in much of the world the United States is seen as showing out of balance favoritism towards Israel. According to a December 2001 Pew Research Center study, in which 275 political, cultural, business, media and government leaders from 24 different countries were asked "Has the United States been too supportive of Israel or don't you think so?" – a total of 73% of non-U.S. respondents answered yes: 68% in Western Europe, 78% in Latin America, 82% in Asia, 90% in the Middle East, and 40% in East Europe/Russia. Conversely, only 35% of U.S. respondents thought the United States was too supportive of Israel.²²

The rhetoric that our political leaders use can also produce a negative perception of American intent and balance on this issue. "When Bush called [Israeli Prime Minister] Ariel Sharon a man of peace, well, that was too unbelievable. People can only laugh at that," said

Mustapha Kamel al Sayyid, a political science professor at Cairo University. "American foreign policy is extremely unpopular, and President Bush is always seen to be taking the side of right-wing Israelis."²³

Finally, there is a perception of a double standard with regard to enforcement of United Nations Security Council resolutions. Critics are asking why Iraq should be held to UN resolutions when Israel oftentimes is not. In his widely publicized speech at the United Nations on 12 September 2002, President Bush called upon the United Nations to enforce the Security Council resolutions on Iraqi disarmament, and in doing so he stated that the legitimacy and relevance of the UN was at stake.

One week later, on a separate issue, the Security Council passed a resolution requiring Israel to end its siege of Yassar Arafat's headquarters and withdraw from Ramallah. The U.S. abstained, and soon thereafter Israel indicated it would not comply with the resolution. "Why do we target one country, and at the same time, why is there no outcry about Israel not implementing its resolution. Why?" asks Yahya Mahmassani, the permanent UN observer for the League of Arab States. "Why should Israel be above the law? Because some members of the Security Council – or one member, maybe – is all the time protecting Israel. If the UN is to be fair, there should not be double standards."²⁴

Consequently, the Israeli-Palestinian issue has led to resentment of the United States - with the United States being perceived as showing out of balance favoritism towards Israel, and not giving the issue the same degree of importance that many Arab nations feel it justifies.

BEHAVIORAL ANTI-AMERICANISM

Simply stated, America is increasingly viewed as an international bully with a heavy handed approach in the international arena. This has been amplified under President Bush. For some people, his "you're either with us or you're with the terrorists" and "Axis of Evil" speech tended to polarize as much as it did to unify. In addition, the Iraq debate has brought much of this sentiment to the surface, and the President's speech to the General Assembly was viewed by some as both hypocritical (given Israel's defiance of Security Council resolutions) and unilateral diplomacy to be accepted by the rest.

President Bush will never be accused of mincing words. In word and in policy, he is direct, to the point, and there is no need to read between the lines – a hidden agenda will not be found. John Lewis Gaddis, professor of military and naval history at Yale University, characterizes the President's style nicely: "This administration speaks plainly, at times

eloquently, with no attempt to be polite or diplomatic or 'nuanced.' What you hear and what you read is pretty much what you can expect to get.²⁵

As might be expected, the President's cowboy-esque approach to self-expression and delivery style is a double-edged sword and it has fostered both admiration and resentment. Consider these comments from Felipe Gonzalez, former prime minister of Spain. "The paradox is that the world's solidarity with the United States after September 11 was as powerful as the savagery of the attacks. But the U.S. administration has squandered this feeling. 'Axis of Evil?' Totally banal...And that funny expression 'If you're not with me, you're against me'...Well, no. I'm with you, but for my own reasons, and with my freedom to say what I think. This administration wants submission, not friendship."²⁶

The "Axis of Evil" comment that President Bush included in his January 2002 State of the Union address appears to have been given a quiet burial. The president did not use that characterization of Iran, Iraq and North Korea in either his June 2002 graduation speech at West Point or his National Security Strategy which was released on September 17th 2002. Similarly, in the January 2003 State of the Union address, the President commented separately about Iran, Iraq and North Korea, but he refrained from characterizing them as an Axis of Evil. Considering the negative reaction to the phrase, a quiet burial is might be a good thing. According to the April 2002 Pew Research Center study, solid majorities in France, Germany, Italy and Great Britain disapproved of his "Axis of Evil" rhetoric.²⁷

Although White House officials publicly state that they do not have any regrets about the Axis of Evil formulation, critics say that the phrase has been more of a sticking point for the administration than it has done to coalesce support for their international strategy. "I think they realize the axis of evil phrase has gotten them into a lot of trouble with a lot of different people," said Kenneth M. Pollack, a senior fellow on the Saban Center at the Brookings Institution and a former C.I.A military analyst who supports a war in Iraq. "It's made their diplomacy a lot harder, and it's reinforced the sentiment that these are a bunch of cowboys who don't pay a lot of attention to nuances."²⁸

One final note on the subject of rhetoric – the President is not the lone target with regard to accusations of being bellicose and blunt. Americans in general are oftentimes criticized for their "in your face" attitude. Consider this comment in a recent USA Today article - "Why do people attack Americans?" asks Tiny Waslandek, a social worker in Amsterdam, Netherlands. 'Because they have a big, big mouth and they mind everybody's business.'²⁹

RELIGIOUS ANTI-AMERICANISM

Although a variety of conservative religious groups condemn various facets of American society for their “corrupting immorality”, religious anti-Americanism is most virulently embraced by Islamic fundamentalists. This is certainly not a new phenomena – the Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran’s late spiritual leader, characterized the United States as the “Great Satan” – a vision that took hold and inspired the masses of disenfranchised Iranian youth to depose the Shah and hold Americans hostage in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran for over a year.

Bin Laden is apparently trying to use the same tactic in his war against the West. Shortly after the United States and Northern Alliance forces attacked the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden declared that “every Muslim should rush to defend Islam.”³⁰ In his post September 11th message, bin Laden said the world had been divided into two regions, “one of faith where there is no hypocrisy and another of infidelity, from which we hope God will protect us.”³¹ Bin Laden wants to turn this into a religious war, and President Bush has made clear from the outset that this is a war against terror, not the Islamic religion.

Does the rest of the world see the war on terror as a conflict between the West and Islam? According to a December 2001 Pew Research Center study of opinion leaders around the world, it appears that the preliminary answer is no, although not by an overwhelming majority. When asked “Do you think the terrorist attacks are the start of a major conflict between the West and Islam, or will it remain only a conflict between the West and al Qaeda?” 59% of non-U.S. respondents felt that the conflict was between the West and al Qaeda, while 29% considered it a conflict with Islam. Respondents in the Middle East/conflict area are somewhat more evenly split, with 41% seeing it as a clash with Islam, and 54% viewing it as a limited conflict with al Qaeda. In the broader array of all Islamic states surveyed, the gap is wider, with 64% viewing it as a conflict with al Qaeda, and 29% considering it as a conflict with Islam.³²

This statistical finding is a “good news – bad news” story. While it is nice to see that most respondents see the war on terror for what the name implies. However, a large number do consider this to be a religiously based war on Islam – and the sympathetic understanding and potential recruits that can come from this soft middle ground is troubling. Consider this quote from a 54-year old Egyptian homemaker - “I think also that since September 11 more people are considering themselves Muslims because Islam is threatened now. It’s an enemy of the West, so people cling to it. It’s a matter of pride, not religion. We’re on the defensive.”³³

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTI-AMERICANISM – A SEETHING HATRED

This aspect of anti-Americanism is a dangerous and explosive form that poses the greatest near term threat to the United States and its allies in the war on terror. It feeds the Islamic fundamentalist, and is the driving force that compels a percentage of disenfranchised Islamic youth to join the ranks of al Qaeda. This psychological anti-Americanism must be addressed and turned in order to win the long-term war on terror.

The root cause of this resentment is not at all complicated. Much of the Arab world is dominated by autocratic and repressive monarchies with failing economies that have produced generations of unrepresented, underemployed, and disenfranchised youth. This increasingly large segment of the population sees the United States as providing both political and economic support to these repressive regimes, primarily in the name of our strategic petroleum interest. They see their societies deeply failing when compared with the West, and they are essentially powerless to influence change. This domestic indignity and humiliation simply fuels their anger towards what they consider to be a hypocritical United States – from their perspective they see a country that trumpets democracy and economic freedoms, yet supports their repressive and autocratic regimes.³⁴

Thomas L. Friedman, the Pulitzer Prizewinning author who has spent much of his time studying and living in the region, sums up the phenomenon like this - “No one should doubt that the rage boiling among Arab youth today – which exploded on 9/11 – is due in part to anger at U.S. support for anything Israel does. That anger is real. But the rage is also the result of the way too many Arab regimes, backed by America, have kept their young people without a voice or the tools to succeed in the modern world. Too many young Arabs feel humiliated when they compare themselves with others, and it is their poverty of dignity that also prompts them to lash out.”³⁵

This frustration is understandable, particularly given the historical context where the Arab world was once at the cutting edge of knowledge and progress. Arabs were leading mathematicians and scientists; they devised algebra, invented the astrolabe, and thought the world was round when Europeans thought it flat. Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus were once considered the intellectual centers of the world, and Egyptians were one of the first civilizations with a written recorded history.³⁶ However, in recent history, the Arab world has not only failed to pave the way for progress, but it has also failed to keep pace. “‘There’s a feeling today we didn’t really participate in the postindustrial era, that we haven’t achieved anything to add to the modern progress of the world,’ said Hala Mustafa, and Egyptian social and political

commentator. 'This lack of accomplishment creates a gap between the Arab and Western worlds.'³⁷

So what went wrong? Sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme, a team of scholars – led by the Egyptian sociologist Nader Fergany, set out to find the answers to this question. What they found was that the Arab world, which encompasses the 22 nations of the Arab League with a combined population of approximately 280 million, does not suffer from a lack of resources, but rather “the lamentable shortage of three essentials: freedom, knowledge and womanpower.”³⁸ These three deficits have given rise to absolute autocracies, bogus elections, a patriarchal social environment, and an education system that has led to a dearth of creativity. “Instead of promoting creative thinking,” said a young Bahraini banker, “our public schools here still teach the three R’s – read, remember and regurgitate.”³⁹ Finally, we have a society that stifles half of its productive potential – approximately one in every two Arab women are illiterate, and their ability to participate in their countries’ political and economic sectors is among the lowest in the world.

In addition to these deficiencies, there exist a variety of Arab economies that are failing. Over the past 20 years, annual per capita income growth has averaged 0.5%, the lowest in the world except for sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, slow economic growth and fast-rising populations have led to dangerously high unemployment. At this point in time approximately 15% of the labor force is unemployed. The region has the largest proportion of young people in the world, with 38% of Arabs are under the age of 14. This lopsided proportion of economic-to-population growth is a dangerous combination. At current population and economic growth rates the unemployment is expected to rise to 25% by 2010.⁴⁰

The deficits in basic human rights combined with failing economies throughout the region has resulted in a large number of jobless, degraded and embittered Arab youth who lack the democratic means to change their societies. While some try to leave in search of a better life, many of them turn to fundamentalist Islam for personal identity, self-respect, and answers to their plight. “In a poll of older Arab youths, a remarkable 51% expressed a desire to emigrate. Others stay and turn to Islam. And in the version of Islam now in favor in many spots, they are taught that the problems of their world are the result of corrupt western influences – particularly American ones.”⁴¹

Consequently, this volatile combination of repressive societies, failing economies, rising unemployment, and fundamentalist Islam has led to a fertile potential terrorist base from which to recruit.

Professor Gaddis describes the resulting phenomena like this - "...authoritarian regimes throughout the Middle East support terrorism indirectly by continuing to produce generations of underemployed, unrepresented, and therefore radicalizable young people from whom Osama bin Laden and others like him draw their recruits."⁴² It is the linkage of U.S. support to these regimes, coupled with the anti-Western sentiment taught within the fundamentalist Islamic ideology that has developed into this particularly dangerous form of psychological anti-Americanism.

VIEWS OF FOREIGN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Much of this paper has dealt with popular opinion and the corresponding sentiment towards the United States. The impact of anti-American sentiment on the corresponding political leadership, and perhaps the inherent sentiment felt among the leaders themselves, is also of obvious importance to the United States. Unlike the public opinion survey data that has been cited in earlier sections of this paper, polling data of international political leadership regarding the respective opinion of the United States is not available. Given the sensitive nature of international politics, this does not come as a surprise. However, much can be deduced from policy decisions and dialog between the key and influential foreign leadership.

SAUDI ARABIA

In the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is a strategically important country to the United States. Saudi Arabia holds over one-fourth of the proven oil reserves in the world, and they are the largest Middle Eastern supplier of oil imported by the U.S.⁴³ Saudi Arabia also provides geographic basing of about 5,000 U.S. military personnel at the Prince Sultan Air Base, where the U.S. has maintained a military presence since the 1991 Gulf War.

The presence of American military forces in Saudi Arabia has been a particularly contentious internal issue, and one that has in part spurred the terrorism of Osama Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda followers.⁴⁴ In addition, anti-American sentiment in Saudi Arabia runs high, with 87% of people polled in Saudi Arabia having an unfavorable opinion of the United States.⁴⁵

Although it has not been officially announced, a senior member of the Saudi royal family have recently stated that Crown Prince Abdullah will ask President Bush to withdraw U.S. military forces following the campaign to disarm Iraq. In addition, Saudi officials stated that the withdrawal would set the stage for internal political reforms, whereby Saudis "would begin electing representatives to provincial assemblies and then to a national assembly."⁴⁶ Saudi Royal family members cite foreign and internal pressure to reform as contributing factors to

these projected changes.⁴⁷ In addition, Saudi officials are publicly stating that the United States will not be able to use its airspace or launch military forces from internal military bases during a future war with Iraq.⁴⁸ Although this is conjecture, it is plausible that internal pressure within Saudi Arabia is in part fueling this change.

WESTERN EUROPE

In Western Europe we are seeing the rising tide of anti-Americanism creeping into mainstream politics. France, Germany, and to a lesser degree Great Britain, are drifting away from the close allied position that they have held for the past five decades. The immediate issue that has forced this shift is the U.S. policy towards Iraq, but as previously discussed, the fear of American power, its unilateralist tendencies and bullying have all come into play as well.

In Germany, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's successful bid for re-election is in large part due to his boisterous opposition to U.S. military action in Iraq. Prior to taking this stance, he seemed to be headed for defeat, yet his anti-U.S. and anti-Bush stance struck a chord with much of the voting public and turned the tide in the election. When the Bush administration reacted with a cold shoulder towards Germany – with the president refusing to speak to the chancellor, and Secretary Rumsfeld snubbing his German counterpart at a NATO meeting – the Chancellor's message seemed to resonate even louder. "Many people believed Schroeder was speaking for them, giving voice to their fears and concerns," said John Palmer, director of the European Policy Center, a research group in Brussels.⁴⁹ Schroeder's strong anti-U.S. stance continues today, and he continues to vow that Germany will not support any military campaign to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

In Great Britain, Prime Minister Tony Blair is under increasing pressure as the gap widens between his position and public opinion regarding the Iraq debate. Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, Prime Minister Blair has been Americans' staunchest ally. However, public opinion in Great Britain concerning U.S. policy towards Iraq is growing increasingly negative, and the Prime Minister's public approval ratings are suffering accordingly. In two recent polls, 74% of Britons said they had either "not much confidence" or "none at all" in President Bush. In addition, 52% of Britons polled were against military action in Iraq, with 29% in favor of it. At the same time, Prime Minister Blair's approval rating has dropped to 35%, the lowest level in 2 ½ years.⁵⁰

In the past, Prime Minister Blair has dismissed anti-Americanism, calling it a "foolish indulgence." However, aides say that he is increasingly aware of the growing gap between his views and public opinion. Accordingly, he has launched a major public relations campaign in an

effort to narrow the gap.⁵¹ The Prime Minister has also lobbied the Bush administration to go back to the U.N. Security Council for a second resolution on Iraq, and he has stated that “There is no rush to war.”⁵² Although he still stands beside President Bush, and he has committed Great Britain to support a military effort in Iraq with 40,000 soldiers, it appears that he softening his stance somewhat in the face of growing domestic criticism.

In France, President Jacques Chirac has been center stage throughout the Iraq controversy. Ever since the Bush administration started making intonations about forcibly removing Saddam Hussein from power, Chirac has maintained an opposing stance regarding the use of force. His stance is also clearly in line with popular opinion in France, where a recent poll indicates that over 80% of French are strongly opposed to a war with Iraq and any unilateral military action by the United States.⁵³ Although this strong anti-American sentiment and President Chirac’s corresponding stance come as no real surprise, their permanent party status on the U.N. Security Council inherently makes France a strategic player in the ongoing debate.

WHY ARE WE ADMIRERD? AMERICA’S OVERLOOKED STRENGTHS

Thus far this research paper has focused on the reasons for anti-American sentiment throughout the world. The fact that favorable opinion of the United States is on the decline in much of the world, coupled with a facet of anti-Americanism that fuels the fundamentalist terror organizations, is certainly cause for concern. However, America is still viewed favorably in the majority of the world. In order to provide a balanced set of recommendations, it is important to analyze not only “why we’re hated,” but also why the United States is admired.

AMERICAN IDEALS POPULAR

According to a variety of surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center over the past 18 months, a majority of respondents surveyed in Western and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa had an overall favorable opinion of the United States. The only region that was decidedly negative was the Middle East. Not surprisingly, American ideals and freedoms are widely admired throughout the much of the world. In a December 2001 Pew Survey, 63% of non-U.S. respondents said the American democratic ideals are a major reason people like us, and the view that America is the land of opportunity was listed by 75% of respondents. These responses mirror what Americans thought others would find appealing. In addition, U.S. leadership in scientific and technological innovation is also considered a major reason for appeal by 67% of non-U.S. respondents.

One interesting finding is a disparity of opinion between U.S. and non-U.S. respondents. While 52% of American respondents thought that others admired us because the U.S. “does a

lot of good around the world,” only 21% of non-U.S. respondents indicated that as a major reason for liking the United States,⁵⁴ leaving some Americans confused and feeling under appreciated.⁵⁵

In the Middle East, although the overall assessment of the United States is unfavorable, there are still aspects of America that are admired. In an April 2002 study by Zogby International entitled *Impressions of America*, respondents polled in five Arab countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait, and the UAE) had strong favorable attitudes toward American freedom and democracy, education, science and technology, and movies and television. Respondents also had largely favorable attitudes towards the American people. What drove down opinion of the United States in these five countries was the U.S. policies in the region.⁵⁶

AMERICAN CULTURE – AN INTERESTING PARADOX

Finally, American consumer goods, movies, music and television are widely popular, yet fear of American “culture creep” is a cause for concern among the same group of people. Over 80% of respondents in Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East listed these items of Americana as a reason to like the United States. However, this affection was tempered with a concern of American culture influencing and perhaps displacing unique elements of their respective societies. The same Pew survey results indicate that 51% of respondents worldwide considered the spread of American culture through movies, television, and pop music as a reason to also dislike the U.S.⁵⁷ An interesting paradox – American culture is both loved and feared – and it is not uncommon to hear stories of popular international McDonald’s franchises also being the recipient of cultural protests and vandalism.⁵⁸ From an international perspective it seems as though American culture is embraced in a love-hate relationship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UNILATERALISM VS. MULTILATERALISM – SEEKING A BETTER BALANCE

The Bush administration's current trend and accompanying unilateralist perception among the international community is worrisome. This will not serve us well in the near term, as we face a continued war on terror and pending war in Iraq, both of which will require widespread international support and commitment in the years to come. Nor will a unilateralist slant serve us in the long term as the United States charts a course of global leadership in the 21st century. Quite simply, we need to find a better balance.

In their article entitled “How America Should Lead,” Kori Schake and Klaus Becher nicely sum up the potential perils of taking a unilateral slant. “While unilateral action is a necessary option for the U.S., enshrining it as an end rather than a usually sub-optimal means of achieving American objectives will erode the voluntary commitment of other states to the common aims they share with the U.S.”⁵⁹ While the Clinton Administration, at least in the early years, became bogged down with pursuing what Madeleine Albright termed “assertive multilateralism,” they eventually settled on a more middle-of-the-road approach, which is captured in the mantra “multilateral when we can, unilateral when we must.”⁶⁰ This is a good mantra, and would serve the Bush administration well to keep this as its centerpiece.

IRAQ AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ISSUE

If war in Iraq proves to be inevitable, then great effort should be placed on attaining United Nations sanctioning and buy-in prior to the commencement of hostilities. As Thomas Friedman aptly states, “I would much rather prefer a hot, legitimate, U.N.-approved war with the world on our side to a cool, less legitimate war that leaves us owning Iraq by ourselves.”⁶¹ United Nations sanctioning will not only ease the accusations of U.S. bullying, but also likely broaden the international support for rebuilding Iraq.

In addition, the United States needs to make an honest, balanced and concerted effort towards substantive progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The administration needs to put this issue back on the front burner and show the world that we are committed to finding a peaceful settlement on this emotionally charged issue. This concerted effort would likely sway Middle Eastern sentiment in a favorable manner, even if a final resolution proves elusive in the near term.

REBUILDING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The Pentagon’s short lived Office of Strategic Influence reflected the Defense Department’s desire to do something about shaping public opinion in favor of America – and senior Pentagon officials say that Secretary Rumsfeld is frustrated by our inability to do just that.⁶² The State Department has seen a similar need of late, and it held two conferences in September 2002 to explore ways to reverse the rising trend of anti-Americanism, particularly in the Arab world.⁶³ America’s public diplomacy – the government’s ability to “understand, inform, and influence foreign publics,”⁶⁴ – has been in decline since its effective use during the Cold War. This trend needs to be reversed.

The Bush administration needs to explore ways of improving our efforts in public diplomacy, particularly in Arab and Muslim countries. In their work entitled “To Prevail: An American Strategy for the Campaign against Terrorism,” Kurt Campbell and Michele Flournoy lay out a number of worthy considerations. These recommendations include –

- Increase in the funding for the State Department’s Public Diplomacy program. Currently public diplomacy programs receive about one billion dollars – which is approximately eight percent of the State Department budget, and less than one half of one percent of the overall Defense budget.
- Revitalize the Voice of America (VOA). During the Cold War, VOA, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Liberty reached approximately 70 percent of the population in Eastern Europe and 50 percent of the Soviet populace. In Afghanistan today, eighty percent of Afghan men listen to VOA. However, in the Arab world, the audience is a mere two percent.⁶⁵
- Better utilize existing Arab media outlets. The Al Jazeera broadcast service has a global audience of approximately 35 million Arabic speaking viewers. The Washington Bureau chief for Al Jazeera commented that the network is “desperate to find any (U.S.) officials. We say every day, ‘Please come talk to us, exploit us.’”⁶⁶ Given the scope of the Al Jazeera audience, this and other Arab media outlets could be effectively used to help shape broad public opinion in the Muslim world.
- Strengthen research on public opinion. Funding for research on international public opinion (about \$5 million dollars annually) has been declined in real terms over the last decade.⁶⁷ Awareness of foreign public opinion can be an important tool in helping policymakers explain and shape policy decisions.

The United States government needs to put a significant effort into informing and shaping international public opinion in an even handed, open and informative way. It is quite possible that some aspects of anti-Americanism have developed simply out of a misunderstanding of U.S. intentions.

LEVERAGING SOFT POWER

American culture and ideals are the primary components of what Joseph Nye calls “soft power.” According to Nye, “Soft power is the ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals. It differs from hard power, the ability to use the carrots and sticks of economic and military might to make others follow your will.”⁶⁸

As previously discussed, American culture and ideals are largely admired and sought after throughout the world. The beauty of soft power is that it inherently sells itself, and is limited only by the ability of others to access American cultural products and ideals. In a globalized world with increasing available internet access, America's soft power should consequently expand – and is limited only by regimes that are threatened by it and hence try to restrict internet access. As we have seen in China, restricting internet access is a problematic effort, and exposure to the World Wide Web is likely only to increase. In addition, an increased emphasis on public diplomacy programs will also serve as a useful conduit for our popular culture and ideals to spread.

PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING PROGRESSIVE REFORMS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

There are some interesting developments afoot in two Middle Eastern countries – developments that come in the form of political and personal freedoms in the tiny nation of Bahrain, and a not so quiet student revolt against the ruling mullahs – in Iran. These developments are small steps towards hopeful change within the region. Most importantly, these developments are coming from within their respective countries, exactly where real change will need to begin. The U.S. needs to pay attention to, and be supportive of these developments.

Last October, polling stations opened in Bahrain for the very first time. Citizens of that country were casting votes for a parliament that will share some decision making with Sheik Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, Bahrain's progressive king. This was the first election in a gulf region state in which women were allowed to run for office and vote. To encourage the latter, the king's wife campaigned publicly for women to vote – all unheard of in this conservative region. For the first time, citizens of this small country will have some ownership in what their government does, and it appears that the initial seeds of democracy have been planted.

Something perhaps more remarkable is occurring in Iran. Popular revulsion against the ruling mullahs is underway, and although it is too early to tell where it is heading, true revolution is not out of the question. Almost daily public protests take place against the ruling mullahs, and in a recent gathering of Iranian students in December, chants of "Death to dictatorship" were heard - a far cry from the chants of "Death to America" that we heard 24 years ago. Iran's youthful population – approximately 65% of Iranians are under the age of 25 – are growing increasingly disenchanted with their autocratic ruling clerics that have economic and political growth within their country. In addition, in a recent poll conducted by the Iranian news agency, IRNA, 1,500 Iranians were asked whether they favored opening talks with America, and 75%

said “yes.” The pollsters were subsequently arrested for conducting “flawed” opinion polls.⁶⁹ It is not possible to tell what the next chapter in this saga will be. Clearly this youthful population has had their fill of tyrannical religious rule, and the winds of change are blowing.

So what should we do about this? At a minimum – public acknowledgement of support by the Bush administration is a good start. This is exactly what the President did in his 2003 State of the Union address when he said “In Iran we continue to see a government that represses its people, pursues weapons of mass destruction and supports terror. We also see Iranian citizens risking intimidation and death as they speak out for liberty and human rights and democracy. Iranians, like all people, have a right to choose their own government and determine their own destiny, and the United States supports their aspirations to live in freedom.”⁷⁰ This was a great statement, and the exposure that it generated in the State of the Union address should have some sort of second or third order effect.

Continued support by the Bush administration of political and education reforms in this largely autocratic region will help to foster real change from within. In addition to the proposed political reforms recently announced in Saudi Arabia, the Crown Prince is also trying to regain control of the education system from the religious authorities.⁷¹ This will be a delicate internal struggle, and one that will require a correspondingly delicate level of support from the United States.

Secretary of State Powell’s gentle nudging is indicative of this type of subtle push. Speaking to the Arabic newspaper Al-Qods al-Arabi, Mr. Powell said the “It is up to the Saudis to decide how they wish to transform their society in order to make it prepared for the 21st Century,” and that while the U.S. would not “dictate change”, the U.S. would like to “be able to influence how such reforms are going to be introduced as some of them could be better than others.”⁷² In the long term, education reform in the region is in the interest of Middle Eastern countries and the United States, and real change must come from within. In this regard, language is important. In light of the heightened anti-American sentiment in the region, demanding immediate change from the bully pulpit is more likely to undermine any internal reform efforts. Secretary Powell’s approach of showing subtle support and offering assistance is a good first step towards getting regional buy-in and indigenous change.

LESSENING DEPENDENCE ON MIDDLE EASTERN OIL

As previously mentioned, our political and economic support for autocratic and repressive regimes like that found in Saudi Arabia, and the subsequent anti-American sentiment that stems from that support, is primarily linked to our strategic interest in Middle Eastern oil. Lessening

our dependence on foreign oil will inherently bring down the price of oil, and therefore erode the only source of income that keeps these autocratic regimes in power. That will quite possibly provide the impetus to spark real change from within these countries.

Today, the United States depends on foreign imports for more than half of its oil, and this percentage is expected to grow to 64% by the year 2020. Of this foreign oil, Middle East oil makes up approximately one fifth of the oil imports.⁷³ Given our increasing demand for oil and a shrinking supply of domestic oil, independence from foreign oil is all but impossible in the near term.

What to do here? First, continue to pursue alternative sources of imported oil. New reserves from the North Sea to Nigeria have been discovered, and new developments in drilling technologies have enabled petroleum companies to find oil and drill in areas that were previously inaccessible. The most promising regions of newly accessible oil reserves include the Gulf of Mexico and West Africa.⁷⁴ Continuing to pursue alternative sources of imported oil will help to diversify our oil import portfolio and thereby lessen our reliance on Middle Eastern supplies.

Having said that, the Middle East still has the largest known oil reserves in the world. A strong emphasis on conservation and developing alternative energies might contribute to a decrease in foreign oil dependency. The President made a substantive and symbolic first step in that direction in his January 2003 State of the Union address when he proposed “\$1.2 billion in research funding so that America can lead the world in developing clean, hydrogen-powered automobiles.” He then asked Congress to “Join me in this important innovation to make our air significantly cleaner, and our country much less dependent on foreign sources of energy.”⁷⁵ This technology is still in the early stages of development, and from an engineering and economic standpoint its viability is still unknown. However, it is a vision that is worth pursuing, and is one that captures the imagination and interest of many people. The President should also urge Americans to be more conservation minded, and to raise the bar somewhat significantly on mileage requirements for commercial automobiles, particularly Sport Utility Vehicles.

TONING DOWN THE RHETORIC

During his campaign for election, President Bush had it right when he said that we needed to be “humble – proud and confident of our values, but humble.”⁷⁶ Unfortunately we’ve lost our azimuth in that regard. Admittedly, world events have forced the administration into action.

However, a more nuanced approach to these world events and policy decisions would serve us well in gathering consensus and support within the international community.

CONCLUSION

As long as the United States remains a global superpower, there will be a degree of anti-American sentiment and resentment towards us. To a degree, that is simply the price that we will pay for global leadership stemming from our military, economic and diplomatic power. It is safe to say that we will never be universally liked, nor should we try to be.

However, neither should we be our own worst enemy. It is important to be attuned to international perceptions and to take balanced efforts to inform and shape world opinion. Every reasonable effort to show inclusion concerning our policy decisions will serve us well – multilateralist when we can, unilateralist when we must – is a good guide. Finally, we could stand to heed a bit of Teddy Roosevelt's advice – to speak softly, but carry a big stick.

Finally, the anti-American sentiment that fuels the terrorists simply cannot be ignored. To win the war on terror, we have to understand what fuels their hatred, take all necessary actions to correct the causes of this sentiment, dry up the pool of potential terrorist recruits, and render these organizations ideologically impotent.

Word Count: 9,460

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