

The Layalina Review

On Public Diplomacy And Arab Media



Layalina Productions Inc., 1250 24th Street NW, Suite 300 Washington, DC 20037

Vol. VI No. 15 July 16-July 29, 2010

WikiLeaks and Afghanistan

Wikileaks, an organization that has published numerous classified documents to reveal “unethical behavior” by governments and corporations, attracted international attention when it recently disclosed a trove of classified military field reports about the Afghan war, reports The New York Times. The news site explains that the sheer quantity of documents posted last Sunday surpasses the entire archives that the Wikileaks disposes.

We believe that transparency in government activities leads to reduced corruption, better government and stronger democracies,” says the Wikileaks website. “All governments can benefit from increased scrutiny by the world community, as well as their own people. We believe this scrutiny requires information.”

According to the New York Times, Wikileaks’ founder Julian Assange explained in a phone interview that the documents revealed lethal military actions involving the United States military in Afghanistan, including also intelligence information, reports of meetings with political figures, and related details that had gone unreported so far by the media and the military.

WikiLeaks withheld some 15,000 documents from release until its technicians could redact certain names in the reports to protect the safety of certain individuals. “The fact of the matter is that we are entering a world where there is an awful lot more digital data around ... We have to get used to journalism in a world of digital data,” Assange added.

Chris Anderson, a Knight media-policy fellow at the New America Foundation, said that Wikileaks may represent the beginning of a new era in journalism – an era of Internet whistle-blowers who serve as intermediary sources for investigative

reporters, according to Ron Synovitz at Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty.

Anderson insisted that “digital data” is creating “a very different world.” Synovitz describes this world as a place “where it is much easier for whistle-blowers to leak classified information and remain anonymous, but where traditional journalism will remain relevant.”

According to Steven Aftergood, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty’s head of the project on government secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists, basic journalism is still necessary to verify and substantiate information provided by groups like Wikileaks.

“Documents are not journalism. Documents can mislead as easily as any other source. The function of journalism still needs to be carried out as carefully and responsibly as possible,” Aftergood pointed out.

Assange agreed, inviting the readers to determine the legitimacy and reliability of the original sources.

“We need to look at these reports in a subtle way. A lot of material is included,” Assange added.

However, Steven Aftergood added that for FAS that Wikileaks has jeopardized American efforts and national security, arguing that “WikiLeaks must be counted among the enemies of open society because it does not respect the rule of law nor does it honor the rights of individuals.”

Atlantic’s James Fallows concurs with this argument, noting that the Wikileaks debacle is not a positive step. He points out that while “ ‘Everyone’ knows this already. People who have been very close to this story say that little of the information is ‘new,’ in a fundamental sense. . . . But not everyone actually did. . . . Information that may be old news to insiders may seem a revelation to the broader public.”

The war logs have also revealed the shortcomings of US drones in Afghanistan, reports Der Spiegel. Remote-controlled drones were presented as a military marvel and the height of sophistication in weaponry for their ability to take out Taliban fighters with precision missiles while protecting Western forces simultaneously.

Yet, the use of drones has produced some disastrous results, causing casualties among indigenous populations due to system failures, computer glitches and human errors. Contrary to what Stanley McChrystal, the former commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, claimed, “they can strike without warning -- when, for example, Western troops are caught in firefights with insurgents or when militants are observed trying to lay improvised explosive devices (IEDs).”

Dubbed the “silent killers” by Der Spiegel, these weapons are prone to problems. The previously classified documents released

In this issue:

WikiLeaks and Afghanistan	1
DoD’s Operations’ New Namesake	2
Using New Media Landscape to Digitize Public Diplomacy	3
Mrs. Clinton Goes to Pakistan	4
Getting Rid of Extremists	5
Oops, Hollywood Said it Again	6
Clashing Civilizations and Cooperative Civilians	6
Niqab Ban Unveils Controversy in Middle East	8
Battlegrounds Shifting in War on Terrorism	9
References	10

by WikiLeaks include repeated reports of crashes and technical problems, like one dated Nov 20, 2008, in which a Predator equipped with a Hellfire rocket on board crashed on the airfield in Kandahar, forcing the temporary closure of the airport.

The reports also account that networks of Pakistani agents considerably hamper the work of American troops, according to the New York Times. A number of American officials corroborated the findings of the reports describing the Pakistani spy agency's collaboration with the Afghan insurgency and Al-Qaeda.

“All governments can benefit from increased scrutiny by the world community, as well as their own people. We believe this scrutiny requires information.”

Wikileaks website.

In addition, The New York Times adds that the documents draw a sharp contrast between the portrayals of the sound cooperation that exists between American troops and Pakistan, and the reality, where Pakistan utilizes deceptive means to avoid confronting Al-Qaeda.

According to the news site, both administrations confronted the Pakistani government on these issues, but were unable to produce results. Benjamin Rhodes, deputy national security adviser for strategic communications, recommends that although Pakistan has been a solid ally so far, “Pakistan’s military and intelligence services — must continue their strategic shift against violent extremist groups within their borders.”

However, Pakistani military leaders strongly deny these allegations. “The

documents circulated by WikiLeaks do not reflect the current on-ground realities,” said Husain Haqqani, Pakistan’s ambassador to the United States.

Furthermore, the Wikileaks scandal, presumed to be one of the largest leaks in US military history, came at a time when the Obama administration is facing “increasing skepticism over whether its new strategy in the region — announced in December 2009 — is working,” comments Alex Wagner for Politics Daily.

According to the White House correspondent, the administration is struggling in a war of perception over its handling of Afghanistan, coming to a head with General Stanley McChrystal’s sudden sacking in June, following the Rolling Stone magazine scandal.

“There are no broad, new revelations,” stated the White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs. He added “We are in this region of the world because of what happened on 9/11...That’s why we’re there, and that’s why we’re going to continue to make progress on this relationship [with Pakistan].”

However, these disclosures, in particular those about the role of Pakistan’s intelligence services, are likely to fuel popular conspiracy theories that the American-led coalition, in turning a blind eye to its partner’s machinations, must be pursuing a hidden agenda in Afghanistan, remarks The Economist.

Administration officials also admitted that this entire debacle will make it more difficult for the Obama administration to muster the support of the public and Congress for the war efforts, reports The New York Times. “We don’t know how to react,” one frustrated administration official said on Monday. “This obviously puts Congress and the public in a bad mood.”

While three administration officials separately expressed hope that they might be able to use the documents to gain leverage in efforts to get more help from Pakistan, two others hinted that there is a possibility that Congressional anger might threaten American aid and further endanger American efforts in the region.

DoD’s Operations New Namesake

US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) recently replaced the term psychological operations (PSYOP) with the term military support to information operations (MISO), explains Dr. Christopher J. Lamb, interim director of the Center for Strategic Research at the National Defense University’s Institute for National Strategic Studies on the National Defense University Press blog.

Lamb comments that the change in terms reflects “a decade-long lobbying effort from some PSYOP practitioners who are confused about the purpose of their own operations.” Originally, psychological operations were designed to provide “support to military endeavors in non-permissive or semi-permissive environments,” but PSYOP professionals seldom respected the restrictions, which were designed to create boundaries between psychological and diplomatic operations.

“We are ... failing to explain ourselves or our objectives to the Afghan people. This provides clear opportunities for Taliban and al Qaeda propaganda against the West.”

Norine MacDonald, ICOS President.

The name change is “not a negative or punitive action,” but rather the result of the success of the Psychological Operations Regiment, as the memo states, writes Matt Armstrong for Mountain Runner. MISO builds on

the flexible deployment of Military Information Support Teams (MIST) in support of a variety of missions, including direct support to State Department posts described, in part, as public information support to diplomacy.

The name change will contribute to the advancement of the mission to “Persuade-Change-Influence” in many different operations. Nonetheless, Armstrong expresses skepticism, arguing that this shift will improve the procedures of the public affairs officer and define the operations with an emphasis on being proactive and engaging across mediums. “This shift must also address PSYOP/MISO’s relationship to military deception, which PSYOP is too often and incorrectly synonymous with,” adds Armstrong.

MISO may also change the dynamics within the Defense Department and among the agencies and Congress on the relevance of information catering to specific audiences regardless of geography or language. Armstrong concludes, “This name change is potentially a significant first step at rebranding through substance and not simply a squandered opportunity.”

Noah Sachtman for Wired Magazine believes that the name change may just bring more confusion, pointing out that the PSYOP community greeted the switch with a substantial amount of criticism.

“Some of us joined Psychological Operations because it sounded awesome for its name alone,” notes one anonymous commenter on the Small Wars Journal blog. He continues, “To now have the name changed from PSYOP to MISO is a slap in the face. The intimidation factor brought on by the words alone is what attracts many recruits to the MOS [Military Occupation Specialty]. Now when you hear MISO you might as well just join admin or supply.”

In the meantime, Reuters reports that NATO is facing increasing challenges in winning hearts and minds in Afghanistan. According to a poll recently released, most people in Taliban heartlands hold negative views of foreign troops and believe that the Taliban should join the government.

The survey was based on interviews with 552 Afghan men in Kandahar and Helmand provinces in southern Afghanistan, the

scene of some of the most intense fighting.

“We are ... failing to explain ourselves or our objectives to the Afghan people. This provides clear opportunities for Taliban and Al-Qaeda propaganda against the West,” the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) President Norine MacDonald said in a statement.

The poll results indicated that 75 percent of the Afghani respondents believe that foreigners disrespect their religion and traditions. Another 74 percent believe working with foreign forces is wrong, while 68 percent believe NATO forces do not protect them and 65 percent believe the Taliban and its leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, should join the Afghan government.

Fifty-five percent of those polled also believed that foreign troops were in Afghanistan for their own benefit, to destroy or occupy the country, or to destroy Islam, denoting the strong rejection of US troops. Reuters describes this to be “a strong blow to NATO’s hopes of gradually transferring security responsibilities to Afghan forces.”

The war in Afghanistan has reached a critical stage. Despite the presence of about 140,000 foreign troops, the Taliban is at its strongest point of influence since the Islamist movement was overthrown by the US-led invasion in 2001.

Using New Media Landscape to Digitize Public Diplomacy

As the social media revolution is becoming a more prominent feature in Arab youth’s daily lives, the US is now keener than ever to utilize these tools to promote “greater engagement between the United States and Islamic societies,” writes Rami Khouri in an opinion piece for The New York Times.

The Obama Administration recently supported calls by the US Agency for International Development to create

programs that would train young Arabs to better use the internet and rapidly evolving digital technologies “for political activism, advocacy, greater transparency and accountability, and other such democratic practices,” seemingly proving that the shift to digital diplomacy is imminent.

However, Khouri points out that while new media provides a means for ordinary citizens to receive information and express their views, it has not triggered any significant change.

He argues, “We must face the fact that all the new media and hundreds of thousands of young bloggers from Morocco to Iran have not triggered a single significant or lasting change in Arab or Iranian political culture. Not a single one. Zero.”

He adds that the lack of change rests on the fact that the State’s security apparatus is stronger than ever and has learned how to deal with new media. He adds that Western governments are interested in funding these new media movement to bolster their credibility in supporting democratic movements in the Middle East.

Khouri dismisses this idea and states, “One cannot take seriously the United States or any other Western government that funds political activism by young Arabs while it simultaneously provides funds and guns that help cement the power of the very same Arab governments the young social and political activists target for change.”

According to Khouri, the solution is in implementing a greater “intellectual rigor,” while understanding that the Middle East youth uses new media for entertainment mainly, not to change the world.

Yet The Economist reports that Twitter and social media have become an integral part of the State Department’s diplomacy efforts. According to Alec Ross, the senior advisor for innovation at the State Department, until last year, the Department was boxed into the world of communiqués, diplomatic cables and slow government-to-government negotiations.

Together with colleague Jared Cohen, the youngest member of the State Department’s policy planning staff, Ross is working on State’s new effort to bring diplomacy into the digital age through “21st-century statecraft,” notes Jesse

Lichtenstein at The New York Times.

While traditional forms of diplomacy are still dominant, using the widely available technologies to reach out to the world represents a shift in form and in strategy. This “21st-century statecraft” is seen as a way to amplify traditional diplomatic efforts, develop tech-based policy solutions and encourage cyber-activism, explains Ross.

Nevertheless, despite the State Department’s excitement over new media as the latest addition to its assortment of public diplomacy tools, some wonder whether the expected benefit of such initiatives is exaggerated.

In his blog The Campaign War Room, James Frayne warns that while new media tools such as Twitter might be beneficial for organizations like the State Department when it comes to spreading timely information, they should not be “an end in itself” and a substitute to other methods when providing a clear view of the world.

Expressing a similar view, John Brown stresses in his Notes and Essays blog-spot the importance of maintaining a balance between what he calls “two sides of the same public diplomacy counterfeit coin,” namely twittering and theorizing.

Relying solely on either Twitter and cyberspace or on over-conceptualized studies and surveys to solve America’s public diplomacy problems is not a sound decision, remarks Brown. He argues that what works best are in-depth, face-to-face, discussions on US public diplomacy initiatives which are “based on history and experience, including the current realities of practicing public diplomacy today by American diplomats overseas.”

On the other hand, the use of social media in journalism has generated a swirl of criticism. When CNN’s senior editor for Middle East Affairs Octavia Nasr used Twitter for a personal post, Trevor Butterworth at Forbes noted that she became a victim of this new media landscape where there is “no longer a thin line between opinion and thought crime.”

Nasr was fired from her post at CNN, after working there for more than 20 years, following a tweet in which she wrote that she felt “sad to hear

of the passing of Sayyed Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah ... One of Hezbollah’s giants [that she] respect[s] a lot.”

In subsequent clarification of her post, Nasr said that she was referencing Grand Ayatollah Fadlallah’s progressive stance on women’s rights and opposition to honor killings rather than his endorsement of suicide bombing or denunciations of Israel and the United States. CNN could not criticize Nasr’s journalistic acumen, but her 19-word tweet was apparently enough for the public to lose confidence in her ability to objectively report about the Middle East conflict.

While it is not entirely clear how Nasr’s views contributed to skewing CNN’s Middle East coverage, Gilead Ini questions CNN’s Senior International Correspondent Ben Wedeman’s journalistic objectivity in an article for The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA).

If CNN hopes to be “the most trusted name in news,” argues Ini, then Wedeman, their Senior International Correspondent, must be reminded of the difference between “analysis” and pro-Palestinian advocacy. According to Ini, Wedeman’s intentional omission of some facts in his reporting and his endorsement of blogger Juan Cole’s anti-Israeli stance should raise red flags at CNN regarding the objectivity of his reports.

Mrs. Clinton Goes to Pakistan

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s visit to Pakistan appeared to be more successful than her previous visit in October 2009, remarks Marc Sandler for The New York Times. Sandler hints that perhaps the reason behind the success may be “in part because Mrs. Clinton showed up with more than \$500 million in economic aid, part of her campaign to win over a skeptical Pakistani public.”

Clinton interpreted the change in mood as an indication of the success of her public diplomacy effort, while nonetheless she expressed caution about overstating progress with Pakistan. She shared her concerns

about Pakistan’s poor record on nuclear proliferation, and the fact that it could do more in the fight against Al-Qaeda.

However, according to opinion polls in Pakistan, the majority of the population remains suspicious of the US intentions. While Secretary of State Clinton supported negotiations with Pakistan-based insurgent groups, like the Haqqani network, she warned that both Afghans and Pakistanis should be cautious throughout these talks, since such groups were unlikely to meet the minimum American requirements to be reconciled with Afghan society.

“But even \$500 billion worth of aid, delivered through Beltway Bandits, NGOs, budget support or otherwise can’t change the lives of Pakistanis.”

Mosbarraf Zaidi, Journalist for The News.

During her visit, Clinton also acknowledged Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani’s “personal role in efforts to normalize relations with India” and hoped that these moves would bear fruit in the near future, reports The Hindu Times.

During his interaction with Mrs. Clinton, Mr. Gilani said that discussions in different sectors, as part of the Pakistan-US Strategic Dialogue, had prepared the grounds for taking the bilateral relationship beyond the war on terror and American aid provided under the Kerry-Lugar Act.

The Prime Minister also reiterated that such a visit contributes to the democratic momentum in the country by strengthening bilateral relations

and creating a positive image of the US among the Pakistani people. As such, he heralded the importance of public diplomacy to combat misperceptions on both sides, while building greater trust between both countries.

Gilani highlighted the need for greater economic cooperation between Pakistan and the US in order to address the root causes of terrorism, such as illiteracy, poverty and underdevelopment, reports The Daily Times.

Mosharraf Zaidi also praises Secretary Clinton's various initiatives in an article for the Pakistani news paper The News. Zaidi remarks that the Kerry-Lugar Act is a positive American instrument for Pakistan, describing how it differentiates between the US government and the mainstream perception of western assistance.

Zaidi adds that the Pakistani government was responsible for the delays in receiving the aid funds for the United States, noting that "Pakistan has no clarity whatsoever about what its development priorities are."

Pointing out that lack of stability, a Kafkaesque bureaucracy and the problems of corruption are the main issues that the Pakistani government is dealing with, Zaidi maintains that indecision and the absence of any coherent development strategy within Pakistan have meant that the US government has had to try to figure out what Pakistan wants, almost completely on its own.

While he congratulates Clinton for her efforts, Zaidi remarks that she is not responsible for the fact that perceptions do not change. "\$500 million worth of pet projects is a supremely sweet gesture. But even \$500 billion worth of aid, delivered through Beltway Bandits, NGOs, budget support or otherwise can't change the lives of Pakistanis," he argues.

Zaidi believes that only reforms can bring forth a solution, and that no amount of money can change Pakistan's problem as long as the government does not hone up to the challenges it is currently battling.

Getting Rid of Extremists

Saudi Arabia recently fired or transferred some 2,000 high school teachers who the Saudi Interior Ministry described as extremist and potential supporters of terrorism, reports The Media Line. The Saudi government plans to hire 23,221 teachers before the beginning of the next academic year in September.

"Everyone knows about these teachers," said Eman Al-Nafjan, a former teacher. "It used to be very common that teachers were extremists. But this has drastically decreased. Thanks to the education ministry program, word got out that it's not okay to teach hatred

"Those with extremist views are citizens who have the right to earn a living, and in fact they are victims no less than their students, but they have to be kept at a distance from anyone they can have an influence on."

Abdullah bin Bakhit, Saudi writer.

anymore and they fired many teachers."

The Muslim nation is grappling with the issues of extremism in education. Recently, the government introduced new educational curricula, removing anti-Christian and anti-American

references from textbooks. During public appearances, King Abdullah reiterates the necessity of eradicating the influence of religious extremism in Saudi Arabia.

Dr. Mustafa Alani, Senior Advisor and Director of Terrorism Studies at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai, declared that this measure demonstrates King Abdullah's keenness to be at the forefront of reforming the next generations, starting with the educational system.

Saudi Arabia aims to eradicate extremist religious instruction, which authorities believe help expand and increase terror cells within the country, according to Haaretz.

"Those with extremist views are citizens who have the right to earn a living, and in fact they are victims no less than their students, but they have to be kept at a distance from anyone they can have an influence on," said the Saudi writer Abdullah bin Bakhit in an interview with the Al-Arabiya television network.

The Media Line also notes that other Saudi counter-terrorism efforts have been implemented at judicial and financial levels.

"[The king] is facing resistance from the old generation," Alani said. "So to supervise the educational strategy, he put his son-in-law in charge as a major sign, because the previous minister was unable to do the work." Offshoot groups or other organizations inspired by Al-Qaeda are trying to undermine the monarchy in Saudi Arabia, which has faced criticism because of its alliance with the West, especially the United States.

Mansour al-Turki, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, which initiated the program, said that his ministry had given instructions for a new form for assessing teachers. The evaluation included questions about their beliefs and viewpoints, in order to identify the candidates who might instruct their students about the extremist streams of Islam before they are selected, adds Haaretz.

Saudi Arabia has been waging its own battle against terrorist organizations since the attack in the grand mosque in Mecca in 1979.

Oops, Hollywood said it again

The Oscar-winning film-maker Oliver Stone stirred quite a controversy following his description of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler as history's "easy scapegoat" in a presentation for his upcoming US TV series "Oliver Stone's Secret History of America," reports The Guardian.

In an interview with the Sunday Times, Stone claimed Hitler "was a Frankenstein but there was also a Dr. Frankenstein. German industrialists, the Americans and the British. He had a lot of support ... Hitler did far more damage to the Russians than [to] the Jewish people, 25 or 30 [million Russians killed]."

When asked to explain the why such statements are not covered in the media, Stone responded, "The Jewish domination of the media ... There's a major lobby in the United States. They are hard workers. They stay on top of every comment, the most powerful lobby in Washington." Stone also went on to claim that Israel has negatively interfered with the United State's foreign policy for years.

The comments drew immediate criticism from groups in the United States, such as The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and their Descendants.

AJC's executive director David Harris compared Stone's remarks to those of fellow Hollywood director Mel Gibson, who was widely criticized for stating that Jews were "responsible for all the wars in the world," when the actor lashed out after a police officer pulled him over for drink-driving in 2006.

Following Stone's apology, the New York-based American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants remained skeptical, reports CNN. In a statement, the group declared, "His apology was necessary and we accept it. But whether he acted out of sincerity or as a desperate response to the moral outcry at his comments is an open question. He must be judged by his future words and deeds."

According to Ynet News, the famed Hollywood director of films including "Platoon" and "JFK" also criticized the US policy towards Iran, which he called 'horrible.' "Iran isn't necessarily the good guy," Stone said, insisting that Americans did not "know the full story."

In response to Stone's comments, Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Yuli Edelstein responded, "When a man of Stone's stature says such things, it could lead to a new wave of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism, and it may even cause real harm to Jewish communities and individuals."

"When a man of Stone's stature says such things, it could lead to a new wave of anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism, and it may even cause real harm to Jewish communities and individuals."

Diaspora Affairs Minister Yuli Edelstein.

The director, who in "South of the Border" has informal conversations with folks including Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Cuban President Raul Castro, also explained that in doing the "Secret History" project he was "trying to understand somebody [he] thoroughly despised" -- likening Stalin and Hitler to former President George W. Bush, reports The LA Times.

Coincidentally, over at 24 Frames, Steven Zeitchik recalls a recent on-the-record Stone comment in a "South of the Border" interview suggesting closet racism had played a part in The New York Times' coverage of Chavez.

Clashing Civilizations and Cooperative Civilians

After taking part in a panel discussion on US relations with the Muslim World organized by the UN's Alliance of Civilization, professor and commentator Marc Lynch realized how deeply ingrained the 'clash of civilizations' narrative is in American culture, he reports for Foreign Policy. Despite the Obama administration's recent initiatives to combat confrontational, war-on-terror style narratives that arose following 9/11, Lynch perceives little progress.

Though right-wing politicians may be partially to blame, as well as persisting terrorist attacks, Lynch asserts that "The frenzies over the Captain Underpants failed bomber and the Times Square failed bomber show a mainstream media still hardwired to fall back into the comfortable tropes of the war on terror."

Much of this discursive dilemma lies, in Lynch's opinion, in the failure of progressives to develop an alternative narrative -- one that focuses on constructive, positive effects of relations with the Muslim world, and not solely negative, security-based agendas. Although members of the Obama administration have made several creative efforts at Muslim world outreach, most of these projects have taken place under the radar, and those that have garnered public attention have fallen subject to debate and criticism, as with the recent NASA outreach project.

In a similar vein, Daniel Greenfield of The Right Side News notes that US foreign policy in the Middle East has been dominated by three ideologies over the past half-century, all of which have proven failures. Stabilizers protected tyrannies in order to maintain stability and easy access to oil, Radicals, believing that all Middle East chaos was attributable to western colonialism and imperialism, supported Marxist and "Islamist terrorist" coups, and Neo-Conservatives (i.e. the W. Bush administration) sought to reform and democratize the Middle East,

yet were naïve about the political and resource realities behind those actions.

The current Obama administration, Greenfield argues, is merely a return to radical foreign policy as earlier seen in the Carter-years. The president's hands off approach to Iran and outreach tactics to the Middle East haven't won the US government any new allies and alienated existing ones, he continues. Ultimately, Greenfield's principle problem with these three antiquated approaches is that "they all sought to determine who would rule in the Muslim world."

Rather than an interventionist strategy of nation building, Greenfield advocates a fourth approach: accountability. In summarizing his basic, military-based strategy, he writes "we will inflict massive devastation on any country that aids terrorists who attack us...We will not impose sanctions on them, we will simply take control of their natural resources and remove the native population from the area as compensation for the expenses of the war."

"To employ it, we must be prepared to use massive force casually without considering any collateral damage," concludes Greenfield. In his opinion, forcible disengagement from the Muslim world is the only way for the US to attain freedom from it and win peace.

Matt Duss for thinkprogress.org also recently took up the issue of US relations with the Muslim world. In the Washington institute for Near East Policy's recently released report "Fighting the Ideological Battle: The Missing Link in US Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism," Institute members argue that the Obama administration has been mistaken in avoiding the role of the Islamic faith when discussing violent extremism.

Duss contends that WINEP's first core recommendation, to "ensure that Islamism... is recognized internally within the US government as the key ideological driver of the violent extremist threat" and, furthermore, that "US public diplomacy efforts should sharpen the distinction between the Muslim faith and the violent political ideology of Islamism," as deeply troubling. This "pretty astonishingly reductive rendering of Islamism" undermines the entirety of the report and its recommendations, according to Duss.

Both WINEP and the Obama administration, he believes, must recognize that many Muslims see Islam not just as a religious faith and practice but also as a political system (and thus are by definition 'Islamists'), yet are against violent tactics. "Casting "Islamism" writ large as inherently violent and irretrievably hostile to the West deprives us of a potentially valuable tool for doing exactly what the report recommends – building upon defections and disillusionment among ranks of current and former radical extremists," he reports.

"The frenzies over the Captain Underpants failed bomber and the Times Square failed bomber show a mainstream media still hardwired to fall back into the comfortable tropes of the war on terror."

Marc Lynch for Foreign Policy

Washington Post writer John Kisser similarly notes the danger of generalization and blanket-vilifying in America's foreign policy efforts. He views the current resurgence in Islamophobia as part of an American legacy of collective guilt and targeting, traceable to Japanese internment and the McCarthyism.

"Islamophobia is a mixture of racism, indiscriminating ignorance of the diversity and complexity within the Islamic world, and the hard reality of some truly dangerous, Western-hating Muslims," he writes. By employing excessive military force and collectively aggregating our

enemy under one big label, Americans only serve to multiply the enemy.

It is largely for this reason that Kisser perceives the Cordoba House to be essential. "It is necessary to show the world that Americans are neither trembling in their boots nor willing to compromise the dignity and rights of American Muslims because of the actions of few dubious "Muslims" around the world." While the Jewish Community Center of New York, United Jewish Federation, Mayor Bloomberg, the FBI, Community Board One and more than two-hundred and fifty 9/11 families all support the center, a vocal group of primarily non-New Yorkers are trying to sabotage the project in order "to instill fear and play on emotions," he reports.

In the Middle East, Theresa Day of Today's Zaman reports on another outreach initiative to improve relations between the Middle East and the West. She profiles the Abraham Path Initiative, a non-profit and non-sectarian NGO started by Dr. William Ury at Harvard University in 2004, which aims to establish a 1200 km route between Harron and Hebron/Al Khail to mirror the route purportedly taken by Abraham, whose roots lie in the Old and New Testaments and the Quran. Eventually the Initiative hopes to establish a 5000 km route stretching to Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia to further link a diverse set of people and cultures.

The Abraham Path hopes to help Western tourists see diverse, little traveled parts of the Middle East and Turkey firsthand, while aiding the economic, tourist, and social lives of the local communities along the route. The business and social partnerships forged among path-communities is also central, for successful completion would mean that "people from different backgrounds – Fallahin (Arab farmers), Bedouins and Jewish people from India and Ethiopia, amongst others – have worked together to make the path come to life," writes Day.

"I'd like to see the day when travelers can connect directly with the host communities and have an authentic cultural experience in a beneficial way for both guest and host. And I'd like to see an economic and social improvement of the lives of people along the path as well as see travelers have their perspective of the people and the region transformed

– one person at a time,” explains Joshua Weiss, managing director of API.

Niqab Ban Unveils Controversy in the Middle East

Syrian Minister of Higher Education Ghaith Barakat recently decided to ban the niqab in universities, following the dismissal of 1200 school teachers for wearing it in class last month. He affirmed that his decision came following requests by parents, who had expressed concern about their children being educated in an “environment of extremism,” reports Edward Yeranian for VOA News. Education officials argue that Syria is a “secular society” and that extremism is “unacceptable,” reports Yeranian.

Analyst Peter Harling of the International Crisis Group in Damascus states that with this ban, the ruling minority Alawite sect is facing a dilemma between its secular principles and its Islamic allies such as Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah. Syria is torn between its position as last secular bulwark in the region and its role as major military actor with “an Islamist outlook,” according to Harling.

Joshua Landis from the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma concurs that this ban aims at protecting Syrian secularism. Kristen Chick for The Christian Science Monitor adds that the coexistence of religions could be considerably undermined by the development of radical Islamism, for which the niqab is a primary symbol.

Tariq Alhomayed for Asharq Alawsat argues that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad who is determined to establish and reinforce secularism in Syrian society also plans to enforce a ban on the niqab. This stance is a reflection of Damascus’ decision to keep its distance from the Lebanese religious group Hezbollah. Alhomayed believes that Syria’s alliance and good standing with Iran and Hezbollah leader Nasrallah (thanks to Iran) are mainly due to the peace process stalemate with Israel.

However, Yeranian explains to VOA News that the ban on the niqab divides Syrian

society between, on the one hand, liberal women and country’s minorities, and on the other, Muslim Sunni conservatives. Maral Haidostian, a Syrian of Armenian descent, testifies that liberal women view it as a step forward, while conservative Muslim women view it as a step back.

Other Muslims decry what they perceive to be a vicious effect of the ban. Hussein, a conservative resident of Damascus whose female relatives wear the niqab, complained, “I have to either send my daughters to universities in Jordan or simply put, not send them to university at all,” reports Sami Moubayed for Gulf News.

Moubayed reveals that the decision is stirring quite a controversy. Most moderates view the appropriate version of the veil as “the Audrey Hepburn-style ishrah (headscarf) worn by women for decades as a symbol of conservatism, or the modern hijab.” They consider the niqab, on the other hand, to be a foreign veil.

Indeed, Yeranian points out that this ban has been decreed as an increasing number of women are wearing the niqab in Syria, particularly those who have previously lived in the Gulf States.

The ban on the niqab does not only concern Syria, explains Kristen Chick for The Christian Science Monitor, although its political regime facilitates its adoption. In Egypt, which is less secular than Syria, the American University in Cairo and the government tried several times to ban the niqab in public university dormitories and during exams, but the movements failed in court. In Syria however, courts are not independent enough from the government to effectively stop a ban from proceeding into law.

The ban of the niqab is also generating some reactions from Human Rights entities, remarks Chick. Hossam Baghat, director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, states, “We believe strongly that taking punitive measures against women who wear the niqab is not an effective way to promote tolerance and a moderate interpretation of Islam.”

In Syria, Bassam al-Kadi, director of the women’s rights group Syrian Women Observatory, describes the niqab as “an extremist message that reduces women to sexual objects that must be covered,” and supports banning it.

Amal, an Egyptian, also mentioned her fear about men who wear the niqab sometimes, pretending to be women “to do something bad,” says Chick for The Christian Science Monitor. She stated that she hoped it would be banned in Egypt as well to avoid among other things, such events.

The debate surrounding banning the niqab showcases the differences between feminist movements in the West and the feminist ideologies professed by religious and intellectual women’s movements in Syria, remarks Chick. Those who support wearing the niqab argue that women can assert their individuality by wearing the niqab, a view in direct opposition with other feminist notions that less clothing is equitable to greater liberation. They argue that women do not choose to wear the niqab as a result of family pressure, but by choice.

“I have to either send my daughters to universities in Jordan or simply put, not send them to university at all.”

Sami Moubayed, a Syrian citizen.

Todd Robberson strongly disagrees with this point of view on his Dallas News Blog. He suggests that the growing number of women choosing to wear the niqab is a product of both family pressure from brothers, fathers and husbands and social pressure from the larger Muslim communities. In addition, Robberson notes that the Quran does not refer to wearing the full-face veil.

According to Robberson, the ban on the burqa is not about religious freedom or free choice, but about male domination over women. He argues that in France the ban grants women an instrument against men who might force them to wear the niqab.

Battlegrounds

Shifting in War on Terrorism

Satellite network Al-Arabiya recently aired parts of Faisal Shahzad's martyrdom video, reports Liam Stack at the Christian Science Monitor.

Shahzad, a Pakistani-born US citizen, attracted international attention after his failed car-bombing attempt in New York City's Time Square earlier this spring. Officials captured Shahzad as he attempted to flee the United States on May 3rd, and ensuing interrogations shed light on his involvement with the Taliban in Pakistan.

While Shahzad was able to plan his attack without attracting suspicion, his inattention to detail likely doomed his plot from the beginning, writes Devlin Barrett for the The Wall Street Journal. New York Police Commissioner Ray Kelly detailed the contents of the bomb: propane tanks, weak M-88 fireworks and non-explosive fertilizer. Following the investigation, officials hypothesized that Faisal Shahzad avoided attention by deliberately purchasing weaker bomb-making materials.

Barrett continues that although government agency "tripwires" contributed to the failure of Shahzad's plan, this case "also highlights how difficult it is to find terror suspects in the US." During his speech at the Center for National Policy, Kelly also pointed out that Shahzad did not register on the radar of any government or police agencies. "Shahzad is particularly of concern, that type of individual. He is striving to be middle-class, he becomes a US citizen," he commented. "He did some radical things, said some very radical things," Kelly continued. "But nobody was looking at Shahzad."

Now, counterterrorism experts are analyzing Shahzad's [would be] martyrdom video. In the video, Shahzad sports a beard, turban and dark vest. He stated that "the Muslim war has just started," and promised that it would continue until Islam had "spread all over the world."

"...This attack on the United States will also be [sic] revenge attack for all

Mujahideen and Muhajireen and the weak and oppressed people of Muslims [sic] such as Beitullah Emir Shaheed and Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi and all the Muslim Arab [sic] that have been martyred," he declared.

Despite the failure of Faisal Shahzad's plot, some experts argue that airing the martyrdom video may result in some unintended consequences. Evan Kohlman, an analyst at Global Terror Alert, stated that a video like Shahzad's "can significantly prolong the visceral impact of even an unsuccessful operation." At The Christian Science Monitor, Liam Stack surmises that the video may represent "an attempt to bolster the reputation of Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud," who took control of the Pakistani Taliban in 2009.

In addition to renewed attention to the Taliban in Pakistan, the United States government and United Nations member states have taken action against a radical cleric in another part of the Muslim world: Yemen.

UN member states added American-born Anwar Al-Awlaki to their respective terrorist watch lists, who also allegedly was involved in the Fort Hood shooting by the Major Nidal Husein, reports VOA News. On July 20, the United Nations placed the cleric on the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee List, describing him as an "operative of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula" and a "recruiter, trainer and planner" for the radical organization.

This decision required UN member states to freeze Al-Awlaki's assets and ban him from entering or leaving their respective countries. Eventually, the Obama administration followed the UN's decision by placing Al-Awlaki on the Specially Designated Global Terrorist list.

In a recent statement, Anwar Al-Awlaki declared that he wanted US President Barack Obama to be remembered as "the president who got America stuck in Yemen." Anwar Al-Awlaki's statement may foreshadow the future of the war on terrorism, expansion into Yemen and Pakistan.

References

- [1] July 26, 2010. "Son of a SAM." The Economist: http://www.economist.com/blogs/asiaview/2010/07/wikileaks_war_afghanistan
- Cooper, Helene. Schmitt, Eric. July 26, 2010. "Leak May Hurt Efforts to Build War Support." New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/28/world/asia/28wikileaks.html?_r=2&adxnln=1&src=un&feedurl=http://json8.nytimes.com/pages/world/index.jsonp&adxnlnx=1280333549-bWQCUGDioPoJYRMItYUGJw
- Gebauer, Matthias. Goetz, John. Hoyng, Hans. Koelbl, Susanne. Rosenbach, Marcel. Schmitz, Gregor Peter. July 27, 2010. 'Afghanistan War Logs Reveal Shortcomings of US Drones.' Der Spiegel: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/o,1518,708729,00.html>
- Lehren, Andrew W. Mazzetti, Mark. Perlez, Jane. Schmitt, Eric. July 25, 2010. "Pakistan Aids Insurgency in Afghanistan, Reports Assert." New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/26/world/asia/26isi.html?adxnln=1&adxnlnx=1280253615-NvLeU8az78pKUUEuKxooZg>
- Schmitt, Eric. July 25, 2010. "In Disclosing Secret Documents, WikiLeaks Seeks 'Transparency'." New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/26/world/26wiki.html>
- Synovitz, Ron. July 27, 2010. "WikiLeaks' Afghan War Reports Stir Debates On Journalism, Law." Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty: http://www.rferl.org/content/Wikileaks_Afghan_War_Reports_Stir_Debates_On_Journalism_Law/2111395.html
- [2] Armstrong, Matt. June 28, 2010. "Military Information Support Operations." Mountain Runner: http://mountainrunner.us/2010/06/miso.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed:+Mountainrunner
- Croft, Adrian. July 17, 2010. "NATO not winning Afghan hearts and minds: poll." Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE66GoD820100717>
- Lamb, Christopher J. July 20, 2010. "More on MISO." National Defense University Press Blog: http://ndupress.blogspot.com/2010/07/more-on-miso_20.html
- Schachtman, Noah. June 25, 2010. "Military Mulls New Name for Psychological Operations: MISO." Wired Magazine: <http://www.wired.com/dangerroom/2010/06/military-mulls-new-name-of-psychological-ops-miso/-more-26467>
- [3] Butterworth, Trevor. July 13, 2010. "When a Tweet becomes a thought crime." Forbes.com: <http://www.forbes.com/2010/07/13/twitter-octavia-nasr-cnn-opinions-columnists-trevor-butterworth.html>
- Frayne, James. July 23, 2010. "Twitter and public diplomacy." The Campaign War Room: <http://campaignwarroom.blogspot.com/2010/07/twitter-and-public-diplomacy.html>
- Ini, Gilead. July 21, 2010. "Bias by CNN Correspondent Ben Wedeman More than Just a Tweet." The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA): http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=3&x_outlet=14&x_article=1896
- John Brown. July 21, 2010. "Twittering/Theorizing: Two Sides of the Same Public Diplomacy Counterfeit Coin." John Brown's Notes and Essays: <http://johnbrownnotesandessays.blogspot.com/2010/07/twitteringtheorizing-two-sides-of-same.html>
- July 22, 2010. "21st-century statecraft." The Economist: http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2010/07/internet_diplomacy
- Khourri, Rami G. July 22, 2010. "When Arabs Tweet." The New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/23/opinion/23iht-edkhourri.html?_r=2&ref=global
- Lichtenstein, Jesse. July 12, 2010. "Digital Diplomacy." The New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/18/magazine/18web2-o-t.html?_r=3&pagewanted=1
- [4] July 19, 2010. "Hillary acknowledges Gilani's efforts to normalise ties." The Hindu Times: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article523222.ece>
- Landler, Mark. July 19, 2010. "In a Visit to Pakistan, Clinton Encounters a Less Hostile Reception." New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/20/world/asia/20diplo.html?_r=4
- Zaidi, Mosharraf. July 21, 2010. "Cutting Hillary Clinton some slack." The News: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/print.asp?id=251833>
- [5] Bar'el, Zvi. July 27, 2010. "2,000 Saudi teachers fired for teaching 'dangerous' subjects." Haaretz Daily Newspaper: <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/2-000-saudi-teachers-fired-for-teaching-dangerous-subjects-1.303129>
- [6] Bogen, Amir. July 27, 2010. "Oliver Stone: Jews' domination of media prevents free Holocaust debate." Ynet News: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3925644,00.html>
- Bruno, Mike. July 27, 2010. "Oliver Stone apologizes for comments on Holocaust and Jewish media." CNN: <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/SHOWBIZ/celebrity.news.gossip/07/27/oliver.stone.ew/?hpt=Sbin-fbid=aOs3jEUvKM>
- Child, Ben. July 27, 2010. "Oliver Stone apologises for 'antisemitic' remarks." The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/jul/27/oliver-stone-apologises-antisemitic-remarks>
- D'Zurilla, Christie. July 26, 2010. "Oliver Stone steps in it with Holocaust, media conspiracy remarks." Los Angeles Times: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/gossip/2010/07/oliver-stone-anti-semitic-jewish-domination-of-the-media-hitler.html>
- [7] Day, Theresa. July 22nd 2010. "The Abraham Path: Bringing East and West Closer Together." Today's Zaman: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/news-216749-132-the-abraham-path-bringing-east-and-west-closer-together.html>
- Duss, Matt. July 15th, 2010. "Condemning 'Islamism' Denies Ourselves A Valuable Tool." ThinkProgress.org, The Wonk Room: <http://wonkroom.thinkprogress.org/2010/07/15/condemning-islamism-denies-ourselves-a-valuable-tool/>
- Greenfield, Daniel. July 22nd, 2010. "A Fourth Approach to the Muslim World." Right Side News: <http://www.rightsidenews.com/2010072211090/editorial/a-fourth-approach-to-the-muslim-world.html>
- Kiser, John. July 24th, 2010. "America already is an Islamic society." Washington Post: http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/guestvoices/2010/07/america_already_is_an_islamic_society.html
- Lynch, Marc. July 22nd, 2010. "Why the Clash of Civilizations Won't Go Away." ForeignPolicy.com: http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/07/22/resilient_narratives_about_islam
- [8] Alhomayed, Tariq. July 25, 2010. "Nasrallah and Syria's Acquittal!" Asharq Alawsat: <http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=21737>
- Chick, Kristen. July 20, 2010. "Veil ban: Why Syria joins Europe in barring the niqab." The Christian Science Monitor: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/0720/Veil-ban-Why-Syria-joins-Europe-in-barring-the-niqab>

Moubayed, Sami. July 21, 2010. "Niqab ban report sparks debate in Syria." Gulf News: <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/syria/niqab-ban-report-sparks-debate-in-syria-1.657037>

Robberson, Tod. July 22, 2010. "Pro-choice on niqabs and burqas?" Dallas News Blog: <http://dallasmorningviewsblog.dallasnews.com/archives/2010/07/pro-choice-on-n.html>

Yeranian, Edward. July 19, 2010. "Syrian Education Minister Bans Full Face Veils in Universities." VOA News: <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Syrian-Education-Minister-Bans-Full-Face-Veils-in-Universities-98763369.html>

[9] July 20, 2010. "UN Adds US-born Radical Cleric to Terror Watch List." VOA News: <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Radical-Cleric-Warns-Against-US-Involvement-in-Yemen-98830404.html>

Barrett, Devlin. July 21, 2010. "Shahzad Used Inferior Bomb to Avoid Detection." The Wall Street Journal: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704723604575379371725895584.html>

Stack, Liam. July 15, 2010. "Pakistani Taliban release Faisal Shahzad's martyrdom tape [video]. The Christian Science Monitor: <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/terrorism-security/2010/0715/Pakistani-Taliban-release-Faisal-Shahzad-s-martyrdom-tape-video>.

The *Layalina Review* is brought to you thanks to a grant from The Dr. Scholl Foundation of Illinois. Compiled by Layalina Staff. The views expressed here are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Layalina Productions, Inc. Inaugurated in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, private sector corporation, Layalina Productions, Inc. is dedicated to bridging the growing divide between the Arab world and the United States by fostering cultural, educational, and professional dialogues through effective commercial television programming. Layalina develops and produces informative and entertaining Arabic-language programming for licensing to satellite and cable television networks throughout the Arab Middle East and North Africa. Layalina is funded solely through tax-deductible donations from individuals and corporations, and through grants by foundations based in the US and the Arab world. Please support Layalina by making a tax-deductible donation. Visit www.layalina.tv or call 202-776-7761 for more information.