Mixed Message: The Arab and Muslim Response to ‘Terrorism’

Many Arab and Muslim countries sympathized with the victims of September 11 and offered valuable support to the United States in its campaign against Osama bin Laden’s organization and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Yet, large sections of the Arab and Muslim public, as well as many of their governments, cannot offer the United States full support in its fight against terrorism because they do not share with the United States the same definition of terrorism and suspect a hidden agenda behind the future phases of this campaign. The general public in the West, particularly in the United States, may not realize that the earliest victims of armed groups claiming to be inspired by certain interpretations of Islam were themselves Muslims—intellectuals, senior officials of government, ordinary citizens, and security forces. These people lived in Muslim countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia years before a small group of alleged members of an Islamic organization launched its deadly attacks of September 11 in New York City and Washington, D.C. Arab and Muslim countries, therefore, did not need any particular preaching on the part of Washington to join an international campaign against terrorism because many of them had long been involved. Arab people have learned, however, that terrorism cannot be defeated if those who fight it rely exclusively on military force.

Islam and Terrorism

To start this story at its inception, reflection on any possible link between Islam and terrorism is important. Because some Western media tend to label

Mustafa Al Sayyid is a professor of political science and director of the Center for the Study of Developing Countries at Cairo University. The author would like to thank his assistants Ingy Abdel-Hamid, Sodfa Mahmoud, and Karam Khamis for the valuable research they contributed to this paper.
those individuals involved in terrorist actions “Muslim terrorists,” the positions taken by Arab and Muslim states on the White House’s “war on terrorism” should be analyzed. One should consider that the U.S. State Department’s list of terrorist organizations mostly includes organizations that are active in Muslim countries, which becomes the focus of media reporting, while ignoring organizations in non-Muslim countries, such as Spain, Northern Ireland, and Latin America, and reinforcing a perception in Western public opinion that terrorism is exclusively Islamic. Western media also uses jihad to convey the notion of an armed struggle launched by Muslims against people of other religions in order to compel them to renounce their religions and adopt Islam. Based on these observations, examining if there is an unbroken link between Islam and terrorism is necessary.

Popular Western media tends to misconstrue the relationship between Islam and terrorism significantly. Attributing a particular policy position on the use of armed struggle for political ends to any religion as a whole is difficult. Among Christians, one can find militant priests in Latin America, such as Colombia’s Camillo Torres, who justify armed struggle in terms of a theology of liberation. Islam, as any other world religion, can be interpreted in various ways.

More importantly, those who believe that Islam can guide and inspire a political order do not necessarily seek to establish that political order by force. Many Islamic political movements try to seek political power using peaceful methods. The Rafah Party in Turkey is one; others can be found in Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Islamic organizations such as the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria, and the Nahda Party in Tunisia accept a pluralist political system and an electoral path to political power. The government in each of these countries bans these parties, however, because they constitute serious contenders for power that the ruling groups, who are reluctant to accept any transfer of power through the ballot box, reject.

Furthermore, the notion of forced conversion is alien to Islam. Although explaining their religion to others is a duty incumbent on Muslims, Islam considers the question of faith a personal matter. Most Muslims recognize and respect the religions of Christians and Jews and consider their holy books sacred texts for Muslims as well. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad married a Coptic Christian from Egypt. When the notion of jihad was applied during the early days of the Prophet Muhammad, it meant armed
struggle against the enemies of the new faith who were launching war against it. Once the new faith triumphed with Muhammad’s entry into Mecca, jihad acquired a new meaning. In Muhammad’s words, the “greater jihad” meant an inner struggle to suppress one’s evil desires and elevate one’s soul.

According to the most authoritative statements on the Islamic theory of international relations, the so-called division of the world into the realm of war (dar al-harb) and the realm of Islam (dar al-islam) does not hold in the modern world because reciprocal commitments to maintain friendly relations tie Muslim states to other countries. The mere establishment of diplomatic relations with other nations signals that the other country has become part of the realm of commitment (dar al-’ahd).¹

Yet, political Islam—just like Arab nationalism and Marxism—can be interpreted in several ways. Some versions would call for the use of exclusively peaceful methods of political action. Other versions of the same ideologies would justify and legitimize armed struggle against those domestic and foreign powers that seem to pose an obstacle to the realization of the political strategy inspired by these ideologies. Thus, some Muslim activists would interpret verses of the Qur’an or traditions of the Prophet Mohammed to serve their own political ends, however they conceive them. Nevertheless, just as no one in his or her right mind would charge all Protestants or Catholics of being terrorists because certain Protestant or Catholic groups in Northern Ireland resort to armed action, by the same logic, the presence of certain terrorist groups that call themselves Islamic does not make Islam and all its adherents potential terrorists and a threat to the rest of humanity.

As this introduction conveys, Arab and Muslim states do not feel that they bear any special responsibility in the battle against terrorism. Even if one accepts the claims bin Laden made in his televised statements—as well as the charges of the U.S. government that the perpetrators of the tragic and condemnable attacks on September 11 are all Arabs and Muslims—terrorism has nothing to do with Islam and Arabism because these individuals cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be considered representative of approximately one billion Muslims.

Not reflecting on the reasons that would lead people to commit such acts, however, would be completely irresponsible. Inquiring about the motivations is not an attempt to justify or excuse what happened on September 11, as commonly assumed in the United States, but just the opposite. If the causes of such acts are not understood, the victims of the tragic events of September 11, as well as the victims of any future terrorist acts, will be disserved. Those who do not learn from history are bound to pay a bitter price in the future.
Arab and Muslim governments also do not feel that they bear more responsibility than other countries in the fight against terrorism. Not only have a number of these governments been engaged in the fight against terrorism for many years, but they have also not received much support from the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom. At different times during the 1980s, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and even Iraq and Libya were engaged in a fight against Islamic organizations that were using armed struggle in an attempt to overthrow or at least destabilize their governments. The extent of the armed insurrection has varied from country to country—sporadic in Jordan, Libya, Iraq, and Tunisia; more serious in Saudi Arabia; quite protracted in Egypt; and bloodiest, but short-lived, in Syria and Algeria. Pointing the finger at these countries and accusing them of not doing enough to curb terrorism would simply be ignoring well-established facts.

Moreover, leaders of these countries, particularly President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, have called on Western governments not to provide easy asylum to well-known key figures in militant Islamic organizations who are wanted for trial for their involvement in terrorist acts. For example, Shaykh Omar Abdel-Rahman—the spiritual leader of the Islamic Group, or Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyyah, who calls on members to launch armed attacks to topple the Egyptian government—was given an entry visa to the United States, where he stayed and continued to agitate against the Egyptian government until he was arrested for his role in the 1993 attempt to blow up the World Trade Center. Members of the Islamic Group, including two of the shaykh’s sons, joined the International Islamic Front led by bin Laden in Afghanistan. The United Kingdom gave political asylum to Yasser Al-Sirri, suspected mastermind of the assassination of Ahmed Shah Mas’oud, the former leader of Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance. Many leaders of Islamic organizations in Tunisia and Algeria, such as Rashid Al-Ghanoushi, have also found asylum in the United Kingdom. Habib Al-Adli, the Egyptian minister of interior, pointed out that, of all Western countries that were warned about the presence of Egyptian terrorists on their territories, only Italy was willing to offer some cooperation.2

Reactions of Arab and Muslim Countries to September 11

As with any broad discussion, examining “the” Arab and Muslim response to terrorism in general, and the September 11 attacks in particular, is difficult. The positions of Arab and Muslim countries on these issues cover a large spectrum. These positions, moreover, have not been consistent from the beginning of the crisis with the attacks of September 11 through the
U.S. military operations that led to the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the installment of a provisional administration in late December 2001. In addition, Arab governments’ formal positions have not always truly reflected public opinion in these countries. Indeed, a major dilemma for U.S. commentators has been not just the indifference but the open hostility with which the public in a number of Arab and Muslim countries met the U.S. war against terrorism.3

When news of the September 11 events reached the capitals of Arab and Muslim countries, their reactions were varied. On the whole, all Arab and Muslim governments condemned the attacks and expressed sympathy for the American people. Holding ranks with other Arab governments, Iraq’s President Saddam Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, and Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN) Mohammed al-Douri all deplored these attacks and expressed sympathy with their victims. Aziz in particular categorically rejected any link between Iraq and the perpetrators of the attacks.4 When U.S. authorities first revealed the identities of those suspected of hijacking the planes, public opinion in Arab countries was generally skeptical of the reliability of such information, particularly because some of the names were of people who were either still alive in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates or who had died years earlier.

Numerous Arab commentators believed it to be unlikely that bin Laden, whom U.S. authorities declared a prime suspect in the attacks, could have been capable of masterminding such an elaborate, well-timed, and well-synchronized attack from his hideout in the mountains of Afghanistan. Many people in Arab countries remained perplexed about why bin Laden declared his support for the attacks in later televised statements relayed to the Arab world through Qatar’s Al Jazeera television network. Even when he suggested in another televised videotape that he knew in advance of the attacks and its details, Arab public opinion continued to be divided between those who believed that he masterminded the attacks and condemned him and those who thought that the attacks were the acts of the enemies of Arabs and Muslims who wanted to drive a wedge between the Arabs and Muslims and Western people. The conversation on that televised tape, for them, was simply fake.5

When the U.S. government resolved to undertake military action against Al Qaeda—the organization believed to be led by bin Laden and supported by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, where bin Laden has been living—most Arab and Muslim governments reluctantly joined what the U.S. gov-
government called “a worldwide coalition against terror.” The degree of support varied, however, from total support (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Jordan), to verbal support (Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco), and support coupled with criticism (Saudi Arabia and Egypt).

Other than Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey, and Jordan, few Arab and Muslim governments adopted a position of total support for U.S. military action in Afghanistan. Pakistan, which had been the Taliban’s major source of economic, military, and diplomatic aid, shifted its posture completely—first, by attempting to persuade Afghanistan’s Taliban leaders to agree to hand bin Laden over to U.S. authorities; later, by offering logistical and intelligence support to the U.S. military; and finally, by withdrawing diplomatic recognition of the Taliban regime following its retreat from Kabul in November when it seemed that its days were numbered. Pakistan’s alignment with the United States was a major risk for its head of state, General Pervez Musharraf, who faced difficult foreign and domestic policy choices. On the one hand, India, Pakistan’s traditional rival, was offering the United States varied military assistance in the war against the Taliban regime. Had Pakistan denied the United States the same assistance, it would have incurred the United States’ wrath, enabling India to gain a diplomatic advantage. On the other hand, if Pakistan aided the United States, Musharraf’s government would face serious domestic opposition and would be sacrificing a friendly neighboring regime in Afghanistan. Musharraf decided to take the risk of increased domestic tension to gain some U.S. diplomatic and economic support, deny India its monopoly of U.S. favors in the subcontinent, and hopefully ensure a voice for Pakistan in deciding the future of Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan also took a major risk by allowing the United States to use its air bases to launch operations in northern Afghanistan, to provide areas from which U.S. Special Forces could undertake underground operations into northern Afghanistan in the early phases of the war, and to assist Northern Alliance troops. Uzbekistan’s strategic location and the Northern Alliance’s early successes, gaining control over Mazar-e Sharif as well as Kabul, reduced the strategic importance of Pakistan in the later stages of the U.S. military effort in Afghanistan. Other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, such as Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, offered logistical services, later acknowledged by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his tour of these countries following the fall of the

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Taliban regime in December. Some of them faced internal opposition by Islamic movements that the Taliban regime supported; all were hoping to benefit from U.S. generosity after the war.

Turkey’s support for the United States surprised no one. The Turkish government offered to send a small contingent of troops to train Northern Alliance forces and expressed its readiness to send troops to participate in a future peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. The Turkish government’s position is consistent with the domestic and foreign policy it has pursued in recent years, which the country’s military establishment firmly supports. The Turkish government has been adopting an extremely secular stance in its relations toward its domestic Islamic parties, to the extent that it has outlawed even those Islamic parties that abide by the rules of democratic politics. In foreign policy, the Turkish government considers alignment with U.S. policies the best way to get the Bush administration to use its leverage to persuade European countries to relax the requirements for Turkey’s admission into the European Union. Moreover, Turkey views a military presence in Afghanistan as a way to strengthen its position as a key player in the regional politics of Central Asia, a region in which it shows great interest.

Thus far, the Jordanian government has been the only other Arab government to offer to send troops to partake in a future peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. Jordan’s King Abdullah, standing next to President George W. Bush at the White House in mid-September 2001, was eager to announce Jordan’s total solidarity with the American people as well as its willingness to offer all the aid it could under the present circumstances. The young king has been careful to pursue the policy that his father, who tried to safeguard the independence of his country by allying Jordan with the dominant powers in the Middle East and in the world, had laid down. King Abdullah wants to maintain cordial relations with the United States and avoid deteriorating relations with Israel, despite the intransigent policies of the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. Algerian president Abdul-Aziz Bouteflika’s forceful position in support of U.S. actions should occasion no surprise.

Many other countries in the Arab and Muslim world support the United States in its political and military campaign against both bin Laden and Al Qaeda as well as the Taliban regime, as clearly indicated in statements issued by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in its Doha summit in October 2001. Their support, however, is limited to backing the U.S. effort diplomatically, sharing intelligence, and freezing funds that individuals and organizations suspected of sympathizing with terrorists allegedly used, steps that follow UN Security Council Resolution 1373.

Another group of Arab and Muslim countries did not hesitate to condemn the terrorist attacks on the United States or to share intelligence with
U.S. authorities, but these states—Egypt and Saudi Arabia, in particular—were critical of certain aspects of the U.S. response to the attacks. The Washington Post and the New York Times, among other U.S. newspapers, have published editorials that were quite critical of the positions of these two governments, accusing them of not providing the United States with sufficient support in its battle against terrorism.

Before the United States began military operations in Afghanistan, Mubarak, who is skeptical about using massive force to deal with terrorism, suggested that terrorism is a complex problem, one that is rooted in frustrations caused by a lack of progress in resolving issues affecting Arab peoples and one that requires an international solution. He reiterated a proposal he made for the first time in 1995 following a failed attempt on his life by Egyptian Islamists in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mubarak attenuated his reservations against the use of force to deal with the problem of terrorist attacks on the United States, but he emphasized that no Egyptian troops would be sent to fight in Afghanistan. He added that Egypt would not participate in a peacekeeping force in Afghanistan. Mubarak was careful to point out, however, that the Egyptian government supported the U.S. military effort. He even expressed delight that the problem of bin Laden would finally vanish.7

Some Saudi officials were more outspoken in their disapproval and concern about the suffering of the civilian population in Afghanistan as a result of the U.S. military campaign. The Arab media, especially Al Jazeera, which is widely watched in Saudi Arabia, kept its viewers well informed about reports of the extent of civilian casualties in Afghanistan, a particularly sensitive issue for Saudi Arabia not only because of the country’s claims to leadership in the Muslim world but also because of Saudi Arabia’s close relationship with the Taliban regime. Saudi Arabia was one of three countries (along with Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates) that had recognized and maintained diplomatic relations with the Taliban government. (Only Pakistan maintained diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime after the fall of Kabul, allegedly on advice from the United States, as a way to maintain a channel of communication with the Taliban leadership.) Some Saudi officials also expressed displeasure that some of the personalities and organizations whose assets were frozen at the request of the UN Security Council committee in charge of implementing the resolution on fighting terrorism were included on that list on very shaky and suspicious grounds. Prince Nayef, the minister of interior, reiterated several times that U.S. authorities
did not provide any convincing evidence about the involvement of Saudis in the September 11 attacks; the Saudi government revoked bin Laden’s Saudi nationality some time ago. Although some Saudis criticized the civilian casualties in Afghanistan, U.S. officials nevertheless declared their appreciation of the cooperation they received from Saudi authorities in the war.

Other voices in the Arab and Muslim world were critical of the U.S. military campaign, but this reaction came from quarters that are critical of U.S. policy in general. Iran’s President Muhammad Ali Khatami, for example, did not like the two choices that Bush put to the rest of the world—“Either you are with the United States, or you are with the terrorists.”—arguing that Iran was neither with the United States nor with terrorists. The Iranian government also condemned the use of military force against the Afghan people. Nevertheless, the Iranian government has been careful not to take any practical steps to thwart U.S. military action in Afghanistan.

Public Opinion: Divided or Critical?

Despite the overall supportive positions taken by governments in Arab and Muslim countries toward the United States in its campaign against terrorism, reading a U.S. newspaper would give one the impression that public opinion in those countries is quite critical of the United States and even sympathetic toward bin Laden and his followers. Because most of these countries have no reliable polls to gauge public opinion, one can only attempt to do so by looking at media coverage in these countries. Some judgments can be made by examining a sampling of what has appeared in the mainstream media in the Arab world.

Public opinion in many Arab countries has been quite divided on the issue of what happened in New York City and Washington, D.C., on September 11, as well as the U.S. response to these events and the impact of the attacks on Arab and Muslim countries. Some have been concerned that these events would have a negative impact on relations between Arab as well as Muslim countries on the one hand and Western countries on the other, particularly the United States. Others were concerned about the projected images of Islam and Muslims, which certain media and prominent Western politicians immediately linked with terrorism and the absence of freedom. Some in the business sector were apprehensive that they might be punished twice—first by the economic forces of a deepened recession, then as a result of prejudices against Muslims that would be the natural outcome of the association some in the West try to establish between Islam and terrorism. Finally, some political strategists believed that Muslim countries had a great deal to gain from the West by aligning completely on the side of the
United States at the moment when it most needed their moral support. Turkish, Pakistani, and Jordanian government supporters were among these groupings, as were those who called on the Egyptian government to endorse the U.S. position more forthrightly.

Nevertheless, many people in Arab and Muslim countries presumably were not convinced of any of the evidence that the U.S. government presented to prove that bin Laden and his organization organized the September 11 events. Many did not see any reason to insist that 25 million Afghan people pay the price for something that was allegedly done by an individual or a small group of people. The release of two bin Laden videotapes, in which he came close to admitting knowledge of and even inspiration for the September 11 attacks, did not change these initial positions. According to one school of thought, no matter how distasteful the Taliban regime was, the war that the United States launched in Afghanistan has disrupted the lives of millions of Afghans who should have been spared that heavy price—notwithstanding the airdrops of food packages in the same areas that U.S. warplanes had bombed. For these segments of Arab and Muslim public opinion, the belief that an end to terrorism could be sought through the use of military means is quite naive. The use of force by the United States would breed more terrorism in the future, fed by the frustrations of victims of the U.S. attacks, many of whom perhaps had not been involved with the Taliban regime but suffered as a result of the so-called collateral damage of U.S. military operations.

Moreover, these same segments of Arab and Muslim public opinion consider the U.S. administration’s definition of terrorism to be rather selective. One can understand that the United States considers bin Laden and members of Al Qaeda—who have acknowledged their responsibility for attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam as well as on U.S. military bases and a warship in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf region—to be terrorists. The same standard would no doubt apply to those who perpetrated the September attacks. Arabs, Muslims, and many others around the world, however, question the U.S. criteria that categorize groups that are fighting against foreign military occupation as terrorist organizations, even though U.S. State Department experts know fully well that international law recognizes the legitimate right of all people to self-defense. Thus, many Middle Easterners feel that the White House adapts its concept of terrorism to whatever suits its needs at the moment and considers those fighting Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and what remains in southern Lebanon to be terrorists.

From this viewpoint, the U.S. administration prefers to ignore real terrorist practices when its closest friends, foremost Israel, conduct them. The Is-
Israeli government not only has persisted in its military occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, the Golan Heights, and the Sheb’a farms in southern Lebanon, but it also has consolidated this occupation by building settlements in defiance of several UN resolutions that the U.S. government itself supported. Reneging on its promise to negotiate an end to occupation, the Israeli government has declared the Oslo accords dead and, in the face of Palestinians’ legitimate resistance to the occupation, has proceeded to carry out a policy of siege, closure of Palestinian towns, economic blockade, and targeted assassination of Palestinian leaders. Any objective observer would find that state terrorism is the only name that can be used to describe this Israeli policy. The U.S. administration’s reaction has been at best a mild reproach of Israel that rarely comes at the worst moment of Israeli atrocities and is usually pronounced by a junior member of the administration. In the eyes of the Arab and Muslim public, this course of action amounts to a double standard.

Another major cause for concern among Arab and Muslim people has been the mystery the U.S. administration has fostered about its plans for the duration of the campaign against terrorism. Bush has stated a number of times that the campaign against terrorism would be a long one that would continue for years and involve other countries and organizations. Initial reports in the U.S. press and later statements by senior U.S. officials suggested that some Arab countries were indeed targeted for future phases of the campaign, the prime candidate being Iraq. Bush himself threatened the use of force if Hussein refused to allow UN arms inspectors to return to Iraq. Powell said on December 5 that the United States had not yet decided whether to launch a strike against Iraq.

Such statements have been so alarming that many world leaders, including the German chancellor and French president as well as Egyptian and Saudi senior officials, have warned that striking at Iraq would be a mistake. It is doubtful that any of those leaders have much sympathy for the Iraqi regime, but implicating Iraq in this war against terrorism casts serious doubts on U.S. intentions underlying the whole enterprise. In fact, immediately after the September 11 attacks, some U.S. officials suggested that Iraqi intelligence services had had contact with some of the people who hijacked the planes that struck the World Trade Center, but the officials did not offer any convincing evidence and did not repeat the allegation. More importantly, talk of toppling Saddam was an open secret in Washington in the spring of

**Implicating Iraq in this war on terrorism casts serious doubts on U.S. intentions.**
2001, months before the September attacks. Large segments of the Arab and Muslim world, including some policymakers, believe that the U.S. administration is using the campaign against terrorism as a pretext to carry out its own hidden agenda, which has nothing to do with the war against terrorism.

**Where We Go from Here**

In the wake of the fall of the Taliban regime, the vast majority of Arab and Muslim countries are abiding by the Security Council resolution on fighting terrorism and cooperating with the established committee to implement the different measures included in that resolution. Four Muslim countries reportedly expressed interest in participating in the peacekeeping force in Afghanistan, namely Jordan, Turkey, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. Saudi Arabia is participating in the financial effort to help rebuild Afghanistan. Arab and Muslim and other concerned countries are expected to continue sharing intelligence on terrorist organizations.

Continued talk by U.S. officials of other phases in the war, however, causes much concern in the Arab and Muslim world for two reasons. First, the U.S. definition of terrorism does not distinguish between those launching a just armed struggle against the illegal occupation of their land and those using force against elected, legitimate governments. Accordingly, the U.S. administration considers Palestinians fighting Israeli troops inside the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip to be terrorists. Second, the U.S. administration does not condemn state terrorism. U.S. spokespersons did not recognize the Israeli government's siege of Palestinian towns and villages and targeted assassination of Palestinian officials by Israeli secret services, which provoked suicide attacks on the part of Palestinian groups, as terrorist actions. That the United States provides Israel with the economic and military means through which it executes such policies but protects Israel from any UN condemnation is even more frustrating for Arabs. For example, in early December the United States thwarted a resolution supported by 12 members of the UN Security Council to send international observers to monitor the safety of the civilian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Under these conditions, for most Arab and Muslim governments to extend more support to the United States for future phases of its war against terror becomes difficult. Of course, Yemen, concerned that it might become a possible target in a second phase in this so-called war, did begin its own internal efforts against alleged members of Al Qaeda, with the help of special forces trained by the United States and under the personal guidance of President Ali Abdallah Saleh's son. Somalia, another possible target in a fu-
ture phase in this war, offered to cooperate with the United States while de-
nying any presence of Al Qaeda members on its territory.

These two examples demonstrate that, although the governments of a few
countries had incomplete control over their territories, such as Afghanistan,
Yemen, and Somalia, no Muslim government encouraged terrorist activities
against U.S. citizens or officials. Many Arab and Muslim governments did face
problems with their own terrorists. They spared no effort fighting them and
did not always receive the timely support they expected from the interna-
tional community. Ironically, the U.S. government played a role in encourag-
ing the groups of young people who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s to fight
the Soviet military presence there and who ended up fighting the United
States.

Even before the events of September 11, a
gulf of mistrust separated the United States
from large sections of the Arab and Muslim
public and policymakers. What the U.S. ad-
ministration is contemplating at present—
launching a second phase of this war against
other Arab and Muslim countries while doing
very little to stop state terrorism practiced, for
example, by Israel—risks widening this gulf
even further and does not bode well for
friendly relations between the United States and Arab and Muslim nations
in the future.

Apart from exchanging intelligence, participating in a peacekeeping force
in Afghanistan, and contributing to the rebuilding of Afghanistan, the best
service that Arabs and Muslims can offer to the U.S. administration and to
the U.S. people is its advice for the United States to cooperate with Arab
and Muslim peoples and governments to find nonmilitary solutions for the
profound causes that push some young people to take up arms against their
own governments and those of other countries. This approach could per-
haps be the best way to promote the ideals of the American Revolution: life,
liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, by all people.

Notes

1. Majid Khadduri, “The Islamic Theory of International Relations and Its Contem-
porary Relevance,” in Harris Proctor, ed., Islam and International Relations (London
3. See in particular articles by Thomas Friedman in the New York Times and several


7. Mubarak became more forthcoming in his support of the U.S. preparation to launch military action in Afghanistan following his visit to Paris and his meeting with President Jacques Chirac on September 24, 2001. Prior to that date, he was critical of both the notion of an international alliance against terrorism, arguing that it would be divisive, and of the use of massive military force against terrorist organizations. His statements were reported in *Al-Ahram* and *Al-Hayat* newspapers.