THE MULTIPLE FACES OF
THE MIDDLE EAST:

A REVIEW

by

DONALD M. SNOW

The Middle East, in all its diversity and complexity, has dominated the center stage of Western, and especially American, consciousness in recent years. The Iranian revolution, the hostage crisis, the protracted Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War, and the assassination of Anwar Sadat have competed for headlines with the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, the Palestinian question, and the implications of the Carter Doctrine. The result has been an increased awareness of the Middle East's chronic instability and a growing realization that the sources of conflict in this petroleum-rich area are deep, pervasive, and sometimes bewildering.

Although the area's complexity virtually guarantees that any analysis will oversimplify reality, the Middle East can, perhaps, best be viewed in terms of three simultaneous conflicts. The first, and least publicized, is the conflict within Islam itself, which is rooted in both communal and ethnic differences and affects politics and stability within most Islamic states and often the relations between them. The second is the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has vexed the world for a third of a century and the efforts to resolve that conflict. The third is the conflict over the Persian Gulf, involving not only those states whose shores are washed by the gulf but the superpowers as well.

THE ISLAMIC CONFLICT

Islam, one of the world's largest and most rapidly growing religions, originated in the Middle East.[1] Aside from the Jews, concentrated in Israel, nearly everyone in the region is a Muslim, providing a sense of commonality among the various populations. A common religion, however, serves to mask the very great differences in the region, both within and between national societies. The sources of animosity and discord are far-ranging and deeply held, and they preclude the emergence of any true sense of Islamic unity and solidarity. There are four bases for the cleavage: religious, national, political, and economic.

Religious conflict: All Muslims are united in their belief that the *Qur'an* (Koran) represents the final revelation of Allah ("the God") through his prophet Muhammed in the seventh century. The teachings of Muhammed (which are the basis of the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna*) include both strictly religious elements and a code of conduct developed during the period when the Prophet was in exile in Yathrib (Medina)

where he served as both a religious and administrative leader. Islam thus combines metaphysical and practical elements that form a theocratic basis for Islamic society. Differing interpretations of the Prophet's message constitute the basic disagreement.

The split within Islam dates to the death of Muhammed in 632 A.D. and the ensuing struggle for leadership of his movement. That competition for designation of the caliph lasted nearly 30 years, as Muslim rule was extended over much of the Middle East and North Africa. The result of that struggle was the division, which continues today, between Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

The basic issue dividing Sunni and Shi'a Islam concerns man's relationship to Allah, his relationship to the community, and the degree of emphasis placed upon each of those relationships. Sunni Islam, which traces its origins to the followers of the second caliph, Umar, places relatively more emphasis on combining the *Qur'an* (Muhammed's recitals of God's revelations) and the more administrative teachings of the *Sunna* (customs and traditions). Sunni Islam stresses the importance of the earthly Islamic community and reconciliation of the Prophet's teachings with evolving conditions without jeopardizing the community's purity. Sunni Muslims are characteristically willing to participate in civic affairs and are urbane and progressive by Islamic standards. The majority of Muslims are Sunni.

Shi'a Islam originated with the supporters of Ali, the third caliph and Muhammed's son-in-law (the name derives from the Arabic Shi'at Ali, or Party of Ali). Shi'ites believe that the caliphate should be passed down through Muhammed's successors. Their emphasis is on the relationship of man to the religious leadership, and especially to the Imam, an individual who has received special guidance from God. At a slightly lower level of piety within Shi'a are the ayatollahs, teachers (ulama) who are the "Signs of God." The Shi'ite tradition places less emphasis on community and political involvement, opposes secularization, and is generally fundamentalist.

The *Qur'an* and *Sunna* are very in-fluential in Islamic society, with political actions and adaptation to change measured against conformity to their principles. Inevitably, some actions conform less than others to those principles. Where divergence has occurred, Islamic revivalism has been a common response. The normal form has been fundamentalist, seeking a return to traditional Islamic customs and values.[2]

Revivalism occurs within both the Sunni and Shi'a traditions. The modern state of Saudi Arabia is the most prominent example of a fundamentalist revival arising from the Sunni sect. That revival has been based on the scholarship of an 18th-century ulama named Adb-al-Wahhab. Followers of his movement, known as Wahhabis, established control over and developed the modern Saudi state. Within Shi'a, with its emphasis on personalized religious leadership and its suspicion between church and state, the Iranian revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini is the most recent revivalist example.[3]

National conflict: Many Islamic Middle Eastern states contain a number of distinct "nations" (ethnic groups)[4] whose members are often more loyal to their "nation" than to the nation-state in which they reside. The result is often great inter-group suspicion and animosity, which is reinforced when the groups are physically distinct (Semites, Aryans, and Arabs cohabit in a number of states) or belong to different Islamic sects.

Ethnic differences create political

Dr. Donald M. Snow is the Director of International Studies at the University of Alabama. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in political science from the University of Colorado and earned a Ph.D. in political science from Indiana University. In 1980 he was Professor of National Security Affairs at the Air Command and Staff College, Air University. Dr. Snow is the author of *Nuclear Strategy in a Dynamic World: American Policy in the 1980s* (1981), and he is the editor of *Introduction to World Politics: A conceptual and Developmental Perspective* (1981) and *Readings in Nuclear Strategy Making* (1980). The present article is a revision of "The Multiple Faces of the Middle East Conflict," published by the Air Command and Staff College in 1980.

problems. In some instances, suspicions between groups lead to bitter political struggles and violence, as in Iraq, where the controlling urban Sunni minority is in conflict with the largely rural Shi'ite majority of nomadic Bedouin Arabs and Kurds; or in Iran, where there is strong Kurdish, Arab, and Baluchi resistance to Aryan Shi'ite Persian domination. The potential effects are internally destabilizing and can leap national boundaries (one commonly cited Iraqi objective in the war with Iran has been to block the export of radical Shi'ite ideas to the Iraqi Shi'ite majority).

Political conflict: The Islamic states are also divided politically between the more conservative, traditional states and the so-called progressive, modernist states. Saudi Arabia is the primary example of the conservative orientation, and the Libyan regime of Colonel Qadhafi represents the other pole. A number of issues divide traditionalists and modernists, but two stand out. The first concerns differing approaches to economic and social modernization within the Islamic context of how to reconcile the values of the *Qur'an* and *Sunna* with the pressures of modern society. As such, conflict over modernization is a continuation of the centuries-old Islamic debates on adaptation to the world environment.

At one extreme are the conservative states, which generally prefer economic modernization along Western lines and have adopted either guarded pro-Western or at least neutralist stances. Conservative states include Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Morocco. At the other extreme are the modernists, loosely gathered under the banner of "Arab socialism," an adaptation of those aspects of Marxist social and economic thought compatible with Islam. Marxist atheism is diametrically at odds with Islam, but the states in the modernist bloc have comparatively close relations with the Soviet Union. States falling into this category include (or have included) Libya, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, and South Yemen.

The second point of disagreement is over who should rule. The conservative states generally maintain some form of monar-

chical rule, while the modernist states are generally ruled by military governments or civilian-military coalitions. Conservative and modernist leaders harbor deep suspicions of one another, and with good cause. There are traditionalists and modernists in every country, and each side has proven capable of actively supporting kindred factions in countries ruled by the other. Also, there have been both direct and proxy wars supported by contenders from the two groups. The Saudi-South Yemeni conflict over Yemen in 1979 is one example, as is Saudi and Egyptian support of vying elements in Aden (South Yemen) in the 1960s.

Economic conflict: The Islamic countries are also divided by economic status. The division is between the oil-rich states along the Persian Gulf, together with Libya, and those states facing extremely difficult problems of economic development. The result is a "prince and pauper" relationship between states, with the presence, as well as the absence, of economic resources creating domestic problems.

Recent enormous revenues from petroleum have allowed the oil-producing states to effectively combat problems such as housing and education, but rapid solution has its own risks. The Iranian revolution vividly demonstrated that there are limits on the ability of a tradition-bound people to absorb technologically induced change, particularly when that change flies in the face of deeply embedded Islamic precepts. In the light of the Iranian experience, the oil producers are likely to see slowing the pace of modernization as an increasingly attractive possibility. The chief means of doing so would be by cutting back oil production and hence excess revenue. Pressures to slow modernization are likely to be especially acute in Saudi Arabia and would put the West in something of a bind. Both Saudi oil and political stability are important to the West, but they may not prove compatible.

In the non-oil-producing states, the people are mostly poor and relatively uneducated. These states combine higher population concentrations with shortages of arable land and are therefore, ever increasingly, net importers of food. Skilled

labor is scarce, and technology must be imported, making productivity low and inflation endemic. The result is that all these countries have balance-of-payment problems requiring external financial assistance. Some assistance is available from the oil producers—Saudi Arabia and Libya, for example—but inevitably such assistance has political strings.

THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Before world attention turned toward the Persian Gulf, the focus was on the confrontation between Israel and the Islamic states opposing Israel's claim to sovereignty. The conflict dates back to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent unsuccessful attempts by the surrounding Islamic states to militarily crush the Jewish state.

In retrospect, the 1973 War may have been a turning point in Arab-Israeli hostilities, because that war marked the first time that Egyptian armed forces inflicted significant military defeats on the Israelis. At one low point in Israeli fortunes, there were reports that the Israelis had activated for possible employment the nuclear weapons[5] that they allegedly possess.[6] When the Israelis surrounded the Second Egyptian Army and threatened it with annihilation as other Israeli units stood poised to march on Alexandria, the Soviets threatened intervention to save Egypt, at that time a client state.

Reflection on the consequences of such an action was sobering and helped create the climate for subsequent change. In 1975, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat broke relations with the Soviet Union and moved to bring Egypt closer to the United States. In November 1977, Sadat took his historic peace initiative and visited Jerusalem. In 1978, the Egyptian President and Israeli Prime Minister Begin were brought together at Camp David by President Carter and signed a peace treaty and "principles" of agreement for settling the entire Arab-Israeli conflict.[7] Further progress included institution of commercial airline service between the two countries in 1979 and full diplomatic recognition, with an exchange of ambassadors, in 1980.

Further development of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship has remained stuck on the Palestinian question.[8] The Egyptians and Israelis agreed in principle to "Palestinian autonomy" in 1978; however, the form that autonomy is to take remains elusive. The Begin government has been unwilling to grant sovereignty to a Palestinian state that could be a staging ground for continued terrorist activity against Israel and hence a serious threat to Israeli security. Because of Israeli intransigence on the Palestinian homeland issue, the other Islamic states have declined to join the peace process. Libya's Qadhafi has attempted both to subvert the agreement and to isolate Egypt in the Islamic world through the "rejectionist front" and continued support of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

The Arab-Israeli conflict thus remains in a state of flux. The United States and European states dependent on Mideast oil have a clear interest in a solution equitable to all major parties in order to promote other interests, notably in the Persian Gulf.[9] The Soviet Union remains piqued at being left out of the peace process and recognizes that it needs some tension in the area to retain influence there (arming some of the Islamic states is about the only source of Soviet leverage).

Israel's position remains contentious, and Israeli public opinion is deeply divided on the Palestinian question. Continuing tension is unquestionably harmful to Israel, forcing her to exist as a garrison state. The extended conflict with her Arab neighbors requires large defense expenditures that fuel an economy-sapping inflation rate of up to 200 percent; and, as world opinion becomes more sensitive to the Palestinians' plight, Israel is becoming a pariah state.

Israeli opinion is divided on what kind of settlement would be tolerable. Israel's main goals, more poignant than those of most states, have been formal acceptance of her right to exist and the guarantee of her security. The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty had great symbolic importance because it marked the first time an Islamic state had recognized Israel's right to exist. What divides Israel is how a settlement focusing on

46

the issue of a Palestinian state on the West Bank can guarantee Israel's physical security.

Israelis fundamentally disagree on the question of Palestinian autonomy, as the 1981 election campaign demonstrated. One major faction, led by Shimon Peres and the Labor Party, argued that the need for peace is paramount but peace is impossible without creating a Palestinian state. The other faction, headed by Prime Minister Begin, expressed fears that Palestinians would not be content with their own state but would continue to press for regaining control of Israel. Those fears reflected the realization that an independent Palestinian state would make an excellent staging ground for continued, intensified anti-Israeli action.

The behavior of an independent Palestine toward Israel is conjectural and complicated by two additional issues: Jerusalem and Jewish settlements on the West Bank. Jerusalem is a special and highly emotional issue because of its religious significance to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The city has considerable symbolic importance to all three faiths, and who controls it politically (and thus can allow or deny access to members of other faiths) is crucial.[10] The Israelis, who were excluded during the 1948-67 period from worshipping at holy shrines in the Old City, have shown a marked reluctance to relinquish control and have intensified the issue by unifying Jerusalem and declaring it their national capital. Jewish settlements on the West Bank have similarly inflamed Islamic suspicions that the Israelis have no intention of ever leaving the occupied lands.

In the confusion of 1948, most of the Muslim population fled the new state of Israel to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Those states could not absorb the influx, however, and many Palestinians ended up in UN-sponsored refugee camps. Conditions in the camps have been grim, fostering the hopelessness and despair that have made the camps fertile recruiting grounds for paramilitary and terrorist groups under the collective banner of the PLO. Little known in the West before its active terrorist campaign in the early 1970s, the PLO refuses to acknowledge the Israeli-Egyptian peace process, arguing that the PLO is the only legitimate voice of the Palestinian people and that only an agreement to which they have acceded is binding. Whether from conviction or fear of PLO reprisal, other Islamic nations have refused to take part in the Israeli-Egyptian talks.

Among the Islamic states, Egypt has the greatest stake in a successful peace process. From an Egyptian vantage point, the results to date have been mixed. Positively, Egyptian nationalism has been revived by the repossession of large portions of the Sinai lost in 1967 (including the oil-producing region). Additionally, Egypt is receiving massive American economic assistance, "more American aid [per capita] in real dollars than West Europeans received after World War II."[11] Negatively, Egypt stands largely isolated from the other Islamic states in their unified opposition to Israel, faces a loose and diverse "rejectionist front" dedicated to the defeat of the peace process, and has lost significant economic assistance from other Arab states, notably Saudi Arabia. Egypt's frustration stems from the realization that progress toward an acceptable solution to the Palestinian question is beyond its direct control, for it is Israel that must make the crucial concessions.

King Hussein's Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan also has a vital stake in the outcome of the peace process. First, a Palestinian West Bank state would be carved from what was a part of Jordan until 1967. An oft-repeated compromise solution to Palestinian autonomy would be some form of federation between a Palestinian West Bank state and Jordan, in which Jordan would presumably serve to moderate remaining Palestinian extremism. Second, Jordan's stake in the outcome can also be related to its large Palestinian minority, which generally opposes Hussein. Many Palestinians remember the brutal attacks by Hussein's largely Bedouin Arab Legion on Palestinian refugee camps during the 1970 Jordanian Civil War. Consequently, Hussein must avoid alienating the Palestinians any more than he already has.

Lebanon has been one of the true, if indirect, victims of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although the political balance in this small nation-state, composed of a Muslim majority and a Coptic Christian minority, has always been tenuous and has been deteriorating as population trends accentuate imbalances, it was the Arab-Israeli conflict that finally drew the Lebanese into a long and bloody civil war and occupation.

The issue that finally tore the political fabric of Lebanon and pitted Christian against Muslim was the Palestinian issue. Refugee camps had existed since the Palestinian exodus, but after 1973 Lebanese camps became the major locus of PLO terrorism and Israeli reprisal. The need to respond to Israeli demands to suppress terrorist activities created a political division along religious lines that could not be resolved. A murderous civil war between Christians and Muslims ensued, virtually destroying the state. Syrian military intervention and occupation (originally part of a multilateral effort, but now unilateral) reduced the level of violence, but no enduring solution has been possible. An uneasy truce exists, with Muslims concentrated in the northern region occupied by the Syrians, and Israeli-assisted Christians in de facto control of a buffer zone along the Israeli border. Civil war in Lebanon might have occurred without the Palestinian issue, but that issue unquestionably hastened it.

THE PERSIAN GULF CONFLICT

All the forces of instability and division within the Islamic world come to a head in the volatile Persian Gulf region.[12] These forces have been present throughout the postwar period, but it took the fall of the Shah of Iran to bring them to the surface. The fact that two thirds of the world's petroleum is produced in the area adds a geopolitical factor of potentially explosive dimension to a situation that would under any circumstances be unstable.

The area mirrors the crisis within Islam. All three Islamic traditions are represented: Khomeini's Iran is the only Shi'ite regime in the Middle East; Iraq and Pakistan have regimes at least nominally Sunni in orientation; and Wahhabism dominates in Saudi Arabia. Islamic revivalism is at its zenith in the region, manifested in the fierce Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation and in repeated calls from Iraq for both superpowers to stop intervening. Multinationalism is a major source of instability in Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan; and periodic Iranian and Iraqi support for minorities across each other's borders contributed to bringing those nations to war. Iraq has been an active force in the Islamic modernist movement, and Saudi Arabia has been the leader of the conservative Islamic states. The great economic cleavage within the Islamic world is also present, with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran at the upper end, and Pakistan, Oman, and Afghanistan at the lower.

The Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq War[13] raised superpower involvement in the Persian Gulf area and significantly increased the prospects for Soviet-American confrontation.[14] The fall of the Shah was particularly traumatic for the United States because American strategy saw Iran as the pillar of stability in the region. The Shah's fall not only undermined that basic American position, but threatened the flow of petroleum from Iran. In light of the continuing power vacuum in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has appeared particularly ominous to American analysts.

As a loyal and trustworthy American ally,[15] the Shah appeared to be transforming his country into a modern Western-style nation-state through a program of economic modernization financed by oil revenues. Iran's US-trained and -equipped armed forces, the largest and almost certainly the best in the region, were a potent obstacle to any contemplated Soviet expansion toward the Persian Gulf.

The rapidity with which the Iranian revolution crumbled its position shocked the United States. The armed forces proved impotent in the face of Khomeini and his supporters, and a seething anti-Americanism

reached its crescendo in the embassy seizure and hostage crisis. The Iran of Western conception proved to be a house of cards, blown over by the windy rhetoric of one fanatically driven religious leader. Determining what went wrong will require years, but, in retrospect, some contributing factors stand out.

In the most general sense, the cause of the revolution was the attempt to foster change too rapidly. The Shah attempted to graft a program of modernization upon Iranian society that simply could not be accommodated by the Iranian people. Economic development expanded the middle class, creating a stratum of nouveau riche who contributed to inflation and corruption. Industrialization drew many from the countryside to work in the factories, but there was not a rapid enough expansion of adequate housing and social services to absorb the influx.

In the long run, the most serious problem was that modernization alienated the powerful and conservative Shi'ite clergy.[16] Conspicuous consumption and secularization offended their Islamic sensitivities, and the Shah's reform program stripped the mullahs of considerable power. Land reform came at their expense, and the Shah's judicial reforms deprived them of their traditional role in the administration of justice.

When the revolution began, the mullahs became an effective force for mobilizing opposition and, upon Khomeini's return to Iran in February 1979, they helped seize control of the revolution from the middle class. Power shifted from the middle class and its representatives (Bakhtiar, Barzagan, and later Bani-Sadr) to the militant clergy, led by Ayatollah Mohammed Behesti and the Iranian Revolutionary Party.[17]

To the extent anyone rules in Iran today, it is the clergy, as shown by the exclusion of moderates from the parliament convened in May 1980[18] and by subsequent events. The country hovers on the brink of economic and political chaos, and there is great uncertainty concerning the course that events will take when Khomeini dies. Some indication of the chaos that could follow may have been provided in the summer of 1981, first by the removal from office of President Bani-Sadr, then by the bombing of the Iranian Revolutionary Party headquarters that left party leader Ayotollah Mohammed Behesti and 70 others dead, and finally by the explosion that killed President Mohammed Ali Rajai and Prime Minister Mohammed Jarad Bahonar.

In December 1979 the world was shocked by the massive invasion of the rugged Islamic nation of Afghanistan by Soviet troops, whose numbers rapidly swelled to 100,000.[19] The invasion marked the first time since World War II that the Soviet Union had employed armed forces outside its recognized sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.[20] Two explanations of Soviet purpose have emerged from analyses of Soviet actions.

The first explanation is that the Soviets believed intervention was necessary simply to preserve the country's communist government. The Communist Party, promising radical Marxist reform of Afghan society, came to power in April 1978 following the bloody overthrow of the noncommunist government. Two communist regimes in a year and a half had alienated the populace, and an Islamic revivalist resistance movement was dangerously close to toppling the Taraki government. By this construction, the Soviets feared the consequences of such a precedent-setting event and believed that they had no choice. With Western attention focused on Iran, the Soviets anticipated a short, decisive campaign involving minimal risk. After intervention, President Taraki (who allegedly had "invited" Soviet assistance in putting down the revolution) was executed and a leader more congenial to the Soviets, Babrak Karmal, was installed.

The second explanation is geopolitically more ominous. In this construction, the long-term Soviet objective is to march on to the Persian Gulf, either directly or by nurturing friendly movements in the states between Afghanistan and the sea (Iran and Pakistan). The 1979 invasion could thus be the first step in a Soviet design that could take on several forms. Afghanistan could be used as a staging area for the seizure of the Iranian oil

fields about 300 miles from the Afghan border, for a march through the Pakistani province of Baluchistan to the sea, or for the inducement of a Baluchi separatist movement in Pakistan—probably the most likely eventuality.

The Iranian revolution's aftermath has created geopolitical fluidity in the gulf region, and Iraq has become increasingly assertive, as has been most dramatically demonstrated by the Iran-Iraq War. Since the Iraqis possess armed forces that, perhaps for the first time, are the most powerful in the area, wary eyes are now turning toward Baghdad to determine whether Iraq will be a source of stability or instability. Prospects are not altogether promising. The country has sufficient petroleum revenues to play a major role in the Persian Gulf and a sizable Soviet-supplied and trained military establishment. Moreover, Iraq has been one of the most radical Islamic states in international affairs, with internal problems in many ways similar to those plaguing Iran.

Iraq broke relations with the United States in 1958 over fear of US intervention in the Baathist revolution that brought a radical, modernist, pro-Nasser regime to power. The Iraqis have consistently supported the Islamic states opposing Israel and committed military forces to the Arab-Israeli wars. At the same time, the ruling Sunni minority clashed frequently with Iran, before the Shah's fall, over Iranian support for the rebellious Iraqi Kurds. In those clashes, the Iranians competed from a position of strength, but now the situation is reversed.

Iraq appears internally stable only when compared to post-revolutionary Iran. Successive governments have, in fact, been unstable and prone to coups, and the Hussein regime has apparently been counting on victory in the war with Iran to maintain its own legitimacy. The Kurdish minority in the Zargos Mountains overlooking the Iraqi oil fields remains restive, and the Shi'ites, generally relegated to the lower social and economic strata of Iraqi society, have considerable potential for instability if the Iranian Shi'ites can mobilize them. At the same time, Islamic revivalist and communist political forces cannot be ignored by the regime. Iraq's emergence as a major Persian Gulf power and spokesman for removal of superpower influence from the area must be placed in the context of very real internal uncertainties. The relatively calm Iraqi reaction to Israel's destruction of its nuclear research reactor and the regime's willingness to enter into a public dialogue with the United States, however, may be positive signs for the area.

Saudi Arabia has become the cornerstone of Middle Eastern stability. The Saudis' enormous wealth thrusts them into a prominent role in any comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement, and their location also makes them a major factor in the Persian Gulf area. Connection to both of these aspects of the Middle East situation makes the conservative, pro-Western monarchy the key to American policy and influence in the Islamic Middle East.

In the Arab-Israeli conflict, Saudi Arabia is important from both a religious and an economic standpoint. As rulers of the territory in which Islam was born and as devout Muslims, the Saudis have a deep, abiding concern for the Palestinians, who share their religion, and a fundamental interest in restoring access to or control over Islamic religious shrines in the Israeli territories.[21] Such concern and interest, which translate into a desire to see a sovereign Palestinian state and either Palestinian sovereignty over or internationalization of Jerusalem, place the Saudis directly at odds with Israel. The Saudis alone have the capability and display the willingness to provide the levels of economic assistance necessary to guarantee the long-term survival of a Palestinian state. The price of such aid, however, and the economic stabilization it could bring would be the realization of basic Saudi interests, giving the Jerusalem issue more importance than might otherwise be the case.

In the Persian Gulf area, Saudi concerns are more strictly geopolitical. The Saudi regime is troubled by the continuing opposition of radical states (South Yemen, for example) both as direct threats to the Saudi

monarchy and because of their Soviet ties. The Saudis have a growing concern about possible encirclement by pro-Soviet regimes, fed by Soviet activity in the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia), on the Arabian Peninsula (South Yemen thrusts against Yemen), and in the immediate Persian Gulf area (Afghanistan).

Because Saudi concerns in the Persian Gulf are closely akin to American concerns, Saudi Arabia becomes a key not only to solving Middle Eastern problems, but to insuring a Middle Eastern climate at least not hostile to US interests. The role the Saudis could play is fundamentally compatible with the kind of Middle East the United States would like to see evolve. Until the Arab-Israeli situation is settled in a manner that takes full cognizance of Saudi concerns, however, Saudi ability to promote a Middle Eastern stability supportive of American aims will be severely limited.

CONCLUSION

The problems of the Middle East are indeed complex. Intraregional differences divide members of the various great religions and affect the relations among Muslim peoples. The conflicts within Islam are often complicated by ethnic, political, and economic considerations that make differences all the more intractable. Such problems permeate the region and clearly manifest themselves in two "hot spots"—the Arab-Israeli and Persian Gulf conflicts.

An axiom of US foreign policy in the Third World is that US interests are best served by peace and tranquillity, whereas Soviet interests are effectively promoted by conditions of turmoil and unrest.[22] There is probably no part of the developing world where that axiom holds more true than in the Middle East. The Soviets have been able to maintain an important presence where their ideology is most foreign and repugnant: there are no two philosophies more at odds than those of Islam and atheistic communism. The problem—both for those regional states that promote moderation within Islamic society and for the United States—is how to create the tranquillity that will weaken the Soviet foothold.

NOTES

1. The role of Islam is ably stated, among other places, in Morroe Berger, *The Arab World Today* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 20-41.

2. For a good summary overview, see John O. Voll, "The Islamic Past and Present Resurgence," *Current History*, 78 (April 1980), 145-58, 180-81.

3. The importance of petroleum wealth and the key roles of Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Khomeini's Iran in the Islamic revival are forcefully stated by Daniel Pipes in " 'This World Is Political!!' The Islamic Revival of the Seventies," *Orbis*, 24 (Spring 1980), 9-42.

4. The ethnic question is thoroughly investigated in R. D. McLaurin, ed., *The Political Role of Minority Groups in the Middle East* (New York: Praeger, 1979).

5. A summary of authors making claims about Israeli nuclear arms can be found in Alan Dowty, "Nuclear Proliferation: The Israeli Case," *International Studies Quarterly*, 22 (March 1978), 79-80. He concludes (pp. 113-15) that from an Israeli viewpoint, keeping the status of weapons ambiguous best serves Israel's purposes. See also Robert J. Pranger and Dale R. Tahtinen, *Nuclear Threat in the Middle East* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1975), pp. 11-21.

6. This suspicion, based on a leaked CIA study, is raised by Richard Falk, "A New World Order Problem," *International Security*, 1 (Winter 1976), 79-93.

7. For a thorough overview of the machinations between Sadat's visit and the signing of the treaties, see John C. Campbell, "The Middle East: The Burden of Empire," *Foreign Affairs*, 57 (Winter 1978), 616-22. For an update, see Ron Ben-Yishai, "Israel's Move," *Foreign Policy*, 42 (Spring 1981), 43-57; and Henry F. Jackson, "Sadat's Perils," *Foreign Policy*, 42 (Spring 1981), 58-73.

8. For an update, see Bernard Reich, "The Middle East Autonomy Talks," *Current History*, 80 (January 1981), 14-17, 36-37.

9. The European Economic Community made a peace initiative to solve the Palestinian question in summer 1980. The proposal and reactions of the parties are contained in "The Palestinian Question," *Survival*, 22 (September-October 1980), 227-30. See also Walid Khalidi, "Regiopolitics: Toward a U.S. Policy on the Palestine Problem," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Summer 1981), 1050-63.

10. The symbolism of Jerusalem is complex. For a brief summary, see "Jerusalem Storm Just One More in a Tortured History," *The New York Times*, 1 August 1980, p. A-4.

11. Christopher S. Wren, "Egypt's High Hopes Lock U.S. into Lavish Aid Program," *The New York Times*, 28 July 1980, p. A-1.

12. Useful analyses of the problems facing the gulf states can be found in Valerie York, "Security in the Gulf: A Strategy of Preemption," *The World Today*, 36 (July 1980), 239-50; and George Lenczowski, "The Persian Gulf and Global Oil," *Current History*, 80 (January 1981), 10-13, 43.

13. For a recent assessment, see Richard W. Cottam, "Revolutionary Iran and the War with Iraq," *Current History*, 80 (January 1981), 5-9, 38-39, 40-42. For different views, see Claudia Wright, "Implications of the Iran-Iraq War," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Winter 1980-81), 1-25; and Adeed I. Dawisha, "Iraq: The West's Opportunity," *Foreign Policy*, 41 (Winter 1980-81), 143-53.

14. J. C. Hurewitz, for instance, argues that the Iranian revolution, which he says is "perhaps the most destabilizing event in the Middle East in the past decade," has combined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to heighten short-term US-USSR tensions in the area. See "The Middle East: A Year of Turmoil," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Winter 1981), 540-77.

15. For a summary of the Iranian revolution and American mistakes in anticipating it, see Eric Rouleau, "Khomeni's Iran," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Fall 1980), 1-20.

16. See William E. Griffith, "The Revival of Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Iran," *International Security*, 4 (Summer 1979), 132-38.

17. This evolution was the subject of a series of articles by William Branigan in *The Washington Post*. See "The New Iran: Mullahs Become an Economic Elite," 15 June 1980, pp. A1, A17; "Iran's Institutions: The Clergy Digs In," 16 June 1980, pp. A1, A22-A23; "Old Politicos Hide Away in Mullahs' Iran," 17 June 1980, pp. A1, A14; "U.S. Called Too Eager in Wooing Iran," 18 June 1980, pp. A1, A18; and "A Country in Turmoil," 19 June 1980, pp. A1, A22-A23. See also Patrick Cockburn, "Iranian Mullahs: From their Strength, A Weakness," *The New York Times*, 26 August 1980, p. A-6.

18. The political left in Iran is a nascent force that, according to Shahram Chubin, has some common cause with the clergy. See "Leftist Force in Iran," *Problems of Communism*, 29 (July-August 1980), 1-25.

19. For a recent overview, see John C. Campbell, "Soviet Policy in the Middle East," *Current History*, 80 (January 1981), 1-4, 42-43. See also Lord Saint Brides, "Afghanistan: The Empire Plays to Win," *Orbis*, 24 (Fall 1980), 533-40; and Jiri Valenta, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: The Difficulty of Knowing Where to Stop," *Orbis*, 24 (Summer 1980), 201-18.

20. For a recent status report, see Zalmay Khalilzad, "Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan," *Problems of Communism*, 29 (November-December 1980), 23-40.

21. For a recent Israeli statement on the Jerusalem question, see Teddy Kollek, "Jerusalem: Present and Future," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Summer 1981), 1041-49.

22. A concrete set of proposals for a greater American presence in the region can be found in Steven L. Spiegel, "Does the United States Have Options in the Middle East?" *Orbis*, 24 (Summer 1980), 395-410. For alternate views, see William B. Quandt, "The Middle East Crises," *Foreign Affairs*, 58 (Winter 1980), 540-62; Joseph Churba, "The Middle East Power Balance in Transition," *Comparative Strategy*, 2 (Spring 1980), 87-95, and "The Eroding Security Balance in the Middle East," *Orbis*, 24 (Summer 1980), 353-62; and Christopher Van Hollen, "Don't Engulf the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, 59 (Summer 1981), 1064-78.