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Muslim People**

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THE TRIO OF EVILS: HOW AND WHY THE UNITED STATES
FAILED IN WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MUSLIM PEOPLE

by

Salih Moustafa

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

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Abstract:

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the apparent failure of the U.S. government to “win the hearts and minds” of Muslims in the post 9/11 world. Using critical discourse analysis of counter Muslim media and audience discourses (discourses criticizing and opposing U.S. policies in the Muslim world), four factors are identified as being central to this failure. They are: (1) The United States government’s lack of historical, religious, social and cultural knowledge of Muslim people, (2) its foreign policies toward Muslim people, (3) U.S. media strategies, and (4) the proliferation of new communication technologies in the Middle East. The findings demonstrate that, contrary to the claims of cultural imperialism theory, local contexts influence how Muslim media and Muslim audience interpret and respond to U.S.-rooted media messages and that new communication technologies have opened up greater opportunity for participation in the public sphere. This has implications for understanding the failure to win hearts and minds of Muslims because it suggests that, the active nature of Muslim media and audiences has actually served to increase distrust of the U.S. government and, more generally, the West throughout the Muslim world.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Contending groups within and across societies draw upon their relative power in order to enact, and to legitimize how certain ideas are conveyed and perceived. This, process often manifests itself in the form of propaganda that seeks to influence public opinion and discourse through the use of media and other advanced technological devices (Taylor, 1995).¹ Many studies conclude that the United States government has access to the most efficient and advanced communication technologies in the world and that it has been effectively using these technologies throughout the post-Vietnam War period as tools for conveying discourses that concur with its national interests (Baudrillard, 1995; Daniels, 2005; Taylor, 1995). According to the authors of these studies, the United States' global communication dominance became strikingly clear during the First Gulf War (1991) and in the Second Gulf War (2003-present).

However, if it is true that successive American administrations have had the ability to dominate the communication landscape, how does one explain the ever increasing distrust, and even hatred, of the United States government in the Muslim world? In other words, *why and how is the American administration losing the hearts and minds of Muslims around the world?* In order to address this question, this thesis investigates how Muslim discourses that are structured in accordance with a particular set of collective values, beliefs and interests, challenge the official objectives provided by the United States government to justify its involvement in the Middle East region.

The actual problem: the background of the conflict

The United States government and Muslims perceive U.S. involvement in the Middle East region and elsewhere from diametrically opposed perspectives whose roots can be traced back in history. The United States government claims that its overall objective is to promote freedom and democracy in the Muslim world and, as such, cannot understand why Muslims resent its noble intentions. Many Muslims, on the other hand, assert that

¹ Throughout this thesis "advanced technological devices," is used to refer to new communication technologies ranging from satellite television to the Internet. In recent years these technologies have rapidly proliferated in the Muslim world.

American foreign policy in the region reflects a hypocrisy in which practice fails to reflect officially stated intentions. According to this view, American foreign policy is best understood as reflecting a selfish bias that fails to address the needs of the people in the Muslim world.

For example, the findings of an Arab public opinion survey conducted in 2004 (“Arab attitudes,” 2004), by researchers at the University of Maryland and Zogby International, in five Arab countries (Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Egypt)², suggested that Arabs’ attitudes towards the United States are mainly shaped by the United States’ policies in the Middle East. The survey found that, contrary to the claims of the current American administration, a majority of respondents did not believe, that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was designed to facilitate the spread democracy in Middle East.³ Indeed, some three-quarters of the survey respondents claimed that the United States’ presence in Iraq was primarily aimed at securing oil (more than 73%) and protecting Israel (73.6%).⁴

Another influential factor identified in the survey is the popularity of ‘counter Muslim media,’ organizations whose messages challenge American media efforts in the Muslim world. For example, *Aljazeera*, was identified as the most watched satellite television station for the international news among the people whose opinions were surveyed in the five Arab countries. To this end, the survey found that for 52.6% of the respondents their first choice for international news is *Aljazeera* satellite television.

These findings suggest that the United States’ superiority in media technologies alone is inadequate for winning Muslim hearts and minds given the negative way in which American foreign policy is perceived and the inability of Muslims to identify their real concerns and voices in the messages emanating from American media systems.

² The sample size in these six countries was 3436.

³ Only 3.5% of the survey respondents believed that the invasion of Iraq had brought democracy to the country.

⁴ Another public opinion survey (“Pew global,” 2006), conducted in fifteen countries (among which five are predominantly Muslim countries: Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Jordan, and Turkey (N=5312)) by the Pew Research Center, suggested that in these “predominantly Muslim countries, the U.S. is generally less popular than Germany, France, Japan, and China” (p.08). In Egypt and Indonesia only 30% of the survey participants favoured the United States, in Pakistan only 27%, Jordan 15% and Turkey 12% (p.08). Confidence in the United States President in these countries is the lowest in Turkey (3%), Jordan (7%), Egypt (8%), Pakistan (10%) and Indonesia (20%).

Moreover, the findings regarding the popularity of 'counter Muslim media' imply that the continued growth of Muslim media organs – that specifically address Muslim concerns – in the region are likely to further hinder the influence of American propaganda on these people. Put simply, many Muslims see their voices as being better reflected in the 'counter Muslim media' which, in turn, enhances peoples trust in these information sources as well as contributing to a reduced reliance on, and faith in, American media which operate in the region.

The discussion in the pages that follow will demonstrate how and why these other, non-technical factors are the key variables to be considered when assessing the extent to which the United States government's media strategies can be expected to successfully win Muslim hearts and minds.

Spinning facts is not as efficient as one might think

Intellectual spin and the manipulation of facts are common methods used by the mainstream media to draw people's attention to particular issues and/or to draw them away from particular issues. In each instance the outcome usually entails serving the interests of political and economic elites in some manner. Evidence of this type of activity was demonstrated in the lead up to the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and in the subsequent stages of the conflict. Solomon (2005), for example, holds up *The New York Times* (before it changed its attitudes about Iraq war) as an illustration of how the American mainstream media's continued spinning of truth supports the American administration's interests pointing out that, "Many know that the news reports which Judith Miller and others were writing in this paper [*The New York Times*] and which were published on the first page of this paper, were in fact a mere channel to convey the [American] administration's lies about the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq" (para.3).

Another instance of spin may be seen in way in which messages in the American mass media were spun to first support and then to divert attention away from the U.S. administration's rationales for invading Iraq. Initially, the invasion of Iraq was justified on the grounds that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed weapons of mass destruction and that it had close ties with al-Qaeda. However, when the evidence to support the latter assertions was shown to be highly dubious at best, the justification for going to war was linked to claims of freeing Iraqis from a dictatorship and spreading democracy.

In a speech on December 15, 2005 (“Bush takes,” 2005), President George Bush admitted that “[m]any intelligence agencies judged that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction, and it’s true that much of the intelligence turned out to be wrong” (para.7). Nonetheless, he has consistently maintained that the war in Iraq was the right choice, that it has been liberated and that it is building democracy despite the fact that the country is in chaos after almost four years of occupation. Although the United States’ administration has presented a favourable perspective on the situation in Iraq and in Middle East, the fact remains that powerful states (namely, the U.S. and U.K.) invaded a powerless state (Iraq) causing the occupied people to resist their occupiers.

The argument presented in this thesis contends that new communication technologies are the major tools that occupied people use in their struggle against their occupiers. As these new communication technologies are used and implemented by counter Muslim media outlets the often contradictory, misleading and sometimes false nature of the United States’ media messages about its foreign policies are revealed to, and disseminated among, Muslims. This, it may be argued, has had the measurable effect of increasing hatred and distrust of the American government in the Muslim world. Put simply, in the Middle East and elsewhere, the presence of these technologies has enabled occupied peoples to present the case for their cause to their own audiences and others thereby reducing the influence of propaganda emanating from the occupying forces.

The theoretical context, the central question of the thesis, and the methods used

The conceptual framework for this thesis is developed from the literature on cultural/media imperialism. A dominant theme in this literature is the American corporations and administrations’ control, access and dominance over communication channels, enabling them to disseminate their ideas and values to the prejudice of others. As will be demonstrated, this claim is inadequate for understanding the media environment in the contemporary Muslim world. The emergence and use of new communication technologies has enabled Muslims to disseminate their own opinions and to promote them within their own cultural and religious context. As a result, these media are challenging American media supremacy by promoting and sustaining dissenting opinions among Muslim audiences.

The concept of ‘active audience’ versus ‘passive audience’ also is an integral element

of the argument presented in this thesis. Many American-originated communications in Muslim countries are immediately questioned by active Muslim audiences which, in turn, leads to overwhelming skepticism of almost everything associated with the American government. Consequently, it is extremely difficult for the American government to win Muslims' hearts and minds – an objective underlying much of its propaganda efforts in the region.

In this thesis Critical Discourse Analysis is used to investigate the relationship between the Muslim discourses and the context in which these discourses are structured. The thesis analyzes counter Muslim media news discourses and its audiences' opinions in order to identify Muslim perceptions of several conflicts including, the United States and its allies (called the coalition forces) wars against Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), the Iranian nuclear program, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and the broader ongoing tension between the United States government and the Muslim world since the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. These conflicts are examined through the lens of the counter Muslim media and audience discourses to identify the main factors underpinning the United States government's apparent failure to win Muslim hearts and minds. It should be noted from the outset that the excerpts from Arabic media sources presented throughout the thesis are translations that were made by the author.

For comparative purposes, the examination and analysis of these counter media discourses is juxtaposed against the publicized claims of the United States government regarding its actions and policies in these conflicts. The comparison reveals a major disparity between the two positions.

Ultimately, the thesis concludes that the American government's failure to 'win over' the Muslim world is not linked to a shortcoming in its access to and use of superior media technologies. It is argued that the failure is instead linked to other factors which are emphasized in the representative counter Muslim media and audience discourses. These factors are: (1) the United States government's lack of historical, religious, social and cultural knowledge of Muslim people, (2) its foreign policies toward Muslim and Arab countries, (3) the media strategies of the United States government, and (4) a power shift resulting from the proliferation of new communication technologies.

The plan of this thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the main argument, the context for the research question and the data sources used. The next chapter introduces the historical, religious, social and cultural background to the main conceptual problem this thesis is investigating – i.e. how and why the United States government has failed to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim world.

The discussion in the second chapter illustrates how an apparent lack of knowledge about the Muslim world has impeded the ability of the United States government to win hearts and minds in the Muslim world, and sets out the conceptual framework used for conducting the empirical component of the thesis. Chapter three outlines the method used for data collection and provides a rationale for the approach taken. Among other things, the discussion in this chapter demonstrates the particular efficacy of critical discourse analysis (CDA) for the task at hand.

In chapter four, attention is focused on Muslim perceptions, as reflected in the counter Muslim media, of American foreign policy in the Middle East and elsewhere. The discussion illustrates how specific actions and policies by the current administration have compromised U.S. credibility in the Muslim world and contributed to increased Muslim resentment of the United States government, and several of its Western counterparts, since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Chapter five examines American media strategies in the Muslim world. Here, the discussion centers on the ways in which new communication technologies have contributed to the empowering of the counter Muslim media and audience. It is argued that this power shift exacerbates the difficulties that the United States government must overcome if it is to successfully win Muslim hearts and minds.

The concluding chapter draws together the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical components of the thesis and addresses the key implications arising from the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Background, Literature Review, and Theoretical Context

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, it is difficult to find detailed studies of the American government's efforts to win hearts and minds that reflect Muslim perspectives. A majority of studies in this domain address the media's role in the First Gulf War (1991) and assert the success of the American administration's media use in that conflict.⁵

The American administration's dominance of media might be conceded if one speaks about its success in using media throughout the Second Gulf War to persuade the American audience. Indeed, it may be argued that the strategies and slogans relating to the war on Iraq used by the administration of George W. Bush (e.g. emphasizing the need to fight a war against terrorism, and fostering fear of further attacks among the American people) helped to keep him in power for a second term in 2004. However, the apparent success in persuading the American people has not been replicated among Muslim audiences. As is discussed in this chapter, this failure is a product of the misgivings that many Muslims have about U.S. foreign policy.

Historically, there has been massive distrust of American foreign policies in the Muslim world, a state of affairs that appears to be overlooked in many Western-based analyses of American media strategies in the Muslim world. In order to understand the influence of U.S. foreign policy on the shaping of Muslim perspectives, an examination of the historical, religious, social, and cultural background of Muslim people and the American government's policies and actions directed toward them is undertaken in this chapter.

⁵ See, for example, Baudrillard's (1995) *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, MacArthur's (1992) *Second Front: Censorship and Propaganda in the Gulf War*, and Daniels' (Daniels, 2005) documentary film *Enemy Image* where they assert the United States dominance of media/information warfare in both First and Second Gulf Wars (1991 and 2003-present). Moreover, see United States Government Accountability Office's (GAO) report (May 3, 2006) titled "U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Persistent Challenges" where the report identifies what kinds of American public diplomacy strategies worked and what did not work in the Muslim world in particular after the 9/11 attacks of the World Trade Centre.

An immature plan

According to Howard (2004), the American government's actions and foreign policy toward Iraq and, the Middle East, more broadly, reveal a lack of understanding of Middle Eastern Muslim people and their historical, religious, social and cultural backgrounds. This lack of understanding, he claims can be seen in the extent to which the current administration's foreign policy rests on false evidence that seeks to personalize conflicts in the region. For example, he highlights the contradiction between the claims of the United States government that capturing Saddam Hussein would bring stability to Iraq and the actual increase in attacks against American troops and interests in the region following his capture and, more recently, his execution. The effort to personalize the conflict by linking it to a few individuals (e.g. Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden) he avers is evidence of a desire by the Bush administration to realize its goals through the use of power (i.e. pre-emptive strikes, invasion, and economic sanctions).

This view is supported by other observers of the Middle East such as Noam Chomsky and Jason Burke who also have concluded that the American government has failed to understand the complex dynamics of the Arab and Muslim world.⁶ In an interview conducted in 2004 by the co-editor of *Left Hook*, M. Junaid Alam, Noam Chomsky asserts that terrorism in Middle East, Arab and Muslim world "doesn't come out of nowhere" (last second para.). The reason terrorism is so rampant in these regions, Chomsky points out, is rooted in the United States government's double standard policies toward this region's people. According to Chomsky, these "policies have been crushing them for years" (para.54) with successive U.S. administrations having supported dictatorships in most Middle Eastern Arab and Muslim countries.

Moreover, as Chomsky illustrates, Arabs and Muslims have been witnessing various American administrations' unconditional support of Israel which, for more than fifty years, has been occupying Palestinian land and suppressing the Palestinian people. He argues that Arabs, Muslims, and other ethnic and religious groups in the Middle East "don't hate our [the American] freedom ... what they hate is US policies" (para.54).

Tracing the American government's policies toward Middle Eastern nations back to

⁶ Moreover, Chomsky and other Arab and Muslim observers assert that the American administration does not seem inclined to learn.

the Eisenhower presidency, Chomsky points out that a 1958 study commissioned by Eisenhower, of the reasons behind Arab and Muslim animosity toward the United States which noted that:⁷

it's [Arab and Muslim animosity toward the U.S.] because there's a perception in the Arab [world] that the United States supports brutal and repressive regimes and blocks democracy and development, and we [the Americans] do it because we want to control of oil and resources-their oil. (para.53)

Chomsky then goes on to say that, "they [the Americans] went on to say, yes the perception's accurate, and we're going to continue doing it" (para.53)

His observation suggests that the American government's stated policies are a façade for controlling the region and subjugating its people to American interests. More importantly, these policies imply a lack of willingness, or desire, to understand the roots of the conflicts in the region from an Arab and/or Muslim perspective.⁸

Echoing the Chomsky's claim that Muslims are not opposed to Western democracy, Burke (2003) asserts that the on-going violence in the Middle Eastern region is directly linked to profound factors that are rooted in this region's cultures and history.⁹ He argues that "the war against Saddam [Hussein] was unwelcome diversion that has had strongly negative results overall" (para.6). The 'negative results' of which Burke writes are the creation of 'good material' for those who see the West as the main enemy who controlled them and who for a long time have been opposed to "prosperity in the Islamic world" (para.7). Elaborating further on this point, he notes that:

The Islamic militants see their struggle [with West] as a defensive one. They believe that they are resisting a tradition of belligerence and aggression by the West that goes back to the Crusades. Unfortunately, attacking ... two Islamic nations [Afghanistan and Iraq] in the space of two years, one of which [Iraq] is the cultural heart of many Muslims' and Arabs' cultural identity ... is going to provide evidence for those who believe in that world view. (para.7)

⁷ President Eisenhower's concerns parallel those of the current Bush administration in terms of questioning, 'if we are so good, why do they hate us?'

⁸ If one assumes that the American administration is sincere in its expressed desire to bring about positive changes to Muslim world, successfully doing so would require a deeper understanding of the region and its people.

⁹ This does not imply that this region's people are violent in nature or that violence is embedded in their values.

Throughout Islamic and Arabic history Iraq was and continues to be considered the Arab and Muslim peoples' cultural pride. Iraq and its capital city of Baghdad were widely seen as the centers of Islamic and Arabic culture, sciences, and religion.¹⁰ During the reign of Saddam Hussein Iraq became the center of Arab nationalism, with Saddam being seen as the symbol and the leader of Arab nationalism.

Muslim fundamentalists and most of Arab nationalists share the view that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was an attack on Arab and Muslim people's culture and identity and, as such, the resistance of such occupation as their natural responsibility. The apparent failure of the United States government to take seriously the possibility of fierce resistance to its occupation, whether by Arab nationalists or Muslim fundamentalists, suggests that American officials did not give sufficient consideration to Arabs' and Muslims' history, religion, culture, and mentality.

Many political analysts, particularly those of Arabic descent, consider the present American administration's foreign diplomacy in the Middle East to be a failure. According to these analysts, the American administration is ignoring the real problems in the region focusing, instead, on its interests and those of its allies in the region (i.e. Israel and corrupt, undemocratic Muslim regimes).

For example, many Arab analysts writing in the counter Muslim media saw the outcome of the 2005 visit of the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes, to some Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) as a failure. There was virtually unanimous agreement in the elite Arab media organs that by focusing primarily on efforts to repair America's damaged image in Arab and Muslim world Hughes did not touch upon, or discuss, the real problems in the Middle East created by the actions of United States government and its allies in the region (i.e. American-led Iraq and Afghanistan invasions and the Israeli government's aggression against the Palestinians).

For example, commenting on these events, the editor-in-chief of the Egyptian government's newspaper *Algomhuria*, Mohammad Ali Ibrahim (2005), wrote:

We, in Egypt or in any other place [Saudi Arabia and Turkey in this instance] do

¹⁰ Arabic and Islamic power and civilization reached its peak in Iraq, with Baghdad city its center, during the Muslim Abbasid dynasty (749-1258 A.D.)

not need a public relation campaign which America administrates ...and the Egyptians or the Saudis or the Turks won't love America suddenly just because it built a television station or a radio station 'Radio SAWA and Alhurra TV [the free one satellite TV]' ... maybe Arabs' feelings [toward America] will change if America changes its way of treating [the people in the region] totally (para.8).

Writing in *Alhayat*, a leading Arab newspaper published in London, England, Alshiryar (2005) expressed a similar view noting that:

Washington knows very well that the most important condition for its public relation policy success [in the Middle East] is the removal of [the real] reasons of the conflict [between the United States and Muslims] rather than renovating [the conflict's] impacts, and without doubt, its present public relations diplomacy campaign will not help [America] under the continuation of its imperialistic policy by which it only wants to soften or justify or change the damages [it] caused for Middle Easterners (para5).

Alshiryar then went on to elaborate on the means to be used by the American administration to change its treatment and its policies toward Middle Easterners by suggesting that:

The Arab officials whom Mrs. Hughes have met and will meet are totally convinced that in order to change the American Administration face [in the region,] [America] needs, before words, to implement missions on the ground. [A]mong [these missions are the] the need for the U.S. to pull out the American and the British invasion forces from Iraq, do not play [with] and change the political and sectarian combination of Iraq, distinguish between terrorism and resisting the occupation, ... and to stop its prostitution support of Israeli barbarism [against Palestinians], and to stop provoking [others] against Arabs and Muslims. And without serious steps at this level, America's nice face, which [used to be] a symbol of freedom and respecting human [rights] and justice, will become more ugly, and this ugly policy will create a behavior [or reactions] more uglier than it, and terrorism will change from a temporary impulse in Arabs' and Muslims' history into long era only God knows when and how it will end (para.5).

Abdulbari Atwan (2005), the editor-in-chief of *Alquds Alarabi*, another London-based Arab newspaper, summarized Arab sentiment on American foreign policy in the Middle East in the light of Hughes' visit as follows:

We do not want to give lessons to the American Administration about the beautification of its image [in the region] for it has many Arab and non-Arab experts [who work in the American public diplomacy], and in any case it will not

consider our opinion or others' opinion [who are] just like us, otherwise, it would not be trapped in its war in Iraq which will be the beginning of the end of the collapsing of the American empire, ... [W]hat we want to say is that the problem is not in the seller [Hughes selling the American Administration's policies to Arabs and other nations in Middle East] but in the merchandise [the American policy itself which Hughes wants to sell]. In the American case, the two disasters complete each other, the merchandise is rotten and the seller is ignorant. [The seller] does not know very well the targeted people [Arabs and Muslims] and believes that [her] rotten merchandise is good and she can sell it and here lies the big disaster (p.1).

Taken as a whole, the above comments are reflective of the views expressed in many daily Muslim media organs and highlight the perceived shortcomings of the American administration's policies in the Muslim world as expressed in the leading counter Muslim media.

American Soft Power: Success or Failure?

Many media studies dealing with the First and the Second Gulf Wars emphasize the United States' total control and dominance of media. A key theme in much of this work is that since the Vietnam War, the control of information coming directly from the battlefield by government and military officials has given the American public a manicured version of events on the ground.

Many media studies dealing with the First Gulf War (1991) focus on how the United States government and the Pentagon were determined to control and manipulate the media in order to meet their desired goals. To this end, many authors assert that the success of the American propaganda strategies implemented during the First Gulf War relate foremost to the 'selling' of the war to the American audience. With the exception of Jowett (2003) who asserts that the long-term impact of the American government's First Gulf War propaganda techniques are unknown, these studies however, barely touch upon the impacts of the American media strategies on the Muslim audiences.¹¹

For example, MacArthur (1992) shows how the Pentagon, during the First Gulf War, manipulated facts and fabricated lies that were marketed through media in order to sell the war to the American public. He notes that the United States government not only muzzled "the media during wartime ... [but it also used] the media to start a war" (p.37)

¹¹ This, points to the need for examining the impact of the United States government's media strategies in the Muslim world.

against Saddam Hussein.¹² He argues that prior to the 1991 Gulf War the Bush [Senior Bush] Administration was determined to use media as an important tool in its war against Saddam Hussein and thus “[t]he war had to be sold” (p.42). Among the lies used to sell the war that MacArthur debunks is the fabricated story of Iraqi soldiers removing hospitalized Kuwaiti babies from incubators that had been used to gain support for the First Gulf War.¹³

According to MacArthur, the American administration’s task was to sell an ‘ugly’ image of their enemy and a ‘handsome’ image of the Kuwaitis to the American mainstream media in order to present two starkly different images to the American public. The Kuwaiti babies story, and other stories like it, were fabricated stories; they worked and “the media bought [and promoted them]” (p.67). One concludes from MacArthur’s argument that although these stories appeared to be fabricated lies, they were nevertheless effective before and during the war in persuading the American people to rally together against a common enemy.

A similar idea is presented in Mark Daniels (2005) documentary film, *Enemy Image*. Like MacArthur, Daniels asserts that successive United States administrations have controlled and manipulated media and fabricated stories to meet their objectives in every military campaign since the Vietnam War. One example exposed by Daniels is the myth of rescuing Private Jessica Lang during the Second Gulf War (2003). In his film, Daniels illustrates that even when it was discovered that Jessica’s story was a fabrication the myth had infiltrated the minds of many Americans.

Both MacArthur (1992) and Daniels (2005) point out that the idea of almost totally controlling and censoring media and journalists was revived by American officials in the light of claims that the media’s access to the battlefield had contributed to the United States losing the Vietnam War. In the post-Vietnam period, American officials became convinced that the “uncensored American press had ‘lost’ the Vietnam War by

¹² MacArthur also notes the tendency by the Pentagon and the American mainstream media to downplay the fact that the United States had been Saddam’s ally in the war with Iran (1980-1988).

¹³ This story was the product of a planned public relations media event sponsored by the administration of George Bush Senior to gain support for an attack on Iraq in response to Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait. The story was told by a young girl who claimed that she had witnessed Iraqi soldiers taking hospitalised Kuwaiti babies from their incubators, throwing them on floor and leaving them to die. It later emerged that the person making these claims was Kuwaiti ambassador’s daughter in Washington and that she had not been in Kuwait at the time of the Iraqi invasion.

demoralizing the public with unpleasant news” (p.113). This led to a belief in many quarters that planning, managing, and controlling media must accompany the military action because dominant military force alone is not sufficient to win a war. In response, successive United States administrations sought to control and censor the media in their subsequent wars with other nations (e.g. US invasion of Grenada in October 1983, Panama in December 1989, and the First and the Second Gulf Wars).

Taylor (1998) also claims that during the First Gulf War (1991) the United States administration had total control over war-related communication, with American officials being almost the only source for information. He writes:

Despite the existence of well over a thousand journalists in the Gulf from a wide variety of news-gathering organizations with differing editorial styles and journalistic practices, they were all essentially dependent upon the coalition military for their principal source of information about the progress of the war. It was monopoly in the guise of pluralism (p.268).

It is understood that during the First Gulf War this ‘monopoly in the guise of pluralism’ was achieved “by the coalition’s media arrangements” (p.266) in which information was provided by briefings from military officials and pool journalists¹⁴ whose activities were controlled by the coalition forces.

Baroody (1998) echoes Taylor’s conclusion that the First Gulf War “formed the apogee of ‘media imperialism’ because of the ability the Western media [had] through superior technology to control the international communications systems and drive the Western military message home across the globe” (p.190).

Baudrillard (1995) relates the American triumph in the First Gulf War (1991) to the fact that the Americans fought the war with their super technology on the ground and in the air without even encountering the Iraqis face-to-face. The American government, he claims, won the war in media; on the television screens as CNN conveyed to the American public the United States’ air attacks against the Iraqis (almost with no casualties) and portrayed these attacks as clean strikes with no casualties of real war on real ground. This leads Baudrillard to call the First Gulf War a ‘virtual’ or ‘fake war’.

¹⁴ During the early stages of the Second Gulf War (2003 – Present) embedded journalists were a key source of information from the battlefield.

While these studies highlight the American government's ability to control the media during the First Gulf War and to manipulate and shape American public opinion, the case in the Muslim world is different. Whereas the American administration's media warfare efforts during the 'fake' First Gulf War successfully conveyed an image of a romantic, righteous war that was fought with smart weapons to liberate a free nation (i.e. Kuwait) from a brutal dictator, the same cannot be said of the Second Gulf War.

Unlike the First Gulf War against Iraq, in the Second Gulf War the American government is losing battles on the ground and in its media warfare against Iraqis and Muslims. Whereas the 'fake' war was won in six weeks, the Second Gulf War is completing its fourth year.¹⁵ Moreover, American troops are having to contend with strong resistance, are battling the Iraqis face-to-face and appear to be losing control on the ground. Iraq's situation is chaotic and heading towards catastrophe. Put simply, this is not a 'fake' war fought and won primarily by superior technology without facing the enemy. It is a war that is all too real.

Most of the wars fought among human beings are based on myths. Almost all non-mythical wars are lost wars because "in mythic war we imbue events with meanings they do not have" (Hedges, 2002, p.21). As Hedges notes, wars that "lose their mythic stature for the public, such as Korea Vietnam, are doomed to failure, for war is exposed for what it is-organized murder" (p.21). After their success in the First Gulf War, American officials sought to instill the Second Gulf War with myths.

However, American media technologies no longer hold superiority over Muslim media with regard to creating agendas. The Second Gulf War has been characterized by the relative inability of the United States government and military to exert a level of information control akin to what has previously been the case. While the key media organs established, funded and/or supported by the American administration (i.e. *Alhurra* TV, *Aliraqiya* TV, radio *Sawa*, and *Alsabah* newspaper) have tried to sell and promote the American government's myths, the counter Muslim media (private and state-

¹⁵ President George W. Bush announced in a speech on May 01, 2003 (after 40 days of the beginning of the Second Gulf War which started on March 20, 2003) the total victory on Iraq and a controversial banner behind him read: "Mission Accomplished" while he was announcing the United States victory (Bush, 2003). In fact, as the events show, the war did not end at that date. Contrary to what Bush claimed, the war is continuing and in fact the American-led troops, since that date, have lost more casualties than they did before that date.

controlled) has successfully exposed these myths to mass audiences by highlighting, and critiquing American government's double-standard policies in the region.

To this end, the principle of freedom of expression appears to have worked against American media policy in Iraq and in the Middle East region more broadly. According to Hasan Al-alawi¹⁶ (Al-Baghdadi, 2005), the Americans in Iraq are surrounded by about seven hundred hours of daily broadcasting by Arab satellite televisions which oppose the American government's policies and actions in Middle East. In addition to these satellite television broadcasts, in post-war Iraq there are hundreds of daily and weekly newspapers that were established under the American slogans such as 'building new democratic Iraq,' and 'the freedom of expression'. This state of affairs, he claims, has effectively countered American media policies in Iraq leading him to conclude that, "the Arab media, first time in the modern time, had triumphed over the American media" (para.3, 5).

Such a triumph could not have been realized if Muslim media organs did not utilize new communication technologies.¹⁷ Access to, and use of these technologies has enabled Muslims to establish their own advanced media networks that are capable of reaching vast audiences and of promoting their own messages among Muslims. During the last three years there have been tremendous opportunities for alternative media organs and the independent journalists to convey alternative images and stories of war than those preferred by American officials.

As a result, the American government's media warfare strategies have not been able to effectively compete with the most popular Arab and Muslim media networks such as the *Aljazeera*, *Alarabiya*, *Abu Dhabi*, *Alalem* satellite television stations and countless newspapers and websites. These Muslim media organs are playing an important role in shaping Muslim public opinion by conveying a different perspective on the conflicts between the United States' government and the Muslim world.

Literature Review and Theoretical Context

The theoretical context for this thesis is rooted in the notion of cultural imperialism. This concept emphasizes the United States' and, more broadly, the West's control over

¹⁶ Hasan Al-alawi is a veteran Iraqi journalist and politician who worked for Saddam Hussein until 1980 as a media advisor and who, subsequently, joined the Iraqi opposition.

¹⁷ This issue is addressed in more detail in Chapter 5.

information flows and its ability to impose and promote its ideas and values on Third World or developing countries. However, the notion of cultural imperialism is often criticized on the grounds that the United States is not the only country that controls global media. For example, McPhail (2002) points out that there are several other giant media controllers around the world besides the United States and that “the media corporations are from various nation-states [and] they work in different languages with different interests and strategies, rather than promoting a simplistic” American perspective (p.72).

Through the use of advanced communication technologies (e.g. satellite TVs and Internet) broadcasters in developing countries are now able to send their messages to developed countries.¹⁸ As McPhail (2002) notes, with the amalgamation of the giant media corporations from different countries of the world since late 1980s (such as the Japanese Sony Corporation’s acquisition of US Columbia Pictures in 1988) the “problem became a transnational issue rather than a purely” an issue of American control of media around the world (p.73).

Since the main goal of these transnational media and culture producers is to make more profits by reaching wider audiences, they produce different cultural products that are demanded by different audiences. In the light of the emergence of transnational media corporations, opponents of American cultural imperialism have created their own media outlets to promote their own values and ideas and to reach audiences all around the world. For example, *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* satellite television stations reach diverse audiences around the world.

In addition, new communication technologies (e.g. the Internet and other digital communication technologies) are helping people to evade censorship and control, thereby enabling different groups to promote their ideas without temporal or physical impediments. Because of these new communication technologies, audiences “are increasingly more aware of what is happening elsewhere” around the world (Williams, 2003, p.213). Given these changes mass communication scholars have started to question

¹⁸ Although there is nothing particularly ‘new’ about satellite television in the West, the launching of satellite television channels in the Arab/Muslim world can be considered as entailing the diffusion and use of new communication technologies. With the exception of MBC and *Aljazeera* that were established in 1992 and 1996 respectively, the availability and popularity of satellite broadcasting in the Arab world did not ‘take-off’ until after 2001.

the efficacy of the notion of cultural imperialism concept.

Whereas cultural imperialism implies the one-way flow of information from the centre (e.g. from the United States) to peripherals (e.g. Third World Countries), the notion of digitally-mediated globalization emphasizes “the capacity of audiences to engage in two-way communication via the interactivity of technologies such as the Internet, e-mail and the World Wide Web as well as the growth of information exchange between peoples across national boundaries outside the control of the nation-state” (Williams, 2003, p.223).

Globalization captures a very significant process in the contemporary Muslim world. Two-way communication allows information exchange at a breadth hitherto unknown. For example, although the situation in Iraq has become disastrous, Iraqis are able to access and use new media technologies and to access other media sources around the world. About four years after the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the Iraqis have started to establish their own media, to some degree, and to express their own ideas about the situation in their country and the world. Moreover, Iraqis are now able to receive other ideas and views via satellite television and Internet.

Although the United States government tries to control media in post-war Iraq, the widespread use of new communication technologies by the Iraqi people has worked against these strategies.¹⁹ One of the dilemmas for the United States government lies in how these technologies have fundamentally changed the lives of Iraqis. On the one hand, as the United States prepared to invade Iraq, its officials claimed to be bringing freedom (freedom of expression among other kinds of freedoms). On the other hand, this freedom, the freedom of expression associated with using new communication technologies, is creating problems in terms of the ability to control what American officials call hostile information.

The journalist citizens

Modern communication technologies have opened the doors for audiences to express themselves and to reach others with their ideas thereby transforming users into producers and consumers of information. This appears to contradict the view of audiences as

¹⁹ If there have been any positive changes in Iraq since Saddam Hussein’s removal this, to a certain degree, is one of them.

passive receivers of information; a concept that is central to notions of cultural imperialism. Although cultural imperialism advocates assert that the new communication technologies serve the interests of giant cultural corporations and governments,²⁰ these technologies have also helped to create citizen journalists. This is due to the widespread use of the Internet which has helped users (the citizens) to create and use their own media products and to interact with others. In other words, users become generators of the content they consume.

The creation of blogs and video blogs are examples of how citizens have become journalists. Moreover, the Internet helped to create countless alternative daily journals and newspaper sites where citizens publish their own news and editorials which often are not reflected in mainstream media. The Muslim world is no exception. Realizing this new environment, traditional media organs, particularly newspapers, have expanded spaces for their audiences to post ideas and comments about issues and events, especially in their web-based editions.

Alkhazen (2006a), a veteran Arab journalist who has a daily column in one of the most popular Arabic newspapers, *Alhayat*, compares the old ways of journalism to the new ones and writes that:

The [appearance of] Arabic satellite televisions in 1990s has lifted the freedom's roof, and its dissemination coincided with the rise of the Internet, and the censor could not control neither this [the satellite televisions] nor that [the Internet] as it [the censor] easily used to control the traditional media organs (para.2).

Alkhazen discusses the role of blogs and says that “as a new or as an alternative journalism which defies the censor, [blogs] publish things which we could not think [or dare] to publish a decade or two decades ago” (para.2). He notes that the Internet broke

20 In *The Internet Galaxy*, Manuel Castells (2002) discussing Lawrence Lessig's claim, which appears in Lessig's *Code and Other Laws of Cyberspace*, points out that controlling of Internet, for example, “is a direct result of its commercialization” (p.170). This, according to Castells, makes it possible to develop “new software architectures to control computer communication (p.170). Castells also illustrates that “[g]overnments around the world both support these technologies of surveillance [control] and eagerly adopt them to claim back some of the power they were losing” (pp.170-171). It is obvious that the controllers (i.e. corporations and particularly the governments) have lost some of their power with the appearance of the new communication technologies and, unlike as usual, it is them, the corporations and the governments, who are struggling to claim some of their powers which they lost to people (citizens). This battle for liberty, Castells illustrates, continues. Castells indicates that though “[t]he Internet is no longer a free realm, but neither has it fulfilled the Orwellian prophecy. It is a contested terrain, where the new, fundamental battle for freedom in the Information Age is being fought” (p.171).

the censor's chains and gave Arab audiences a great opportunity to be in touch with the world, and that blogs "have created a generation of 'journalist citizens' who communicate with each other, establish spontaneous conversation conferences, and reach their ideas to any corner of the world where there are people who care about their ideas" (para.3).

Despite the role of blogs, Alkhazen notes that governments can censor some of these blogs. Yet, meanwhile, the bloggers can find new technical ways to come back once again (para.4). Thus, new communication technologies continue to guarantee, to some degree, opportunities for citizens to express their own ideas and to create alternative media despite lacking the credibility and responsibility of traditional media. However, the key issue is not whether these new media outlets are totally reliable. The important thing is that they are new, alternative media that citizens can, and do, use to express and disseminate their own ideas.

Jo Twist (2006) of BBC online concurs with Alkhazen's ideas about the role of new communication technologies in creating a new, alternative media by and for citizens. Twist observes that "[t]welve months ago, it was clear the mass consumer was going to have at his or her disposal many more gadgets with greater capacity to record, store and share content" (para.2) and that "people started to challenge those who traditionally provide us with content, be it news, music, or movies" (para.3). Thus, with the aide of such new communication technologies "[t]he consumer was turning into citizen with meaningful role to play" (para.5).

Twist points out that these new tools have more advantages than the well-established traditional, mainstream media organs in that they can be on-the-spot and capture events as they are happening. For example, Twist points out that the "tsunami of 2004 starkly showed the potential of these tools. Most of the memories of that day have been graphically captured, replayed and played again, making the event much more immediate and personal" (para.6).²¹ Twist also notes that "the 7 July London bombings and the hurricanes in the US [2005] forced home the fact that citizens had a much larger role in the production of news than ever before" (para.7).

²¹ See, for example, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) *Fifth Estate's* documentary *Tsunami: Untold stories* (Studer, 2005). This documentary film is highly dependent on footage shot by people vacationing on the spot.

What enhances the use of these technologies by citizens, as one infers from Twist's claims, is that these new communication tools are very cheap when compared to mainstream media costs. For example, an individual can purchase his or her entire editing software and conduct the whole editing process on their home computer without needing the entire complicated, huge, and expensive machines of film studios. Likewise, the creation of smaller and more accurate high definition (HD) and cheaper cameras enables individuals to shoot their own footage at low cost.

The use of new communication technologies has been growing in the Muslim world since the middle of the 1990s, when new satellite television stations established themselves. More recently, the use of the Internet has been spreading all around the Middle East. Despite censorship by Muslim states, Muslim citizens have succeeded in establishing alternative media outlets, in part, by creating new, daily opinion and news discourse sites and blogs. Moreover, many Muslim traditional daily, weekly, and periodical publications now have online editions that can be read by citizens.²²

As will be discussed later in this thesis, the opponents of the Iraq war, including the insurgents, are able to counter the potential influence of the United States media by making use of such inexpensive new communication technologies.

“You are what you watch” or “watch what you are”?

The idea ‘you are what you watch’ suggests the influence of imposed ideologies and values of capitalists who control the mass media that is emphasized by cultural imperialism advocates. It implies that controllers of the media try to create, disseminate, and sustain a general consent among the public which, in turn, will serve the controllers’ interests (Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

This idea might be valid in the Western context, but it is reversed in the Muslim world, where most people suffer from colonial-like control. People in the Muslim world, who are oppressed by neo-colonialists and by dictators, struggle to express themselves. They try to convey their voices and want to be heard as well as wanting their voices to be heard. This is to say that they want to hear and watch themselves. They are not, for the most part, what they watch or hear. In other words, although these Muslims are exposed

²² Their hard copies were banned in many different Muslim countries.

to certain values and ideologies be it those of colonialists' or their rulers', they want to hear and watch their own voices and images in media.

What works in the West to create and sustain general consent among people will not work in the Muslim world because the historical, cultural, religious, social and political conditions in the Muslim world differ fundamentally from those in the West. Without understanding these conditions and taking them in consideration, the United States government's propaganda strategies, which are designed to serve their interests, cannot, and will not, succeed in the Muslim world. In the Muslim world, American efforts to control information flows and to denigrate their opponents' ideas and opinions are doomed to failure.

The United States government was largely successful in winning the hearts and minds of American citizens in terms of getting the public to rallying behind its policies towards, and actions against, the Muslims in the First Gulf War (1991), the Afghanistan War (2001), and the Second Gulf War (2003). However, this is not the case vis-à-vis attempts to win Muslim hearts and minds. The majority of Muslims' opinions, as reflected in the counter Muslim media, about the United States' involvement in the latter conflicts do not appear to be influenced and/or shaped by American dominancy over media and information. There are several different historical, cultural, religious, social, and political factors that shape Muslim public opinion.

After the September 11, 2001 attacks of the World Trade Center in New York, Muslims, in particular, started obtaining and using new communication technologies to counter the American government's propaganda and to build their own counter-propaganda machine. This points to the need for examining Muslim audiences and the Muslim media's role in creating their own meanings and messages about the American government's policies and actions in the Muslim world.

“Active audience” versus “Cultural imperialism”

Since its development in late 1960s the notion of cultural imperialism has been referred to in different ways including, 'neo-colonialism,' 'soft imperialism,' economic imperialism,' media imperialism,' 'structural imperialism,' 'cultural independency,' and 'ideological imperialism' (Rauschenberger, 2003). During the 1970s, the concept of cultural imperialism gained popularity among the United Nations' Third World members

and the former communist block and contributed to the establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which dealt with the issue of information flows from developed countries to developing countries (Rauschenberger, 2003; Roach, 1997; White, 2000).

Although it is defined in a variety of ways, the most widely accepted and frequently used definition of cultural imperialism draws on Herbert Schiller's (1976) definition which defines the concept as:

the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of dominating center of the system (p. 9).

According to this definition, cultural imperialism means that the dominate centre (i.e. Western countries and, particularly, the United States) attract or pressure government officials, business people, and intellectuals in lesser developed countries to accept and promote Western values and culture. While audience passivity is a prominent feature of cultural imperialism, active audience theorists emphasize, conversely, the role of the audience in not accepting and believing everything directed at them by the dominant media. Active audience theory focuses on how audiences generate meanings from different media texts by emphasizing "what [the] audiences do with the media" (Williams, 2003) rather than what the media do to the audiences. In other words, active audience theorists view audiences as capable of creating their own meanings from media texts – print, audio, visual texts – and of interpreting them in accordance with their interests and beliefs.

Two major questions have plagued media theorists throughout media history and have led to different approaches to media analysis: what effects do media have on the audiences and what do audiences do with media? Williams (2003) draws a broad and general distinction between these two approaches.

Starting from the early twentieth century, Williams lists media theories under two major categories: media effects theories and audience and reception theories. Media effects theories are further divided into two categories: direct effects theories and limited effects theories. The direct effects theories were shaped by Lasswell's hypodermic needle

theory which emphasizes omnipotent media effects on audiences. It presents audiences as “passive recipients of media messages, with little or no say in how they interpret them” (p. 172). The limited effects theories, such as Lazarsfeld’s two-step model, distanced itself from Lasswell’s hypodermic needle model to emphasize the opinion leaders’ role in influencing audiences. The two-step model asserted the role of elites who are respected by people and who “pay more attention to the media and transmit what they learn to others whom they can influence through personal contact” (p. 175). It is clear that this model also implies that the audience is passive; they just receive mediated information twice removed.

Unsatisfied with the two-step model, most researchers of limited media effects adopted the uses and gratifications theories which claimed that audiences sought to satisfy their own individual needs and desires when using media. A shift from perceiving the audience as passive to active was made here. According to this model, the audience plays a role in how media messages are received. The emphasis “shifted from what the media do to people to what people do with the media” (Williams, 2003, p. 177). However, uses and gratifications theory also was criticized for emphasizing individualistic needs and desires of the audiences. Critics saw it as missing or neglecting the broad social dimension of media effects on audiences (p. 178). This challenged researchers to create and adopt new approaches to examine media effects in a broader social context. Cultural effects theories emerged as a result.

Cultural effects theories (mainly Marxist oriented) emphasize the role of media in helping dominant and powerful groups to impose and sustain their ideologies among people. It is within this paradigm that cultural imperialism theory enjoyed popularity especially in 1970s, as it claimed that the powerful Western values and ideas (culture in general), particularly those of the United States, dominated the developing countries. Cultural imperialism was criticized by some cultural effects theorists and by active audience advocates alike for overestimating the dominance of one single power (i.e. the United States) over other nations (i.e. the Third World countries) and for neglecting the role of audiences in creating their own meanings from media texts and interpreting them according to their beliefs and values, thereby, rejecting or resisting the powerful groups’ messages and ideologies structured in the texts.

According to Williams, it is important to understand how media ideologically function “rather than conceptuali[zing] the media as acting as tools of the class that owns and controls them, and serving the interests of this class” (p. 52). Now, media “are seen as sites of struggle between competing ideas and interests” (p. 52), rather than being only sites of controlling ruling class ideas.

Within the cultural effects tradition of research, Hall paid particular attention to the role of audience in negotiating message meanings. According to Stevenson (2002), Hall re-conceptualized “the dominant role played by media messages” (p.41). He places emphasis on the arbitrary or diverse meanings of media messages and resistant readings of these messages (Stevenson, 2002). Hall distinguishes between ‘encoding’ or how the media construct their messages and what they intend to convey to audiences and ‘decoding’ or how audiences (according to their values, beliefs, social positions etc.) read messages and construct their own meanings from media messages. According to Hall, media messages can be read in three different ways: “A *dominant hegemonic* reading interprets the text in terms of the preferred meaning suggested by the message” (p. 42) where the audience mainly accepts the message, a *negotiated code* reading where the audience agrees, to some degree, with the message but meanwhile has their reservation or some disagreement with the message, and an *oppositional* reading where the audience rejects the message (Stevenson, p. 42; Williams, 2003, p. 196).

It is this rejection, resistance, or opposition to the dominant reading by audiences that ‘active audience’ advocates emphasize, distancing themselves from media effects theorists. According to active audience theorists, audiences are not raw or passive individuals who accept whatever the dominant groups tell them. For example, Roach (1997) states that “the research in cultural studies represented by adherents of the ‘active audience’ theory and the ‘resistance’ of audiences was in opposition to some of the basic tenets of cultural imperialism” (p. 52). The adherents of ‘active audience’ theory, according to Roach, argued that audiences are in fact capable of producing their own meanings from media messages and thus refuted “the central idea of domination through Western culture” (p. 52). He points out that ‘active audience’ and ‘resistance’ theory adherents such as John Fiske and Larry Grossberg challenged and invalidated cultural imperialism’s assumption of ‘dominant ideology’ (p. 50).

Roach also emphasizes that the notion of 'active' audience emerged against cultural imperialism's 'passive' notion of the audience and Western (particularly the United States) domination of the Third World.²³ He supports the view that there is no one dominant or "one grand, totalizing interpretation ('metanarrative') of media messages" and that media messages are polysemic (multi-meanings) and asserts "that audiences are free and able to construct their own meanings from media messages independent of structural influence (for example, ownership and production patterns)" (p. 51).

Several authors maintain that audiences have a role in challenging intended messages in media texts. Fiske (1991), for example, examines the audience's ability to choose relevant media texts and to produce its own meanings from chosen texts. The audience, Fiske asserts, does not consume messages indiscriminately. If the product or message is not relevant, it cannot be consumed. For example, he points out that films, "with major stars, huge budgets, and expensive marketing still fail at box office" and that four "out of five new prime time TV shows, carefully researched and expensively produced, will be axed before the end of the season" (p.103).

Media texts and their messages' relevancy to the audience play a great role in how media affect the audience and how the audience makes their interpretations and meanings from these messages. No matter how media messages are structured or what owners intend from their structuring of messages, the audience still functions as agents in decoding and extracting their own meanings from these messages. Fiske, for example, asserts that the "social relevance is far more powerful than [the] textual structure" (p. 105) in audiences' choice and interpretation of media messages. Other factors such as politics, religion, and culture are also instrumental in how the media influence audiences. These factors create certain sets of beliefs and values in certain audiences in certain situations and contexts.

The role of active audience in creating meaning and interpreting messages structured in texts is evident in several audience studies. One of the first and most influential

²³ As an example cultural imperialism's 'passive' notion of the audience, Roach mentions "Tapio Varis's influential summary of the 1980s television flow study done for UNESCO in 1980s" (p. 50) which indicated that "most countries [mainly Third World countries] are *passive* recipients of information disseminated by a few other countries [Western countries]" (p. 50, quoted from Varis, 1990: 33; emphasis added by Roach).

audience research studies was conducted by Morley and Brunson (Stevenson, 2002; Williams, 2003), who examined the content of a famous BBC news program in the 1970s and “interviewed groups of people from different social, cultural and educational backgrounds to see how they interpreted what they had seen in the programmes they were shown” (Williams, p. 196). The results of this study were that different groups interpreted the messages in different ways (p. 197). Another widely cited ‘active audience’ study was conducted by Ien Ang, based on the famous American television program *Dallas*. Quoted in Williams (2003), her hypothesis was that “people actively and creatively make their own meanings and create their own culture [from the cultural products], rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed on them” (p. 199).

The role of cultural heritage, values and beliefs in people’s and/or societies’ creation of meanings from media’s messages and resistance to certain messages is also evident in a research conducted in Third World countries. Focusing on South Asian countries, Chadha and Kavoori (2000) examined the extent to which Asian media systems are overrun and overwhelmed by imported programming originating in the Western hemisphere. Their finding suggests that Asian media are not being overrun or overwhelmed because the dynamics of audience preference play a role in countering Western media and “effectively inhibit the domination of the Asian mediascape by Western audiovisual production” (p. 418). The research underscores the huge gap between locally or regionally produced programs and Western programs viewed or preferred by people in different South Asian countries.²⁴ This gap highlights the role of audiences in choosing their own media contents and, as such, appears to contradict a key assumption underpinning the notion of cultural imperialism.

It is obvious that the audience has a role in determining the effects of media messages

24 For example, in Indonesia, the research indicates, “seven out of the ten top programs on the leading channels are domestically produced” (p. 423). Similarly, in Taiwan “it is action series and dramas either made within the country or imported from Hong Kong that routinely draw the highest numbers of viewers” (p. 423). In comparison, while locally produced dramas such as *Pao the Judge* draws “in an average of 2.5 million viewers”, Western productions such as *Seinfeld* and *Melrose Place* had insignificant viewers (fewer than 200,000) in Hong Kong (p. 424). Similar results of viewers’ preferences are also shown in other Asian countries such as China and India. For example, in India, locally produced programs broadcasted by state owned “Doordarshan reaches about 33 million people every week, and the privately owned satellite channel ZeeTV which primarily carries Hindi programs, reaches about 16 million each week” (p. 424) while, on the other hand, the foreigner “STAR Plus is watched by [only] 1.39 million viewers on a weekly bases” (p. 424).

and that cultural imperialism's claim of certain ideas or values (e.g. Western or American) dominancy in the Third World countries in particular is not totally accurate. In other words, there is no one single assumption made by media theorists which can inclusively explain media effects on audiences. As we notice from media theories establishment and evolution, each had added more insight into how media and their effects are conceptualized. Each has added something to the realm of media impacts whether in the media effects theory tradition or in the audience and reception theory tradition.

Even, for example, in the media effects tradition one can find theories which do not put total emphasis on an omnipotent media. Theories like pluralism which emphasizes the diverse ideas and thoughts of the audience reflected in the media (though some reflected more than others), and the two-step model theory which focuses on the mediators role (opinion leaders role) between the media and audience in fact have some legitimacy in practice. No one single theory, so far, could have explained exclusively the issue of media effects on audiences. As we noticed above, cultural imperialism's claim that media, particularly the developed countries media, exclusively have a great influence on the developing countries' cultures and values is not accurate.

When discussing cultural imperialism's implications, it is important to consider some points which are related to this study. It is important to distinguish between the cultural and the economic impacts of the cultural products whether on the Western or the Third World audiences. This is important in understanding how media impact the audience. Cultural imperialism advocates emphasize media products' economic bases and that the giant profit oriented media corporations are parts of the capitalist economic system (Webster, 2002). As profit-oriented enterprises, they seek to expand the markets for their products. While these products could carry American values, they could also carry Noam Chomsky's oppositional ideas as long as Chomsky's books continue selling at high rates. Profit-oriented cultural corporations have their own cultural products. They are not related entirely to certain people's values in particular. These products are consumer products in essence.

Even if profit-oriented corporations convey certain people's values or the cultural aspects of certain ethnic groups, they manipulate them in a way to sell. In other words,

these cultural values become commodities with certain commodity traits (different from the essence of any people's cultural values) in order to be sold. Eventually, the essence of any culture is not totally conveyed in profit-oriented cultural products. As Rauschenberger (2003) indicates, American cultural industries are targeting "the world's upper and middle class" (p.15) who can afford their products. This, according to Rauschenberger, supports the idea that "the cultural trade is more of a profit-driven enterprise than ideological" (p. 15). The point is that capitalist, profit-oriented cultural corporations do not necessarily convey and promote certain powerful countries' (e.g. the United States) values in less powerful countries, though they have the power to disseminate any kind of values.

The claim that Western cultural corporations promote powerful Western countries' values in powerless countries also is dubious. The authoritarian governments in some developing countries have enormous power; controlling what their people have to consume or not consume. China, for example, banned Disney's projects when Disney produced its 1997 film *Kundun* which portrayed "the life of Dalai Lama" and the company's relations with China did not resume until Disney sent Henry Kissinger and its CEO to solve the problem (Rauschenberger, 2003, p. 16). Rauschenberger concludes that cultural corporations like Disney and others think about how their products make profit more than thinking "about what messages they are conveying" (p. 16) to over one billion Chinese citizens.

Likewise, companies such as McDonald's, Pizza Hut and Starbucks prefer to make profits from their products rather than actively conveying American values such as equality and freedom. According to Manning (2002) at least "three major U.S. companies- including McDonald's, Pizza Hut and Starbucks- are reportedly upholding gender apartheid in their franchise stores in Saudi Arabia" (para.01). These American stores, reports Manning, have separate entrances and sections for women (para.02). Starbucks in particular, Manning writes, even altered its logo's mermaid "because in Saudi Arabia any display of the female form ... is considered indecent" (para.02). These companies not only fail to practice American values of gender equality and freedom, they are involved in sustaining and promoting local customs and traditions. In spite of its "philosophy of contributing positively to communities near its franchises," Starbucks

sticks to its way of doing business in Saudi Arabia (para.05). “As a guest in any country where we do business,” Starbucks’ president Peter Masien says, “we abstain from interference in local social, cultural and political matters” (para.05).

Regarding these corporate practices, activists claim that companies “are far more concerned with profits than with basic human rights” (para.08). It is obvious that what are promoted in Third World countries are the developed countries corporations’ products not the cultural values of Americans or other developed countries.

Critique of active audience theory

One of the criticisms of active audience theory centers on the ability of the audience to choose among the cultural corporations’ products or messages. Fiske (1991), for example, claims that the audience is able to choose among the cultural corporations’ products if they are relevant to their interests and desires. Audience choices, however, are problematic given that corporations produce similar products which make choosing among these products pointless. Most corporations’ products are manipulated and become commodities to sell. Audience interpretation or created meaning from these similar products does not give audiences wider chances to interpret or create meanings from these products. This is obvious, for example, when media manipulate truth or do not convey certain unprivileged groups’ ideas and focus on the dominant groups’ preferred versions of the news and opinions. This can be seen in the case of the mainstream media in the West, particularly in the United States, that typically conveys negative aspects or events of the Third World from a Western perspective (Webster, 2002, p. 133). Such is reality for the Muslim world, as many influential media outlets tend to convey negative images and ideas of the United States and the West.

Moreover, cultural imperialism advocates accuse active audience theory of simplifying the issue of resistance. Cultural imperialism adherents emphasize the role of resistance in more radical ways and in a wider context; that of the tension between privileged (the dominant, powerful groups) and underprivileged groups (the dominated, powerless groups). For example, Williams (2003) notes that, several writers criticize Fiske for “romanticizing consumer sovereignty” and “confusing simple consumer choice with political statement” (p. 207). In other words, audience choice of products among a corporation’s similar cultural commodities and creating their own meanings or pleasure

from these products means very little when compared to the masses being active and making their point (political statement) against the dominant, controlling groups in their struggle for equality and justice at macro level. Muslim audiences have wider media alternatives called counter Muslim media from which to choose. In other words, although there are local and regional Muslim cultural industries which produce cultural commodities to sell and to entertain, there are also counter Muslim industries which gained popularity among Muslim audiences.

Furthermore, while praising the importance of Fiske's studies of creative audiences and their role in negotiating messages' meanings and the audiences' oppositional readings of them, Stevenson (2002) points out that studying popular culture (as Fiske does) "is not about the macro issues of political economy, ideology or public sphere, but about evasive tactics of the weak" (pp. 94-95). Stevenson also believes Fiske's celebration of the audiences' role "pays insufficient attention to the institutions that structure the reception of symbolic forms" (p. 95). This works against the creative audience and the interests of the cultural industry. It is obvious that people choose cultural products according to their interests and desires, thus there will be different and divided groups of audiences. Stevenson argues that diverse groups in society provide "a plurality of markets for capitalist accumulation strategies" (p. 96). Knowing each group's interests and desires, the capitalist attempts to satisfy each group's desires and leave less space for the divided groups to create their own meanings. A "fragmented culture," Stevenson concludes, "may undermine the social cohesion necessary to produce relations of solidarity with those not immediately present in time and space" (p. 96). In other words, a divided audience cannot create a public sphere, which is important at a macro level of society in the struggle against dominant ideas or messages.

This distinction is obvious in the Muslim world. Iraq is an example of divided audience concerns. After the American-led invasion in 2003, division occurred within Iraqis' consumption of media products. Print and radio broadcasting notwithstanding, there are dozens of satellite and terrestrial television stations operated by different political, sectarian and ethnic groups. These groups generate loyalty within their sect by emphasizing their own interests in television programming and effecting a robust division among Iraqis, which ultimately contributes to a weakening of Iraqi solidarity at the macro

level. Yet, with the exception of a few satellite and terrestrial television stations (such as the American funded *Aliraqiya* and the two major satellite television stations KurdSat and Kurdistan TV of the Kurdish minority in Iraq), most of these stations agitate against American policies and actions.

The creation of counter media as a form of resistance to dominant Western messages by those who are being dominated is also problematic according to cultural imperialism adherents. These adherents claim that many local or regional cultural industries in Third World countries are indistinguishable from Western cultural industries because they produce similar commodities for sale. For example, cultural imperialist thinking in Latin America criticized the local and regional cultural industry of imitating the capitalist American products. Conveying Oliveira's ideas, Roach (1997) notes that in the 1980s, Brazil was known as a country that countered American cultural imports and produced its own programming. Brazilian Soap operas, for example, gained more popularity than American soaps, yet these Brazilian soap operas did not reflect the majority of the Brazilians' concerns who lived in poverty (p.58). As Roach concludes from Oliveira, these soap operas were the Third World 'spiced copies' of "Western values, norms, patterns of behavior and social relations" (p. 58).

Regarding the Muslim world, this is true to some extent. There are dozens of soap operas, shows and songs in the Muslim world's satellite televisions. Yet it is also true that there are several media outlets (satellite television stations, radios, print etc.) in the Muslim world which convey local and regional content and reflect countless concerns of Muslim people. These media outlets range from private to state-owned and play a great role in agitating against the American administration's policies and actions in the Muslim world.

Finally, another important criticism of active audience theory is that audiences' resistance or rejection of certain messages could, sometimes, work against them. For example, audiences' rejection of certain messages such as "messages of campaigns that encourage safer sex or discourage violence against women" cannot be considered progressive (Williams, 2003). This is true in the Muslim world. Not only have several Muslim audiences rejected some messages which could support their interests, they also accept subjective messages, from local and regional Muslim media outlets, as long as

these messages support their resistance of occupation forces (in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine). Whether Muslim media convey truth or falsity is immaterial as long as these messages satisfy the audience's thoughts and feelings about the occupiers.

Although 'active audience' theory is criticized on many levels and does not on its own sufficiently illustrate how media achieve their impacts on audiences, it remains a valid theory for examining and analyzing audiences and the local and regional media's role in manipulating the dominant media's effects. The theory plays a great role in illustrating audiences and counter media's role in creating their own meanings from and against the dominant media messages, interpreting these messages, and rejecting and resisting them. The examination of a representation of counter Muslim media and some Muslim audience opinions will provide an example of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world.

Research Objective

This thesis examines the main factors behind the United States government's apparent failure to win the hearts and minds of the majority of Muslims as reflected in the Muslim media that oppose and criticize the U.S. government's policies and actions towards Muslim world. The study **does not** attempt to prove the United States government's failure in winning the majority of Muslims' hearts and minds. Rather, it examines **how** and **why** the U.S. government's strategy has failed in winning these people. In other words, it examines the main reasons or factors behind such failure.

The key factors behind this failure are mainly related to: (1) The United States' lack of historical, religious, cultural, and social knowledge of Muslim people, (2) its foreign policies toward Muslim people, (3) its inefficient media strategies in the Muslim world, and (4) the role of new communication technologies in enabling Muslim media and audiences to counter the American administration's claims and media in the region.

These factors are investigated by examining reports in Muslim media about the major conflicts between the United States and the Muslim world since the September 11, 2001. The conflicts include: The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; Iran's nuclear program; Hamas's victory in the Palestinian election; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Muslims' prophet's cartoons appearing in a Danish newspaper in 2005; and finally the conflict between the Arab satellite television *Aljazeera* and the United States government since this government's war on Afghanistan in 2001.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

It is a truism that seeking absolute knowledge in social science is problematic. Understanding social/cultural phenomena depends more on arbitrary naming, labeling, and defining than on their existence as absolute knowledge. Those who attempt to study social/cultural phenomena in a vacuum risk missing the 'big picture'. Today's truth, or absolute knowledge, could be seen as untrue tomorrow just as many of yesterday's truths have proven to be untrue. Moreover, things believed to be true and/or standard rules in a certain society are often seen as incorrect in other society. This is why this thesis is examining how the Muslim world looks at the conflict between itself and the United States and how different perspectives complicate the conflicts between the two.

Considering social phenomena as external to, and independent of, our minds, and studying them as such limits our understanding them (Luke, 1982). Commenting on the work of Durkheim, Luke accuses the latter of 'missing' or 'leaving out' several aspects of social/cultural phenomenon when he asserts that sociology's objectivity is "a matter of treating 'social facts as things'" (p.2), that these 'social facts' should be investigated "independently of individuals' will" (p.3), and that they must be reached at as "definite forms" where these 'definite forms' "exist permanently ... and constitute a fixed object, a constant standard which is always at hand for observer, and which leaves no room for subjective impressions or personal observations" (p.3).

In his refutation of Durkheim's ideas, Luke argues that the mere "meaningful character of social facts precisely means that they express and are constituted by particular, internal and (inter-) subjective points of view" (1982, pp.12-13). He further asserts that social facts cannot be objectively identified even if the researchers try to isolate the phenomena and to examine them independently of personal opinions and/or ideas of society's members because phenomenological meanings are controversial and disputed among the researchers and the whole society's members (p.13).

He concludes that one cannot find objective answers in divergent interpretations of phenomena because researchers' independent examination of phenomena is biased by

individuals' views. Therefore, presenting social phenomena in isolation "will aim at 'thin' descriptions which capture their 'real' nature ... rather than the way they appear to the view(s) from within" (p.13). The 'thin' descriptions of these phenomena, as Luke points out, cannot be adequate because phenomena have different aspects and ways in which individuals "see and understand them" are different (pp.13-14).

Luke's ideas concur with Geertz's (1973) view that culture is semiotic in nature, and cannot exist separately from human beings' minds, thinking, interpreting, and naming of social phenomena.²⁵ This suggests that culture should not be studied, and analyzed on the bases of "experimental science in search of law" (Geertz, 1973, p.5).

In terms of this thesis, Luke's argument suggests that understanding the United States government's failure to win the hearts and minds of Muslims, cannot be effectively understood by limiting oneself to quantitative research and analysis because this issue has several interconnected aspects that need to be interpreted and evaluated within a wider context. In other words, and as Baroody (1998) points out, "just as overall knowledge of a war cannot be learned from only one perspective but requires input from a variety of sources, so the results of one survey cannot fully illuminate an issue as complex as media and war" (p. 175). Therefore, qualitative research methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which depends mainly on description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation of different aspects of the phenomenon appears to be particularly well suited for the task at hand.

The data: the opinion and news discourses

In this thesis the investigation of the failure of the American government to win the hearts and minds of Muslims draws upon a variety of different related sources including, counter Muslim media and audience discourses from 2003 onward, relevant documents, documentary films, and the findings of other studies relating to the American government's policies and actions in the Muslim world in the post-9/11 period. The rationale behind this broad-based approach lies in the fact that the topic examined in this

²⁵ Geertz (1973) argues that the concept of culture is essentially semiotic. He writes that "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (p.5).

thesis extends to other related issues in a wider context

The significance of the period of the time chosen (i.e. March, 2003 to the present) lies in the fact that anti-Americanism in the Muslim world reached its heights after the American Bush administration's justifications for invading Iraq (i.e. Iraq had the weapons of mass destruction and ties with al-Qaeda) were revealed to be untrue. Since that time, a division in Muslim media and audiences' discourses about the United States government's involvement in the Muslim world has emerged between those who oppose this involvement and those who support it. It should be noted, however, that opposition to the United States government's involvement in the Muslim world in the counter Muslim media and audiences' discourse is far higher than those who support this action.

The counter Muslim media sources used in this thesis were selected according to their degree of opposition to the United States government's involvement in the Muslim world. The views expressed range from moderate to extreme opposition. In the opposition discourses, different factors relating to the U.S. government's failure to win Muslim hearts and minds are frequently repeated. It is these factors that are the core focus of this thesis.²⁶

This thesis also examines anti-American opinion and news discourses in major Western-English language media organs (mostly news and opinions on the official and well-known media organs' sites such as the *BBC*, the *Independent*, and the *Guardian*) which also are adopted by Muslim media organs to enhance and foster their critiques against the American policies in the Muslim world.²⁷ The specific media sources examined are newspapers, magazines, journals, websites, television and radio programs and shows, and documentary films in Arabic, English and Turkish.

Muslim audience's opinions about the American policies in the Muslim world also are

²⁶ It is important to note that since this thesis examines the counter Muslim media and audiences' discourses, it does not present a rosy portrait of the American government's policies toward the Muslim world.

²⁷ The importance of examining the counter (and even moderate) non-Muslim media organs (in English) lies in the fact that many Muslim media organs adopt several ideas from Western media organs and, sometimes, translate entire articles from these sources into Arabic and publish them in their media. The rapid adoption, translation, and publication of information and opinions from non-Muslim sources in Muslim media outlets could not be completed without the aide of new communication technologies such as the Internet. Until at least a decade ago, Muslim audiences did not have access to Western and non-Western information as they do now.

examined in this thesis. These opinions are assessed on the basis of online postings to the web-sites of certain Muslim and non-Muslim media organs such as *bbcarabic.com* that have 'have your say' and/or "your participation/opinions" sections.

The counter, or opposition, content of the media organs that are examined in this thesis was narrowed down by identifying media organs known for their moderate to extreme criticism of the American policies in the Muslim world and on the basis of their popularity among Muslim audiences. These include, for example, *Alquds Alarabi* (Arabic), *The Independent* (English), *Alhayat* (Arabic), *Aljazeera.net* (Arabic and English), *bbcarabic.com* (Arabic), *The Guardian* (English), *kitabab.com* (Arabic, covers Iraqi events), and *bizturkmeniz.com* (Turkish and Arabic). Items, be they news, editorials, op-ed, letters to the editor, or guest writers' articles that are explicitly or implicitly and related to the topic of this thesis were selected on the basis of their titles.

It is important to note that most of the Muslim media organs examined in this thesis are not independent or are semi-independent. They can be categorized on the basis of their sponsors, and the particular ideologies or groups they represent. For example, the most popular Arab satellite television *Aljazeera* is partially funded by the Qatar government. Likewise, the most popular London-based daily Arab newspaper *Alhayat*, which is known for being moderate, is published by a member of the Saudi Royal family. Others, such as the London-based daily Arab newspaper *Alquds Alarabi* and *albadeeliraq.com* represent certain groups' beliefs and ideas. The former reflects pan-Arab nationalism, while the latter, *albadeeliraq.com* reflects the views of secular, leftist Iraqis who oppose the American-led occupation of Iraq. Other media organs such as *Alahram* (Egypt), *Albayan* (Emirates), *Al-Riyad* (Saudi Arabia), reflect their respective governments' views despite being filled, on daily basis, with editorials, opinion, political, and religious articles that criticize the American policies in the region.

From content to discourse analysis:

As was indicated above, this thesis is not employing a systematic content analysis because an empirically-based content analysis is not an appropriate method for understanding how and why the U.S. government's strategy are failing to win the hearts

and minds of Muslims.²⁸ The main limitation with content analysis is that identifying and describing the characteristics of media messages in certain texts “do not necessarily reflect the nature of the data or variables” (Berg, 1998, p.226).²⁹

Given that the subject matter of this thesis is multifaceted and needs to be understood in a wider context, Critical Discourse Analysis is deemed to be the most appropriate method for examining and analyzing the material at hand. As Henry and Tator (2002) explains, “critical discourse analysts ... are motivated ... by the desire to produce counter or oppositional discourses that provide alternative ways of interpreting, understanding, and interacting with the world” (p. 73). As such, the thesis seeks to offer a lens for understanding Muslim perceptions of the actions of the American administration.

Berg (1998) argues that in addition to more explicit messages or ‘manifest content’, text/content contains hidden messages or ‘latent content’ (p.225). The latent messages, he claims, can be inferred by independent evidence and “relevant statements ... that serve to document the researchers’ interpretations” (p.226). One method for examining and analyzing latent messages is discourse analysis. According to Merrigan and Huston (2004), discourse analysis “uses thematic categories developed from [documented or recorded] talk, or textual data, as well as the researcher’s cultural knowledge of the situation to inform those categorizing decisions, in order to advance explanations of macro-level social order” (p.202).³⁰ Among these macro-level orders, studies rooted in Critical Discourse Analysis focus on the issues of power dominance, control and ideology among the groups.

²⁸ Wimmer and Dominick (1997) define content analysis as “a method of studying and analyzing communication in systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (p.112).

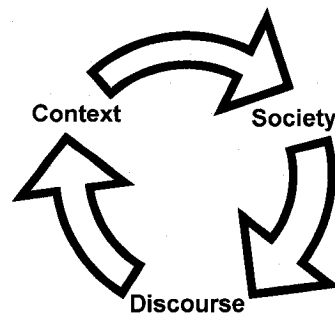
²⁹ Wimmer and Dominick claim, for example, that if a study of morning programs for children on television reveals that these programs contain a high percentage (80%) of commercials for sugared cereal, this “does not allow the researchers to claim that children who watch these programs will want to purchase sugared cereal” (p.115). To make such a claim, a study of the viewers (i.e. the children who watch these programs) is needed.

³⁰ As such, discourse analysis examines and identifies the structures and units of discourse and their relation to the wider context (i.e. macro-level social order). If content analysis deals with micro-level discourse, that is the structures of the content, discourse analysis may be seen as dealing with the macro-level implications of the discourse. That is, the overall social orders and the overall aims of different groups’ goals and interests.

Critical Discourse Analysis belongs to the critical methodological school of thought.³¹ It emphasizes the role of the context in which discourse is structured and is generally used to identify the intentions of the discourse users, as well as the underlying ideologies in the discourse. Identifying underlying ideologies in discourses reveals how they are related to context by exposing the socio-cognitive interface that mediates between the discourse and the context (van Dijk, 1995).³² Therefore, the theoretical ground of the discourse analysis can be best found in the interaction between the individuals' (or even groups') discourses and the social beliefs and values of a given society. The shared social values and beliefs of the society have a great role in producing the ideologies in the discourse.

Discourse, society, and context have mutual affects on each other. The meanings, ideas and opinions expressed in the discourse are influenced by the social values and beliefs and the wider context in which they occur. Similarly, meanings, ideas and opinions expressed in the discourse could reproduce and shape, or challenge, social beliefs and values. As much as the discourse impacts the society and the context, context and society also impact the discourse (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mutual Constitution of Discourse, Society and Context



The importance of understanding an issue by examining and analyzing its relation to the wider context is emphasized in a number of studies. For example, Lazar and Lazar

³¹ Van Dijk (1993), relates recent CDA's development to its disciplines, orientation, and school which goes back "to the members of the Frankfurt School 'Adorno, Benjamin and others' and its direct or indirect heirs in and after the 1960s" (p.251).

³² Socio-cognitive interface refers to the point at which "the social and the discursive can meet and be explicitly related to each other" (van Dijk, p. 136).

(2004) argue that statements and actions of American officials before and after the September 11, 2001 attacks of the World Trade Center in New York can be better understood in the wider context of the New World Order (NWO) which the American officials kept emphasizing after the end of Cold War era (pp. 223-224). Van Dijk (1993) also emphasizes Western parliamentary discourses on ethnic issues. He demonstrates how racist statements and discourse given by right-wing and mainstream members of these parliaments served to produce, reproduce, enact and promote the dominant group's ideas and values. Finally, Greenberg's (2000) study of opinion discourse in the Canadian newspapers' reports of Chinese migrants' arrivals to British Colombia's coast in 1999 contributed to the promotion of negative ideas about the Chinese.

How CDA is applied in this study:

By using critical discourse analysis, this thesis seeks to set out the relationship between the discourses analyzed and the contexts within which they are used by the American government and the Muslim world. Particular attention is given to how the Muslim historical, religious, cultural, social and political context influences how Muslims create their own meanings about American foreign and media policies and their responses to these policies.

The approach taken in this thesis is to juxtapose the claims of the American government regarding its involvement in the Muslim world (e.g. fighting terrorism, destroying Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, bringing democracy to Muslim world) with the criticisms levied against these claims in the counter Muslim media news discourse and in the Muslim audiences' responses in these media. Critical discourse analysis is used to expose the latent intentions behind these claims and their relationship to the context in which they were structured. To this end, claims by the American government that have been challenged by the counter Muslim media and audiences are investigated using additional sources in order to interrogate the claims of both sides.

This method is used to identify messages, ideas and/or opinions that are structured in the discourse at the micro-level and to examine these structures in relation to the more general social structures of the Muslim world. This is done by comparing and contrasting what has been structured in the micro-level discourse of the American government with the discourses in counter Muslim media sources in order to uncover hidden agendas. In

turn, the relationship between these discourses and the wider context is revealed. By examining the counter Muslim and non-Muslim media discourses and the broader context within which these messages are propagated, this thesis assesses the perceived legitimacy and efficiency of the United States media and foreign policies toward the Muslim world from a Muslim perspective.

The aim here is twofold. The first is to demonstrate how the discourse in the counter Muslim media is challenging the hitherto dominance of the U.S. government's war-related media strategies. The second is to show how this discourse is influencing the context within which broader U.S. – Muslim conflicts are taking place. Thus, this thesis focuses on the relationship between Muslim discourse and Muslim's rejection of the American government's views regarding its conflicts with the Muslim world.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Trio of Evils

The discussion in this chapter examines how Muslims receive, interpret and, ultimately, create meaning from the American government's messages regarding the tensions between the United States and the Muslim world in accordance with their collective beliefs, ideas and context. Developing a better understanding of how this process influences the counter Muslim media in structuring their critiques of the American government's policies in the Muslim world is the goal of this chapter. In order to do so, Muslim opinion and discourse is juxtaposed with the American government's claims and developments on the ground in order to assess the validity of what is claimed by the two sides. Particular attention is given to Iran's nuclear program, America's image in the Muslim world, Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestinian election, and the controversy surrounding the publication of cartoons of the Muslims prophet. The American government's wars against Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) also are considered. Before proceeding with this assessment, the background to the chronic distrust of many Muslims feel with regard to the American government's policies and actions is addressed.

The history of distrust

Many Muslims are convinced that the problems manifesting themselves in the Middle East region originate from a combination of the actions of three parties who are widely perceived as evil. The three parties are: the United States government, its ally Israel, and Muslim political regimes who many view as puppets, or the agents of the United States government (e.g. Iraqi, Saudi, Jordanian, and Persian/Arab Gulf states).

Muslim distrust of the West goes back to the Crusades when several Western European countries invaded various parts of the Muslim world (e.g. coastal parts of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine). This distrust also is related to United Kingdom's and France's victory over and division of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. Many Muslim countries suffered under colonial tyranny and exploitation until the 1960s. In addition, there is a widely held view throughout the Muslim world that the West,

particularly the United Kingdom, implanted Israel (Muslims' eternal enemy) in the heart of their land in order to weaken them.

Muslims' distrust of the United States government stems from its colonialist actions and policies towards Muslims and from its unconditional support of Israel. In the eyes of many Muslims the United States' government is preventing them from having democratic governance by imposing various totalitarian, or puppet, Muslim regimes upon them. The American-led invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 and, subsequently, Iraq in 2003 has served to enhance and sharpen this distrust.

In the light of this distrust, several factors must be taken into consideration when considering the efficacy of attempts to win Muslims' hearts and minds. These factors include: religion, the impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism; the unconditional support of Israel by some Western governments; and the support of dictatorial Muslim regimes by Western governments, particularly by the United States.

In his investigation of Turkish Muslim distrust of the West, Vick (2006) found that this state of affairs stemmed from the negative history and experience of Muslims with some Western governments. According to the perceptions of the people interviewed by Vick, the last Muslim Caliphate, or united Muslim empire (i.e. the last Ottoman Empire), was attacked, defeated, and divided by the West. This, combined with the West's support of Israel and the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq has contributed to fostering a view among Muslims that the West continues to wage war against Islam under the guise of "the war against terrorism" (p.A01). The problem, as Vick argues, is that Turkey is considered by many in the West to be the most democratic country in the Muslim world, in part, because of its separation of religion and state. However, most Turkish people, as Vick notes, consider themselves to be Muslim first and Turks second when they were asked about their identity in a survey by Pew Global Attitudes Project (p.A01).

Vick also draws attention to the impact of some of the views expressed by Western political leaders. For example, he points out that the language used by the United States President, George W. Bush, in his speeches on terrorism have evoked the language of Cold War and "has cast the conflict in Iraq as the pivotal battleground in a larger contest between advocates of freedom [the West] and those who seek to establish 'a totalitarian

Islamic empire reaching from Spain to Indonesia” (p.A01). He argues that given the strength of Muslim identity vis-à-vis national identity it is unwise for a Western official, such as Bush, to cast the conflict as a battle between advocates of freedom (i.e. the West) and those who seek to establish ‘a totalitarian Islamic empire’. Quoting Kirstine Sinclair, a researcher at the University of Southern Denmark, Vick concludes that “the smart thing to do if you’re the president of the United States is to sort of de-Islamicize the problem” (p.A01).

The trio of evils I: Iran’s nuclear program

Given the importance of religion in the Islamic world, it is not surprising that some Muslim leaders know how to use and effectively exploit these religious beliefs to rally Muslims behind them in order to serve their interests. Muslims’ religious beliefs, their attitudes toward Israel, and the unjust treatment of Muslims by some Western governments are frequently used and exploited to mobilize Muslims against the actions and policies of Western governments.

For example, at a news conference on January 14, 2006, the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, defied the West by stating that Iran is not building nuclear weapons as the West claims, but rather, is building nuclear power for peaceful purposes, and that nuclear weapons are built by only those people who “want to solve everything through the use of force” (“Iran ‘does not,’” 2006, para.2). For Muslims, and some Westerners, it is understood that people who ‘solve everything through the use of force,’ refers directly to the United States government and Israel.

The relationship between Muslim people’s support for Iran’s pursuit of nuclear power and their distrust of Western governments, as well as the influence of religious belief is easily identifiable in Muslim audiences’ views as expressed in the opinion sections in different Arabic and Western Arabic media organs such as the BBC’s Arabic broadcasting. In a section called *Ara’akum* (“Your opinions,” 2006), the *bbc-arabic.com* asked its audience’s opinion about Iran defying the West by resuming its nuclear power research. Approximately 72.2% of the 119 opinions contributed to this on-line media source expressed support for Iran’s nuclear ambitions.

Those who support Iran appear to believe that the West and the United States government, in particular, maintain double standards when dealing with Muslims. They

question why the United States government does not challenge Israel's nuclear research activities and its possession of nuclear weapons, by which it threatens the Arab and Muslim states. Viewing Israel as a Western creation in the heart of the Arab and Muslim world as well as being the United States' best ally, the supporters of Iran believe that the West is against them and, in fact, waging war against Islam. According to the supporters of this view, evidence to substantiate this perspective can be seen in the American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The following are examples of the Muslim participants' responses posted at bbc.com. They illustrate and reflect the themes outlined above:

Mustafa Alhusayni from Egypt:

Iran must go ahead in its [nuclear] program not only for peaceful purposes but also for war purposes and to hell with the Europe and America for the Western countries will not allow any country which does not belong to their belief [or ideology or faith etc.] to own [or obtain] weapons of mass destruction under the excuse of maintaining [preserving or saving etc.] the international security and the innocents' blood ... [A]s for France, England, and America, which their hands are smeared with innocents' bloods whether in ... crusade wars or in present time in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo ... etc. [As if] it is ... their right to have everything in order to kill us whenever and wherever they want. Go ahead Nejad [Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad] and ... I wish the Arab leaders to follow you.

Ahmad Salim from Egypt:

It is Iran's right to complete its nuclear program just like America, Israel and Europe. Iran is a big, civilized country and the fanatics in Israeli government, for example, are more dangerous to global security than those who have radical ideas in Iran.

Hanadi Alsafi from Sudan:

... Who gives the right to West to have nuclear weapons and nuclear energy and prevent others from having [such weapons and energy]? Is not this an attempt to impose mastery on others ... control them and their economic sources and their political decisions forever? ... Among all the countries, who have nuclear weapons in this world, who used it and who is ready to use it once again except America?

Shakir Alrubayii from Iraq:

Iran's nuclear program is a victory for Islam and Arabs in order to stand up against the challenges the Islamic Umma [nation] is facing, and thus all the Muslims must stand with Iranian right. Israel owns nuclear weapons and they are pointed at Muslims and Arabs. This weapon is our strength and victory. Let us stand with our Iranian brothers.

Ahmad Fahad from Kuwait:

Nuclear facilities in Iran are dangerous for Arab Gulf states as much as they are dangerous for Israel ... but I say why the West prohibits Iran from having these facilities and allows Israel to have them?

Mubarek Sayyed from Egypt:

Iran is situated in a region where it is surrounded by Americans and it is close to Israel which the European and the Americans ignore it. If the West and America want to refer Iran's file to Security Council, then Israel's [nuclear power] must be referred to Security Council too [and then let the Security Council] decide for both. But I doubt that because [the West's] goal is to control [only] the Islamic Umma [nation].

Alfardan from Manama-Bahrain:

It is an honour for Muslims a steely man emerges from them as Ahmadinejad [the Iranian President]. The [Muslim/Arab] presidents must be like [Ahmadinejad] ... for he does not bend and does not kiss the Western hands as the rest do.

Jod Suleyman- Jeddah [Saudi Arabia]:

We want to compete with the world in development and condemn sectarian and Racism and [we do not want] Iran to make sectarian [Siite] atomic bomb and falsely relate it to Islam and claim that by it [by the atomic bomb] it defends the Arab.

Abdulla Sayyid-Syria:

Iran obtaining nuclear technologies means imbalance of power between the Sunnis and Shiites in the eastern part of the Arab [world].

Ziyad-Jordan:

... The Mollas' regime in Iran is a dangerous regime and [if] they obtain nuclear weapons, that would be a disaster for Arab nation more than the Western countries.

As can be seen in the above statements, even the respondents who posted messages opposing Iran's nuclear program did not side with the United States government or with the West. They are worried about Iran's nuclear program because of the sectarian and ethnical differences between themselves, as Arabs, and the Iranians who, generally, are not Arabs or Sunnis. Historically, there has been an ongoing struggle between Arabs and Iranians on ethnic and religious bases. Most Iranians are non-Arabs and contrary to the majority of Arab Sunnis, most of the Iranians are Shiites.³³ Despite these differences, the majority of Arab respondents side with Iran, as a Muslim country, in its conflict with the United States government and some of its allies.

The trio of evils II: America's image in the Arab and Muslim world

Views similar to those posted to the bbc-arabic.com web-site also were expressed in a survey conducted by al-jazeera.net through October 2005 to January 2006 titled "Improving America's image in the minds of Arabs and Muslims". The survey focused on the U.S. Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes' visit to some key Middle East countries (e.g. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) in September 2005. The objective of Hughes' visit was to find ways of improving the United States image in the minds of Arabs and Muslims.

Approximately 95.7% of the 70 opinions posted to this survey were critical of the American government and its policies in Muslim world. Common themes in the messages posted to this forum included, 'the United States is not honest in improving its image', 'cannot be trusted', 'cannot fix its image in Arab and Muslim world', 'is lying', 'must be resisted', and 'if the United states is serious in improving its image among Arabs and Muslims, it has to change its double-standard and aggressive policies and

³³ The struggle between Arabs and Iranians goes back at least to the sixth century when Arabs defeated Iranians in Persia during the second Muslim caliph Omer ibnul-Khattab era (634-44) and imposed on them Islam as a religion. In order to distinguish themselves and to continue struggling with Arabs, the Iranians adopted and promoted among themselves (and even among some other Arabs) the Shiite sect of Islam against the Sunni Arabs.

actions toward Arabs and Muslims'. Of the remaining 4.3% (N=3) of opinions posted two do not support the United States government but criticize Arabs' and Muslims' 'bad fortune'. Only one opinion of the 70 is critical of Arabs and Muslims and supports the United States government. The following are some examples of the participants' comments:

Imad:

America has to improve its image in front of its citizens, as for Arab and Muslim minds, they will not forget thousands of murdered, fled, and orphans in Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. How we forget? How we forget? How we forget?

Ibrahim:

... America is an extorting and an exploiting of other nations' rights and it is the biggest enemy of Arabs and Muslims, and its image cannot be improved in Arabs' [minds and hearts] except if it withdraws from all Arab countries and protect human rights.

Abu Aldhahab:

Not only the Muslims, but the whole world, even those who collaborate with these cowboys [the Americans], wish America's defeat in the hands of the resistance especially in Iraq, and god wills, this [America's defeat] will happen for everyone.

Eman:

America's image cannot be improved unless it changes its dictatorial policies. We do not want an improvement of shape without content. If it stops its support of Israel which occupies [Arab territories], there might be another chance [to believe in that America wants to change its image].

Under the title of "America was a state of terrorism and will remain forever"

Abuljamajim writes:

America is the imperialist state of imperialists, it is a no-freedom state, it is a terrorist state. America is the first state which applied terrorism against the real inhabitants [native Americans] of America, and its terrorism followed to Vietnam, then to Afghanistan, then to Iraq ... Whatever they say, lie, [no matter for] how long they will procrastinate and change the facts, the Arab world will not believe

their lies, their allegations of spreading freedom. America will remain the number one terrorist state in the eyes of Arab world.

Youcef:

It is a very strange thing that America tries to improve its image in the minds of Arabs and Muslims. Can a wolf improve its image in front of the sheep[?]

Yahya:

America is the big Satan in the region [Middle East] and its image cannot be fixed as long as it commits slaughtering in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mohammad:

... It is obvious from what is happening on international stage that [America] wants to control the world and impose its rules ... I ask god, especially as we are in this holy month [Ramadan], to [allow me to] participate in annihilation of its arrogance and strength and reclaim Muslims' dignity.

Fadi:

This is ridiculous!!! I mean talking about improving their [American] image. They know that their image is deformed ... If America wants to improve its image, let it withdraw its dogs from Iraq ... You might convince me that the world is a lemon ... but you cannot convince me that America is [not] a professional prostitute.

Masmoud:

How could America improve its image in the [mind] of an Arab citizen who is convinced, more than anytime before, of its disgusting, barbaric, and savage image which contradicts the image once it had as the land of freedom, democracy, and human rights ...? This mask of civilization and humane [of America] has fallen in the Iraqi and Afghani swamp, and its true, ugly, and disgusting face has appeared in front of the world, and all beautification creams in the world cannot change or improve this ugliness.

One respondent, Huthayfa, writes that the American administration can improve its image in the minds of Arabs and Muslims if George Bush senior apologizes to Iraqis, compensates them for the sanctions he imposed on them in 1990 and which lasted until 2003, and which caused the death of thousands of Iraqi children. He also calls for George

W. Bush to apologize and compensates Iraqis for his war against them in 2003. Huthayfa goes on to write:

To the nations of the world, we, the Arab nations like to live in peace and freedom and do not like other country's control of our rights and land. To the American people, we like the American people and do not hate them, yet your rulers' deeds and wars force us to revenge. You [people of America], with your hands, can improve your country's image not only in the Arab world but in all around the world by revolting against these rulers [American rulers]. ... Islamic religion is but a peace and a love message, and our religion does not order us to hate anyone no matter what his religion, color is, our religion is a message of peace ...

Comparing the opinions posted to bbcarabic.com with those of the aljazeera.net respondents offers insights about the participants and their views. Most of the opinions posted to aljazeera.net are written in a broken and unsophisticated Arabic and most often reflect extreme religious ideas. This suggests that most of the participants are either less educated, or are non-Arabs who only know Arabic to a certain degree.³⁴ Moreover, most of these opinions appear to be rooted in Islamic religious beliefs and are more emotional than those posted by the bbcarabic.com respondents. Put simply, the language used by individuals who posted messages to bbcarabic.com tends to be more sophisticated, rational and neutral. This suggest that distrust of the American government may be present among extreme Islamists and less educated Muslim people, as well as the secular, educated Arab and Muslim survey participants.

A second theme that appears to be latent in the respondents' messages to the two surveys is the need to resist the United States government's perceived aggression against Muslim nations. Historically, using violence to oppose occupiers of a country has been called 'resistance' and not 'terrorist acts'. Yet, the United States government labels Iraqi resistance to its occupation forces terrorism and promotes this view in the mainstream media.

It is true that in Iraq there are daily violent acts targeting civilians rather than the occupation forces. However, many Muslims do not believe that these violent acts against

³⁴ Many non-Arab Muslims know Arabic for they have to pray, read the Quran, Muslims' holy book, in Arabic or they have learned Arabic as students in Islamic or non-Islamic universities in Arab countries or as they work in these countries.

civilians are committed by legitimate Iraqi resistance groups.³⁵ In order to substantiate this view, they point to the fact that violent actions have been committed against Iraqi civilians by the United States occupation forces and their Iraqi allies' militia forces, and to the power and control exercised by the Kurdish militias in the north and the Shiite militias in the south and in Baghdad (Shadid and Fainaru, 2006). They also point out that, it was in collaboration with these national Kurdish and sectarian Shiite militias that American officials created well-known death squads – who were officially created to fight the insurgents – that are responsible for most of the ethnic cleansings and attacks against civilians in the northern and southern parts of Iraq as well as in Baghdad (Sengupta, 2006; Watson, 2005; Beaumont, 2006).

The majority of the personnel in the Iraqi army and police forces created with the assistance of the American administration belong to these ethnic and sectarian groups. Cockburn (2006) is critical of these interests and writes that

in theory, [the Iraqi government] has 264,000 soldiers and police under its command. In practice they obey the orders of their communal leaders in so far as they obey anybody. (para.02).

A similar view is presented in an investigative report by Deborah Davies of the U.K.'s Channel 4 who shows how one of the American-led coalition's major Iraqi allies, Bayan Jabr, a senior figure of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution, played a role in creating Iraqi death squads when he became Iraq's Interior Minister in 2005.³⁶

In the light of this situation, it is ironic to portray the insurgents' violent actions against the occupation forces as terrorist acts when the United States forces and those of their Western and Iraqi allies have killed tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians since 2003³⁷ as

³⁵ Indeed, many believe that the former number one terrorist in Iraq, Alzarqawi who was assassinated by U.S. forces on June 7, 2006, is the creation of the United States government.

³⁶ The crimes of these Militias have reached Iraqi and non-Iraqi journalists who dared to reveal some of these activities. For example, the American journalist, Steven Vincent, who wrote an opinion piece in *The New York Times* "criticizing the rise of Shi'ite Islamist fundamentalism in [the city of] Basra" was killed by Shiite militias in this city (Brook, 2005, para.5). Vincent was kidnapped by the growing powerful Shiite militias and killed. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) indicates that "[i]n many cases, journalists are murdered either to prevent them from reporting on corruption or human rights abuses, or to punish them after they have done so" ("Journalists killed," 2005, para.7).

³⁷ *Iraq Body Count* group, a group records the Iraqi civilian victims since the American-led invasion of Iraq according to the media reports, have recorded the number 34,030 victims as minimum and 38,164

well as destroying essential infrastructures in Iraq such as clean water, electricity and communication facilities. Seeing these aggressive actions against fellow Muslims leaves no room for many Muslims to trust the United States government despite its efforts to portray its actions as 'liberation' and bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq.

Overall, this challenges the notion that Muslim distrust of the United States can be equated with terrorists, fanatical, and/or radical ideas. Moreover, the diversity of those who distrust, and the reason for this distrust in, the U.S. government challenges the efficacy of framing the conflict between the West and the Muslim world as a struggle between 'good' and 'evil', or between those who hate the American/Western way of life and those who value freedom and democracy.

How this happened: Search the American foreign policy

From the 1950s through to the 1970s Arab nationalism with some modern ideas triumphed in the Arab world.³⁸ Since the late nineteenth century Islamic Shari'a (law),³⁹ as Hourani (1991) explains, was replaced in many Muslim countries by modern secular laws adopted from European states. In countries such as Turkey, the Shari'a was separated from the state in the 1920s by the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. During the second half of the twentieth century in Arab countries such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria systems of modern laws were adopted and practiced in spite of the rise of Arab nationalism. Expanding on these events, Hourani points out that,

Criminal, civil and commercial cases were decided according to European codes and procedures, and the authority of the *shari'a*, and of the judges who dispensed it, was confined to matters of personal status. The main exception was the Arabian peninsula: in Saudi Arabia, the Hanbali version [a Sunni Islamic sect] of *shari'a* was only recognized law of the state (pp.345, 346).

as maximum up until April 13, 2006 on their site www.iraqbodycount.org. According to a BBC online report ("Iraq body," 2006), the *Iraq Body Count* numbers are controversial for many victims, because of the chaotic situation in Iraq, are unreported. While Iraq's Health Minister, Ali al-Shamari, estimates the number of Iraqi civilians killed since the beginning of Iraq war between 100 and 150 thousands-based on the number of bodies in mortuaries, "the UK medical journal The Lancet published a study saying nearly 655,000 Iraqis have died as a result of the war" ("Iraqi official," 2006).

³⁸ For example, Arab nationalists with secular ideas seized the power in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq during 1950s and 1960s.

³⁹ Shari'a is the law arranging Muslim religious, social, economic, and political life.

Despite the fact that the nationalistic regimes in several Arab countries were trying to modernize, they did not encourage the establishment of democratic environments. In fact, they sought to wipe out democratic practices. These regimes were one-party dictatorial regimes. Nonetheless, they were supported, as satellites, by the United States government and by the former Soviet Union throughout the Cold War era. One of the consequences of the tensions between these two superpowers was the creation of a democracy-void environment in the Middle East. In the absence of alternative political parties and in an environment characterized by dictatorial rule, the last sanctuary for people was religion. This contributed significantly to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East and elsewhere

Evidence of the continuation of this process can also be seen in the post-First Gulf war period. After virtually destroying Iraq, the American government left Iraqis to contend with the tyrant Saddam Hussein. Moreover, with the support of the United States government, the United Nations imposed the major sanctions on Iraq that lasted for some thirteen years (e.g. from 1990 to 2003). In response, most Iraqis sought comfort in God and in religion and blamed the trio of evils for the peril within which they found themselves.

A similar process manifests itself elsewhere in the Middle East and, especially, in Palestine. The rise of Hamas, a fundamentalist Islamic group, in this region can be linked to the American government's continued support for Israel, and to the corruption of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). According to the makers of the documentary film *Hamas Behind the Mask* (Saywell, 2005), Israel actually encouraged and supported the rise of Hamas as a counterbalance to its number one enemy, Yasser Arafat, the former president of the PLO.

Likewise, the United States government, with its allies in Middle East, recruited and supported fundamentalist Muslims, whom they called mujahideen, to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s.⁴⁰ At the time, the United States government viewed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as a threat to its interests in the region of Middle East and central Asia. Put simply, the United States government, and its allies, played a key role in

⁴⁰ Osama Bin Laden and other Muslim fundamental figures, whom the United States government sees as terrorists today, were considered the United States' allies because they were fighting its former enemy, the former Soviet Union.

establishing fundamentalist Muslim groups in the Middle East and elsewhere (Taylor, 2001; Umberto, 2001; Vincent, 2002).⁴¹

For many Muslims these actions serve to reinforce the view that for the United States government nothing is more important than protecting its selfish interests. To this end, they point to contradiction between helping to establish Islamic fundamentalists groups when it was deemed to be politically astute to do so, and considering these same fundamentalist groups to be terrorists when they resist the American-led coalition forces in Iraq and elsewhere. This contradiction also contributes to the view that what the United States government says about spreading freedom and democracy around the world is mere propaganda used to disguise efforts to promote its interests around the world.

There is another issue which contributes to the notion that whether states are democratic is, in fact, of little interest for the United States government provided that states agree with its policies. The Arab states and most Middle Eastern states are without exception undemocratic. Yet, several of these states (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan) rank among the United States government's closest allies. Countries such as Syria and Iran, on the other hand, are considered by the United States government as enemies because they do not support the United States' policies in the Middle East region. Hence, for many Muslims the current American administration's slogan, that the Americans want to bring democracy and freedom to Middle East, is little more than an empty slogan to cover its administration's 'hidden agenda'.

For many Muslims, this view is reinforced by the United States government's support for Israel as its democratic ally in the region. By unconditionally supporting Israel the United States government has greatly damaged its image in the hearts and minds of many Muslims. This is in no small measure due to the fact that many Muslims view Israel as a state that oppresses Palestinians and illegitimately occupies Palestinian land.

⁴¹ Though many U.S. officials deny such connections to al-Qaeda, they admit that the U.S government supported the Afghani fundamental Muslim groups to fight the former Soviet Union troops in the occupied Afghanistan during 1980s ("Did the U.S. 'create' Osama bin Laden?," 2005). Al-Qaeda's fighters were fighting within these Afghani groups. The latter U.S. Department of State report (Did the U.S. 'create' Osama bin Laden?) acknowledges that al-Qaeda was supported by the United States' allies such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, UK, and Egypt. Moreover, an FBI official's, J. T. Caruso, testimony (*Al-Qaeda International*, 2001) indicates that the American officials allowed al-Qaeda to maintain its offices in the United States and in various parts of the world (para.02). These offices were recruiting people to join al-Qaeda and fight the former Soviet Union's troops in Afghanistan during 1980s.

Further evidence of the perceived double standards and the dishonesty of the American government may be seen in recent developments in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The January 2005 Palestinian election that was largely sponsored by the American government and which was deemed to be democratic, was won by Hamas. In response, the Bush administration imposed conditions on this victory because Hamas was not the party that it hoped would win the election.

Another example of the perceived dishonesty of the United States government may be seen in George W. Bush’s State of the Union address on January 31, 2006 (“State of the union,” 2006). In this speech it was revealed that, contrary to claims of invading Iraq to spread democracy, the Bush administration was concerned about the Americans’ “addiction to [Middle Eastern] oil.” This suggests that the United States involvement in Iraq is linked to oil. While the Bush administration may deny such a claim, for many Muslims it is taken as a virtual certainty. When the American and coalition forces invaded and occupied Iraq in 2003, they left almost everything in chaos except for the oil facilities. Moreover, after his original denial that the United States’ invasion of Iraq was linked to a desire to protect Israel, in a March 20, 2006 speech Bush warned that the United States will not hesitate to use force to protect Israel (“President Discusses,” 2006).⁴²

From a Muslim perspective, it seems that the Bush administration is not seriously interested in winning the hearts and minds of those on the ground, in part, because it has largely ignored diplomacy. Diplomatic efforts could have gone a long way to solving their conflict with Iraq. Instead, within the Muslim world and elsewhere the Bush administration now stands accused of creating myths and lies to justify the invasion of Iraq. This suggests that the American administration had a hidden agenda from the outset.

⁴² Unlike the Western media organs, most Muslim media organs, reporting Bush’s speech on this date in which he addressed several issues besides using force to protect Israel from others in the region, they focused on Bush’s using force to protect Israel in their headlines. For example, in the next day of Bush’s speech (March 21, 2006) Arab newspapers’ headlines were reading: “Bush warns Iran that he ‘will use force’ to protect ‘Israel’” (*Alriyad*, Saudi Arabia), “Britain suggests a resolution for Security Council in April [and] Bush threatens Tehran ‘to protect Israel’” (*Assafir*, Lebanon), “Security Council will hold a closed meeting [and will] discuss presidential report ... Bush threatens Iran by using force ‘to protect their [Americans’] ally Israel” (Dergham, 2006, *Alhayat*, Saudi owned paper, London-UK-based), “Bush threatens to attack Iran in order to protect Israel” (*Alquds Alarabi*, pan-Aran paper, London-UK-based).

For example, there is evidence which suggests that American officials were planning to occupy Iraq before the attacks on the World Trade Center. In his review of Bob Woodward's *Plan of Attack* (2004),⁴³ Hamilton (2004) draws attention to the claim made by Woodward that "On Nov. 21, 2001 ... Bush directed Rumsfeld to begin planning for war with Iraq" (p. A01). Woodward writes that after "a National Security Council meeting in the White House Situation Room was just finishing on Wednesday, November 21, 2001" President Bush called Donald Rumsfeld aside "into one of the small cubbyhole offices adjacent to the Situation Room" (p. 1) and told him there, in the closed room, "Let's get started on this [war on Iraq]" (p. 2).

Woodward (2004) shows that the Bush administration was trying to keep this plan secret lest it, "trigger 'enormous international angst and domestic speculation'" (p. 3). Hamilton (2004) argues that the Bush administration's focus, all along, was Iraq rather than waging war against terrorism (p. A01). To this end, he emphasizes the influence of neo-conservatives, such the former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and the Vice President Dick Cheney, on Bush administration. Hamilton argues that Wolfowitz, in particular, was pre-occupied with seizing Iraq's oil fields (p. A01) and concludes that after 9/11 the Bush administration found a good opportunity for achieving its hidden agenda of occupying of Iraq by creating the myth of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction and ties with al Qaeda.

The claims made by Woodward support the assertion that a key motivation behind the invasion of Iraq was the Bush administration's desire to control and use Iraq's oil for its interests. Expanding on this theme, Palast (2005) notes that insiders from US State Department and "'Big Oil' executives" (para.3) and others such as Falah Aljiburi, an oil industry consultant and "once Ronald Reagan's 'back-channel' to Saddam [Hussein]", and Robert Ebel, "a former Energy and CIA oil analyst" (para.10) participated in meetings to discuss this American administration's secret plans for Iraq oil "in California, Washington and Middle East" and London (para.6, 10). These insiders and participants, according to Palast, told the BBC's 'Newsnight' that the United States secret plans for

43 In *Plan of Attack*, Bob Woodward indicates that his "information in the book comes from more than 75 key people directly involved in the events" and from two interviews of President George W. "Bush on the record for more than three and a half hours over two days [on] December 10 and 11, 2003 ... and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on the record for more than three hours in the fall of 2003" (p.x).

Iraq's oil "began 'within weeks' of Bush's first taking office in 2001, long before the September 11th attack on the US" (para.5).⁴⁴

Given that the Middle East region is rich in oil and the Americans are addicted to it as Bush admitted, being active in the region potentially gives the American government better control over this resource.⁴⁵ Jamail (2006) argues that American officials "aren't telling the American public about their true plans for Iraq" (para.26). He claims that the Bush administration planned to stay in Iraq for long-term and to establish at least four bases in Iraq.⁴⁶ Moreover, the United States, Jamail notes, is constructing the largest embassy in so-called the Green Zone area in Baghdad.⁴⁷

According to the views of many Iraqis and Muslims, another important reason for waging war against Iraq and for harassing countries such as Syria and Iran is to rebuild the region according to the United States' strategic interests, and to protect Israel. The findings of a detailed study by Mearsheimer and Walt (2006) suggest that the unconditional support of Israel by the United States government damages the United States' security more than it promotes peace and safety. Some, the authors explain, relate the bond between the two countries to the notion that, "U.S. and Israeli interests are essentially identical" (p.1)

However, "The remarkable level of material and diplomatic support" of Israel by the United States government, the authors point out, cannot be justified by such ideas (p.1).

⁴⁴ BBC's news report also points out that American administration's secret plan of Iraq's oil also intended to "sell-off of all Iraq's oil fields ... [and to be used] to destroy the Opec [OPEC] cartel through massive increases in production above Opec [OPEC] quotas" (para.9).

⁴⁵ See George W. Bush's ("State of the Union address," January 31, 2006) where he says "America is addicted to oil". In fact this kind of statement of Bush also serves a propaganda purpose. After about three years of war in Iraq which his administration started on false allegations, and after this administration's several mistakes in this war which led to disasters for both Iraqis and the Americans who started disapproving his mistakes, Bush tells the Americans do not blame me, blame yourselves for you are addicted to oil and the Middle East is the source of oil and I had to control it by being there.

⁴⁶ For more details, see, for example, (Shanker, T & Schmitt, E., 2003) which Jamail refers to. This article is originally published in *The New York Times*. Also, see (Ricks, T. E., Feb.04, 2006).

⁴⁷ Jamail writes that "a Kuwait-based construction firm is building a \$592 million US embassy in Baghdad ... this compound will be the largest and more secure diplomatic compound in the world" (para.28). This compound, as Jamail illustrates will be the home of "over 1,000 [US] 'government officials'" which will have its own independent facilities from Baghdad city (para.30). Jamail compares this compound to Iraq's infrastructure "which is in total shambles and functioning below pre-[American]invasion [of Iraq] levels in nearly every area" (para.32).

They point out that “Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct assistance each year [from the United States], roughly one-fifth of the foreign aid budget [of the United States]” and, according to them, this is “striking when one realizes that Israel is now a wealthy industrial state with a per capita income roughly equal to that of South Korea or Spain” (p.2). Israel, according to the authors, is not even questioned on how it spends this aid “which makes it virtually impossible to prevent the money from being used for the purposes the US opposes, such as building settlements on the [occupied Palestinian territory] West Bank” (p.2). The authors go on and point out that Israel also receives about \$3 billion from the United States “to develop weapons systems” (p.2) (some of which are used against Palestinians), and that the United States government “has turned a blind eye towards Israel’s acquisition of nuclear weapons” (p.3).⁴⁸

The position of the United States government with regard to Israel stands in sharp contrast to its position vis-à-vis the Iranian nuclear program. From a Muslim perspective, the key issue in the U.S. – Iran conflict is not primarily linked to whether Iran is telling the truth about its nuclear ambitions. Instead, the key issue is the double-standard that this conflict exposes. Specifically, if the United States government does not trust Iran and assumes that it is going to build nuclear weapons by which it can attack its neighbors, how can guarantee that Israel will not use its nuclear weapons against the Muslim countries.

There is an additional important point related to the prominent levels of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world that Mearsheimer and Walt illustrate in their research. They challenge the view held by some Israeli politicians and the American supporters of Israel that both countries are threatened by the same terrorist groups asserting that,

‘terrorism’ is a tactic employed by a wide array of political groups; it is not a single unified adversary. The terrorist organizations that threaten Israel (e.g. Hamas or Hezbollah) do not threaten the United States, except when it intervenes against them (as in Lebanon in 1982). Moreover, Palestinian terrorism is not random violence directed against Israel or ‘the West’; it is largely a response to Israel’s prolonged campaign to colonize the West Bank and Gaza Strip (p.5)

⁴⁸ Mearsheimer and Walt also highlight the fact that that the United States government “provides Israel with consistent diplomatic support” and that “[s]ince 1982, the United States has vetoed 32 United Nations Security Council resolutions that were critical of Israel”, while blocking “Arab states’ efforts to put Israel’s nuclear arsenal on the International Atomic Energy Agency’s agenda” (p.3).

Anti-American terrorism in the Muslim world, Mearsheimer and Walt argue, is linked to the United States government's support of Israel, and this "is not the only source of anti-American terrorism, but it is an important one, and it makes winning the war on terrorism more difficult" (p.5). Many Arabs and Muslims see Israel as Muslims' number one enemy and as a terrorist state because it occupies their land (e.g. Palestinian, Lebanese, and Syrian lands) and oppresses, kills and imprisons Palestinians on daily bases. Seeing the United States government unconditionally supporting such a state, contributes to the anti-Americanism among Muslims.

Most Muslims do not hate America, or the West for that matter, because of American or the West's values such as freedom and democracy, as George W. Bush and his ally Tony Blair have repeatedly claimed. On the contrary, Muslims are eager to get their freedom and to build democracy. A response from an Arab respondent to aljazeera.net survey discussed in chapter four ("Improving America's," 2005-2006), clearly articulates this view:

To the nations of the world, we, the Arab nations like to live in peace and freedom and do not like other country's control of our rights and land. To the American people, we like the American people and do not hate them, yet your rulers' deeds and wars force us to revenge. You, with your hands, can improve your country's picture not only in Arab world but in all world by revolting against these rulers. Arabs' ... Islamic religion is but a peace and a love message, and our religion does not order us to hate anyone whatever his religion, color is, our religion is a message of peace.

The issue with, perhaps, the greatest resonance about the double standards and dishonesty of the Bush administration are linked to the notion that Iraq has become more democratic in the post-2003 period. Since the beginning of the American-led occupation, Iraq has been divided along sectarian and ethnical lines. The political reality is not based on citizenry but on religious and ethnic loyalties. Paul Bremer, who was appointed by the American administration to rule Iraq in the early days of the occupation, created the Iraqi Governing Council and chose its members according to Iraqi religious sects and ethnic groups. The Governing Council consisted of 25 members: 13 Shiites, 5 Sunnis, 5 Kurds, 1 Christian, and 1 Turkmen and was not elected by Iraqis (Leaver & Jarrar, 2006). It

became the base of the Iraqi governments during the next three years. Today, the country is more divided than at any other time before.

Further evidence of the dubious nature of Iraq democracy may be seen in how the Iraqi constitution was written and in the way in which the 2005 election was conducted. The constitution was written and put forward in only no more than four months, between June and September of 2005, and did not involve any consultative forums. As for the December 2005 election, its results were not announced until mid-January of 2006.

Despite the American and British administrations' support of Iyad Allawi, who was an agent of Western secret intelligence agencies such as the United States CIA and the United Kingdom's MI6,⁴⁹ the Islamic Shiite and Sunni groups won most of the seats in the election. Allawi, with a coalition of some secular Iraqi political parties won only 25 of the 275 parliamentary seats. The Islamic Shiite parties won 128 seats and one of the Islamic Sunni groups won 45 seats. Once the results had been announced, several political parties refuted them and accused the American administration's Iraqi allies of "blatant" fraud (Steele, 2005).⁵⁰ In the light of these questionable practices and the competing interests of the ethnic and sectarian Iraqi political parties, supported by the United States government, an Iraqi government was not formed until May 2006, more than four months after the election.⁵¹

The trio of evils III: The case of Hamas victory in Palestine

In the minds of many Muslims, the trio of evils is profoundly implicated in the case of Hamas's victory in the January 2006 Palestinian election. An examination of the opinion discourse in almost every Arab media organ from Ocean (Atlantic Ocean) to Gulf (Arab/Persian Gulf)⁵² shows how Arabs and Muslims distrust the United States and some

⁴⁹ See, for example, *The Guardian Weekly's* "The CIA's main man in Baghdad" by Patrice Claude, July 23rd, 2004, and *The New Yorker's* online "A man of the shadows", by Jon Lee Anderson about Iyad Allawi, posted on January 17, 2005, issue of January 24 and 31, 2005.

⁵⁰ International monitors reported that there were "some 2,000 complaints of fraud, violence and intimidation were noted" ("Monitors report," 2006, para.3).

⁵¹ Finally, in May 2006, these sectarian and ethnical political parties, after more than four months of bargaining, established a government with important ministries, such as defence and interior ministries, missing ("Terrorism and," 2006).

⁵² Most Arabs, when talking about the Arab world, refer to their land as the land from Ocean to Gulf. To the west, the Arab land, in Morocco, ends at Atlantic Ocean, while in the East, it starts from Arab/Persian Gulf. Arabs call and believe that Persian Gulf is an Arab Gulf.

Western governments, how Israel spins 'facts', and the role of Arab and Muslim regimes in all this.

In his discussion of the factors leading to Hamas's victory Malik (2006) highlights two key issues. The first, he claims, was the American administration's excessive siding with Israel and a failure to consider the views of others. The second is related to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land and their actions of subjugation, repression, and sanction against the Palestinians. Malik goes on to argue that the American government's attitude can be regarded as a double-standard because it withheld financial aid from the Palestinians after their election of Hamas, despite the fact that the election was sponsored by American officials in accordance with their 'road map' in the region, and that many observers viewed the Palestinian election as the most successful democratic election in the region.⁵³ He writes:

this democracy is a local democracy and it is not imported ... and once again the American double-standard appears for it accepts only the imposed democracies in the region, but when a democracy appears from the heart of Palestine, it is not acceptable (para.10,11).

Malik concludes that Hamas's victory in the Palestinian election can be interpreted as

a victory of rejecting and opposing forces against the so-called prepared American plans for the region. And consequently, this means that the decisions Washington makes and tries to impose them on others by force are not eternal destiny which cannot be confronted [or countered] (para.17).

AbdulAzim (2006) argues that the Bush administration's call for democracy in the Middle East is a democracy of threatening others. He claims that if democratic practices in the region are not practiced according to the American government's desires, they are threatened until they obey the desires and ambitions of leading Western governments. For example, he points out "Hamas did not reach power by cheating and frauds as it happens with many Arab regimes which America overlooks ... [Hamas] reached [power] with real, undoubted votes of Palestinian voters" (para.22). This leads him to question "[w]hat makes America and Europe overlook the racist practices of Israel against the Palestinian

⁵³ The United States President, George W. Bush, himself admitted in his speech, right after the election, that the election was successful.

people, and rush to threaten Hamas and the whole Palestinian people by cutting the aid from them unless Hamas recognize Israel and stops its resistance of it” (para.4). He also chastises Arab regimes for subjugated themselves to American and European governments and for not representing Arab people’s will.

According to AbdulAzim, Arab and Muslim peoples’ will is to resist the American and Israeli occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine, yet the American, Israeli, some European governments, and with them most of Arab regimes try to stop this resistance in “this shameful situation which is related to a bad Arab era” (para.16). He argues that the threat to withhold financial aid by the American and the European governments is not for the sake of the Palestinian people, but rather “to protect Israel. America and the European Union never commented about Israel’s threats against Hamas’s ministers-to be, and never comment about Israel’s daily violation of [peace] agreement against Palestinian people” (para.20).

In his analysis of the Hamas victory in the Palestinian election, Alkhazen (2006b) also alludes to the ‘trio of evils’ in his comments about what he sees as the hidden hatred of the Palestinians by pro-Israeli US Congress members. He writes:

for their democratic practice which was continuously demanded by the American administration and they [those pro-Israeli Congress members] ask [the American administration] to cut all the financial aid from the Palestinian authority ... [N]ot only that, they also demand that United Nations programs, which help the Palestinians, be cut, and to restrain the Palestinian authority members from traveling (para.5).

Just as the American government accuses Hamas and other Palestinian political parties of terrorism, many Muslims, media and audience alike, accuse the Israeli government and its leaders of being terrorists. For example, in the eyes of many Arabs and Muslims, the former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is a war criminal.⁵⁴ Moreover, in the eyes of these actors one cannot contrast the ‘terror’ against Palestinians and other Muslim people

⁵⁴ In fact, Arab and other human right activists tried to bring Sharon to a trial for his role in crimes committed against the Palestinian civilians. BBC online (“On this day,” 2006) indicates that about twenty-three survivors of two Palestinian refugee camps (Sabra and Shatila) massacre in Lebanon “brought a civil action in Belgium against Mr. Sharon and others, accusing them of crimes against humanity” (para.17). “More than 800” Palestinian refugees were massacred in these camps (para.4). These massacres committed against the Palestinian civilians in 1982 as the Israeli forces, of which Sharon was responsible as a defense minister, were occupying Lebanon.

(e.g. Iraq and Afghanistan) – which is backed up with large armies – with the ‘resistance’ to the occupying Israeli forces in Palestine and/or the occupying American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the light of the Israeli oppression of Palestinians and the preferential treatment it gives to Israel, it is virtually impossible for Muslims and Arabs to *love* the United States government.

The trio of evils IV: Muslims’ prophet’s cartoons⁵⁵

Perceptions about the role of ‘the trio of evils’ in fostering tension in the Muslim world is evident in the case of the cartoons of the Muslims Prophet Mohammed that first appeared in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005. The trio of evils was explicitly criticized in many of the discourses about the Prophet’s cartoons in the counter Muslim media. In these opinion and news discourses Muslims accused the trio of evils, particularly the ‘West’ and ‘the United States’, of being dishonest and maintaining double-standards with regard to the issue of freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Many Muslims considered the cartoons to be racist and, as such, enormous anger was unleashed. This served to further increase the animosity many Muslims feel toward some Western and the United States governments.

Although the conflict relating to the Prophet Mohammed’s cartoons initially was between Denmark and Muslims around the world, the United States, Israel and the Muslim regimes also were critiqued in the Muslim discourses associated with this event. Many of the opinions expressed in these discourses claimed that the cartoons furor was a plot by the Israeli and the United States governments aimed at widening the gap between Muslims and the Europeans and to detract Muslims’ minds from the harm these governments are causing to Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and elsewhere.

⁵⁵ The discussion presented in this section is based on an analysis of 8 Arab newspapers from different Arab states, between Feb. 02, 2006 and March 01, 2006, were reviewed and 22 editorials and opinion articles, related to the topic, were examined in these newspapers. These newspapers include: from United Arab Emirates: *Albayan* (Albriki, 2006; Alkhuli, 2006; Almuayni, 2006; Kirat, 2006; “[Now] it is,” 2006; “Outrageous in,” 2006; “The false [lie],” 2006; “The need,” 2006) and *Akhbar Alkhaleej* (Alkhaleefa, 2006), from Jordan: *Alarab Alyawm* (Aludwan, 2006), from Egypt: *Algomhuria* (Ragab, 2006), From UK: *Alhayat* (Alaz’ar, 2006; Alkawari, 2006; Alkhazen, 2006c; Alsa’adi, 2006; Hamid, 2006; Sha’aban, 2006), *Alquds Alarabi* (Alshahabi, 2006; Shawish, 2006), and *Asharqalawsat* (Huwaidi, 2006a, 2006b), and from Qatar: *Alrayah* (“Political position,” 2006). *Albayan*’s two articles (“[Now] it is” and “The false [lie]”) are adopted from *Alsharq*’s (Qatar) two editorials, and “The need” is adopted from Egypt’s leading paper *Alahram*. Also, 131 Arab/Muslim readers’ responses about the cartoons on *aljazeera.net*, from Feb. 02, 2006 to Feb. 20, 2006, were examined.

Another common theme present in this discourse was the view that most European media outlets would not dare ridicule Judaism and Jews in a similar manner. As for the Arab regimes, they were accused of doing nothing to regain Muslims' dignity which was seen to be harmed by the cartoons. Almost all of the editorials, opinion articles, and the readers' responses to these cartoons examined for this thesis expressed the view that publishing these cartoons had nothing to do with freedom of expression or the freedom of the press. The authors of these discourses considered the cartoons as provoking hatred and racism against Muslims and Arabs.

Examining this conflict in a broader context shows how freedom of expression and/or freedom of press can provoke hatred and racism by promoting negative, stereotypes of Muslims. It also highlights the factors underpinning the perceived hypocrisy of several Western governments.

The views of the Muslim audiences regarding this event were reflected in an *Aljazeera* on line's survey ("A survey regarding," 2006) that asked readers' opinions about the cartoons. All of the respondents to this survey viewed the cartoons as a deliberate campaign against Muslims and Islam when responding to the question 'what is the purpose of these cartoons or who is behind them?'. In addition to criticizing Denmark, the readers criticized the West, Israel, Jews, Zionism, the United States and the Muslim regimes. In other words, 'the trio of evils' in the eyes of those Muslims who responded to the survey also is present in this conflict.

Many of the respondents criticized more than one of these 'evils'. While some 56 of the 131 respondents explicitly or implicitly criticized *Jyllands-Posten*, the Danish government and its officials, approximately 45 respondents criticized Israel or Jews, 18 the United States, 36 the West, Europe and 'crusaders', and 30 the Muslim regimes. These figures suggest that the wider context of the conflict has a role in influencing these opinion discourses.

The audience's role in creating personal meanings from media discourses and interpreting them is evident in the responses. According to the respondents, the war against Afghanistan and Iraq and the occupation of Palestine by Israel are all part of a scheme to oppress Islam. The following are examples of survey participants' responses:

Marwan Alsa'adi, a journalist (as he identifies himself), from Jordan assures

The cartoons were an intended campaign against Muslims. Who is behind them? The Mossad ... stands behind them and which controls ... the Viking countries.

Muhammad Sati from Sudan says:

... Let all Europe's newspapers continue publishing those cartoons [... Our] continuation of boycotting those countries which started [publishing the cartoons] will be a lesson to all of them. Let us be martyrs for [our] religion [Islam] and our future generations for there is no dignity and honor but by sacrificing [our selves]. And this is also a lesson for some Arab rulers who are smeared in disgrace [who] seek the approval of arrogant Western powers ...

Ahmed Al-tarabulsi from France claims that he and other Muslims

who live in West for a period of time ... experienced ... the extent of Jew-Zionist infiltration in their [in the Westerners']... economic, political or media and even religious life ... Did we not hear couple of years ago Vatican's Pope's declaration – the highest religious authority in of Catholics- about denying the blood of Jesus peace upon him from the Jews while everyone knows that Christianity was built on Jews crucifying Jesus peace upon him. The point I want to reach at is these-the Jews- are known in conspiracy and meanness [against others] ... if they want to do something they prepare many things before that ... Maybe that is why- as they fully control the international media- they want to pass a very dangerous thing related to Muslims.

Rani Katana from Jordan wonders:

... the last chain of events, in which the European countries played the leading role, [could be] Jewish and American co-production which aims to divert some of Muslims' hatred of America to the European countries in order to ... get America out of Muslims' only enemy list and involve some other countries in this role. This could be the beginning of a new American scenario to draw attentions from itself in order to start one of its new plans which never ends, whether this plan is aimed at Iran, Syria or at any other country for candidates are plenty.

Hussein Mukhtar from Somalia writes:

Yes, this is an obvious, intended campaign against the Muslims after they succeeded in seizing Muslims' lands in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine.

Muhammad Al'anqawi, an engineer from Saudi Arabia claims:

The United States and Europe are waging an open war against Islam and Muslims under the leadership of George [W. Bush], Tony [Blair] and Jacques [Chirac].

Faisal Suwais from Algeria writes:

[This is] a dirty crusade war against the whole Islam ... We do not need their apology.

Some respondents' interpretations of these cartoons appear to be based on a common belief among many Muslims that, in turn, is based on a verse in the holy Quran that reads "Neither the Jews nor the Christians will be pleased with you until you follow their sect" (Verse 120, chapter 2).⁵⁶ For example, one respondent, Majed, a student from Germany writes:

I see the drawing and publishing of these cartoons result from an old, rooted hatred in the souls of many who claim friendship and living in peace for Muslims in West. [Yet] the great god said the truth and he knows their state when he informed us that neither the Jews nor the Christians will be pleased with us until we believe in them and forget our religion.

Flemming Rose (2006), the cultural editor of *Jyllands-Poste*⁵⁷ who first published Prophet Mohammed's cartoons justified their publication by saying that he was practicing freedom of speech and that *Jyllands-Posten* treats everyone (i.e. the Danish royal family, public figures, and other religions) equally when it comes to cartoons and satire (para.11). However, this claim appears to be hypocritical given that prior to publishing the satirical pictures of the Prophet Mohammed cartoons about Jesus Christ were not published on the grounds that such cartoons would likely hurt some Christians' feelings (Fouche, 2006).

⁵⁶ This belief is based on a flawed interpretation of the verse. First, the holy Quran considers Jews and Christians to be believers just like Muslims. Second, the verse was revealed to the Muslim prophet when there was a dispute between Muslims and Jews living in and around the Arabian city Yathrib (later Almadina) and the Christians who lived in Najran concerning the direction to face during prayer. The first Muslims originally faced Jerusalem but then they changed to face Mecca. When Muslims changed their direction from Jerusalem, Jews and Christians were not pleased. It seems from this verse, and others before it, that the first Muslims were not sure where to face during prayer until they decided to face Jerusalem, then Mecca (Alhimsi, n.d., pp.30-38).

⁵⁷ *Jyllands-Posten* is one of the most right-wing papers in Europe.

Rose also claimed that,

by treating Muslims in Denmark as equals ... we are integrating [them] into the Danish tradition of satire because [the Muslims who live in Denmark] are part of our society, not strangers. The cartoons are including, rather than excluding, Muslims [from Danish society] (para.12).

However, Rose's argument is somewhat misleading. First, the cartoons promote negative stereotypical portraits of Muslims. For example, one of the cartoons showed the Muslim prophet as a terrorist wearing a bomb in his turban. Such a cartoon connotes that Muslim people are terrorists. Another cartoon shows Prophet Mohammed in heaven receiving jihadists who have bombed themselves and the Prophet informs them, in sorrow, that they, in heaven, are out of virgins. The cartoon implies that jihadists kill themselves in order to win virgins in the heaven. This is an obvious negative stereotyping that detracts attention away from the real reason why people fight, and even are ready to die for their cause by reducing Muslim resistance to a desire to win virgins.

Second, the cartoons, contrary to what Rose claims, may isolate and exclude Muslims by potentially making them feel like strangers in Danish society. This is in no small measure due to the fact that the cartoons portray Muslims as different and weird, and imply that their 'terrorist' traditions contradict the 'civilized' Western values.

In justifying the publishing of the Prophet Mohammed's cartoons, Rose argued that he opposes labeling critiques of something "as an insult" because labeling is used by totalitarian regimes to practice censorship and to punish those who fight for human rights. He claims that this is what former Soviet regimes did to its writers and "accused them of being anti-Soviet propagandists, just as some Muslims are labeling the 12 cartoons of Muslims' prophet in Danish newspaper anti-Islamic" (para.20). While there is some validity to Rose's argument in so far as labeling critiques as insult can impinge on the freedom of expression, the cartoons can be seen as anti-Islamic.

For some Muslims, such as those who responded to *Aljazeera's* survey, the publication of these cartoons exposes the hypocrisy of some Western countries' democracy in so far as they see this action as an example of democracy working for some and not for others. At issue here is the fact that while the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and other Western officials claim that the publication of these cartoons is protected and

guaranteed under European laws and that it is against to their laws to censor or punish the publishers of the cartoons, several European countries have laws that punish those who express, let alone publish, racist ideas about other ethnic groups. What makes Arab and Muslim editorials, opinion writers and readers accuse the 'West' of being hypocrites is the fact that several European governments are perceived as treating Muslims differently than other ethnic and religious groups. Muslims see this as discrimination and prejudice.

Much of the Muslim opinion discourse examined with regard to the cartoon controversy stresses that the 'West' is biased, pro-Israelis/Jewish, and anti-Muslims. For example, Qatar's daily *Alraya* editorial ("Political position," 2006) regarding this issue argued that the republishing of Prophet Mohammed's cartoons in a French paper (and of course in other European papers) "is a provocation" and that the paper's justification of republishing them was nothing but "a falling in the swamp of double-standards which is waged against Muslims and Arabs every time and every moment" (para.2). The editorial claims that those Westerners who claim to be pro-freedom of expression are hypocrites, that while the Europeans publicize hatred when they talk about Islam they accuse those who assess and examine anti-Semitic⁵⁸ issues and the Holocaust of hatred. Those who are sympathetic to the view expressed in the *Alraya* editorial point to laws, in many European countries (e.g. Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Switzerland), that make denying the Holocaust a crime.⁵⁹

It can be argued that what is happening to Muslims as a whole (i.e. labeling and portraying them as terrorists by showing the Prophet wearing a turban bomb) is promoting negative ideas (i.e. Muslims as dangerous people) among Westerners and fosters their isolation in Europe and elsewhere. Such attitudes toward certain ethnic groups risk unwanted and, potentially, ugly consequences. The sense of isolation is further reinforced by the fact that the government of Denmark has recently legislated laws that are seen by some as limiting the rights of new immigrants to Denmark by

⁵⁸ It should be noted that 'anti-Semitism' is not simply, as many in West understand, about hate crimes against a certain ethnic group. The accusation of anti-Semitism also is used to promote political agendas. See, for example, "Mayor is suspended" (2006) and "Mayors statement" (2006) which expand upon the accusations levied against Ken Livingstone, the mayor of London, in response to comments he made comparing a Jewish journalist to a guard at a concentration camp.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Bell (2006).

tightening the rules on asylum. Moreover, and as Castle (2006) notes, “[f]or weeks after the publication of the cartoons [in Sep. 2005], the [Danish] Prime Minister refused to get involve” (para.13) and “rejected a request from ambassadors of 11 mainly Muslim countries [to discuss the conflict], staying aloof until the dispute escalated to a crisis [in the beginning of 2006]” (para.14).

The violent demonstrations that followed the publication of the cartoons of Prophet Mohammed reflect more than people simply being angry about satirical cartoons. The violent demonstrations around the world marked a reaction against the perceived accumulation of decades of repression at the hands of some Western governments, totalitarian Muslim regimes, as well as the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Islam is detoured so is democracy

The problems facing the Muslim world, in general, lies in what is widely perceived to be an unjust and oppressive state of affairs that many Muslims view as being directly linked to the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism in the region. A common perception among many Muslims is that the trio of evils (the United States/West, Israel, and puppet Muslim regimes) will always find excuses for pursuing their interests at the expense of Muslims.

Evidence of this view can be seen in the response of one participant, Raed Alanzi, in *aljazeera.net*'s survey. In his response about the Prophet Mohammed's cartoons and Muslims' reactions to the cartoons he expresses the view that, the 'West' will always find an excuse, and label any Muslim action as terrorist action. According to this respondent the best thing Muslims can do to face the West, is to boycott Western goods. However, he notes that, “but now [after boycotting Western goods] they will use the term of economic terrorism for according to them, any thing a Muslim does is considered as terrorism” (“A survey regarding,” 2006).

One of the key issues fuelling the growing animosity of many Muslims toward the United States and some Western governments is the rise of extremism in both sides.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Elements of extremism maybe seen in President George W. Bush's claim that god had ordered him to wage the war on Iraq. Similarly, the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, Tony Blair, claimed that his decision to support the invasion was based on his own religious beliefs. According to Blair ““if you believe in God, it's [the judgment of going to war] made by God” (“PM attacked,” 2006, para.9, 10).

Extreme attitudes in the West toward Muslims foster extreme reactions of the part of Muslims toward the West and vice versa. All the while, extremists from both sides, whether religious or political, increase the problems people face. Given that the rise of extremism is central to understanding why and how the United States government has failed to win the hearts and minds of Muslims, there is a need to examine how Islamic extremism came into being and how Islam is being detoured and used to promote hatred toward the United States government

Much of the Muslim world remains far behind the West in every aspect of civil society. The Muslim world is a part of the so-called Third, or developing World. In order to understand why the so-called Muslim extremist and/or fundamentalist movements are spreading in an era of globalization, one has to examine factors such as low education levels and high poverty rates. Such an environment helps to foster and sustain fundamentalist and/or extremist ideologies by enabling certain actors to exploit people's lack of knowledge.

The Muslim world was under colonial control for centuries. The colonialists were primarily concerned with protecting their economic and political interests.⁶¹ Even after achieving independence, the Muslim countries in the Middle East remained under the influence of the big powers such as the United States, United Kingdom, France, and the former Soviet Union. The latter countries played, and in some cases continue to play, a major role in putting and removing Muslim leaders in power.⁶² These regimes played a major role in creating an environment where democracy and the freedom of expression cannot grow or survive. These regimes also have wiped out almost every other rival domestic secular and political power.

It was advantageous for the West, particularly the United States, to support totalitarian regimes that promoted U.S. interests and who fought groups opposed to the West's policies in the Muslim world. To this end, it may be argued that by collaborating with some of the most totalitarian Muslim regimes (e.g. the Saudi regime), the United States

61 Right after the First World War (1914-1918), for example, Arab countries such as Syria and Lebanon were under the control of the French colonialist, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt were British colonies, and Algeria, for example, was already a French colony.

62 For example, the most totalitarian Arab regimes, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco kings, and the Egyptian President Husni Mubarak are the best allies of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

and the United Kingdom's governments have indirectly and directly helped the growth of extreme Muslim movements and organizations.⁶³

Part of the problem also exists within the interpretation of Islam. Many of the Muslims who were recruited to fight the former Soviet Union's forces in Afghanistan during 1980s believed that they were fighting their enemy for god. In other words, their primary motivation was religion. Some Western governments, particularly the United States, helped and exploited these Muslim fanatics as part of the Cold War strategy against the former Soviet Union.

When power centers struggle the contest often is carried on under different names, such as liberation and/or resistance. Eventually, hidden agendas also tend to emerge. The point here is that in pursuing their specific interests, the Western power centers gave rise to conflicts and problems. When the former Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan, the Western powers no longer needed the fanatic Muslim groups who had fought the Soviets. Yet, these fanatical Muslim groups continued to exist as potential powers that can play by different rules in different conflicts.

The Muslim fundamentalists who had been helped by the Western powers interpreted Islam literally and, in accordance with their political agendas. However, Islam is not what these extremists believe.⁶⁴ The extremist interpretation of the holy Quran and the Prophet's sayings is not compatible with the ever changing times and places in which modern Muslims find themselves.⁶⁵

⁶³ For example, the U.S. government directly and indirectly helped al Qaeda financially and logistically in efforts to recruit Muslim youth to fight their main enemy, the Soviets, in Afghanistan during 1980s.

⁶⁴ Islam is a revolutionary religion that changed many negative aspects of Arab society if one looks at it within the time and the conditions of the context within which it first appeared about fourteen centuries ago. For example, Islam forbade the killing or burying the female new-born infants which many Arab tribes did believing females were a burden in the harsh environment of Arab region. Islam also brought freedom and equality for the slaves, with the Hadis (i.e. sayings) stressing that, "People are equal as the teeth of the comb and there is no difference between Arabs and foreigners and between blacks and red skins except in virtue". Indeed, the holy Quran forbids any ethnic group from ridiculing another (Chapter 49, verse 11). Islam also established the foundations of a democratic political system. The holy Quran orders Muslims to democratically discuss their own issues (Chapter 42, verse 38) as well as commanding that leaders discuss issues with their people before taking any decisions (Chapter 3, verse 159).

⁶⁵ For example, one can find in the holy Quran many verses which encourage peace and cultural harmony between different ethnic groups, as well as the prohibiting of the killing of innocents and civilians (chapter 49, verse 13; chapter 5, verse 32; chapter 4, verse 93). When faced with the new aspects of the new cultures, the Muslim scholars, and even the rulers, have had to look beyond the holy Quran and prophet's sayings and behaviors to contend with the issues they faced. Some of these methods are

When Islam is seen as a movement that seeks to change negative aspects of a society, the Muslim world and the West can find a common ground to initiate solving the conflicts that exist between them. In short, extremists from both sides – East and West – may be seen as playing a role in escalating conflicts between Muslims and the West rather than fostering tolerance and building common ground for better understanding. In the words of one of *Aljazeera*'s respondents ("A survey regarding," 2006),

The recent talking about the insulting cartoons of Prophet lacks other face of the picture. It is extremism and religious animosity which are increasing the disagreement among people and the capitalist regimes and those who benefit from them exploiting this to increase this turmoil's fire among the nations while the rulers and dominated political, economic, and social groups sit on our chests. I see insulting of the Prophet or any other prophet, or any human being in essence, as a racist act, and I think that we have to deal with it as individuals who believe in human rights and not on religious animosity or sectarian bases for not all Europe is Christian and not all Arab world is Muslim and therefore, what an Arab does should not represent all Arabs, and likewise whatever a European does should not represent all Europeans...

The key question, therefore, is: Who is benefiting from this kind of escalation of animosity? Many in the Muslim world suspect that the biggest beneficiaries are the extremists.

There are, in fact, hundreds of suspicious violent attacks which have been committed against Iraqi civilians as well as the bombing of Muslims' sacred shrines and mosques.⁶⁶ In addition to the assassination of doctors and scientists, Alsalihi (2006) points out about 182 professors have been killed in the last three years of the American-led occupation of Iraq. This issue also was reported in Western media outlets such as *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*. Zangana (2006), for example, explains that "[n]ot one of these crimes has been investigated by the occupation forces or the interim governments" and asserts that "the victims have been men and women from all over Iraq, from different ethnic, religious and political backgrounds" (para.3). According to Zangana most of these

known as 'ijtihad' and 'ijmaa'. Ijtihad means thinking and reasoning. In the end, and after most scholars have agreed collectively (ijmaa) on the new rules and do not contradict the essence of the faith, these new rules become laws. These two methods, which repeatedly practiced since the beginning of Islamic empire(s) shows that Islam is an interactive, not static, faith, and demonstrates that is adoptable to change.

⁶⁶ Christians' churches in Musul and Kirkuk, for example, also have been bombed.

victims “were vocally opposed to the occupation” and “were killed in ... cold-blooded assassination” (para.3). Zangana concludes that these kinds of assassinations are in the interests of the occupiers “[f]or the occupation’s aims to be fulfilled, independent minds have to be eradicated” (para.4).

Many Iraqis, Arabs, and Muslims are sympathetic to Zangana’s conclusion, and are of the view that such violent attacks against the civilians are not committed by the real resistance groups who fight the occupiers. There is a widely held notion that these crimes are committed by trained, professional, and criminal groups who are recruited by other powerful states, and in particular the United States, to create chaos and to divide Iraqis so as to control them. For example, an investigative report in *Alhayat* (“People of Anbar,” 2006) shows that many Iraqis in the province of Anbar⁶⁷ questioned the existence of Alzerqawi whom American officials held as an al-Qaeda leader in Iraq.

Ahmed Aljumaili, a professor of political science in the university of Al-Anbar who is quoted in the report, argues that “Alzerqawi’s organization and other extremist groups ‘are but a part of a big intelligence operation [by the occupiers], the aim of it is to spread disgust about the resistance of the occupation in the hearts of people, and attaching terrorism trait to the resistance groups” (para.1). Aljumaili asserts that all the violent acts attributed to Alzerqawi ultimately serve the interests of United States in Iraq and abroad (para.1, 2). Other Iraqi citizens of Falluja and Ramadi (Al-Anbar’s main cities), according to *Alhayat*’s report, assert that the American officials know that Alzerqawi does not exist but they have “turned him into a legend in order to justify their staying in Iraq” (para.6).

Overall, the support for Zangana’s conclusion also reflects Muslims’ distrust in the United State’s government. It is observable from the counter Muslim media and opinion discourses examined above that the wider context has played an important role in influencing the ideas contained in the discourses about the issues and conflicts examined. Equally, noticeable is how the audience itself creates its meanings and decodes the Western media messages to which it is exposed. In other words, Media messages cannot impact the audience without being questioned.

⁶⁷ Falluja, which is totally destroyed by the American-led forces in November 2004, is one of this province’s cities and considered one of the most Iraqi resistance groups’ hometown.

In the case of counter Muslim media and audience opinion discourses examined in this chapter, the context in which the Muslim audience live and their collective memory about certain issues appears to play a role in shaping their beliefs and, consequently, impact on how they create their own meanings from the information provided by Western media sources. These meanings generally involve ideas that are rooted in a rejection of the United States government's claims of bringing democratic values to the Muslim world. Indeed, the opinion discourses examined in this chapter suggest that American policies and actions toward Muslim world tend to be seen as actually enhancing conflict rather than reducing it. It seems plausible therefore, that the widespread diffusion of such views among Muslims is likely to foster an environment that is not compatible with American efforts to win hearts and minds.

The local and/or the regional values and beliefs, as reflected in the Muslim opinion discourses, appear to have a greater impact on Muslim countries than American culture contrary to what the cultural imperialism advocates claim. Muslims, or any people of a Third World country, might enjoy 'imperialist's' products, yet when it comes to serious issues where they feel threatened or perceive the subject of unfairness, they resist.

One of the key factors influencing the dissemination and promotion of Muslim counter opinion discourses against the United States government is the widespread diffusion of new communication technologies and their use in the Muslim world. The role of these technologies in helping to spread and create pan-Islamism and to propagate ideas that challenge the United States government's policies and actions is the focus of discussion in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Bush Administration's Ineffective Media Warfare in the Muslim World

Several policies and practices of the American government in dealing with the Muslim world have proved to be ineffective and have yielded negative results. The discussion in this chapter focuses on how these policies have negatively influenced the Bush administration's credibility among Muslims throughout the world, particularly after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The emergence of counter Muslim media outlets whose messages challenge the United States government's media messages in the Middle East has contributed to the continued propagation of anti-Americanism in the region.

This chapter centers on two primary factors that appear to account for the American government's failure to win Muslim hearts and minds. They are, first, the ineffective American media strategies applied in the Muslim world after the September 11, 2001 attacks. These strategies have included censoring, and the controlling and bribing local Iraqi and regional media organs in post-war Iraq.

The second factor is the widespread use of new communication technologies in the Muslim world. The latter has had the effect of "giving voice" to a wide number of people who previously had been excluded from public discourse. This has enabled Muslims to establish a profound, counter Muslim media. These two factors are illustrated by examining the United States government's battles against media outlets such as *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya*.

Power sharing: the new players

The role of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in helping empower new groups, whether governments, civil organizations, media corporations and citizens, to engage in public discourse has influenced the United States government's media strategies around the world and in the Muslim world in particular. Ironically, the United States government's strategic slogans regarding the fight against terrorism and bringing freedom and democracy to other nations appears to have backfired in its interventions in the Middle East.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Assessing whether the American officials are sincere or not in their claims is beyond the scope of this

The widespread availability of ICTs (e.g. satellite televisions,⁶⁹ Internet) has enabled different groups in the Muslim world to obtain, propagate and convey their own propaganda and ideas to wider Muslim audiences. These 'Muslim propaganda machines,' function as rivals to the American government's propaganda machines in the region, and have contributed to the forming, in many Muslim people's minds, of opinions that oppose the American policies and actions. What distinguishes new media organizations such as the *Aljazeera*, *Alarabiya*, *Almanar*, *Abu Dhabi*, *Alsharkiya* and *Alalam* satellite television stations from the United States' media outlets such as *Alhurra* and *Allraqiya* is that they are operated by Arab and Muslim staff and journalists who know the Arab and Muslim mentality and culture better than American officials.

For instance, the Iraqi people have been skeptical of the American media organs that were established right after the fall of Baghdad to help win Iraqi and Muslim hearts and minds. King (2003), who interviewed Iraqis in his visit to the south of Iraq right after the fall of Baghdad, asserts that the "Iraqis met are sophisticated viewers and listeners. They are skeptical about the weapons employed by the coalition forces in the propaganda war," (para.11) and are aware of that television stations such as "Towards Freedom TV" and radio SAWA have their "own agenda" and are "pro-US" stations (para.12).⁷⁰

A subsequent news report ("The Iraqi viewer," 2004) adds weight to King's claim. The report notes that most Iraqi viewers do not watch *Allraqiya* TV which was established, funded, and operated by the United States government (para.1, 17). It also points out that *Allraqiya* TV "fails in covering the daily events in Iraq, and its coverage is not accurate" (para.18) and that, as a result, the Iraqis watch other satellite television channels such as *Aljazeera* (Qatar), *Alarabiya* (based in United Arab Emirates) (para.3), *Almanar* (Lebanese Hizbulla TV), *MBC* (Saudi), *LBC* (Lebanese) (para.12), *Sahar* and *Alalam* (Iranian in Arabic) (para.14), and *Alsharqiya* (Owned by an Iraqi media mogul)

thesis.

⁶⁹ As mentioned earlier, satellite televisions are considered new communication technologies in the Muslim world in that they appeared in Muslim world and their numbers increased and gained popularity among most Muslims after 9/11. The most popular Arab satellite news television, *Aljazeera*, for example, was established in 1996 ("Democracy Now!," 2006b, para.15), and the second popular Arab satellite news channel, *Alarabiya*, was established in 2003 ("Alarabiya news," 2006). As we will see in this chapter, *Aljazeera* even did not gain its reputation among Muslim audiences as a semi-independent and trusted Arab news source until after 9/11.

⁷⁰ These media outlets were established by the coalition to disseminate 'Western' messages in Iraq.

(para.25).⁷¹ The author of the report also indicates that Iraqis watch these broadcasters for their perceived “credibility and neutrality and because they convey the daily Iraqi events” (para.4, 12).

All the above satellite television channels are operated by Arab and Muslim staff who know the Iraqi culture and mentality very well and who know what types of programs are most likely to appeal to Iraqi audiences. For example, a popular program on *Alsharqiya* called “Labour and Materials”, as Ciezadio (2004) illustrates, involves surprising Iraqi families whose houses were bombed and destroyed by coalition forces with new materials construction materials, new furniture and appliances. The show’s director, Ali Hanoon, explains that “[t]he main point [of the show] isn’t to rebuild the house, but to show the change in the psychology of the family during the rebuilding” (p.8). This rebuilding, Hanoon goes on, “has a psychological effect on the families – their memories, their lives, are in these walls” (p.8).⁷² This example underscores how important knowing and using the audiences’ culture and mentality is in order to win hearts and minds.

In contrast, the American administration’s media policy does not appear to be based on such knowledge vis-à-vis Iraqi audiences. Although American officials have recruited Iraqis into the Iraqi Media Network (IMN), most of these Iraqis have come into conflict with the American officials’ media agenda.

‘Information Dominance’

Miller (2004) observes that since the beginning of the war in Iraq, “the US has sought not just to influence but to control all information, from both friend and foe” (para.1). This raises the issue of whether it has succeeded. The evidence emerging from their battle to dominate and to control information vis-à-vis rival counter Muslim media outlets such as *Aljazeera* during the last four years suggests that they are losing. Miller points out that “[a]chieving information dominance according to American military experts, involves

⁷¹ The irony, as Ashur (2005) illustrates, is that although the American and Iraqi authorities have banned one of these popular TV stations namely *Aljazeera*, from working in Iraq, they are very keen to appear on its screen for they know that they can reach the Iraqis and the wide Arab and Muslim audiences because of the popularity of *Aljazeera* in Iraq and in Arab/Muslim world (para.2).

⁷² All the materials and goods used in rebuilding the destroyed houses are “donated by viewers who respond to a message flashed at the end of the show” (p.8). These “donations count as zakat, the one-fifth of yearly income all Muslims must give to charity” (p.8).

two components: first, ‘building up and protecting friendly information; [second,] degrading information received by [their] adversary’” (para.6). As Miller notes, in the war against Iraq, the American government succeeded in ‘building up and protecting friendly information’ by the means of embedding journalists. He observes that according to an American Ministry of Defence “commissioned commercial analysis of the print output produced by embeds shows that 90% of their reporting was either ‘positive or neutral’” (para.6).

The success in “building up and protecting friendly information” by the American officials, however, does not appear to have been replicated when it comes to denigrating information received by the adversary. The main reasons behind this appear to lie in the contradiction between democratic principles, such as bringing freedom of expression to Iraqis, and the undemocratic practices that are taking place on the ground with regard to freedom of expression. The American government’s reaction toward media in Middle East, and particularly in Iraq, reveals various undemocratic dimensions aimed at achieving information dominance.

Contrary to what was promised to the Iraqis regarding the establishment of new media, American officials have controlled and dominated media policies since the beginning of their occupation. Right after the fall of Baghdad on April 9, 2003, they were projecting “a post-Saddam television service towards the homes of millions of Iraqis” (White, 2003, para.1) filled with “endless broadcasts of Bush and Blair to the Iraqi people” (Stewart-Smith, 2003, para.2). This new television service, which was called *Towards Freedom* TV sought to ‘teach’ Iraqis democracy and freedom and broadcasted “evening bulletins of ABC, NBC and CBS dubbed into Arabic” (para.7).

The American government’s management and control of Iraqi broadcasting were even more explicit and controversial in the establishment of *AllIraqiya* TV. *AlIraqiya*, which is a part of Iraqi Media Network (IMN), was established, funded, and operated by the US military. According to Miller (2004):

The new TV [*AllIraqiya*] service for Iraq was paid for by the Pentagon. In keeping with the philosophy of information dominance it was supplied, not by an independent news organization, but by a defence contractor, Scientific Applications International Corporation (SAIC). Its expertise in the area – according to its website – is in ‘information operations’ and ‘information dominance’ (para11).

However, problems soon began to appear with the occupation’s control of the IMN and *AllIraqiya*. The exiled Iraqi journalists who were hired to work in IMN protested the American officials’ control and censorship of their productions which were considered “too independent” (Miller, 2004, para.12). According to Ahmad Al-Rikabi, the director of “US-backed” *AllIraqiya* TV, the Iraqi staff protest was because “inadequate funding, equipment and training for staff members left the network unable to meet the Iraqis’ vital need for objective news” (“Iraqi TV boss,” 2003, p.D6). Al-Rikabi also complained that “inadequate funding has made [*AllIraqiya*] impossible to compete with rival TV networks” (p.D6).

Stephen Claypole, a “former adviser to efforts by the US and Britain to set up a post-war media network in Iraq,” illustrates that the “IMN TV’s staff threatened to strike” (Byrne, 2003, para.12) because of the “high degree of political control exerted over broadcasts by coalition authorities” (p.1). As if the coalition control was not enough, Claypole adds that “[i]nto this ‘dodgy mix’ ... came a woman called Hero Talabani [Iraqi President Jalal Talabani’s wife]” (para.10) to edit and censor the materials. He goes on to say that while “IMN attempted to give the impression that it was conveying the views of ordinary Iraqis, it was heavily weighted in favour of the official US line” (para.7), and points out that they (i.e. American officials) wanted “to have vox pops ... so that Iraqi people can see themselves talking in an atmosphere of liberty.” However, “when the vox pops came back ... with anti-American opinions, they were shelved for a day or two to be inter-cut with official ORHA responses [ORHA, Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance directed by Jay Garner, the first US administrator in post-war Iraq]” (para.8).

Another reason for why the American officials have failed in controlling and denigrating ‘unfriendly information’ lies in the credibility the alternative media outlets have gained among the Middle Eastern and Iraqi people. These alternative, or counter Muslim, media organs succeeded in highlighting and contradicting the ‘spin’ in the

American media messages. Expanding on this development, Christopher Dickey, *Newsweek's* Paris bureau chief, points out that contrary to the general idea which emphasizes the domination of the agenda by the United States, the United States media are dying and are not "interested in covering the world outside America" (para.3, 14). He argues that in such situation, the gap between "the US and Arabic media reports is widening ... with American reports being 'all about victory and the Arabic being all about victims'" (para.15).

Building on this view, Amr (2004) asserts that adding American state-owned media outlets, such as *Alhurra* satellite TV which broadcasts to Middle Eastern people in Arabic and Persian languages, "answers neither America's needs nor those of the [Middle East] region" (para.6). Amr relates this futile effort to the fact that in this era of changes in communication technologies, people in Muslim countries have a wide range of choices to switch from a channel to another to get the news he/she wants and try "to get a read on what was really going on" (para.6).

The lost battle against *Aljazeera* and others

The battles against *Aljazeera*, *Alarabiya*, and other Muslim and local Iraqi television channels and media outlets by the American government are prime examples of how American officials have tried to denigrate 'unfriendly media'. The results of such policies, however, have served to damage the American government's credibility while the 'unfriendly' media organs' popularity has increased in the region and in the other parts of the world. The credibility of these so called 'unfriendly media organs' have helped to weaken the United States government's efforts at winning Muslim hearts and minds in the last few years.

In the days and months following the initial American-led occupation of Iraq, it was clear that Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction, or ties to al-Qaeda. Moreover, after almost four years of occupation, the pledge George W. Bush and Tony Blair made to the Iraqis was not fulfilled. As Zangana (2005) illustrates, Bush and Blair promised to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. They also promised the Iraqis to liberate them from Saddam Hussein's repression and to establish a democratic Iraq that respects the human rights. However, Iraq has become one of the most dangerous places in the world, harboring many terrorist groups, and registering countless civilian casualties

everyday. The contradictions between the American officials' promises and practices severely damaged their credibility in Iraq.

In such a situation, the American-backed media in Iraq started losing its credibility among Iraqis. As a result, the Iraqis started getting their information from alternative media sources and began to watch and trust other alternative satellite TV broadcasts more than the American-backed *AllIraqiya* TV. For example, *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* "gained Iraqis' great respect for its real coverage of the Iraqi events" ("The Iraqi Viewer," 2004, para.4) and for their critiques of the American occupation ("Television Revolution," 2005 para.15).

In response to the growing popularity of these alternative information sources, the counter Muslim satellite television stations were denigrated by the American officials and their Iraqi allies for their coverage of the Iraqi events. *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* were accused by the American and Iraqi officials of reporting and encouraging violence in Iraq. The battles against these television stations have culminated in the banning of both and the closing their bureaus in Iraq by the Iraqi officials who were appointed by the American administration.⁷³ *Alarabiya* subsequently toned down its coverage of events in Iraq and appointed a new pro-American general manager, Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed (Shapiro,2005). As a result, the ban on its operation in Iraq was lifted. However, the ban on *Aljazeera* remains in effect to this day.

According to Janabi (2004), the reason behind the banning *Aljazeera* was not because *Aljazeera's* reports from Iraq violated media ethics or encouraged violence, as the American and Iraqi officials often claimed. He argues that, instead, the ban is directly linked to its coverage of the American-led coalition forces' increased attacks on Iraqis. A similar view is shared by Udai al-Katib, an *Aljazeera* reporter, who asserts that *Aljazeera* was the first to convey the destructive pictures of American forces attacking the Iraqi city

⁷³ From July 2004 to the beginning of 2005 as the American-led occupiers appointed Iyad Allawi as the interim prime minister of Iraq, and from the beginning of 2005, where the first Iraq election was held and the Shiite candidate Ibrahim Jafari was appointed as the Prime Minister, each tried to appoint their supporters in the Iraqi Media Network (IMN) outlets. Then IMN became a struggle place among powerful Iraqi political parties. During 2005, for example, and as a result of struggle and desire to control the media, Cuma Alhalafi, the editor in chief of IMN's daily paper *Alsabah* was forced out of his position by militias and a new editor in chief, ally to other Shiite group and preferred by the Kurdish President of Iraq Jalal Talabani, who is preferred and supported by the American administration, was put in his position (Mahdi, 2005)

of Falluja in April 2004 (para.22). He argues that the Iraqi government and the American officials “have learned from Falluja experience and want to avoid more embarrassment” (para.21). In other words, the American and the Iraqi officials, wanted to control ‘unfriendly information’. The irony is that *Aljazeera* and other alternative media sources for Iraqis and for many Arabs and Muslims as well remain key sources of information about events which frequently go unreported by the American-backed Iraqi media.⁷⁴

It may be argued that the denigrating of *Aljazeera* in the post-9/11 period reflects hypocrisy on the part of American officials that flies in the face of slogans such as freedom of expression. In an interview with Amy Goodman, the anchor of *Democracy Now!*, (“Democracy Now!,” 2006a), Wadah Khanfar, managing director of *Aljazeera*, points out that *Aljazeera* was considered as the centre of freedom expression by the American administration up until 2001 (9/11).⁷⁵ However, as it began reporting the other face of the American war in Afghanistan, Bin Laden’s statements, and different stories from Iraq it became, in the eyes of the American officials, a biased TV station that only shows the negative pictures of the American troops killing women and children. According to Khanfar, *Aljazeera* did not change after 2001. It kept loyal to its motto which reads “the opinion and the other opinion”.⁷⁶

The American officials’ conflict with *Aljazeera* reached its climax during the siege of Falluja in April 2004 where *Aljazeera*’s journalist Ahmed Mansur managed to enter the city and report on the massacres the American troops committed against the Iraqi

⁷⁴ Another irony and contradiction of banning *Aljazeera* by American-backed Iraqi officials lies in that many Iraqi officials are keen to appear on *Aljazeera* for they know about its popularity among Iraqi, Arab, and Muslim audiences.

⁷⁵ Hugh Miles, the author of *Aljazeera: How Arab TV News Challenged the News*, also mentions that the American officials used to praise *Aljazeera* up until 9/11. He indicates that the United States Department report on Qatar, released in 2000, praises both Qatar and *Aljazeera* and that the “U.S. officials often used to say that *Aljazeera* was a beacon, it was a pillar of democracy” (“Democracy Now!,” 2006b, para.32). Miles indicates an important point about *Aljazeera*. He says that *Aljazeera*, unlike other Arab channels, mostly controlled by Arab states, had given chances to those who were denied airtime in Arab world. In addition to Hezbollah, American officials, Hamas etc., *Aljazeera*, for example, also invited Israelis to their TV. “This [inviting Israelis],” says Miles, “was an absolutely fundamental change from anything which had happened before, because Israelis were banned from Arab TV. Most Arabs had never seen an Israeli speak before, and here they [the Israelis] were on *Aljazeera* presenting their case in their own words” (para.23). It is understood from Miles and others’ comments about *Aljazeera* that the United States government is insisting on its president’s motto where he said after 9/11 that others are either with us or against us. Had *Aljazeera* did not mention or report the other face of American administration’ war in Afghanistan and in Iraq, it would have stayed safe and sound in the eyes of American officials.

⁷⁶ Khanfar also claims that *Aljazeera* has given more air-time to American officials than to Bin Laden.

civilians in the city. Moreover, the images of killed and deformed women and children sent by Mansur to the world severely damaged the American government's claims about the success of its troops in the city.

The American officials, according to Khanfar, asked "to take out *Aljazeera* crew from inside Fallujah" (para.17) as a condition for a ceasefire during the first attack of Falluja in April 2004. In the end, the American officials succeeded in taking *Aljazeera* out of Falluja and, subsequently, banned it from operating in Iraq in August 2004.⁷⁷ In addition to banning *Aljazeera* from operating in Iraq, American officials tried to attack their offices, and to arrest and kill their journalists.⁷⁸

Such actions against counter Muslim media organs and their journalists have fostered anti-Americanism among Muslim audiences and have weakened the American propaganda and media warfare efforts in the region.⁷⁹ In the eyes of some Muslim observers the attitudes of American and British officials toward *Aljazeera* suggest that the governments of these countries apply similar actions to those which the dictatorial Middle Eastern regimes used to practice on their people.⁸⁰

The American government's strategy of intimidation against the counter Muslim media with regard to the wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq also is addressed by *Alquds Alarabi's*

⁷⁷ This was two months prior to the second attack on Falluja.

⁷⁸ In April 2003, the American forces attacked *Aljazeera's* office in Baghdad and killed the networks' correspondent Tariq Ayub. According to Khanfar, while he was *Aljazeera's* bureau chief in Baghdad in 2004, about 20 of his colleagues were either detained by the American forces, spent days in jails, or tortured.

⁷⁹ Alkhazen (2005) concludes that he does not think that Bush was joking about bombing *Aljazeera*, contrary to what the White House announced after the *Daily Mirror* reported the news (in Nov. 2005) about a memo where it claimed that Bush, while meeting with UK's Tony Blair, was thinking to bomb *Aljazeera's* headquarter in April 16, 2004. Alkhazen is not surprised by Bush's suggestion of bombing *Aljazeera* because, as he sees it, a president whose administration wages war against the American press will not hesitate waging war against *Aljazeera*.

⁸⁰ Daniel Mason, the co-founder of *Blair Watch* (www.blairwatch.co.uk), notes that as the *Daily Mirror* revealed the controversial *Aljazeera's* bombing story, the British Attorney General Lord Goldsmith activated The Official Secrets Act and "essentially told the media [British media] that if there was any further discussion or if any more of the memo's contents were revealed, then editors would be prosecuted" ("Democracy Now!," 2006c, para.14). In other words, the British media were threatened of revealing any further information about the memo. Mason notes that the mainstream media kept silent about this secret memo after Goldsmith's threat (para.25). For further details about Goldsmith's threat of media and persecution of David Keogh and Leo O'Connor, the two British civil servants who were accused of leaking the memo, see, for example, ("Call for transparency," November 23, 2005), ("Memo: Bush," November 22, 2005), and ("Bush al-Jazeera," November 22, 2005).

editor-in-chief, Abdulbari Atwan (2005). Regarding the bombing of *Aljazeera*,⁸¹ Atwan indicates that this is another act of terrorizing an Arabic media organ which refuses to abide to the American officials' misleading and lies in their war in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine. These wars "in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine," Atwan writes, "are wars based on lies and misleading, and any Arab media ... tries to reveal minimum fact must be bombed, criminalized, and accused of all accusations ... [such as] supporting terrorism to being anti-Semitic" (p.1). Atwan goes on to write:

[T]he Arabic media which are keen to their humane and moralistic principles, though they are scarce, and try to imitate the Western media in objectivity, professionalism and free ideas, are accused of different kinds of terrorism. If one escapes bombing in Kabul or Baghdad, cannot escape false accusations of belonging to al Qaeda or supporting terrorism which leads him to jail for seven years as it happened to colleague Taysir Allouni [Aljazeera's reporter in Afghanistan during the American invasion in 2001] (p.1)

After all, as Atwan points out, the only space of freedom which is left for Arab journalists is:

to hail the American occupation and bend for President Bush and thank his generosity for his invasion of Iraq and turning it to a failed state with chaos and terrorism ... and giving it to a government of thieves and resources looters. If we do not do that, then we are accused of harboring terrorism and propagate for it and we refuse the blessing of American democracy which reveals in its best pictures in new Iraq (p.1).

The above passages from Atwan's editorial underscore the widely held perception among the counter Muslim media of the American government's strategies of threatening and accusing others who are considered as the source of enemy information.

While they used threatening and intimidating policies against unfriendly media organs, American officials use 'soft strategies' to disseminate their own preferred stories in Muslim world. Among other things, these soft strategies have included creating their own media outlets, such as establishing *Alhurra* TV, the Iraqi Media Network; paying certain media organs and journalists to publish articles written by American officials; and closing down some Iraqi press media such as Muqtada Sadr's paper *Al-Hawza al-Natiqa*.

⁸¹ In November 2001, the American forces, which invaded Afghanistan, bombed *Aljazeera*'s office in Kabul ("Aljazeera under," 2005).

For example, *Alhurra* TV was established in March 2004 after American officials recognized the influence of Arabic satellite television networks on Arab audiences. They did so in order to disseminate their own views and values and to be, as Khalil (2006), a journalist who worked for *Alhurra*, argues, “an example of free press in an American way, and ... [to be] distinguished as a light pole in a media market dominated by evocation and deformation” (para.1). Yet, two years after its establishment, Khalil wonders, whether *Alhurra* presented a distinguished American broadcasting in Arabic, it succeeded in reacting against the anti-American propaganda in Arabic media, it helped in promoting democracy in Middle East, and whether it succeeded in challenging Arabic media such as *Aljazeera* (para.2). The answer to such questions is definitely no according to Khalil. He claims that there are several factors as to why *Alhurra* failed. In addition to its weak performance, Khalil points out that *Alhurra* is not much different from many other state-controlled Arab broadcasting station.⁸²

Many of the American government’s media policies in the Muslim world have yielded negative results that harm its efforts to win hearts and minds. Paying Iraqi papers to publish news and articles written by Pentagon staff as *Los Angeles Times*’ Mazzeti and Daraghi (2005) revealed, was one such flawed media policy. According to Mazzeti and Daraghi “[a]s part of an information offensive in Iraq, the U.S. military is secretly paying Iraqi newspapers to publish stories written by American troops in an effort to burnish the image of the U.S. mission in Iraq” (para.1).

The irony, as it is understood by these authors, lies in that while the U.S. military “disseminate propaganda in the Iraqi media” (para.6) “the State Department is training Iraqi reporters in basic journalism skills and Western media ethics” (para.7) and that while the U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, just a day before *Los Angeles Times*’ report of U.S. military bribing Iraqi press, claimed that Iraqis are enjoying free media since American-led coalition forces ousted the former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein (para.8). The bribing media by American officials reminds Arabs, particularly the Iraqis, of how Arab dictators, such as Saddam Hussein, were pumping millions of oil revenues to tens of media organs to propagate for the great leader.

⁸² According to Khalil, *Alhurra* and its managing director Muwaffaq Harb complies with Arab regimes’ policies who are allies with the United States.

It also is important to note that in addition to praising “the work of U.S. and Iraqi troops”, the articles, which were “written by U.S. ‘information operations’ troops”, denounced the insurgents (para.2, 3). According to Mazzeti and Daraghi, most of the articles appeared in “Iraqi press as unbiased news accounts written and reported by independent journalists” (para.3). Some of the articles ran, for example, under a main headline of “Iraqis Insist on Living Despite Terrorism” in a sequence in August 2005 in Ahmad Chalabi’s⁸³ paper *Al Mutamar* (para.26). *Al Mutamar*’s editor-in-chief, Luay Baldawi did not hide his readiness to publish anything which praises the Americans, noting that they, in *Al Mutamar*, “are pro-American” and “[e]verything that supports America [they] will publish” (para.29). So it is in the interest of both the American officials and Chalabi’s group, among others, to publish propagandist articles that attack resistance groups and show them as terrorists.

The American officials and their Iraqi allies call any violent attack ‘terrorist attacks’ regardless of whether the attack is carried out against coalition forces or civilians. It is important to recall, however, that many Arabs and Muslims do not believe that violent attacks against civilians are the deeds of resistance groups. There is a strong held view that the resistance groups only attack the coalition and its allies’ forces. Moreover, many Arabs and Muslims believe that attacking Iraqi civilians is one of the coalition forces’ hidden agendas for dividing and conquering the Iraqi people.⁸⁴

⁸³ Chalabi, who was Pentagon’s ally and favorite candidate to play a big role in post-war Iraq, never hid his support of the Americans.

⁸⁴ In fact, dividing Iraq into, for example, Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish regions seems absurd to a certain degree. Such a division is illogical and unreal if we know that Shiite and Sunni are two major sects of Iraqi Muslims just, for example, like Catholics and Protestants of Christianity, and Kurds are an ethnic group. The word ‘Kurd’ is not a religious sect like Shiites and Sunnis. In other words, ‘Shiite’ and ‘Sunni’ are religious terms and refer to the two main sects of Islam, while ‘Kurd’ or ‘Kurds’ is an ethnic name, that is the name of a nation called Kurdish people, then classifying the three under one category is false. Moreover, the majority of Iraqi people are Muslims (Shiites and Sunnis). Yet ethnically, they are divided into several nations such as Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians. Except the Assyrians, who are Christians, Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen are Muslims and religiously, each of these ethnic groups are mainly divided into Shiites and Sunnis. So the correct categorizing or classification of Iraqi people, if needed, must be either according to their ethnicity or according to their religion. For example, we can either say Iraqis, ethnically, are Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians and so on, or we can say Iraqis, religiously, are Muslims, Christians, and so on. In the Western mainstream media where it says Sunnis usually they refer to the people who mostly live in central, west-central, and northwest parts of Iraq where violent is too high, whereas the Kurds, who live in Northeast of Iraq are also Sunnis. The natural division of Iraq is as following: Arabs (Sunnis and Shiites) live in south, central, and in northwest parts of Iraq. Kurds (mostly Sunnis) live in the northeast part of Iraq, and the Turkmen in between these two ethnic groups, while the Assyrians (who are Christians) mostly live in north of Iraq from east to west.

Expanding on this view, Sami Ramadani (2006) writes that Iraqis' "have persistently accused US-led forces of 'controlling' an assortment of death squads or private militias and 'turning a blind eye' to many terrorist attacks" such as killing and assassinating "more than 200 academics and scientists" (para.7). Since the beginning of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, news items, leaked by American officials, assert that in addition to the approximately one hundred fifty thousand American troops that invaded Iraq, special force teams were secretly created by Pentagon to identify and hunt down suspicious Iraqi insurgents in a strategy that parallels the Phoenix Program that was employed during the Vietnam War to assassinate more than forty thousand Vietnamese.⁸⁵ The problem with such programs is that many innocents are killed as a result of wrongful identification (i.e. people were killed and were not fighting the American troops).

Whether the mysterious assassination, abduction, and killing of Iraqi academics, scientist, doctors, politicians, and journalists, and daily killing of Iraqi civilians are committed by the American forces or by other groups, the truth remains that Iraqi innocents are losing their lives on daily bases⁸⁶ to this chaotic situation which was created by the American-led invasion.⁸⁷ Among the American policies that led to the chaotic situation in Iraq was the abolishing of the Iraqi security forces. This has created a security vacuum in the country, turning Iraq into a lawless state.

In justifying the dissolution of the Iraqi army, American officials claimed that it needed to be abolished because it was Saddam Hussein's Sunni army (Alden & Dinmore, 2006). In fact, every Iraqi who served in the Iraqi army knows that the majority of men making up the Iraqi army were Shiite Arabs.⁸⁸ They constitute up to 60% of Iraq's population, and most Iraqi army's commanders were not loyal to Saddam Hussein. After all, as Alden and Dinmore point out, even Paul Bremer admits that "the decision to disband the Iraqi army following the US invasion [of Iraq] in 2003" was wrong (para.1).

⁸⁵ For more details, see, for example, (Hersh, December 08, 2003), and (Borger, December 09, 2003).

⁸⁶ The former Iraqi interim prime minister, Iyad Allawi, in an interview with BBC, admitted that Iraq is losing "each day as an average 50 to 60 people throughout the country" ("Iraq in civil," March 19, 2006).

⁸⁷ See, for example, (Kessler, 2006), and ("Rice admits," March 31, 2006) where the US Secretary of States admits that the American Administration had made many errors in Iraq since the invasion in 2003.

⁸⁸ Joining army in Iraq, pre-US invasion was mandatory for every male upon reaching the age of eighteen.

Many Arab and several Western critics⁸⁹ see the abolishing of the Iraqi army as a misguided American policy in post-war Iraq and believe it was carried out in the interest of Israel in order to weaken Iraq which previously had posed a potential threat to Israel. Support for this view is linked, in part, to the fact that abolishing of the Iraqi army was the decision of the pro-Israeli American conservatives in Pentagon such as Paul Wolfowitz (Alden and Dinmore, 2006).

Bremer appears to have also erred in abolishing Iraq's Ministry of Information. This action led to unemployment for hundreds of journalists who, subsequently, turned against the occupation. Moreover, Bremer, as the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, urged the Iraqi Governing Council to pass laws against the freedom of press. This resulted in a large section of Iraqi Shiites opposing the US occupation as was manifest most clearly in the response of Muqtada Sadr's supporters. According to Robert Fisk (2004), *Al-Hawza al-Natiqa*, was ordered to close because Muqtada Sadr and his followers opposed the American occupation and were publishing articles that criticized the occupation forces.⁹⁰

During Bremer's tenure in power, which lasted from May 2003 to June 2004, the most controversial laws against the freedom of press were passed by the Iraqi Governing Council (the members of which were appointed by Bremer himself). It was during this period of time, for example, that the campaign against *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* satellite TV stations started. The justification for banning media outlets on surface was that these media organs were encouraging violence. These media organs were labeled as encouraging terrorism, the favorite word of the occupation forces and their Iraqi allies in denigrating counter sources of information.⁹¹

⁸⁹ See for example, (Alkhazen, April 01, 2006d), and the study of John J. Mearsheimer & Stephen M. Walt titled "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy" mentioned earlier in this study.

⁹⁰ Fisk wonders whether closing the paper was worth it, especially as it is "a weekly paper with a circulation of only 10,000- in a population of 26 million" (para.14).

⁹¹ An order, signed by Iyad Allawi, the former interim Iraqi Governing Council President and former Iraqi PM, numbered as order No. 47, on September 23, 2003, about banning *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* channels from working in Iraq indicates that *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* had violated the rules which the media organs must follow in order to allow them to operate in Iraq ("Order No. (47)," n.d., para.1). According to the order, the rules which *Aljazeera* and *Alarabiya* violated include among others, "not to encourage violence against individuals and groups, not to encourage chaos, not to encourage violence against authorities and authoritarians, not to encourage Baath party's [Saddam's party] to come back ..., and not to encourage disseminating sectarian, racism, and religious struggles" (para.2).

The role of new communication technologies

One of the main reasons for the failure of American government's media policies in Muslim world lies in the reaction of an army of Muslim journalists, writers, and thinkers who are critical of these policies. The questionable aspects of American policies are made public and used to criticize the American government. This is made easy in an era where the use of the new communication technologies is growing in the Muslim world. An average Muslim individual can find several anti-American articles in most Muslim papers on daily basis. If this individual has access to the Internet, s/he can easily read dozens of anti-American articles and other news from many Muslim newspapers and news/opinion websites published on line. If the individual is illiterate, s/he can easily watch anti-American programming on most of Muslim satellite TV broadcasts.⁹² These Muslim media organs transmit a diversity of opinions ranging from moderate to extreme.

The problem with the American media strategy is an apparent failure to consider – in addition to the historical, religious, political, social and cultural reality of the Muslim world – the new communication environment created by the spread of ICTs. Once the contradictions between their words and actions of the American government are revealed, their spin can be easily countered in an era of rapid information flows. As new aspects of what is widely perceived as the hidden agenda of the American government in the Middle East are revealed, the administration's credibility in the Muslim world decreases further.

This also is related to the problem of one-way information flow which the American government has tried to practice despite its claim of bringing democratic principles to the Muslim world. According to Amr (2004), there are two main reasons behind the increasing sentiment against the United States administration in the Islamic world. The first rests with its policies toward Muslim world. The second lies in the way in which these policies are communicated (para.3). These are core factors at the heart of the conflict between the United States government and the Muslim world.

The discussion in this chapter has focused on these two variables and their consequences. The findings highlight the extent to which the information Muslims are

⁹² For example, *Aljazeera* satellite TV's audience, which is popular in Arab and Muslim world and even among Muslims who live in Diaspora, range between 30 to 50 million (Weisman, Jan. 30, 2005).

receiving through alternative media channels reflects their interests and concerns as opposed to those propagated by the American government.

While American officials convey their own messages to the Muslim world, the American mainstream media has played the role of salespeople propagating the U.S. administration's official line, and the American people have remained largely unaware of what most concerns Muslims.⁹³ In contrast, the counter Muslim media, by utilizing new communication technologies, has succeeded in revealing and publicizing the contradictions in American policies and in promoting anti-American propaganda among Muslim audiences. As a result, this has helped to increase the rejection of American policies in the region and, ultimately, has negatively influenced the American government's attempts at winning Muslim hearts and minds.

⁹³ According to Amy Goodman, the host of *Democracy Now!* TV and radio news show, the American mainstream media have played as 'cheerleaders' for war in Iraq (Day, 2006, para.8). According to Goodman, in the heat of running to war in Iraq, for example, "a study of NBC, CBS and PBS newscasts over a fortnight recorded 393 interviews on the conflict, of which only three reported the anti-war movement" (para.7). Furthermore, according to Ethan Zuckerman, the co-founder of *Global Voices Online* and a research fellow of the *Berkman Centre for Internet and Society* at Harvard Law School, "[t]he US media have done a shameful job of reporting on the Arab world" (para.5) and he urges "the new Arabic media players to do a better job" than the American mainstream media "in covering the rest of the world" (para.6).

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world is connected more strongly to the foreign and media policies of the United States government than to the promotion, or domination, of American corporations' cultural products. The contrast between Muslims enjoying American products (e.g. McDonald's big Macs, Starbucks's beverages, Pizza Hut's pizzas, and Disney's and other Hollywood's films) on one hand, and anti-American spirit, on the other hand, is stark.⁹⁴

American foreign policy in the Muslim world is a major contributor to the revival of Muslims' traditional resistance to these policies and, consequently, the American government's failure in winning Muslim hearts and minds. The contributing factors to this resistance are rooted in many Muslim people's beliefs and are exploited by different local, regional and even international groups when Muslims feel threatened. Otherwise Muslim audiences keep enjoying themselves by consuming American cultural and non-cultural products. After all most cultures – whether corporations' culture or people's culture – since creation, have been interacting with each other (e.g. trade, traveling, wars). Yet each culture reserves its own distinctive characteristics while incorporating others.

As Rauschenberger (2003) illustrates, American culture or Western culture, for that matter, is not, "indivisible package[s] that [are] simply adopted by local cultures" (p. 17). Although massive industrial and modernization changes are compounding around the world, significant aspects of cultures still endure and persist. (pp.17-18). According to Inglehart and Baker (2000) the role of local cultures is more significant in less developed or underdeveloped countries than in developed countries. Their study used World Values Surveys data from three waves, which included 65 societies (developed and underdeveloped societies) and 75 percent of the world's population. They concluded that

94 See for example, the Pew Research Center's 2006 survey ("Pew Global," 2006) of 15 nations' attitudes toward different conflicts and crises around the world, the World Public Opinion (WPO) 2006 poll of Iraqi public opinion about the U.S presence and withdrawal from Iraq ("Most Iraqis," 2006), and the University of Maryland and Zogby International 2004 Arab public opinion survey ("Arab attitudes," 2004).

while industrialization greatly impacts people's traditional values, the "influence of traditional value systems exhibit remarkable durability and resilience" (p. 49).

The durability and persistence of traditional values are high in underdeveloped countries (e.g. most of the Muslim countries) and they increase in times of crises. This is very true in the Muslim world. For example, during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars cultural, social, religious and historical values have been heightened and exploited in response to Muslims feeling threatened by the American administration's actions and policies in the region.

The failure of the American government to win over Muslim hearts and minds rests on several factors. These factors appear to be grounded in the foreign and media policies of the United States government toward the Muslim world, the apparent lack of knowledge of Muslim culture and history, and in the presence of rival Muslim media.

The findings of this thesis show that the American government's foreign and media policies, as applied in the Muslim world, actually are counterproductive when it comes to boosting their efforts at winning Muslim hearts and minds. One of the main reasons for this is the perceived contradiction between what the American government claims and what it practices on the ground. While American officials claim that they are bringing freedom and democracy to the Muslim world, the findings of this study show that they also are censoring and controlling freedom of expression in this region.

In the same vein, the findings from the examination of counter Muslim media and audience opinion discourse demonstrated that many Muslims tend to view U.S. foreign policy as involving a double-standard designed to protect the interests of the United States government, Israel, and what most Muslims call the puppet Muslim political regimes (i.e. the trio of evils). Consequently, many Muslims believe that these policies are not sufficiently sympathetic to Muslims' interests.

Historically, there has been, and continues to be, a huge distrust of the United States government in the Muslim world. Its interference and presence in the Muslim world are seen by many Muslims as a continuation of the Western colonial experience. Moreover, since the American government's war on terrorism is closely linked to the war on Muslim extremism, many Muslims perceive the American forces' involvement in the Muslim world as a war against religion and cultural identity.

This thesis also has revealed how ICTs are used by Muslims to criticize and to counter the American government's propaganda in the region. Using these technologies, counter Muslim media outlets contribute, to a great extent, in increasing the anti-Americanism in the Muslim world. This situation appears to contradict the claims of those who argue, in accordance, with the notion of cultural imperialism that American media dominate the Third World (e.g. the Muslim world).

There are different media monopolies, international and regional, which compete for the Muslim audience and that have their own agendas which they try to convey to their audiences. Moreover, several of these Muslim counter media centers are not necessarily profit-driven media. As cultural imperialism asserts, media monopolies, as part of capitalism system, are profit-driven corporations and seek commodification of information in order to sell (Webster, 2002). Some of the influential Muslim media, such as the *Aljazeera*, *Alalam* and *Alarbiya* satellite television stations and state-owned newspapers are mostly funded by Muslim governments.

As was demonstrated in this thesis, local and regional South Asian media centers compete with imported American products and the majority of local and regional audiences prefer these local and regional products to the American ones. The Muslim world also has its local and regional media and cultural production centers, which have their influence and popularity among Muslim audiences.

The use of ICTs, especially the increasing use of satellite televisions in the Muslim world has contributed to the growing influence of these Muslim media and cultural centers. The dissemination of this technology, and others such as the Internet, has led to the creation of a sense of unified Muslim public opinion as these media reached massive audiences around the Muslim world (as well as those in diasporas) simultaneously.

With the increase of these media centers in the Muslim world and with their new, interactive programs that reflected local and regional concerns Muslim audiences have been able to express their ideas. These media knew their audiences better than Western media, at least better than the American funded media such as *Alhurra* satellite television, *the Voice of America* or *Aliraqiya*. This does not mean that the new Muslim media are objective or impartial. Most of them fail to endorse these roles, yet many of them succeeded in effectively conveying messages that challenge the American government's

activities in the region. Moreover, the majority of Muslim audiences appear to prefer these counter Muslim media over their American counterparts.

The Muslim audience's role in creating their own meanings and interpreting and decoding the American government's messages in accordance with their values and beliefs is explicit in the Muslim opinion discourses examined in this thesis. These opinions and discourses reveal the profound impacts of Muslim values and beliefs in interpreting the messages put forth by the United States government. Contrary to cultural imperialism's claim of audiences' passivity, the findings of this study suggest that Muslim audiences are, in fact, active and capable of forming their own opinions about these messages.

Taken together, the above factors have played a key role in weakening the propaganda efforts of the American government in the Muslim world. Without a major rethinking of the significance of the issues addressed in this thesis, the rejection of American policies and the rise of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world are likely to continue increasing. This does not bode well for the efforts of the United States government in winning widespread support for its "democratization efforts" and, more broadly, the winning of Muslim hearts and minds.

Although the findings of this thesis cannot be generalized to the perspectives of more than one billion Muslim people, it must be acknowledged that the distrust of American intentions in the Muslim world is profound. This situation cannot be resolved through the use of military force and intimidation. Muslims' suspicion of American policies and actions towards them at this time is such that even "if [the Prophet Mohammed] came down to do the PR campaign [in Arab and Muslim world] for the U.S., he would fail" (El-Nawawy & Iskandar, 2003, p.191).

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