

**American Foreign Policy
&
The Muslim World**

Edited by

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**Al-Zaytouna Centre
For Studies & Consultations
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السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية والعالم الإسلامي

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Preface

The idea of compiling a book on American foreign policy and the Muslim world came to the editors in 2002 when one of them started teaching an undergraduate course on US foreign policy in the Department of Political Science at the International Islamic University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. He was struck, by the unfamiliarity of students with American domestic politics and the foreign policy-making system in the United States, which are both very important for understanding American policies toward various countries of the world. The idea of compiling an edited volume on American foreign policy with a special focus on the Muslim world was, however, finalised in 2006 in Kuala Lumpur during a discussion between the editors. They shared a strong feeling that there was a need, to come up with such a volume for the benefit of students studying American foreign policy, in various countries in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia. With this purpose in mind, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut kindly agreed to support such a project. The purpose of this volume is to dispel naive ideas, and misconceptions shared by students about US foreign policy. The contributors to this volume explain the pattern and process of American foreign policy.

Part I of this book provides an analysis of the domestic sources of American foreign policy (Chapter 1) using the funnel of causality model. Also, it discusses the rise of Christian evangelicalism (Chapter 2), the roles of neo-conservatism (Chapter 3) and the media in shaping American public opinion (Chapter 4), the role of the Israel lobby (Chapter 5), and the Muslim groups in the US in influencing American foreign policy (Chapter 6).

Part II analyses the characteristics of foreign policy of the United States. In doing so, the major issues of American foreign policy are discussed from a historical point of view (Chapter 7). In addition, the political economy of Washington's policy is spelled out (Chapter 8), and the need for a paradigm shift in American foreign policy is emphasised (Chapter 9).

Part III of this volume examines five key legacies of American foreign policy, which are of special interest not only to Muslims all over the world, but to other world-wide peace-loving people as well. Chapter 10 provides an outsider's perspective on the impact of ideological and elite interests on America's Palestinian policy. The 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq are explained in Chapter 11 as an example of America's desire to build a hegemonic world order. America's policy towards Iran's nuclear programme is dealt with in Chapter 12. In Chapter 13, America's Afghanistan policy is analysed. Finally, Chapter 14 discusses the foreign policy of Barack H. Obama and analyses whether he would provide a new direction to America's foreign policy toward the Muslim world.



We express our deep gratitude to al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations for funding this project. In 2006, invitations were sent out to the contributors, and their contributions were sent to the editors in 2007. We would like to thank the contributors to this volume for their cooperation. Due to some unavoidable circumstances however, the production of this book took more time than we anticipated. But wherever necessary, the chapters have been updated. We thank Professor Dr. Syed Nasir Raja Kazmi for editing the manuscript with patience. We are deeply indebted to our families (Salina, Mahmood and Shaiara) and (Ghina and Israa) for their inspiration and support. Dr. Ishtiaq thanks his son Mahmood Hossain (currently doing M.A. in Sociology at Wichita State University, Kansas, USA, and his daughter Shaiara Hossain, who graduated in 2008 with a B.Sc. degree in Mathematics from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada and is working in Vancouver) for their help in researching and editing Chapters 1 and 3 of this book. We would like to thank our colleagues in the Department of Political Science, International Islamic University Malaysia and al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations in Beirut for encouraging our work. While we are fully responsible for editing, the publication of the chapters does not necessarily mean that we subscribe to the authors' opinions as expressed in the chapters. However, we alone are responsible for any mistakes in this book. We welcome any views on this book so that improvements can be made in the book's future editions.

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Introduction

Ishtiaq Hossain and Mohsen Saleh

To non-Americans, the US foreign policy is bewildering. A vast majority of them feel that positions taken by successive US administrations on most international issues are at variance with the declared foreign policy principles of the United States. Foremost among those issues is the consistent pro-Israeli position of successive American administrations since the end of World War II. Muslims, like others, ask the question: how could the US, which has vowed to uphold the principle of self-determination, so eloquently enshrined in President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, continue to deny the Palestinians their right to exercise the same principle? Rightly or wrongly, this question haunts many people even after President Bush's announcement that the US accepts the establishment of an independent state for the Palestinians - the first such public commitment ever made by an American President.

The unilateralist policy of the United States is yet another cause of concern to the world at large. The Bush administration, in particular, took a number of foreign policy decisions which reinforce this concern. For example, consider the following: the announcement of US withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol, and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; Washington's decision not to sign the anti-land mine treaty, and be a member of the International Criminal Court, whose idea ironically the US had so enthusiastically supported. These steps, according to many scholars of US foreign policy indicate the Bush administration's preference to "act alone" in world affairs. The military action against Iraq (2003) without specific authorisation from the UN Security Council is a further convincing proof, as many critics of American foreign policy would like to point out, of Washington's policy of unilateralism.

Like millions of people all over the world, Muslims are particularly worried about the way America is pursuing its so-called "war on terrorism." Especially, since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, ordinary Muslims seem to view that the US is deliberately targeting the Muslim states as the harbingers of terrorism. Islam abhors terrorism, and in spite of this, many people including Muslims believe the US finds it convenient to justify its policy of pre-emptive attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. Particularly the latter, as they argue, became a convenient sacrificial lamb in Washington's ambition to contain the possible rise of any Muslim power. The failure to find any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq adds more fuel to this argument. The continuing tension between the Western states and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran on the question of Tehran's nuclear programme, and President Bush's refusal to



rule out the use of force against Iran, has added further to Muslim apprehensions about America's intentions towards Iran. Many Muslims also detect a double standard in America's policy on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. They ask: why is Washington not doing anything about Israel's nuclear weapons? Why does Washington engage in talks with North Korea while the US is impatient about trying out diplomacy to resolve its nuclear dispute with Iran? President Bush's frequent use of terms like "Islamic terrorism" and "Islamic fascism" further alienates the Muslims.

There is another dimension to the uneasiness among the critics of American foreign policy. This concerns Washington's support to governments, especially those in Muslim countries, which are dictatorial in nature and have the worst human rights records. Many are of the opinion that if America is truly committed to the ideals of democracy, and human rights, then Washington should not provide political, economic, and military support to those regimes. If that is done, then there would be no need for America to embark on a policy of "assertive realism," i.e., spreading democracy by force.

The preceding discussion provides a kaleidoscopic view of concerns of ordinary citizens all over the world, and in particular of the Muslims, about American foreign policy. We need to find out answers to the above-mentioned questions in a systematic manner, and in particular, try to understand why the US behaves this way. Is it because America "hates" Islam? Or, in a Huntingtonian way, is Washington behaving as such because it is wedded to the theory of "clash of civilisations"? Certainly, answers to our questions cannot be found in such simplistic world views as mentioned here. American foreign policy making is a highly complex process. In order to understand the US foreign policy, it is imperative to look into the domestic context of US foreign policy making. Many of the policies mentioned above may have their roots in the nature of internal politics in the US. For example, one may look at the Bush administration's first major foreign policy decision - that of stopping financial assistance to international agencies promoting family planning. This decision was taken due to a complex relationship between President Bush's religious faith and the support lent to him by various conservative Churches (like the Southern Baptist Church) and other faith-based groups during his election campaign in 2000. Similarly, the pro-Israeli policy of successive American administrations can be explained, as pointed out by Kathleen Christison, by the successful manipulation of American domestic political forces by well-established Jewish groups.¹ In a similar fashion, rather than asking whether America hates Islam, we should try to account for the rise of Christian evangelicalism in American society, and assess whether it can account for America's Middle East policy. There have



been attempts to do that but these do not look into the American foreign policy making process in detail.²

This book is based on the assumption that in order to understand and explain American foreign policy making, it is imperative to comprehend its complex domestic political context. The editors of this volume do not underestimate the role of the international context of American foreign policy making. Realists point out that the distribution of power on the international system (balance of power) is a principal source of US foreign policy. However, the same theoretical tradition also emphasises the domestic inputs into the American foreign policy making system. Keeping this in view, this volume unravels and examines the domestic patterns and processes of American foreign policy and analyses the intricate role of the competing forces in the foreign policy making of the United States.

In Chapter One (“American Foreign Policy: Dynamics of Domestic Sources”) Ishtiaq Hossain explains the role of key domestic sources in the making of American foreign policy. The constitutional basis of the powers of the Congress and the President are explained at first. Then in a systematic way, Ishtiaq explains the role of the Congress and the President in American foreign policy. In the US, the President remains at the apex of the foreign policy making apparatus. Ishtiaq discusses in detail his role by exploring the role of President George W. Bush in foreign policy making. In the history of the United States, the Congress has played the role of oversight over the nation’s foreign policy. Ishtiaq pays attention to this fact in this chapter. In recent years, the National Security Council (NSC), created in 1947 by an executive order, has emerged as an important organisation in the making of US foreign policy. Described by David Rothkopf as the Committee that Runs the World,³ Ishtiaq points out that in a democratic country like United States, the NSC is an anomaly because those who serve on that committee are not constitutionally bound to testify before the legislative branch.

The rise of evangelical Christian groups in American society has been a spectacular phenomenon. Even in the 1990s, they were considered poor, and uneducated. Yet now they have arrived at the heart of the American power structure. The influence of evangelicals in the Bush administration is particularly important. How did this remarkable transformation take place? Muhammad Arif Zakaullah in Chapter Two (“The Rise of Christian Evangelicalism in American Politics: Its Genesis and Process”) of the book deals with the remarkable growth of the evangelicals in American society. He traces the genesis and the process that have made the Christian evangelicals one of the most influential groups in American politics. Sometimes also referred to as the Zionist Christians, various



evangelical Christian groups have been working in tandem with Israeli lobbyists pushing the case for the Jewish state. Arif identifies the social forces of the 1970s - materialism, rampant capitalism, growing inequality accompanied by poverty, corruption among the politicians and increasing secularism - as the main causes of the rise of Christian revivalism in the US. Christian evangelicals have been the most rapidly growing social and political groups owning newspapers, magazines, radio stations and radio networks. Arif analyses the role of these groups in American political life under the presidencies of Carter, Reagan, Clinton and the Bushes.

It is well-known that since the end of World War II the United States has been following a foreign policy based on realism. Hans J. Morgenthau, the father of modern realism, urged the nation states to pursue their national interests, which the esteemed professor defined in terms of military power. True to Morgenthau's maxim, the US has since 1945 frequently resorted to the use of force in pursuit of its national interest, for example, in Korea, Vietnam, the invasion of Grenada, the arrest of President Noriega, the first Gulf War, and the Iraq War. However, in some of the major wars in the recent past, the US used multilateralism such as the use of the UN to legitimise the use of force. However, since 9/11, Washington has been following a policy of "unilateralism." How does one explain such shifts in American foreign policy since 9/11? How does anyone account for the recent changes in the foreign policy of the US? Is President Bush himself responsible for all these changes? If he did not act alone, then who else are behind the current foreign policy in Washington? What kind of ideology do they believe in? What are the foreign policy objectives of these decision-makers in the US? In Chapter Three ("The Neo-Conservatives and American Foreign Policy"), Ishtiaq Hossain attempts to provide answers to those questions. Ishtiaq argues that the foreign policy of the Bush administration is influenced by the thoughts of a group of intellectuals and activists known as the neo-conservatives. The author, first of all, discusses the views of such scholars. Then the main principles of neo-conservatism are analysed. Finally, in Chapter Three some of the activists of neo-conservatism are identified and their impact on the Bush administration's foreign policy is analysed.

In Chapter Four ("Public Opinion and the Media"), Alison Weir considers the critical role of the media in shaping public opinion in the United States. In her chapter Weir argues that ordinary Americans know little about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with which they are so intimately connected. This is due, as the author points out, to the American news media almost never reporting the amount of US tax money that flows to Israel, or the substantial protection provided to Israel by the US government in derailing international efforts to address Israeli



human rights violations. As a result, Alison Weir maintains that American policies regarding Israel-Palestine largely reflect the determined influence of special interest lobbying rather than the will of the general American public or the informed analysis of American foreign policy experts. She, however, argues in the chapter that there is evidence that as Americans become accurately informed on Israel-Palestine issues, they begin to demand change in US policies, much as earlier generations called for withdrawal from Vietnam and divestment from South Africa. But it depends on how quickly the American public becomes informed on Israel-Palestine.

The role of the Israel Lobby in American politics is discussed in Chapter Five (“The Role of the Israel Lobby”), written by Atallah Bogdan Kopanski and Mohsen Saleh. The authors put forth the argument that contrary to the popular belief the Israel Lobby is not all-powerful, but plays a crucial role in shaping the US policies, in the areas where the interests of Israel are present. To enhance their argument, they focus on the Israel Lobby’s sources of influence and explain its *modus operandi* within the American politics. They provide striking examples that clarifies the influence of the Israel Lobby on American foreign policy toward the countries in the Middle East.

American politics is based on the principle of “pluralism.” Therefore, it is not surprising, as Ahrar Ahmad points out in Chapter Six (“Muslim Groups and American Foreign Policy”), that “different interests pull and push, thrust and parry, negotiate and bargain, as they make claims upon the system and compete to affect policy outcomes in desired directions.” Organised groups representing different interest lobbies mobilise public opinion and influence the American political machine in an attempt to advance their causes. Muslims in the US, compared to other organised groups, in the past were not known to be effective in influencing America’s foreign policy. However, Ahrar Ahmad points out there are now signs that at long last Muslims in the United States are developing their institutional and political assets to operate effectively in the American political system. He explains the reasons for the Muslims’ late arrival in the American political system. The author of this chapter believes that Muslims in the US have collectively “come of age,” and are now actively trying to integrate themselves into the pluralist model of the US political system with the intention of affecting policy both domestically and in the external arena. Chapter Six explores the context, actors, procedures, interests and challenges involved in that effort.

In Chapter Seven (“Major Issues in American Foreign Policy: A Historiographical Analysis”) Elfatih A. Abdel Salam provides a historical study of American foreign policy with answers to a string of questions which deal with the characteristics and factors that have shaped American foreign policy since



the 19th century. He explains the factors that provide its distinctive colour to the foreign policy of the United States. Elfatih also explains the transformation of the US from a regional power in the 19th century to a world power in the 20th century. In Chapter Seven, Elfatih in surveying the historical unfolding of American foreign policy highlights its enduring characteristics.

The main thrust of Chapter Eight (“The New-Old Empire: The Political Economy of US Foreign Policy”), written by Habibul H. Khondker, is to develop an argument as to whether one can understand America’s Middle East policies as emanating from the imperialist ambitions of the United States. The author asks: How viable is imperialism in a world caught up in the whirlwinds of globalisation and slogans of democracy? In his analysis Habibul does not pursue the relationship between democracy and imperialism, he rather suggests that the existence of imperialism proves the feeble nature of democracy in the contemporary world. Habibul argues that imperialism is inconsistent with substantive democracy yet it is compatible with both procedural and sham democracies. He predicts that global democracy will remain a chimera as long as forces of imperialism remain ascendant.

Chapter Nine (“America’s Foreign Policy: the Need for a Paradigm Shift”) by Shahid M. Shahidullah examines the militarization of American foreign policy in terms of its competing visions and their competing readings of the present world scenario. The main argument of this chapter is that this radical disjuncture between militarization and modernization in America’s foreign policy, and the dominance of the foreign policy postures of unilateralism, pre-emption, and militarization came from a misleading understanding of the nature and context of the rise of radical Islam presented to the Bush administration by a group of neo-conservative foreign policy analysts. Shahid forcefully argues that the rise of radical Islam is neither a religious war nor is it a “civilizational clash.” He calls for the adoption of a new perspective in America’s foreign policy that can be built on Washington’s experience of the Cold War foreign policy strategies of containment and modernization and the post-Cold War strategies of enlargement and democratic engagement espoused in the Clinton Doctrine.

In Chapter Ten (“America’s Palestinian Policy: An Outsider’s Perspective”) Daud Abdullah argues that American policy toward the Palestinian issue has been largely shaped by the nature of the American society, its political and strategic interests, historical background, the role of the Christian Evangelical movement, political lobbyists, finance, media and the intelligentsia. The author concludes that the problem does not lay in the inability of the Palestinians to govern themselves and administer their affairs, but it is rather, as so eloquently pointed out by former American President Jimmy Carter, Washington’s unwillingness to



engage in dialogue on controversial issues and with bodies Israeli deems to be unworthy partners.

Abdul Rashid Moten provides his insights into the American invasion and occupation of Iraq in Chapter Eleven (“The Invasion and Occupation of Iraq: The US Hegemonic World Order”). He puts forth the argument that the invasion of Iraq is part of an American global strategy to re-shape the world in its favour. President George W. Bush, who first came to power in 2000 after a controversial election, decided to re-shape the world after the incidents of September 11, 2001. Rashid argues that this is being carried out under the banner of an all-out war on terrorism. He explains that this paramount “monumental struggle” demands unswerving commitment from America’s allies and the non-aligned alike. There is no room for neutrals and by-standers. In this chapter, Rashid explains the following main ingredients of America’s foreign policy strategy: world hegemony, pre-emptive strike, and unilateralism. He then goes on to explain the background to America’s occupation of Iraq in 2003 by discussing Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 and providing a detailed discussion of the situation in Iraq after the Gulf War of 1991. Finally, in this chapter the author provides American justifications for the Iraq War of 2003. The author points out that the Bush administration had argued that a war against Iraq was needed due to the threat of Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, its violations of UN Security Council resolutions, the harbouring of terrorists and support of terrorism, its human rights abuses, and the like. Many of Washington’s accusations were either wrong, gross exaggerations or were not unique to Iraq.

Iran’s attempts to gain peaceful nuclear technology are now embroiled in a controversy. While Iran maintains the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme, the West, led by the US accuses the Islamic Republic of harbouring nuclear weapons ambition. In Chapter Twelve (“The Iranian Nuclear Issue”) Choudhury M. Shamim deals with this controversial question. According to him the Iranian nuclear issue has become embroiled in both domestic and international politics. As Shamim puts it “It has inflamed public opinion and emotions on both sides and has degenerated into a melodrama of threats and counter-threats as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran and President George W. Bush of the United States of America whipped up the masses in their respective countries.” Shamim is of the opinion that the current discussion on Iran’s nuclear programme is largely due to much misunderstanding and misinformation. He argues that given the fact that since Washington and Tehran have had no diplomatic relations since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, each side is prone to misperceptions regarding the other’s actions and words. Thus the US-Iran hostile relationship has doomed all efforts to resolve the issue. Shamim also argues in his chapter



that the EU-3 (the UK, Germany and France) failed in their attempts to persuade Iran because the US did not completely support their effort. Shamim laments the fact that what could have been solved through quiet diplomacy has now become global street theatre where passion rather than rational argument rules the day.

It has often been alleged that in the past US policy towards Afghanistan smacked more of knee-jerk reactions to events in that country than well-thought out long-term policy based on Washington's strategic interests in the region. In Chapter Thirteen ("America's Afghanistan Policy, 1980-2007"), Wahabuddin Ra'ees picks up this point and argues that all that changed when Afghanistan became strategically significant to America's Cold War global interests after the 1978 successful communist-led *coup d'etat*, followed by the Soviet invasion in 1979. The US abandoned its policy of "indifference" primarily to contain the Soviet expansion and deny Moscow its access to the "warm water ports" in the Indian Ocean. In spite of the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union on 1 January 1992, Wahabuddin argues Washington continues to view Afghanistan as strategically significant to its interests. Afghanistan, to policy makers in Washington, was vital to many of America's post-Cold War, and is still vital to its post-September 11, 2001, concerns in the region ranging from access to natural resources (e.g., oil, gas etc.) and market, the rise of regional hegemony (e.g., Russia, China or India) and combating terrorism. In this chapter Wahabuddin reviews America's Afghanistan policy in pursuit of its interests since Washington's abandoning of its policy of indifference towards Kabul. He suggests that Washington's policy shift in search or abandoning of allies within Afghanistan (i.e., among the Afghan ethnic and ideological groups) or regional powers only occurred after the US identified a new set of foreign policy goals. In this chapter, the author first discusses the US foreign policy concerns in Afghanistan. Then he explains the changing nature of Washington's Afghanistan policy. He, however, cautions that these policy shifts are to be read in conjunction with the American interests as outlined in this chapter.

The election of Senator Barack Hussein Obama (not a Muslim) in November 2008 as the 44th president of the United States led to immediate speculation about the possible changes in American foreign policy. After nearly eight years of "unilateralism" of President George W. Bush, Muslims along with the rest of the world desired a major shift in Washington's foreign policy. Muslims asked the following questions: what would be the newly-elected president's foreign policy toward the Muslim world? Would he keep his campaign promise to shut down Guantanamo Bay prison and withdraw American troops from Iraq? Would Obama change Bush's Afghanistan and Pakistan policy? What would Obama do with the so-called "war on terror"? Would he change its conduct by adopting



other means? Ishtiaq Hossain makes an attempt to deal with these and other questions in Chapter Fourteen (“Foreign Policy of Barack H. Obama: A New Direction for America?”).

Ishtiaq tries to answer these and other related questions by first analysing the composition of Barack Obama’s national security and foreign policy team. An admirer of President Abraham Lincoln, Obama has put together a team of “rivals” as members of his national security and foreign policy team. He believes it is only such a team that can speak without fear and provide the best advice to the president. As possible contours of Obama’s foreign policy, Ishtiaq thoroughly examines what he describes as a “basketful of advice” to the newly-elected president. Then the author delves into a detailed analysis of the main features of Obama’s foreign policy and examines his policies on Iraq, Iran, Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the so-called “war on terror,” Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ishtiaq concludes by stating that the fundamental guiding principle of Obama’s foreign policy would be to engage with the rest of the world, in particular, with the Muslim world to find solutions to the existing problems.

It must be emphasised here that Ishtiaq completed writing this chapter before the 20 January 2009 inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the US. Therefore, throughout the chapter he is referred to as the president-elect. Moreover, this chapter does not deal with President Obama’s decision to withdraw American combat troops from Iraq by June 2010. America’s new strategy in Afghanistan is also not dealt with. These and other issues will, however, be included by the author in any future edition of the book.

Endnotes

¹ For details see: Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine, their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999).

² For example see the following: Muhammad Arif Zakaullah, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Rise of American Evangelicalism and the Future of Muslims* (Kuala Lumpur: The Other Press, 2004); J. L. Himmerlstein, “The New Right,” in R. C. Liebman and R. Wurthnow (eds.), *The New Christian Right* (New York: Aldine, 1983): 1-30; Steve Bruce, “Zealot Politics and Democracy: the Case of the New Christian Right,” *Political Studies Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2000): 263-282; William Marion, “The Christian Right and the American Foreign Policy,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, Vol. not provided, No. 114 (Spring 1999): 66-81; and Andrew J. Bacevich and Elizabeth H. Prodromou, “God Is Not Neutral: Religion and U.S. Foreign Policy After 9/11,” *Orbis*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (Winter, 2004):43-54.

³ See: David Rothkopf, “Inside the Committee that Runs the World,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 147 (March/April, 2005): 30-40; and David Rothkopf, *Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

