



INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF DIPLOMACY  
EDMUND A. WALSH SCHOOL OF FOREIGN SERVICE  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

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## TALKING WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD: IS THE MESSAGE GETTING THROUGH?

*Session One of Three Sessions*

### *The U.S. Image in the Islamic World*

This series on U.S. public diplomacy in the Islamic world was introduced by Casimir Yost, Director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service of Georgetown University.

Project Director Marjorie Ransom outlined the thematic focus of the three part program that will explore how the U.S. is perceived in the Islamic world, how the media creates and influences these perceptions, and how the U.S. can better project its image and message. Ms. Ransom then introduced the panel of the first session that took place at Georgetown University on February 19, 2002.

**DR. JAMES ZOGBY**  
**President of the Arab-American Institute**

*Dr. Zogby said he was asked to speak on how Arabs view the United States and to refer to public opinion research. He noted that the Arab American Institute currently has polling going on in nine countries and that he anticipates very rich data. But from research already completed, he could make some general observations.*

Arabs do not view Americans as much as we would like to think they do. We have an initial misconception, which might be termed the Al Jazeera syndrome. We assume that all Arabs watch Al Jazeera, a 24 hour-a-day news service from Qatar, all day. This is no more true than assuming that all Americans watch CNN or Fox news constantly. In

fact, most Arabs watch LBC (Lebanese TV) or MBC (Middle East Broadcast TV from London) entertainment. They watch soap operas, movies, and popular entertainment, just as Americans. Like us, they have complex lives; they think of children, their futures, and local issues. They do not compulsively think about America, but are consumed with their daily lives.

Arabs don't see the U.S. differently from the way those in other regions see us. This was shown by a recent PEW study on how the U.S. is perceived by the rest of the world. Europeans, Asians and Latin Americans have many of the same criticisms of the United States: too unilateralist, too arrogant with power, too supportive of Israel in terms of the overall approach to the Middle East.

When Arabs do think about us, they tend to see us through the same distorted lens through which we see them. All cultures tend to view the deviant behaviors of other cultures as the norm, while viewing their own deviant behavior as exceptional. A few extreme comments might be perceived as symptomatic of the whole. Bad news is big news. We see our own history and flaws in a different way from the way in which others see them. This is particularly true of our attitudes toward women, race, and violence. Other countries question our commitment to our values. There is a difference in the ways in which we see ourselves and others see us.

There is a split image in terms of how America is viewed by others. The society that has created controversial popular culture such as Dallas or Bay Watch, is at the same time a culture of freedom, freedom of expression, and a country with a

massive number of immigrants waiting to enter. We are known as an open and gracious society, while at the same time being an intolerant and hurtful society. The treatment of many Arab students after 9/11 can be contrasted with the affirmative stories of the sympathetic reaching out to Arab Americans.

Arabs are troubled by the U.S. attitude toward the Arab world, toward Palestinians, and toward Islam. They are troubled by a campaign that created ruptures between the Arab and U.S. civilizations. Elites in the Islamic world are engaged in exercises similar to those exemplified by this discussion program. They want to know why the U.S. hates them. Some have noted that Americans cannot make Muslims understand them until they understand Muslims. The opposite also applies. There must be an inter-civilization dialogue.

In speaking about attitudes of Arab Americans, demographics should be taken into account. Some 80 percent of Arab Americans were born in the U.S. Opinion polls show their attitudes toward the President and the war against terrorism are not different from those of other Americans. In terms of identity questions and the importance of ethnicity, polls show that recent immigrants downplay the importance of ethnic identity, while first and second generation Arab Americans put more value on ethnic identity and are more forceful in projecting their identity. They are more assertive on campuses and in workplaces.

**DR. AKBAR AHMED**  
**Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies**  
**American University**

*Professor Ahmed chose to view the question of how the American message is getting through to the Islamic world through an Islamic filter. He cited a saying of the Prophet that if one part of the body is in pain, the entire body is in pain. The Muslim world is in pain. There is the Palestinian situation, the possibility of an attack on Iraq, the humiliation of the Saudis in the press, Iran cited as part of an axis of evil, and the civil war in Afghanistan. You have the situation in Pakistan, with the government in a coalition with the U.S. against terrorism, while the kidnapping of Daniel Pearl is symptomatic of the attitudes of the people. There is also the Kashmir question, troops in the Philippines, talk of troops going into Somalia, etc. Among these areas there is some sense of community, and the saying of the Prophet is evoked. But there are nuances.*

American Muslims number between seven and eight million, but they have a limited impact on the

Muslim world. The truth of the September 11 attacks itself is in dispute. In the Muslim press, there is debate about whether the terrible events of 9/11 were caused by Muslims. There is also an increasing disconnect in terms of the way 9/11 was viewed six months ago, and how it is viewed now. Shock and outrage is being replaced by ambiguity, confusion and a sense that we are drifting into a situation of America vs. the Muslim world.

America has begun to discover the Muslim world. Before, the Muslim world was viewed in simplistic terms with the Palestine conflict the focus. There was also a simplistic equation of Arab equals Muslim. In fact, Arabs comprise about 20 percent of the Muslim world. There is now greater awareness of other regions, of Central and South Asia, and of tribal conflict. Some of these issues bewilder commentators.

Is the message getting through? Professor Ahmed expressed a feeling of ambiguity. The great messages of America are not being sent abroad.

Democracy, is a key issue with key questions of who is ruling and how. Accountability is an important issue in the Muslim world, but it is not on America's agenda with the Muslim world.

The role of education is of great importance. Throughout the Muslim world, scholars are silenced, humiliated and arrested. There are important questions of how the Madrasa system could be reformed and brought into line with mainstream education, so students do not find their way into a black and white world of Jihad and emerge as potential Taliban. But, there is not much discussion of this in terms of the relationship between the U.S. and the Muslim world.

The impact of the media is not something which emerged after 9/11. For two decades, Hollywood has been depicting Muslims in a certain negative light. It is difficult to reverse this trend and change images in the western mind. Similarly, there is a negative image of the U.S. in the Muslim world. There are great gaps in perceptions and not many bridges being built. This is partly because of the failure of the Muslim world and its spokespersons to project themselves. Too often their discussion in the media is a repetition, of "we love America" and "Islam is a religion of peace." This makes no sense to the average American. This is evident in the press accounts of the violence of security officials, Muslims being thrown off planes, and women in traditional dress being stopped and detained. There is a constant sense of humiliation that flows into the Muslim community and feeds the notion of the body in pain.

To ameliorate the situation, the first step is to accept that the pain is real. There is pain, and there will be consequences in the form of more political turmoil, more kidnappings, and more highjackings. This is a gloomy message. But, if we acknowledge that there is a problem, we can then work out a charter of action and the steps to be taken.

**RAGHIDA DERGHAM**  
**Senior Diplomatic Correspondent**  
*Al Hayat*

***It's the Policy, Stupid***

America's image problem in the Arab and Muslim world is first and foremost a result of its policies, Ms. Dergham said. There is certainly room for improvement in communications and public relations, but what really matters is the message, not the messenger. In her words, "It's the policy, stupid."

Criticism of American policy in the region centers on U.S. relations with Iraq and U.S. support of Israel.

By coupling its demand to implement Security Council resolutions with declaring its intent to overthrow the Saddam Hussein regime, the administration shot down its own claims to playing by the rules of the resolutions. In the Arab and Muslim world, even those who despise Saddam Hussein cannot embrace a war on Iraq that would result in civilian casualties.

As long as Israel is allowed to keep weapons of mass destruction and is absolved of any accountability or transparency, a war on Iraq to strip it of such weapons will be considered anti-Arab and anti-Muslim.

Pressure the Iraqi regime. But do not punish Iraq. There will be less criticism of the U.S. if it has a secret plan to overthrow Hussein that will not entail bombing Iraq. A swift military operation with guaranteed success against Baghdad might not cause a hostile reaction in the region.

Regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, as long as American policy remains lopsided in favor of Israel, the risk of radicalizing the whole Arab and Islamic world is indeed real.

Those in the region who understand the necessity to pressure Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to take total charge of the Palestinians cannot accept the American pattern of constantly absolving Israel no matter how far Mr. Sharon goes. Mr. Sharon's security-only policy avoids the political process and has failed.

Many Arab governments are reacting to the current security logic with relief since it is a convenient pretext to circumvent democracy.

A distinction must be drawn between Osama bin Laden and his followers, who hate America for everything it represents, and those Muslims and Arabs who have issues with American policies and what America does.

The most effective way to blunt the agenda of the radical few is to build on new types of relations, bilateral and regional, through new policies that take grievances into account, be it the lack of civil rights in most Arab countries or the frustrations with the Palestinian-Israeli issue.

The majority of Arabs and Muslims are eager for a normalized relationship with Americans. But for that to happen American foreign policy must be adjusted and Americans must want to impact their foreign policy.

Finally, Ms. Dergham criticized the Pentagon's new Office of Strategic Influence as "illegal" and "unethical," citing press reports that it would use disinformation and covert activities as weapons in the war on terrorism.

**AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPHER ROSS**  
**Special Coordinator for Public Diplomacy**  
**Department of State**

***Why They Don't Hate Us***

Ambassador Ross began with an account of an "illuminating" trip he had taken in the Middle East in the later half of January with Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Charlotte Beers. In Rabat, Casablanca, and Cairo, they met with government officials, parliamentarians, businessmen, university faculty, students, and "people on the street" friendly to America. They also talked with Arab journalists in Paris and London.

The uniform message of their interlocutors was that if the U.S. wanted to improve its image in the region, it must do something about its policy.

Criticism of U.S. policy centered in four areas:

- America's stand on the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict, perceived as based on a double standard;
- Prospective American military strikes against Iraq, seen as reflecting a lack of concern for the Iraqi people;
- Superpower arrogance and unilateralism;
- The USG's close relations with governments in the region considered authoritarian and out-of-step with values professed by Americans.

The Arab interlocutors did not express any particular interest in discussing Afghanistan or “Islam as the enemy.” They had internalized the eventual results of the Afghan war. They believed that the U.S. was sincere in its stated aim that it was fighting terrorism, not Islam.

The discussions did not reveal hate against America, as reported in the U.S. media. Rather, they showed a high regard in the Muslim world for the values that underlie the American way of life, including democracy, free expression, and religious tolerance.

Ambassador Ross said the following points were made to his interlocutors:

Regarding the Palestinian issue, the United States has been active in trying to achieve a settlement for over 50 years, and has been especially involved since the Madrid conference. The current administration has gone far beyond its predecessors in presenting a vision of a future in the region, citing for the first time the objective of a Palestinian state. The parties directly involved should be doing more for themselves, rather than looking exclusively to the outside world to solve their problems.

The United States has demonstrated ample concern for the fate of Iraqi civilians. There is plenty of money to assist the Iraqi people in the coffers of the oil-for-food program. Action is underway in the Security Council to institute a series of “smart sanctions” against Iraq within six months.

Military action against Iraq would not be undertaken unless other means were exhausted, be they police, intelligence, judicial, legal, or financial.

Ambassador Ross concluded that American public diplomacy intends to go beyond the “crisis response” of September 11. In the coming phase it will focus its strategic objective on U.S. democracy and an open society as an alternative to despair and frustration, as well as on the role of education as a means to equip children for the modern world.

The panelists were given an opportunity to react to each other and to make final statements.

**Dergham** Secretary Powell’s vision statement last November was a very important policy statement put forth by the administration and it remains on the table. In the last three months, however, Israel and others have tried to undermine Powell’s initiative. The Administration deserves credit for resisting the pressures to change its position, but how does the U.S. deal with the impression in the region that this policy gives only lip service?

**Ross** You can only restate what your policy is. Many people in the world make it a profession to

interpret our policy for others, stating our policy in their own way according to their own agendas. The first task is to make sure that the policy is clearly stated and clearly understood. As we look at the stalemate in the central Middle East region, we can only point out that, after September 11, our priority objective is to deal with terrorism. This diverts attention from other issues. In the Mitchell report, the Tenant work plan, the vision enunciated by Secretary Powell, and the statement by President Bush about a Palestinian State, we have given the parties plenty to work with, if they wish to work towards peace. The real question is whether they are prepared to do so. We can help, but we cannot substitute for the parties.

**Ahmed** We need to look at what the man in the street is feeling. The average Muslim does not look at America as a monolith; there is a great deal of affection to build on. There is respect for democracy, for the rights in America and for the warmth with which millions of Muslims have been received here over the last couple of decades. There are also great expectations. Americans need to help rebuild our societies, and Afghanistan is a very good case study. Bombing the Taliban off the map of the world is one thing, but holding on to Kabul is another. What is America going to do? Is it going to say that America has nothing to do with Afghanistan and that it is Afghanistan’s problem/Afghanistan’s leadership? These are important questions. I believe America has a role to play. America’s key notions as a society of democracy, of education for all, and a fair chance for average individuals to participate in society become very important. The first, most important lesson is to begin to understand the Islamic/Muslim world. We have been hearing a lot about the Arab world, and I agree that Israel and Palestinian situation is absolutely crucial, but it is a global Islamic/Muslim civilization that America needs to be looking at and analyzing.

**Zogby** America has not performed well in the treatment of Israeli behavior against Palestinians, and this has taken a real toll. When we asked different countries about their attitude towards the Palestinian issue, the results were startling. The numbers in Kuwait, Lebanon, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco were almost identical. About 85 percent said that it was either the most important or one of the top three most important issues facing them. The holocaust and Israel have come to define existentially how American Jews define themselves. Even though other Arabs did not experience the trauma of Palestinians—Egyptians were not in exile, Saudis didn’t live in refugee camps—they define

much of their personal life in terms of the plight of the Palestinians. We are perceived as insensitive to that issue. They are watching this trauma play out everyday on television and America is identified with it. It isn't a question of why they hate us, but why they don't understand us. I tried to explain, as an American, how it felt watching the buildings go down on September 11. It became our personal passion play. It was us. We went down in the planes. We went down in the buildings. The Arabs did not understand our pain and they don't understand that we don't feel the same way when Palestinian kids are getting shot. There is this huge gap which has not been closed and won't be any time soon. On a personal level, we are not there yet. We don't understand the reality of people in the Arab world, that they are just like us. They have their own source of pain, their own source of history, their own narrative. Until America is ready to address that, we are not going to get them to address our concerns. We will be viewed as arrogant, in part because we are so powerful. In the Muslim world, they feel that the U.S. wants to understand them to want to run their world, to use their resources, and to do their business, but the U.S. does not understand them as a people.

## DISCUSSION

**Question** In the bloody cycle of violence that the Palestinians and Israelis are undergoing, many look to the United States to try to break that cycle. The United States should be stating that they not only encourage the parties to cease the violence and return to the negotiating table, but that we assume that the outcome will be two states, essentially on the 1967 lines, and the end of the Israeli occupation. We don't say that. We say we want the parties to go back to the table and talk. The disparity of power and the pain of the recent bloodletting is so deep, that, unless we state that framework, the Palestinians are helpless to go in a room with the Israelis and get a just outcome.

**Ross** The issue is not a declaration of outcome, but the means of moving the parties toward that outcome. We have talked about the end of Israeli occupation; we have talked about a Palestinian state. We have not talked about specific boundaries, as we have felt that this is an issue that needs to be negotiated. For reasons having to do with the way our own political system works, we have not put real muscle behind the effort to push the parties

towards the kinds of negotiations that might bring that vision into being.

**Dergham** Until we exercise pressure on both parties, the negotiations will not go anywhere. Unless an administration takes the position, which will entail political risk, of announcing the outcome of the negotiations, which was done in the Powell vision, negotiations will be at a stalemate. The Powell vision was put out there and left to hang after last November; pressure was put on Arafat and none on Sharon. This lopsided approach translated itself into just selling them words, while the facts of the ground developed a new reality. The U.S. declares itself as a partner to Israel. This brings us back to the point that the U.S. is perceived as a partner of Israel, not as an honest broker. All they in the area see is the pain inflicted on the Palestinians under occupation. There should be an end, but what is being done about it? We need policy that acts, not a policy perceived as lip service.

**Question** If the President is serious about a Palestinian state, then why has he refused to meet with Arafat, while he has met with Sharon four times. Doesn't this give evidence of his bias?

**Ross** We have requested a number of steps from the Palestinian authority, under the presidency of Chairman Arafat, and we are not satisfied with the results to date of the response. It has been stated over and over, that the President remains ready to meet with Chairman Arafat at an appropriate time. For us, the appropriate time is when there has been far more progress toward meeting some of the requests that have been placed before him. We can argue all night about whether it is right to request things from Arafat and not Prime Minister Sharon, but, in a technical sense, that is why there is no meeting to date between President Bush and Chairman Arafat.

**Question** Has your poll been directed toward the Arab world or to the larger Muslim World? If so, what was the larger issues that the Muslim world may have with the United States.

**Zogby** We have polled Muslim Americans, but not the Muslim world, only the Arab world.

**Question** America is quick to respond when its universal morals are violated. But, universal morals fall prey to self-interest, which is defined as national interest. This situation will remain as long as states continue to violate these universal morals in the name of their national self interest. Your comments, please?

**Ahmed** The actual crisis, the flash point, is in a different part of the world. Although the situation has cooled off, India and Pakistan still have hundreds of thousands of troops facing each other. The problem of Kashmir, like the problem of the Palestinians, is not resolved. The asymmetry of power, the indifference of the world, and the continuing sense of anger in that part of the world will continue to feed violence. I believe that we need to be looking at this globally. America, for the first time in history, can talk to both Islamabad and New Delhi. I am optimistic because I know that Colin Powell is there. People respect him in that part of the world, they think very highly of him and people listen to him. This needs to be kept at the top of the agenda. The seriousness is that we are talking about one-fifth of humanity, two nuclear powers who have been to war three times, and governments who have said, "we will have no hesitation in using the nuclear option if there is a war." When we talk about the Muslim world, we need to remember that one-third of the Muslim world lives in that part of the world.

**Zogby** There is serious unfinished business to deal with: firstly, Afghanistan, secondly, the crisis between India and Pakistan and, thirdly, the unfinished business of Al Qaeda, which remains a force throughout the world. Instead of settling decades old scores and not dealing with critical issues on the front burner right now, we seem to be devoting our attention to other matters. This may play well at home, but it will not convince the world that we are serious in solving problems as they occur. The Palestinian issue remains central to America's building the kind of relationship we need to build to root out Al Qaeda everywhere. As I read the Arab press, I find confusion about what we are doing and why we want to divert attention to Iraq. Afghanistan is critical among the issues we are not paying attention to because, if it goes the way it went in the last decade, and it very well might if we lose attention, it will be a devastating blow to what was accomplished.

**Ahmad** Al Qaeda can be checked permanently, but it has to be battled from within. It can only be battled by democracy, where people participate. People can check the growth of Al Qaeda by education, where people learn that blowing up Christians and Jews is not a good thing and that the actions are not sanctioned in Islam. Unless that happens, you will have students, who will think like Al Qaeda, just maybe under a different name. The challenge to Al Qaeda, or people like Al Qaeda, must come from within society. The connection

between American foreign policy and domestic policy in the Muslim world still needs to be much stronger.

**Question** I am interested in the perception in the wider Muslim world, including the Arab world, of the United States as a society in which Muslims live, work and raise their children. Additionally, what is their perception of U.S. foreign policy towards the former Yugoslavia? How do they view the evolution of U.S. policy in that regard? Do they buy into the clash of civilizations theory?

**Ahmed** Scholars of Islam in America use the phrase "new Andalusia" for recent America society. New Andalusia refers to old Andalusia, which means a time when Christians, Muslim and Jews could live together, could work together, could create great art, great thought, great literature, and great poetry together. There is the idea that in this world, in the 21st century, if there is a possibility anywhere of living together in a new Andalusia, it is America. Compare between America and Britain, where you also have a significant Muslim minority. In Britain, Tony Blair has six members in the House of Lords and the House of Commons. When there is a crisis with the Muslim world, he uses the British Muslims. They are Pakistanis and Indians, but they are British and loyal to Britain. I believe America needs to use its American Muslims more visibly and more actively than it has thus far. American Muslims feel left out, and they have a role to play. They are great ambassadors, bridges between the Muslim world and America. America should learn from Britain as they have far greater experience in the Muslim world. America has a respected role in Afghanistan, and there are high expectations. The crisis is in America, not in the Muslim world, in terms of diplomacy. America must define its objectives much more clearly. Where are we going to go, what are the ultimate objectives, what is this campaign all about, and how long is this campaign going to last? These are huge questions, and these questions are causing a lot of uncertainty in the world.

**Zogby** There is a role that the American Muslim community and Arab Americans can play. There is a political problem. We can't even give a speech at the State Department without a huge uproar. It is an issue that remains a real problem in the region. We have an American administration with an enormous numbers of American Jews, qualified individuals serving in critical posts dealing with the Arab/Israeli conflict, while there was a campaign to remove the only Arab American in the office of

Near East Affairs. A credible American Muslim would encounter the same difficulty. It is the policy, and the absence of Arab Americans or American Muslims as messengers. Why didn't the administration use Spencer Abraham more visibly after September 11th to deal with the backlash questions of Arab Americans? Why haven't the Arab American Members of Congress been used in public diplomacy more effectively? Also, why haven't Arab Americans and Muslim Americans been given sensitive positions in NEA and in the White House?

**Question** On the issue of liberation of women, the example you pick is their sale, their ability to sell themselves. I think you sell us short. In this country, we also have the ability to work, the ability to vote, and the ability to be elected to Congress. We are seeing our emissaries create change in the Arab world in that vein. For instance, in Tunisia, they have a very good record for women. We have seen the Egyptian Council for Women playing a role in Parliamentary elections, and there are forthcoming elections in Bahrain in which women are taking part. The liberation of women is a part of the democratization effort; women make up half the population in most countries. I think the U.S. is taking a leadership role and is exporting the ideas quite well. In this, America should be encouraged. Dr Zogby, your thoughts, please?

**Zogby** You are right and Tunisia is leading the way. The products that we sell, such as the liberation of women, don't always clearly reflect our values. When we are better known for *Dallas* and today for *Baywatch*, there is a problem of how we are perceived. The problem is whether or not the values that we want to project come through clearly, because, for everything we do, the products that we sell are better known by the media images, and these images can undercut everything else we try to do.

**Question** I am struck that there was no discussion by the panel of economic development. Here is an issue on which we should see eye to eye, but, when you talk to the people in the region, there is a perception that the U.S. is forcing its way in terms of economic development issues. Leaving aside the Palestinian issue and all the political issues, it seems we are not seeing eye-to-eye on economic development issues. Your observations, please.

**Dergham** There was the MENA conference in Casablanca when things looked good, when the Madrid peace process had produced a lot of enthusi-

asm. Then it stopped, because of the political element. In planning for conferences in Egypt, Amman, and Qatar, however, it became clear that you couldn't go on pretending as though there are no political problems. You can't take the Palestinian issue away from the minds and hearts at any level. A few years ago, when I said the issues are not only about Palestine, I took a lot of criticism. I didn't want to undermine the Palestinian issue, but I wanted to bring out the education issues, the necessity to take care of our women, and democratization. I wanted to point out that there are other fundamentally important issues that this Arab world must deal with. But, the bottom line is that it doesn't work without the politics. Everything goes back to the Palestinian issue and Iraq, and you can't decouple it.

**Question** When you talk about the economic issues, we seem to get the message that the U.S. is trying to force something. Even when we just want to talk about plain economic development, there is still this gap. What is your feeling on this issue?

**Dergham** In some cases, in some countries, there's always an excuse. In some Arab countries, they really like the status quo and don't like to rock the boat. In sum, in order to reach the environment for economic development, you need to resolve the political issues.

**Zogby** Our polling observation in some countries indicates that people have a bifurcated consciousness. There is a political mind and a business mind. When you look at the numbers and Saudi Arabia, it is very clear that the U.S. is its number one trading partner. When you ask Arabs what their most important issue is, they answer Palestine, but, when you ask about investment issues, they talk about business as if there were no politics at all. This leads me to believe that there hasn't been an integration of these two consciousnesses. What that means is that you will end up with bilateral economic ties. You're not going to see multi-lateral or regional economic ties. That's true, not just for the Middle East as a region with Israel included, but also the Middle East as Arab countries in regional economic development with the U.S.

**Question** Professor Ahmed, you spoke of issues of the broader Islamic World. How important is Arab history in Pakistan?

**Ahmed** As a generalization, throughout the Muslim world, the Palestinian issue and Jerusalem are very important. The further you move from the Middle East, the more the edges are blunted, so that

even the attitudes towards Israel or the Jews are quite different. There is sympathy for the Palestinians and the cause of Jerusalem, but there is also a feeling that the Jews are people of the book. There is that potential for good will. People feel that they have cultural links, in terms of values, customs, and names. There is potential for good will, but the contemporary politics of the Middle East get blurred here. The bottom line is that, the further you move away from the Middle East, the more the focus becomes blurred.

**Question** As people continue to kill each other, it seems as though there are tremendous psychological barriers that have been raised. Could the role for the United States in this situation be the task of breaking this psychological barrier, much as Sadat broke through the psychological barrier making Camp David possible? Does the U.S. need to come up with some proposal that breaks the psychological barrier in the region?

**Dergham** There is a possibility that some influential Arab countries, like Saudi Arabia, are trying to clarify scattered positions through an Arab summit. It has been the Arab position that, as soon as UN Resolutions 242 and 338 are implemented, it means the recognition of Israel. But Syria's position is that, as soon as Israel agrees to withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 borders, Syria is ready to sign a peace treaty and normalize with Israel. It is now clearly

stated by the Palestinians that an agreement on the June 4, 1967 borders should be signed and everyone should live happily ever after. But, this has not come as a collective Arab league position. For the Arab/Israeli conflict, there is a clear road map to a solution and it needs to be grabbed right now. The idea of eliminating occupation, getting rid of the settlements, and establishing a state of Palestine over the land of occupation should be seized before the forces of extremism or those who have a different point of view change the atmosphere of negotiations. I believe that the administration is still intent on working its way back to reestablishing what happened at the Madrid process. With this return, we are talking about a comprehensive peace settlement. There is a bottom line for Israeli public opinion. We can go on living in a siege mentality but, if we want to settle, now is the time, before the offer is not on the table anymore. As far as Iraq is concerned, to avoid military confrontations just look at the UN Security Council Resolutions. Smart sanctions are not the thing to do now; there is a way through these resolutions to force the Iraqi government to comply. The U.S. needs to accept what is in these resolutions. You can't demand cooperation, and, in the same breathe, state that we are going to get you anyway. The consequences of war on Iraq would be to leave the Israeli/Palestinian conflict unresolved and then have radicalization and lose the U.S. grip over the region.

## BIOGRAPHIES

### PROFESSOR AKBAR S. AHMED Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies American University

Professor Akbar S. Ahmed is the Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies and professor of International Relations at American University in Washington, DC. Professor Ahmed is a distinguished anthropologist, writer, and filmmaker. He has been actively involved in interfaith dialogue and the study of global Islam and its impact on contemporary society.

Professor Ahmed is the author of many books on contemporary Islam, including *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*, which was the basis of the BBC six-part TV series called *Living Islam*. His *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* was nominated for the Amalfi Award, and his book *Islam Today: A Short Introduc-*

*tion to the Muslim World* was rated among the best nonfiction of the year by the *Los Angeles Times*. His "Jinnah Quartet," a four-part project on Pakistan's founding father, M.A. Jinnah, has won numerous international awards. Ahmed has co-edited several books including *The Future of Anthropology: Its Relevance to the Contemporary World*.

Ahmed has been a visiting professor and the Stewart Fellow in the Humanities at Princeton University and held appointments at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, Harvard University, and Cambridge University, where for five years he was the Iqbal Fellow. He has held senior positions in Pakistan, including the Pakistan High Commissioner (Ambassador) to the United Kingdom. Since joining the civil service in Pakistan in 1966, he has held several important posts including Political Agent in the North-West Frontier Province as well as Commissioner of three divisions in Baluchistan. He was

the founder and director-general of the National Center for Rural Development in Islamabad. Dr. Ahmed is also on the board of directors of the American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies and the editorial boards of several distinguished academic journals. He is the recipient of the prestigious Star of Excellence in Pakistan and the Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal given by the Royal Society of Asian Affairs in London.

Dr. Ahmed recently delivered several keynote addresses at the annual meeting which included the following: American Muslim Council, American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies, and the Association of Muslim Social Scientists. He gave the keynote address to the Brookings First Task Force on Islam. He will deliver the President's Distinguished Annual Lecture at the University of Victoria in March 2002.

Dr. Ahmed has made frequent media appearances in the United Kingdom and the United States. Most recently, he has appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," CNN, MSNBC, and NBC *Nightly News*. Dr. Ahmed has been interviewed by *The New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *People* magazine, and *Newsweek*, among other publications. He is a regular syndicated columnist for Religion News Service.

**RAGHIDA DERGHAM**  
**Senior Diplomatic Correspondent**  
*Al Hayat*

Raghida Dergham is Senior Diplomatic Correspondent for the London-based *Al Hayat*, the leading independent Arabic daily newspaper. She writes a regular weekly strategic column on international political affairs and is one of the few women political commentators on TV networks worldwide. Ms. Dergham also contributes to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and the *International Herald Tribune*. A Lebanese-born American citizen, Ms. Dergham is a member of The Council on Foreign Relations and was co-chair of the Council's 1997 conference, "In the National Interest: Does diversity make a difference?" She is a frequent participant in policy conferences held by forums such as the Washington Institute for the Near East, The Middle East Institute, The Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, The Aspen Institute and the World Economic Forum at Davos.

She serves on the board of the International Women's Media Foundation and is in SUNY's Hall of Fame as a distinguished alumna.

Ms. Dergham has conducted exclusive interviews with over 20 heads of governments and 50 foreign ministers. Besides breaking major news stories, such as the Oslo secret talks, she was the only journalist to interview Ramzi Youssef, the alleged mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing.

**MARJORIE RANSOM**  
**Project Director, ISD**  
**Panel Moderator**

Marjorie Ransom's career of 30 years brought her to the rank of Career Minister, the second highest in the Foreign Service.

She served throughout her career in the U.S. Information Agency, specializing in cultural exchange, press, and education. A Middle East specialist and Arabic speaker, she served as the first female officer in Amman, Jordan in 1963 and subsequently headed Public Affairs sections in the American Embassies of Sanaa, Yemen; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; Damascus, Syria, and Cairo, Egypt—the last a section so large it exceeded many embassies in size.

In 1995–1997, she served a second tour in Damascus, Syria in a key State Department job, that of Deputy Chief of Mission, the number two job in the Embassy. During that time there were seven trips by the Secretary of State in a valiant but unsuccessful quest for a peace agreement between Israel and Syria.

From 1997 to 2000, she was the Director of the Department's three foreign press centers in Washington, New York and Los Angeles. In that capacity, she led the U.S. government effort to inform foreign journalists in the U.S. and through them large foreign audiences abroad about U.S. policy, society and institutions.

With her husband, also a Foreign Service Officer, she pioneered in tandem assignments, serving with him (a State Department political officer) in the same embassies three times. The overlap and difference in their interests made for a rich family life for their three daughters, now all graduated from college and launched in careers of their own.

In November, 2000, Ms. Ransom retired from the Department of State to devote more time to her family and to her extensive personal interests: U.S. public diplomacy towards the Middle East, researching, cataloguing and documenting her considerable collection of the folk silver jewelry of the Middle East and Central Asia and volunteer activities in

prison ministry and mentoring a District of Columbia public school student.

**AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPHER ROSS**  
**Senior Adviser to the**  
**Under Secretary of State for**  
**Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs**

Ambassador Christopher W.S. Ross, one of the U.S. Government's top specialists in Middle Eastern and North African affairs and one of its most fluent speakers of Arabic, was named Senior Adviser to the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in October 2001. He held previous appointments as Coordinator for Counterterrorism (1998), Ambassador to Syria (1991–98), and Ambassador to Algeria (1988–91).

As Ambassador to Syria, Ambassador Ross participated actively in U.S. efforts to achieve a Middle East peace settlement. At the same time, he pursued a robust dialogue with the Syrian Government on terrorism, human rights, narcotics, and arms control.

Ambassador Ross began his diplomatic career in 1968, serving with the U.S. Information Agency in Libya, Morocco, Lebanon, and Algeria. In 1979, he was seconded to the Department of State, serving in Algeria, Lebanon, Israel, and Washington before being named Ambassador to Algeria. Among the events that he witnessed and that marked his career were the Libyan revolution of 1969, the beginnings of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975–76, the release of the U.S. hostages in Iran at Algiers Airport in 1981, and negotiation of the still-born Lebanese-Israeli agreement of May 17, 1983.

Following his initial retirement, Ambassador Ross joined Search for Common Ground, the leading non-governmental organization in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, serving as Executive Director of its programs in the Middle East and North Africa from 1999 to 2001. In this capacity, he chaired numerous meetings in which Arab, Israeli, Turkish, and Iranian opinion leaders jointly addressed the critical issues of the region.

Ambassador Ross received an AB degree in Oriental (Near Eastern) Studies from Princeton University in 1965 and an MA in International Relations from the School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University in 1967 and speaks fluent French in addition to Arabic. He has received four Presidential Meritorious Service Awards and the Distinguished Service Award of the Department of State.

**DR. JAMES J. ZOGBY**  
**President**  
**Arab American Institute**

Dr. James J. Zogby is founder and president of the Arab American Institute (AAI), a Washington, D.C.-based organization which serves as the political and policy research arm of the Arab American community. Since 1985, Dr. Zogby and AAI have led Arab American efforts to secure political empowerment in the United States. Through voter registration, education and mobilization, AAI has moved Arab Americans into the U.S. political mainstream.

For the past two decades, Dr. Zogby has been involved in a full range of Arab American issues. A co-founder and chairman of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign in the late 1970s, he later co-founded and served as the Executive Director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. In 1982, he co-founded Save Lebanon, Inc., a private non-profit, humanitarian and non-sectarian relief organization which funds health care for Palestinian and Lebanese victims of war, and other social welfare projects in Lebanon. In 1985, Zogby founded AAI. In 1993, following the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord in Washington, he was asked by Vice President Al Gore to lead Builders for Peace, a private sector committee to promote U.S. business investment in the West Bank and Gaza. In 1994, with former U.S. Congressman Mel Levine, his colleague as co-president of Builders, Zogby led a U.S. delegation to the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement in Cairo. After 1994, through Builders, Zogby worked with a number of U.S. agencies to promote and support Palestinian economic development, including AID, OPIC, USTDA, and the Departments of State and Commerce.

Dr. Zogby has also been personally active in U.S. politics for many years. Most recently, in 1995, DNC Chairman Don Fowler appointed Zogby as co-convenor of the National Democratic Ethnic Coordinating Committee, an umbrella organization of Democratic Party leaders of European and Mediterranean descent. On September 24, 1999, the National Democratic Ethnic Coordinating Council (NDECC) elected Dr. James Zogby as its observer to the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) Executive Committee. He is also active professionally beyond his involvement with the Arab American community. He is a board member of the human rights organization Middle East Watch and currently serves as a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

A lecturer and scholar on Middle East issues, U.S.-Arab relations, and the history of the Arab American community, Dr. Zogby appears frequently on television and radio. He also hosts a popular weekly call-in program, "A Capital View," on Abu Dhabi TV. Since 1992, Zogby has written a weekly column on U.S. politics for the major newspapers of the Arab world. In 2001, he authored a study entitled "What Ethnic Americans Really

Think," which discusses the views on various issues of several of America's distinct ethnic groups.

In 1975, Dr. Zogby received his doctorate from Temple University's Department of Religion, where he studied under the Islamic scholar, Dr. Ismail al-Faruqi. Dr. Zogby received a Bachelor of Arts from Le Moyne College.

Dr. Zogby is married to Eileen Patricia McMahon and is the father of five children.