

'America wants to wage war on all of us'

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Find the information

Find the answers to these questions in the text:

- 1• Who was the founder of pan-Arab nationalism?
- 2• Which city is the ideal place to assess Arab opinion?
- 3• How do Arabs see the "war on terror"?
- 4• Why do Arab countries need basic reforms?
- 5• What is the cause of 90% of the problem?
- 6• Which country do the Americans want to be the centre of a new geo-political order?

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There is no better place to assess the feelings of Arabs and Muslims than Cairo, centre of the two great movements that swept the region in recent times, the pan-Arab nationalism led by President Nasser, and the "political Islam" that began with the failure and decline of Nasserism. Today everyone seems to be talking about the two things that seem most significant for the future - the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and US plans for a possible war against Iraq. "Bin Laden may not be so attractive now," says Dia Rashwan, an expert on Islamist fundamentalism, "but that doesn't mean people don't hate the US.

They hate the US more than ever, and now this is from an Arab point of view rather than an Islamic one." Things seem even darker now for many Arabs than they did in the days immediately after the September 11th attacks. One year on, the consequences of that day seem much clearer.

As they see it, the US's post-September 11 "war on terror" is now simply an attack on themselves. In George Bush's simple world of good against evil, it is the Arabs, together with Iran, who are the evil ones. After centuries of foreign conquest and control, the Arabs now risk losing all those aspirations like independence, dignity and the unity of the greater Arab "nation", which were promoted by Nasser. With all their social, economic, cultural and institutional problems, they are not in a good position to meet this external challenge. Many Arab experts believe that their countries need many basic reforms in order to bring in democracy, human rights and accountability.

"For us", says Muhammad Said, a journalist at Egypt's leading newspaper, al-Ahram, "the West always preferred control to democracy. Now 90% of the problem comes from the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is a continuous reminder of our colonised past." In Arab eyes, the US has never acted so obviously and shamelessly in favour of Israel. So the Arab world, says Said, is now in danger of "direct or indirect colonialism". People think that Arab societies are incapable of modernising on their own, and this opens them up to colonisation".

This kind of neo-colonialism involves "regime change" by force for those countries which the US regards as hostile. For countries which the US regards as more friendly, it involves imposing reforms on those countries. The idea, says Said, is to solve" the Palestinian question by war at the expense of the Arabs as a national group. After overthrowing Saddam Hussein, the US hopes to make Iraq, with all its natural wealth, the centre of a whole new pro-

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American geopolitical order. When other countries see this demonstration of American power they will have to do what the Americans say or they will suffer the same fate. This applies both to traditional, "terrorist-sponsoring" opponents such as Syria, or traditional friends, such as Saudi Arabia,

countries believed to be a source of terrorism as a result of bad government or a culture of religious extremism. If Arabs really believed that, by removing Saddam, the US wanted to introduce democratic order in his place, they would be more willing to join the Iraqi opposition in tolerating such a war at

least. But they don't. "The US may be preparing a big surprise for the region," warns Lebanese commentator Saad Mehio, "but the Middle East may be preparing an equally big one for the Americans."

The Guardian Weekly 12-9-2002, page 7

2 Comprehension

Match the beginnings with the endings:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1• Cairo is a good place to assess Arab feelings because ... | a• is an attack on them. |
| 2• Everyone is talking about two things: | b• in order to bring in democracy and human rights. |
| 3• Although Bin Laden has become less attractive to many Arabs ... | c• it has a culture of religious extremism. |
| 4• For many Arabs the "war on terror" ... | d• it is the centre of pan-Arab nationalism and political Islam. |
| 5• Arab countries are not in a good position to meet the external challenge because ... | e• they don't believe the Americans want to bring in democracy in Iraq. |
| 6• Many Arab experts believe their countries need basic reforms ... | f• they have many social and economic problems. |
| 7• Many Arabs believe that ... | g• they hate the US even more than before. |
| 8• Saudi Arabia is believed to be a source of terrorism because ... | h• the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the possible war against Iraq. |
| 9• Many Arabs are against a war against Iraq because ... | i• the Arab-Israeli conflict is the basic cause of their problems. |

3 Vocabulary Work

Find the opposites of these words in the text:

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1• success | 5• brighter | 9• moderation |
| 2• rise | 6• capable | 10• unwilling |
| 3• love | 7• friendly | |
| 4• internal | 8• anti-American | |

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4 Word Building

Complete the table:

Verb	Noun	Verb	Noun
1• feel	_____	6• believe	_____
2• fail	_____	7• prefer	_____
3• aspire	_____	8• remind	_____
4• promote	_____	9• impose	_____
5• disagree	_____	10• remove	_____

5 Collocations

Fill the gaps using an appropriate preposition.

Check your answers in the text.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1• began _____ | 6• reminder _____ |
| 2• incapable _____ | 7• in danger _____ |
| 3• in favour _____ | 8• impose _____ |
| 4• talk _____ | 9• at the expense _____ |
| 5• expert _____ | 10• apply _____ |

6 Discussion

Is it right for the Americans to impose their own solutions on the Middle East?

What are the arguments for and against a war against Iraq?