

'America wants to wage war on all of us'

Level 3 | Advanced

1 Pre-reading | Key Terms

Match these terms with their meanings:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. to take the pulse of | a. a cruel and violent act |
| 2. the aftermath | b. to be the best example of something |
| 3. an atrocity | c. a violent attack |
| 4. to boil down to | d. to measure/ to gauge |
| 5. an assault | e. without the necessary resources |
| 6. to embody | f. the effects and results of something |
| 7. ill-equipped | g. very basic |
| 8. to give rise to | h. to cause |
| 9. root and branch | i. obviously and without shame |
| 10. blatantly | j. to be the main reason for something |

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Arabs see regime change not as cure for political backwardness but as new term for old enemy: colonisation

There is no better place to take the pulse of Arab and Muslim sentiment than Cairo, hub of the two great movements that swept the region in recent times, the pan-Arab secular nationalism of which President Nasser was the champion, and the "political Islam" that began with Nasserism's failure and decline. Today, from the air-conditioned thinktanks on the banks of the Nile to the sweltering alleyways of the splendid

but dilapidated medieval city, the preoccupation with the two things that seem most fateful for the future - the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and US plans for a possible war against Iraq - is overwhelming.

"Bin Laden may have lost a lot of his appeal," says Dia Rashwan, an expert on Islamist fundamentalism, "but that doesn't mean the US isn't hated. It is, more than ever, and more now from an Arab than an Islamic standpoint." It is much darker for most Arabs than it might have appeared in the immediate aftermath of that apocalyptic atrocity in New York and Washington. One year on, it seems clearer to them in its consequences.

As they see it, the US's post-September 11 "war on terror" now boils down to an assault on them. For in the Bush universe of good versus evil, it is essentially they, with Iran thrown in, who are the evil ones. In the collision to come, the Arabs risk further blows to all those aspirations -

independence, dignity, the unity and collective purpose of the greater Arab "nation" - which, after centuries of foreign conquest and control, the pan-Arabism of Nasser so triumphantly, if defectively, embodied. Internally they are ill-equipped to meet the external challenge, racked as they are by all manner of social, economic, cultural and institutional sicknesses. These, the US says, are the very conditions that gave rise to Bin Ladenism. Few Arab opinion-makers would dispute it, or doubt their societies' desperate need of root-and-branch reform, ushering in democracy, human rights, accountability.

"For us", says Muhammad Said, a columnist at Egypt's leading newspaper, al-Ahram, "the West always preferred control to democracy. Now 90% of the problem flows from the Arab-Israel conflict, that continuous reminder of our colonised past." Never before, in Arab eyes, has the US acted so blatantly in favour of Israel. So the Arab world, says

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Said, now risks being "subjected to direct or indirect colonialism". And the very "backwardness of the Arab order makes the pursuit of such imperial designs possible". For Arab societies are seen as "incapable of modernising on their own, thus providing a natural gateway to colonisation". Such neo-colonialism involves "regime change" by force for those the US deems beyond the pale, and the imposition of reforms, from the school curriculum to their position on Palestine, on those who remain within it. The idea,

says Said, is to "terminate" the Palestinian question by war at the expense of the Arabs as a national group. With the overthrow of Saddam, the US hopes to make this richly endowed country the linchpin of a whole new pro-American geopolitical order. Witnessing such a demonstration of US will and power other regimes would have to bend to US purposes or suffer the same fate, be they such traditional, "terrorist-sponsoring" opponents such as Syria, or traditional friends, such as Saudi Arabia, held to

spawn terrorism through their misrule or a general "culture" of religious extremism.

If Arabs really believed that, in removing Saddam, the US were bent on promoting a democratic order in his place, they would be readier 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

Choose the best answer for each of these questions:

Why is Cairo the best place to test the mood of Arab and Muslim public opinion?

- because it is a pan-Arab city
- because it embodies both pan-Arab nationalism and political Islam
- because it is the centre of the Arab world

For people in Cairo the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and the possible war against Iraq are

- not really important
- a topic of conversation
- an everyday concern

The USA is

- hated less than before September 11th
- hated to the same degree as before September 11th
- hated even more than it was before September 11th

For many Arabs, the "war on terror" is:

- a war against Osama bin Laden
- a war against Egypt
- a war on all Arabs

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Why are they ill-equipped to meet the external challenge?

- because they have a range of social, economic and cultural problems
- because they lack unity and collective purpose
- because they support Bin Ladenism

What, according to the Egyptian journalist, Muhammed Said, is the main cause of the problem?

- the colonial past
- Western control
- the Arab-Israeli conflict

Why, according to Said, is the Arab world at risk of colonialism?

- because the US acts in favour of Israel
- because Arab societies are regarded as backward
- because Arab societies are regarded as incapable of modernising on their own

What, according to Said, is the main goal of American policy in the region?

- to make Iraq the centre of a new geopolitical order
- to overthrow other Arab regimes
- to impose reforms

3 Vocabulary Work

Fill the gaps using words or phrases from the text. They are in chronological order.

A _____ is a group of people working together to produce ideas.

Very hot and humid weather can be described as _____.

If something is _____, it is very old and in a very bad condition.

An _____ feeling is a very, very strong one.

If something is described as _____, it suggests that the world will be destroyed.

Hopes for the future and things you wish to achieve are known as _____.

If someone is regarded as being outside civilised society, they can be described as _____.

The _____ is the person or thing that is absolutely essential to a group, organisation, system or plan.

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4 Collocations

Which of the 3 words does NOT collocate with the verbs or adjectives from the text:

to meet

- a• a fight b• a deadline c• a challenge

racked by

- a• problems b• disease c• illness

to usher in

- a• reforms b• new laws c• problems

to impose

- a• reforms b• a position c• a new regime

to overthrow

- a• a government b• a dictator c• a country

to promote

- a• democracy b• efficiency c• opposition

5 Prepositions

Fill the gaps using an appropriate preposition:

Nasser was the champion _____ pan-Arab nationalism.

People are preoccupied _____ the Israeli-Palestinian question.

_____ an Arab standpoint, the US is hated.

Many Arabs regard the "war on terror" as an attack _____ them.

A number of conditions gave rise _____ Bin Ladenism.

The West is said to prefer control _____ democracy.

Arab societies are said to be incapable _____ modernising.

The US may impose reforms _____ other nations.

6 Discussion Point

Do you agree with the opinion expressed in the article that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the root cause of resentment in the Arab world?

What are the solutions to the many problems of the Middle East?