

STRATEGIC ESTIMATE

2010



Adnan Khan
Khilafah.com

“The US has had the ultimate aim of preventing the emergence of any major power in Eurasia. The paradox however is as follows – the goals of these interventions was never to achieve something – whatever the political rhetoric might have said – but to prevent something. The United States wanted to prevent stability in areas where another power might emerge. Its goal was not to stabilise but to destabilise, and this explains how the United States responded to the Islamic earthquake. It wanted to prevent a large, powerful Islamic state from emerging. Rhetoric aside the United States has no overriding interest in peace in Eurasia. The United States also has no interest in winning the war outright.....the purpose of these conflicts is simply to block a power or destabilise the region, not to impose order.”

George Friedman, ‘The next 100 years, a forecast for the 21st century’

Introduction

As the first decade of the 21st century has drawn to a close, many thinkers, academics and policy makers are developing their assessments and forecasts for 2010 and beyond. The ‘Noughties’ as the 21st centuries first decade has come to be known was defined by the war on terror, the decline of the US as a world power, the global financial crisis and the resurgence of Russia.

The world’s powers regularly make assessments of all the trends they face and the trends they perceive will impact them. This is in order to protect themselves from any emerging threats and prepare for any challenges. An example of such an assessment is Americas National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). The NIE is the authoritative assessment and coordinated judgments of the United States Intelligence Community, a group of 16 US intelligence agencies. Alongside this many think tanks also produce assessments and reviews and construct policies upon such assessments in the hope that their proposals will be adopted by governments around the world.

The Muslim Ummah today is without a state, as a result rather than producing its own assessments the Muslim world is the subject of study and on the receiving end of Western designs. This would be the inevitable situation as without a state, there would be very little incentive to follow global trends and as a result no polices to counter such threats and challenges would ever develop.

Politics in Islam is the taking care of the affairs of the Ummah and is practically carried out by the Khilafah state. Islam obliges politics upon the Ummah as many ayah of the Qur’an and many Hadith order the Ummah to account the rulers, hold them to task and for the Ummah to defend the deen. Today this is practically achieved through monitoring the plots and plans against the Ummah and Islam, exposing such plans and engaging in political, intellectual and ideological struggle with those who have designs on the Ummah.

What follows *inshallah* is the author’s opinion and assessment on the trends for 2010 and short to medium term – i.e. the next decade. This is based upon current trends, the plans of some of the world’s powers and the likely outcome of such manoeuvres. Like any assessment, they are merely estimates and forecasts; as global politics is always in a state of flux such an assessment will never remain static nothing can happen without the permission of Allah سبحانه وتعالى

27th Muharram 1431

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Adnan Khan

Decline of the USA

At the beginning of the 21st century the US was the unrivalled world power, having defeated Communism, established NATO as the world's default security organisation and dominated the world economy, it was considered very likely that the world would be writing and printing about US prowess for decades to come. The US in 2010 is a very different global power to the one of the last decade.

The US has been humbled. Today America continues to bleed from two open wounds in Iraq and Afghanistan that show no signs of abating. Both wars have now lasted longer than WW2. The US army, the most technologically advanced in history has been unable to defeat a band of fighters using weapons developed in the 1960's. As a result it has to rely on a variety of surrogates to avoid embarrassment. The US is facing numerous challenges in different regions of the world which only a decade ago it completely dominated.

It is very unlikely the US will be replaced as a superpower in 2010, but the challenge the US faces are twofold, how do you maintain your prowess when you have been humbled? How do you contain nations who are visibly taking advantage of the decline of the US?

The debacle of Guantanamo Bay and the Global Economic Crisis has undermined America's purported chief exports, namely human rights and the free market. The US is drowning in a sea of debt which the Global Economic Crisis brought to the forefront. The US generated nearly \$14 trillion in economic output in 2007, however the national debt – money that central and federal governments owe to the US public and the world through the bonds they have issued - stands at \$10 trillion. The US citizenry have a huge appetite for imports and as a result consumer debt stands at \$11.4 trillion. The debts of US companies amounts to \$18.4 trillion. This makes the US indebted to the tune of \$40 trillion, more than twice what the US economy produces annually.

The debacle of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has severely dented US prowess around the world. The US is overstretched, drowning in a misery of debt, and become more and more reliant on the cooperation of other nations to achieve its aims. It is very unlikely the US will be replaced as a superpower in 2010, but the challenge the US faces are twofold - how do you maintain your prowess when you have been humbled and how do you contain nations who are visibly taking advantage of the decline of the US?

The Resurgence of Russia

In the last decade Russia has managed to gain control over its mineral resources and utilities and banished many oligarchs who benefited from the break-up of the Soviet Union. With some of the worlds largest energy reserves it is now developing a state of the art military and competing directly with the US in regions where the US for nearly a decade had uncontested hegemony.

Russia continues to follow an independent route and employ policies that demonstrate this such as its view that Hamas and Hezbollah are not terrorist organisations despite numerous US resolutions

to the contrary. Russia has signed a deal with India to develop a stealth fighter as well as various military pacts. Its Middle East tours, position it as an alternative superpower to the US which is supplemented with its observer status in the Arab League and Organisation of Islamic conference (OIC). Russia continues to use its relations with Iran as a means to frustrate US plans on imposing sanctions against Iran. Russia plans to spend over \$200 billion in the next 5 years to modernise its military.¹ This includes new nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, a fleet of TU-160 supersonic strategic bombers and the development of a fifth generation fighter jet. Such production is also leading to Russia cornering the arms industry; Russia is the largest supplier of arms to China, Iran, and Venezuela and is courting the Middle East.

Russian foreign relations are currently being driven on reversing the post cold war trend and securing Russia's periphery by bringing all the former Soviet republics under its influence. Russia is directly competing with the world's superpower once again.

2010 will be a year of consolidation for Russia. It has taken full advantage of America's preoccupation with the Islamic world to reverse all the American sponsored colour revolutions. The project to bring all of the former Soviet republics under Russian influence has been a meticulous task led by Vladimir Putin. In 2010 Russia will make significant gains in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan and should have removed what remains of Western influence. The reformulation of a political union in much of the former Soviet space should have begun.

This means by the time 2010 comes to an end over 70% of the former Soviet Union will most likely be under Russian control and any effort to change Russian expansion must be monumental if it is to succeed.

Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia are already members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a Moscow-led security group comprising pro-Russian former Soviet states. The CSTO is primarily a bloc that Russia uses to integrate with and project influence throughout former Soviet republics via security coordination. Russia has recently concluded a deal for a Customs Union with Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia which will align their economies to Moscow further. Azerbaijan is considering CSTO membership and in Ukraine's January 2010 elections all three candidates most likely to win, are pro-Russian.

This means by the time 2010 comes to an end over 70% of the former Soviet Union will most likely be under Russian control and any effort to change Russian expansion must be monumental if it is to succeed. With the US in decline, Russia looks to be moving into poll position in attempting to shift the global balance of power.

Britain

World War Two consumed Britain to such an extent that it weakened its international standing. In the post war era British global aims were restricted by its economic realities, for this reason Britain worked and continues to have a role in the world by partaking in global issues; however it is unable to completely shift the global balance of power.

British foreign policy today is built upon having a role in Europe and influencing the US. British policy makers eventually accepted Britain's weakness after WW2 and developed a policy of preservation rather than direct competition with the US. Britain has managed to achieve its interests through a policy of preserving its global ambitions by working with the US and the EU, whilst at the same time working to divert, alter, complicate and limit the aims of both. Britain has frustrated many US plans across the world such as rescuing Gaddafi's government from clutches of American neoconservatives who after September 11 wanted regime change in Libya. Britain also managed to delay the Iraq war by forcing the US to go through the United Nations weakening the US considerably who then went against international law. At the same time Britain has worked with the US on the two state solution in Palestine, on Iran's nuclear enrichment talks and the North Korea issue, but worked against US aims in partnership with Europe in Sudan and Lebanon.

America brokered the Naivasha peace accord in 2005, which culminated in the eventual termination of the civil war between the main rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Sudanese government. The terms of the agreement included a variety of measures that gave the South autonomy and the prospects of secession in 2011 when the deal expires. Both Britain and France provided arms to the rebels in Darfur through Chad which created the Darfur issue. Both nations have successfully internationalised the issue of Darfur and complicated US plans to separate the South of Sudan and turn it into an independent nation. Instead the US must now deal with the Darfur issue thus delaying its plans for the South.

In Lebanon the assassinations of prominent politicians have deeply divided Lebanon into pro-Syrian/Hizbullah and pro-EU camps. The Hezbollah-led March 8 coalition utilised its veto vote to complicate the forming of a government. Both Britain and France have engaged with the March 14 coalition led by Saad Hariri's Future Movement to maintain their relevance in Lebanese politics. Hizbullah has successfully ensured US interests are protected in Lebanon by utilising its veto vote

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resulting in none of the pro-EU parties from achieving a majority and therefore unilaterally forming a government.

From a European perspective this is the fundamental problem with Britain. In the past it used its navy to build a global empire, allowing it to move beyond territorial and economic expansion focused solely on the European continent. But these global interests, developed over centuries of trade and empire-building across the globe, clash with the EU's goal of unifying Europe politically and economically.

The dominant political forces in Britain are the Labour party and Conservatives, both view complete isolationism from the EU as unrealistic. Europe is too close and too large to be simply ignored. However the two political parties have divergent views on the EU. The Labour party believe that through engagement, London can influence the EU's development and the ultimate direction of its policies.

It is not opposed to a European political union, as long as London does not turn into Luxemburg and melt into the EU, it wants a prominent seat at the table of such a union.

2010 is election year in Britain and most indicators point to the possibility of a hung parliament – this is where no party wins the election outright and therefore would need to build a coalition government. If the Conservative party emerges victorious, the Tory strategy towards Europe will in all likelihood be the same since the Thatcher era, engaging Europe in order to control it. The EU's emphasis on the free movement of goods, capital and people removes government-imposed trade barriers on the free market, which gives Britain's economy an advantage in many fields. However the Conservatives will work to ensure Britain's big government is not replaced by Brussels. For these reasons the Conservatives will work to ensure a powerful Europe doesn't become functional.

In 2010 Britain will likely become active in EU politics, but in a way that the Continent — especially France and Germany - will inevitably clash. Britain will continue to work with the US in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan and continue to alter and complicate US plans in order to keep strengthening itself. This dual sometimes contradictory approach is how Britain keeps itself relevant in international politics. This is what Britain has resigned its role to in international politics; it no longer has the propensity to achieve anything more substantial.

China – Pretender or Contender

The rise of China in the last decade has come to define the first decade of the 21st century for many. China has been able to rapidly develop its domestic infrastructure in order to become the world's prime location for exports. In 2009 China worked to consolidate its regional ambitions, which has the possibility of being derailed by the global economic crisis. The plunge in global trade resulted in a huge fall in Chinese exports. China managed to work around this through providing huge loans to affected businesses and through the financing of a number of large infrastructure projects. China's current problem is that, with the exception of having more infrastructure than it did a year ago, Beijing enters 2010 in almost the same situation as it entered 2009. China needs to reduce its dependency on exports, which is driving the economy, but this dependency cannot be made in a decade, much less a year. The Chinese, then, have little choice but to continue the debt-driven loan and infrastructure programs that allowed them to evade a crash in 2009 until such time that the global economy recovers.

Chinese aims have until now been achieved through Chinese leaders avoiding behaviour that would arouse fear or suspicion on the part of its neighbours and economic partners. It has utilised its economic strength or 'soft power' - diplomacy, development aid, and cultural ties - to cultivate friends and allies. China's development aid of over £20 billion to various African nations in return for an uninterrupted supply of energy, where China will develop schools, infrastructure and ensure the transfer of skills has become symbolic of this approach.² In 2010 it appears unlikely this will change.

China will use its growing wealth and technological prowess to enhance its military power, Chinese forces remain technologically unsophisticated and its weapons are no match for the most modern

US, Japanese, and European competitors. However, this gap will narrow significantly in the century's second decade as China devotes more resources to military modernisation.

The challenge China faced in the first decade of the 21st century is how to weaken US attempts to contain it. China has used its economic clout to loosen Australian, South Korean, and Indian ties with the United States. To a certain extent, this strategy is meeting with success, as these countries seek to profit from the economic boom China is experiencing.

However in 2010 and beyond China will have to navigate and attempt to exploit a number of new developments. The US has introduced a number of new initiatives to revive relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The US has shifted its policy towards Myanmar (Burma) and plans to move beyond the current sanctions regime to include direct engagement with the military government. Myanmar is playing a central role in China's overseas energy strategy and through direct engagement the US is attempting to minimise the expansion of a Chinese sphere of influence. At the same time China will need to contend with the ambitions of India and Japan in the region.

Whilst many are looking towards China as the nation possibly replacing the US as the world's superpower, this is unlikely for now considering China has restricted its ambitions to its region. China has an active policy of dominating South East Asia and has constructed relations with its neighbours to achieve such ends. Its foray into Africa is not to dominate the region, or remove European and US hegemony but to secure a stable supply of energy for its economic development.

For now China and the US remain interdependent upon each other and this will make it very difficult for China to undermine. The US is the world's largest consumer and imports the vast majority of goods that come from China's production lines. As a result of this, America has a trade deficit of \$268 billion with China, which results in US dollars ending up in China, which today is over \$2 trillion. Such huge reserves have resulted in China purchasing US treasury bonds, which funds America's massive trade deficit. In turn this has resulted in the expansion of China's manufacturing base and China's need for a larger share of the world's oil and mineral resources. This has also led to the loss of jobs in America's manufacturing sector to superior Chinese craftsmanship. Both nations benefit from this interdependency, at the same time however their fates are closely aligned making it difficult for either of them to undermine.

India – A False Dawn

After 20 years of implementing reforms India has risen to rapid prominence and is the world's fastest growing economy after China. In 2010 and beyond India will face the same challenges it has been grappling with for the last decade; in fact it faces a deluge of challenges.

While 80% of Indian villages have at least an electricity line some 600 million Indians have no mains electricity at all, just 44% of rural households have access to electricity. India's rising energy demand due to economic development has created a perpetual state of energy crunch. India is poor in oil resources and is currently heavily dependent on coal and foreign oil imports to fulfil its energy needs. Whilst the Indian economy has grown fourfold over the last two decades, this new

wealth has still to permeate to the wider population. 33% of the world's population that lives in poverty resides in India. Alongside this India is still characterised with crumbling roads, jammed airports, and power blackouts as well as rampant corruption in mega projects.

India's fundamental problem lies in its identity. Is India a Hindu nation or a secular nation? Secularists are in the minority and have argued against Hindu nationalists who have led mass riots against minorities. Those who have benefited from India's liberalisation have to a large extent been those who believe Hinduism should have no role in governance. If India is a Hindu nation with Hinduism its identity, then this institutionalises the caste system which stratifies India into a system of hereditary groups. Currently India is a mixture of secularism and Hinduism which means the nation cannot move in a unified direction and this is what has caused its secessionist problem as Hinduism cannot deal with people outside such a caste system.

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In 2010 India will continue look beyond its borders but not beyond its region. The decades old rivalry with Pakistan will continue and India will continue its attempt to become the world's workshop. Its relationship with the US will in all likelihood deepen and it will attempt to deepen economic ties with China, whilst still viewing the Chinese with distrust.

India will continue with its pragmatic insular approach to global affairs. Outside South Asia India has no major strategic interests. India's fundamental interests will always come from within — from its endless, shifting array of regional interests, ethnic groups and powers. Like China, India has little appetite for global ambitions, but unlike China, India has very little propensity to ever become a world power – its deluge of challenges will always engulf it.

EU

Over a period of nearly 60 years the European Union has become an integrated whole through unifying its markets, through a single currency and now through the Lisbon Treaty will streamline decision making and empower Europe to emerge as a continental entity.

There is however a number of obstacles that will keep the EU disjointed in 2010 and the foreseeable future. The European Union has expanded well beyond its original founder states. Consensus on how far enlargement should go and how deep integration should be continues to plague the union. Member states are reluctant to relinquish their sovereignty to bureaucrats in Brussels or leave key decision making to the two nations that dominate the EU - Germany and France. The Lisbon Treaty was an attempt to overcome such differences by replacing unanimous voting with qualified majority voting (QMV), this practically means most EU issues can no longer be vetoed by a single nation.

Europe continues to be dominated by two differing spectrums of thought on the future direction of the union. There are Eurosceptics such as the UK and Denmark who view the EU with suspicion due to the larger nations who dominate it, for them is it worth giving up national sovereignty in

return for being led by Brussels, but at the same time want to benefit from the Customs union and trade opportunities a united EU brings. Then there are those who want to see a strong, united and integrated political union such as France and Germany, which can manoeuvre at a global level and

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protect their national interests in a world with rising global powers such as China and India. National interests will always halt progress in the EU. Fundamentally a union of smaller states into a larger political union is a weak method of amalgamation. It lacks the characteristics found in full unification where a people become one nation. A union as a method of binding peoples and nations is always prone to political differences as it continues to recognise the sovereignty of constituent nations, this leaves itself open to penetration from the outside.

In 2010, Europe will have to deal with a resurgent Russia on its own as the US will be preoccupied in the Muslim World. The European Union will have to deal

with the realities of institutional change that the Lisbon Treaty brings with new and opposing coalitions solidifying within the union. The most important of these are the founder states of the union – Germany and France. France and Germany's acceptance of Russian pre-eminence in Ukraine and role in Europe's energy supply are not palatable to Central Europe, particularly the Baltic States, Poland and Romania. Therefore Europe's increasingly divergent interests will swell the ranks of states disenchanted with Franco-German leadership.

Global Economy

The spectacular crash of the US financial sector spread rapidly to the rest of the world economy and brought to an end one of the longest boom's in Capitalist history. Banking sectors were ripped to shreds, a number of governments fell and even Dubai crashed. At the end of 2009 America joined Japan, China, Germany and France as the world's leading economies who appeared to have emerged from recession and averted economic collapse.

Whilst it appears economic collapse has been averted, the world economy may very well be heading towards another recession. At the peak of the economic crisis many Western economies developed Stimulus packages in order to save their economies from collapse, the most infamous being the US \$1.2 trillion stimulus package in 2008. However any stimulus is a high-octane boost and a temporary measure. They are designed to kick-start stalled economies, not to fuel sustained economic growth. Hence the current growth seen in some economies are the inflated results of stimulus measures achieving their intended effect to be temporary. Government initiatives such as Car Scrappage schemes as seen in most nations, the reduction in the general sales tax in the UK and tax credits for first-time home buyers as seen in the US and France contributed to the respective 1 percent and 0.5 percent portion of the total GDP increase.³ As these programs end, so will the contribution to the economy.

The stimulus packages have driven artificial growth, once Western states remove the leg up they have provided we will need to see if the free market can function on its own two feet. However with unemployment at its highest, national production at best premature and debt still very high this turnaround is in no small part due to government stimulus measures, and is therefore most likely artificially inflated and not sustainable. For these reasons it is very likely the global economy will see a double dip or W-shaped recession. Economic growth in the coming years will be constrained due to government debt reaching colossal proportions which all still needs to be repaid.

Middle East

- Iraq

Barack Obama inherited George W. Bush's plan that called for coalition forces to help create a viable Iraqi national military and security force that would maintain central government's authority and Iraq's territorial cohesion and integrity. The apparent stability that has been achieved in Iraq has been through co-opting various war lords, tribal leaders, Iran, Syria and numerous other factions. It is these factions that have integrated themselves into America's political settlement for Iraq and through this their own interests.

The trends that need to be followed are America's attempt at a staged withdrawal through political stabilisation and the development of Iraqi security forces. Obama's election campaign pledge was to systematically reduce its presence in Iraq by around the summer of 2010, with only non-combat troops remaining. Whilst it is very likely Obama will continue to tweak such a plan, the next US election is in 2012 and the challenge the US faces is one of factionalisation. The various deals the US made to establish its political solution to Iraq has only remained intact due to the US armed forces being present in Iraq and with Iranian proxies partaking in Iraq's central government. With parliamentary elections scheduled for March 2010 it is very much possible that the US-made Iraq will crumble as various factions find the post election Iraq unpalatable. Iraq most certainly is not stabilised and America's political settlement is tentative at best.

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- Palestine

The central issue of the Middle East is Palestine and all other issues are more or less associated with it. A settlement on Lebanon is linked to the political settlement of Palestine. There is the issue of the Golan Heights which links Syria to the issue of Palestine. Since the inception of the state of Israel, American policy has been to force the Ummah to give up land for an Israeli state. Its aim has been the two-state solution whereby two states would co-exist side by side with virtual autonomy. This would isolate Israel from the rest of the region, curtail her and minimise her role in the Middle East. US policy is centred on establishing a Palestinian state to act as an instrument of containment; this

is to be achieved by establishing a host of international guarantees and by bringing multinational forces to be deployed along the borders between Israel and the future Palestinian state. All that is needed is for the US to decide upon the final borders and then impose this upon both Israel and what remains of Palestine.

The Bush government, for the most part, was engulfed in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and hence the issue of Palestine became secondary. After the Israeli defeat in the Lebanon 2006 war, Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, became deeply unpopular due to a number of scandals relating to his Mayorship of Jerusalem. The Israeli coalition-government fell apart, causing the need for early elections. This unforeseen occurrence made any progress on the two-state US plan virtually impossible. Israel took full advantage of America's concentration on Afghanistan and Iraq and constructed numerous settlements in order to unilaterally define the final borders.

Obama took positions largely in support of the hard-line Israeli government, making statements virtually indistinguishable from that of the Bush administration. His primary criticism of Bush's policy towards the conflict was that the administration had not been engaged enough in the peace process, not that it has backed the right-wing Israeli government on virtually every issue.

It is very unlikely the US will be able to move forward with the two state-solution in Obama's first term, let alone 2010. Iraq and Afghanistan will continue to preoccupy the US and Pakistan appears to be becoming centre stage of US plans. Any moves in this direction will in most likelihood be a result of attempts at taking attention away from US failures in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- **Iran**

Iran's nuclear enrichment programme is being used by various factions to protect their own interests. Iran's nuclear programme is to a large extent for domestic consumption, Ahmadinejad's support base is secured through such a policy. Israel on the other hand has used such a development to raise the spectre of a military strike in order to set back Iran's programme and give Israel the security it desires and maintain the military balance in its favour in the region. The key player in the Iran issue is the US.

The US has had numerous opportunities for regime change in Tehran, which many politicians in Washington have long coveted for. But it appears behind the scenes Iran is playing a role very different to what is making the headlines.

Rapprochement between both Iran and the US has been underway for quite some time. This was confirmed by Ahmadinejad, in his interview with the New York Times during his visit to the United Nations Summit in September 2008: *"Iran has extended its hand of cooperation to the United States on the issue of Afghanistan...and our country has given assistance to the US in restoring peace and stability in Iraq."* Iran through its proxy the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) a group created in Tehran with full backing in 1982. Abdel Aziz al-Hakim its supreme leader until recently, gathered the major Shi'ah factions to partake in Iraq's government, this left the US with an insurgency around Baghdad to only contend with. In Afghanistan, it is Iran that has secured North East Afghanistan and begun the redevelopment of the area, once again coming to America's aid in

its time of need. The US and Iran have virtually the same interests in the region and whilst there is much distrust between the two nations that goes back to the 1979 revolution, the reality in the region means Iran and the US will only cooperate further.

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The nuclear issue achieves a number of regional interests for the US. Firstly it shows Iran that the US is prepared to use other means if it does not play ball. The bellicose language until recently helped the US aggressively push its missile shield programme in face of stiff Russian opposition. Additionally, it enabled the US to enter into new security pacts with the Gulf States who view Iran as a threat to their security and to acquire nuclear energy from the US. It has also forced the Israelis into a security pact with the US.

Currently the US has engaged in what can only be described as selective engagement with the Iranian government. This has been after concluding that the current lack of sustained engagement with Iran harms US interests in a critical region of the world and that direct dialogue with Tehran on specific areas of mutual concern should be pursued.⁴

In 2010 America under the Obama administration will press ahead with normalising US relations with Iran. America will employ a series of carrots and sticks to mould the Iranian regime to implement its policies and protect US interests in the region.

South Asia

- Afghanistan

US aims in Afghanistan have been cloaked in ambiguity, after 100 000 troops, a war that has now lasted longer than WW2, after numerous surges, elections, conferences and the problem of supply lines, US aims in Afghanistan have constantly changed. Barack Obama placed Afghanistan at the centre of his foreign policy in his presidential campaign.

The US is unable to win the war in Afghanistan, but is not prepared to abandon its interests in the region. Its aims in the region were made very clear by Condoleezza Rice in 2006: *“One of the things that we did in the State Department was to move the Central Asian republics out of the European bureau, which really was an artefact of their having been states of the Soviet Union, and to move them into the bureau that is South Asia, which has Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. It represents what we’re trying to do, which is to think of this region as one that will need to be integrated, and that will be a very important goal for us.”*⁵

Like Iraq, the US is attempting a similar strategy in Afghanistan of utilising regional surrogates, corrupt warlords, and through political compromises to maintain an acceptable level of violence, whilst constructing the necessary political architecture that will protect its interests. All political settlements are useless in Afghanistan unless the Taliban are participants, as they control most of

Afghanistan's territory. The governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have confirmed meetings with the Taliban for such purposes as numerous Western politicians have called for dialogue with the Taliban. The Taliban, despite their vowed statements that they would never enter into negotiations while Afghanistan was under occupation, have not denied such meetings with the Karzai government. Abdussalam Za'eef, the former Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan in September 2008 clarified to Reuters that certain Taliban elements travelled to Saudi Arabia in September 2008 and met the Saudi King and Afghan officials.⁶

It is very unlikely any political settlement will be reached anytime soon in Afghanistan. The Taliban have the upper hand in Afghanistan through successfully intercepting US supply lines and through an insurgency the US is unable to contain. Talks with the Taliban are still in their early stages and have been painstakingly slow, due to America's occupation with the global economic crisis.

The challenge the US faces is how do you convince the Taliban to come to a political settlement when you are clearly losing? This is where Pakistan comes in.

- **Pakistan**

US aims in Afghanistan are now intricately linked to Pakistan. Similar to its strategy of using regional surrogates in the Middle East to solve its Iraq problems, it appears Pakistan is central to US plans in South Asia. In the year ahead the US needs to bring the Taliban into a political settlement – which Pakistan will be central to; but it will also use its military option to force the Taliban to this political settlement through targeted strikes against key Taliban personnel. The aim is to weaken the Taliban, so political reconciliation becomes the only practical option. Pakistan is central to this as Pakistani intelligence is realistically the only option that can provide such accurate intelligence.

However the US does not trust many elements within Pakistan's premier intelligence agency, the Interstate Intelligence Agency (ISI) and the army. This is why such elements are consistently termed 'rogue' elements. The US will continue with its various measures to pressure Pakistan into handing over such information. Current measures include working with a leadership that is completely compliant to the US and reliant on US aid. An opportunist parliament that is prepared to give the US what it wants in return for various 'carrots.'

The US has forced Pakistan, through an international campaign of propaganda, to carry out bombing campaigns in its own territory. This has resulted in a very questionable bombing campaign taking place in Pakistan where innocent civilians are regularly being killed in retaliation. Zardari has used this as a justification to target militants thus aiding the US when it has been unable to halt the

It is very unlikely any political settlement will be reached anytime soon in Afghanistan, the Taliban have the upper hand in Afghanistan through successfully intercepting US supply lines and through an insurgency the US is unable to contain. Talks with the Taliban are still in their early stages and have been painstakingly slow, due to the US occupation with the global financial crisis. The challenge the US faces is how do you bring the Taliban to a political settlement when you are clearly losing? – This is where Pakistan comes in.

insurgency it faces in Afghanistan. The US has used various carrots and sticks to get Pakistan to play the role of regional surrogate. Slowly but steadily, Washington is tightening the noose around the neck of Pakistan - civilian and military - and forcing them to make strategic choices. Major General Ashfaq Nadeem, the top commander of the 2009 Swat Valley offensive, said that most of the leadership of the Swat Valley Taliban has simply relocated to Karachi and South Waziristan.⁷ Pakistan could cut a deal with the Tehrik-i-Taliban; this would suit both parties; it would however be against US aims. The actions of Zardari's government are in no way dealing with any of Pakistan's real issues, they are implicitly placing Pakistan in an even more perilous position and weakening her in the face of US demands.

2010 will indeed be crunch time for Pakistan. Gripped by a bombing campaign, an economy in disarray, with some provinces looking for secession and an army at odds with the civilian government, Pakistan will, in all likelihood, see the US increase its presence in the region, which will include more troops and the challenge of supplying such troops. It should be borne in mind that the ultimate aim of the US in the Muslim world is to prevent the emergence of any major power; Khilafah or otherwise. US intervention in the Muslim world has never been to achieve any ultimate settlement – even though the rhetoric may have said so. US aims are to prevent stability in areas where another power could possibly emerge.

This strategy was confirmed by George Friedman of Strategic Forecasting, the US based intelligence organisation: *“The US has had the ultimate aim of preventing the emergence of any major power in Eurasia. The paradox however is as follows – the goals of these interventions was never to achieve something – whatever the political rhetoric might have said – but to prevent something. The United States wanted to prevent stability in areas where another power might emerge. Its goal was not to stabilise but to destabilise, and this explains how the United States responded to the Islamic earthquake. It wanted to prevent a large, powerful Islamic state from emerging. Rhetoric aside the United States has no overriding interest in peace in Eurasia. The United States also has no interest in winning the war outright.....the purpose of these conflicts is simply to block a power or destabilise the region, not to impose order.”*⁸

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Khilafah

The first decade of the 21st century has seen Islam take centre stage and replace Communism as the new menace in the eyes of the West. At the same time the West has spearheaded a campaign to demonise Islam. The West has taken primarily two approaches towards the re-emergence of Islam; the first is physical occupation of Muslim lands, as the Muslim rulers have failed to stem the demand for Islam. Secondly the West has begun an ideological struggle to defend its ideology through subverting Islam.

The banning of minaret construction in Switzerland, one of the most insular nations in the world has proven beyond doubt that Europe is in a state of emergency when it comes to Islam and Muslims. The banning of the Hijab, discriminatory legislation and the rise of the Far Right in Europe has done little to stem the demand for Islam from the Ummah residing in the West. The desperation by European nations to stem the demand for Islam is set to get more ideological. Until the events of 9/11 integration of the Ummah followed two distinct policies. The first was that Muslims should show their loyalty to the host nation and in return their religious needs would be catered for, this was the case in continental Europe. Britain on the other hand viewed integration as a process of offering the Muslims everything in return for their loyalty. The subsequent invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan showed the West that the Ummah held on to Islam and stood shoulder to shoulder with the wider Ummah under attack. Muslims in the West, have since the events of 9/11, held onto Islam and have in fact become more political, this development is the West's biggest nightmare. This is because any people who engage in political struggle will lead the call for their own state with their own system of governance. Whilst the Ummah is not looking to establish Islam in the West, the West view a large Muslim population with Islamic politics at its centre, alongside a more aware Ummah becoming more and more in tune with Islam - for the West the Ummah is challenging the West's way of life - Capitalism.

The West has taken primarily two approaches towards the re-emergence of Islam, the first is physical occupation of Muslim lands, this also confirms that the Muslim rulers have failed to stem the demand for Islam and hence the West is resorting to physical occupation. Secondly the West has begun an ideological struggle to defend its ideology through subvertina Islam.

The West has successfully maligned Islam as inherently violent and in need for a reformation amongst its own population. It has failed to however halt the demand for Islam from the 1.6 billion Muslims around the world, who during the invasion of Gaza in 2009 saw the open treachery of the Muslim rulers and viewed geographical borders as irrelevant when it came to the Muslims of Gaza.

The attacks on Islam will continue and the US alongside Britain will in all likelihood design a new set of strategies and plans to debate elements of Islam, bringing together recognised scholars from across the world to justify the wholesale changing of Islam. At the same time the US will continue to use the threat of al Qaeeda as a basis to launch attacks and as a basis to label Islam as violent.

In the Muslim world the treachery of the rulers has been exposed and is leading them to resort to ever more desperate measures to cling to power. The Egyptian government's ban of the niqab in universities shows the desperation of the Muslim rulers.

The challenge for the Ummah is to show the armies in the Muslim world that the Ummah wants change, so the army feels confident to make this change. The West will work to cripple all unified calls for change in the Muslim world. Whilst the gap between the US and its challengers - Russia and China, is still huge, both former communist states are offering little in the way of alternatives.

The Ummah on the other hand possesses an alternative.

Conclusions

In 2010 the world will continue to move from being a unipolar world where the US enjoyed uncontested hegemony to a more multipolar world with other powers competing with the US in different regions of the world. The debacle of Afghanistan and Iraq and the lingering effects of the global economic crisis will continue to impact US prowess around the world.

Does this signal the decline of the US as the world's superpower? America's control of the international situation since WW2 has been built upon her military strength. Today the US does not enjoy the same primacy as it did prior to its invasion of Iraq. Iraq and Afghanistan have impacted US power and depleted her resources. The global economic crisis further exacerbated America's standing in the world, as it turned towards Socialist intervention to prop up its economy. Because of such challenges America's presence in the world is being considered as overstretched and untenable. Whilst the US is faltering and despite all the setbacks it has faced the US still remains the world's dominant power, sets the world's agenda and controls the global balance of power.

As a result of America's apparent weakness the challenges stemming from her competitors have grown in size and scope and today are much stronger. China has a military industry in better shape than Russia, but it lacks the global ambition necessary to remove the US as the world's superpower. Russia on the other hand has managed to take advantage of America's weakness and strengthen itself in the Former Soviet republics. However Russia is still very far from the necessary economy and industrial base needed to pose a direct challenge to the US. For these reasons the US will remain the world's superpower for the foreseeable future even though it is faltering, because none of the other powers can directly challenge it, yet.

The US faces challenges from two potential challengers, China and Russia, however US national intelligence estimates have continued to reiterate the demand for Islam by the Islamic Ummah around the world as a threat. Without a state the Ummah will be unable to become the leading nation and American aims are all geared towards ensuring the Ummah remains without a state to challenge the US. The world is at a cross roads unlike any time in recent history as the world's superpower is visibly facing a variety of threats. As global competition intensifies, as nations compete with the US this will further preoccupy the US and will give the Ummah a great opportunity to change the status quo in the Muslim lands and establish their own state.

The Ummah's yearning for Deen has alarmed the West who view the Khilafah, Shari'ah and Ummah as a threat to Western liberal democracy. The US and Britain have attempted to reform Islam in the West in the hope of exporting this new Islam without politics and Khilafah to the Muslim world. Such a strategy has failed to achieve anything substantial as it has been unable to enlist anyone with any credibility to carry the campaign to reform Islam, those from amongst the Ummah who sold their deen have been labelled traitors.

The global work for Khilafah needs to intensify, and such work needs to be translated into exposing the role of the Muslim rulers against the Ummah and the Deen. The armies in the Muslim world need to be shown beyond any shadow doubt that the Ummah, globally, wants change and backs the army to make this happen 100%.

Notes

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