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AMERICA'S second new president of this millennium Barack Obama already has got popularity, for his naive approaches different from that of the last president, in the Muslim World. Last year move for building mosque at Ground Zero is another step in this process. President Obama defended the right of the Muslims to build a 13 storey cultural center and a mosque to be named Cordoba House. This decision raised the wave of condemnation; flurry of loath from mass people across the US. In protests Americans depicted their view points regarding the issue with racial; anti-Islamic beliefs. One placard had - 'Mosques breed terrorists' and below that 'Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims'. In fact the reactions from Americans on these issues are the indicator of their mindset on the question of Islam or the role of the US in Middle East. Surely we didn't forget that though Mr. G. W. Bush invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 he didn't loose his presidentship. He was reelected by those Americans. Hence, it can be assumed that events had been taken place for last few years by the US government in Middle East and by Americans within the US has a common trait or a common tendency of Islamophobia. Do they want to suppress Muslims or Islam in forms they find? Are the Americans Islamophobic?

What is Islamophobia? Islamophobia refers to groundless fear of and hostility towards Islam. Such fear and hostility leads to discriminations against Muslims, exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political or social processes. Basically, Islamophobia developed through centuries but such Islamophobia was unsurprising in the post-Cold War age of al-Qaeda.

A new spectre haunting the Americans

It got new momentum because US Foreign Relation Council based intellectuals like Francis Fukuyama and Samuel P. Huntington argued about a looming clash of civilization between Islam and the West and thus Islam versus America. Ideology versus state, what an asymmetrical contends!

Start of the strife: Islam vs US

When this sort of asymmetrical contends started between Islam and America? Here I shall try to mean these problems with different approach and information. Islam, of course, has long been a bogeyman for the West. In 1776- a few Muslims for the first time in the history entered into the U.S. And later, from 1880s to 1914, several thousand Muslims immigrated to the United States from the Ottoman Empire, and from parts of South Asia; they did not form distinctive settlements, and probably assimilated most into the wider society. The Sultanate of Morocco was the first government in the world to recognize the existence of an independent United States, in 1778. But it was America's naval expeditions to North Africa; 19th century Barbary Wars -- which affected Moroccan Sultanate. That's how America replied Moroccan gift! These seem to have had little impact on either side. Even the small but growing American presence in Muslim lands in the nineteenth century -- merchants, consuls, missionaries, and teachers -- aroused little or no curiosity.



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The Second World War, the oil industry, and postwar developments brought many Americans to the Islamic lands; increasing numbers of Muslims also came to America. And then the great change came, when the leaders of a wide-spread and widening religious revival sought out and identified their enemies as the enemies of God. They found Western Hemisphere as source of sin; source of infidel and Satan. Suddenly, or so it seemed, America had become the archenemy, the incarnation of evil, the diabolic opponent of all that is good, and specifically, for Muslims, of Islam.

Bernard Lewis in "The Roots of

Muslim Rage" which was published in September 1990, looked for causes behind the rise of contend between America and Islam. He writes-'Among the components in the mood of anti-Westernism, and more especially of anti-Americanism, were certain intellectual influences coming from Europe. One of these was from Germany, ... no means limited to the Nazis but including writers as diverse as Rainer Maria Rilke, Ernst Junger, and Martin Heidegger. In this perception, America was the ultimate example of civilization without culture: materially advanced but soulless and artificial; assembled or at best constructed,

not grown; mechanical, not organic; technologically complex but lacking the spirituality and vitality of the rooted, human, national cultures of the Germans and other 'authentic' peoples' like Muslims. 'German philosophy, and particularly the philosophy of education, enjoyed a considerable vogue among Arab and some other Muslim intellectuals in the thirties and early forties, and this philosophic anti-Americanism was part of the message.'

What are the outcomes?

Lewis has given a provocative cause behind the rise of contends between Islam and America. But this German propaganda logic can't undermine the more importantly root cause activities attempted by the US itself specifically after WWII. It just not only bruised against the Middle Eastern countries but constantly backed up and endorsed Israeli aggression over other Muslim countries. The US envisions the whole Middle East as a reservoir of petroleum not as a source of civilization, culture or birthplace of all great world religions. So did the Middle East based extremists view the US not as the leader of World progress but as a leader of infidels. And later history till the historic event of 9/11, 2001 is not unfamiliar to us. On that day of 9/11 mistrust, confusion, grief and agony between two groups of believers just reached the acme of unconquerable mountain.

The uneasy feelings are mutual. Americans are Islamophobic while

Muslims are antagonist toward the US activities and its existence. Every act of terrorism carried out by extremist Muslims in responses to another aggressive step by the US pushes Islamophobia to new extremes. Unfortunately, many Muslims feel helpless when it comes to arresting the scourge of terrorism posed by the likes of al-Qaeda because of the political chaos in the Muslim world, which American foreign policy has helped propel for so long. In a study in 2004 by Cornell University, it is found that about 44 percent said they believe that some curtailment of civil liberties is necessary for Muslim Americans. In fact Muslims both in and outside America are victim to the aggressive steps taken by the American government or revenge taken in response by the terrorist people. Thus American Muslims are in a dilemma and victim from both sides.

What is the future?

End of Islamophobia? Is it plausible? Neither plausible nor possible in the present context but can be appeased with a congruent effort. The Americans have to change their mindset. They have to sling out the spectre of Islamophobia from their mind. The Americans should look for the root causes behind their Islamophobia. This is not a call for the United States to relinquish its advantageous military and economic positions to appease others. The American government should work to resolve or, at the very least, refrain from aggressive attempts. Mr. Obama also should remove his façade of soft tone and need to come up with real motive for the Muslims. And should take steps boldly about Ground Zero Mosque plan implementation. It will promote image both of his government and his state to the Muslim world. The great step may morally weaken the terrorists as well.

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Pentagon seeks \$118 billion for Afghan, Iraq operations In 2012

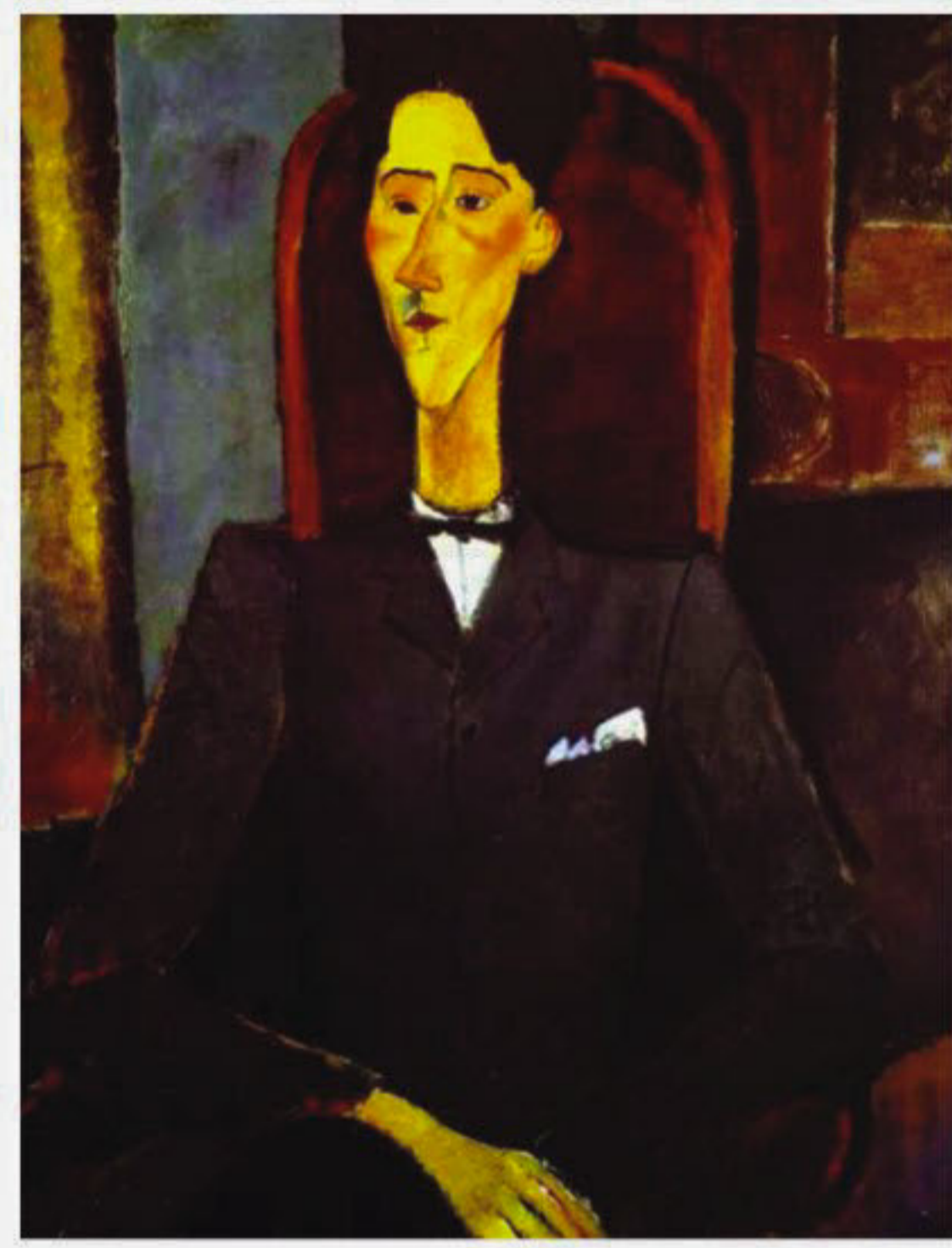
THE Pentagon has released its proposed budget for fiscal year 2012 with a request for almost \$118 billion dollars to fund military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said that proposed figure was based on there being an average of 98,250 U.S. troops in Afghanistan in 2012.

Gates said should the security situation in Afghanistan improve, U.S. forces could then be withdrawn more quickly and there "may be money that we just don't spend." The United States and its allies in Afghanistan are planning to hand over responsibility for security to Afghan forces by the end of 2014. Nearly \$13 billion of the Pentagon's request for Afghanistan is intended for training and arming Afghan security forces.

The Pentagon also noted that as part of its cost-cutting measures it is reviewing the cost of printing the 1,000-page reports it distributes to journalists and Congress.

The Army's budget presentation for 2012 cost \$3.8 million for "government manpower" and printing; the Air Force's budget presentation for 2012 cost \$2.3 million; and the Navy's \$1.1 million. There are orders to trim spending on these Pentagon reports that even Secretary Gates said are often "of questionable relevance, value, and in many cases, have rarely been read".



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"The instinct of nearly all societies is to lock up anybody who is truly free. First, society begins by trying to beat you up. If this fails, they try to poison you. If this fails too, they finish by loading honors on your head."

- Jean Cocteau (1889-1963)

UN focuses on Somalia with multi-agency piracy plan

THE UN launched a holistic new multi-agency push to tackle piracy on 3 February, with a formal action plan known as Piracy: Orchestrating the Response.

The action plan sets down six key aims including: improving the training of seafarers to avoid boardings; applying political pressure for hostage release; and providing care for hostages and their families. However, from a military perspective, the main points of the plan are to "promote greater levels of support from, and co-ordination with, navies"; increase anti-piracy information sharing and co-operation between states and other actors; and assist states in piracy-prone areas to "deter, interdict and bring [pirates] to justice".

Although notationally a global plan, the push is implicitly focused on the Horn of Africa as the current main piracy hotspot, with particular emphasis on Somalia, and as such, the plan urges a multinational, multi-agency approach to tackle the causes of piracy there, as well as taking a firmer line for the counter-piracy patrols off the coast.

The first step towards this was endorsed in late December when the UN Security Council approved a 4,000-strong uplift to the African Union Mission for Somalia, taking the force to 12,000...

Russian land purchases in Finland raise suspicions

LAND purchases by Russian citizens in the immediate vicinity of Finnish military bases have raised suspicions. Purchases have been made of properties in poor condition or that are wasteland, but adjacent to military facilities. One such example is land close by the Karelian Air Command near Kuopio.

The head of the Karelian Air Command, Ari Jussila, says that he is aware of the purchase, but is unwilling to take any position on the matter, since the Air Command's duties on the ground extend only as far as its perimeter fence. The Defense Forces has a unit charged with overseeing issues of this kind. The matter of these real estate deals was raised by Arto Luukkanen, a researcher of Russian affairs at the University of Helsinki. It is noted in his recently published book Suomi Venäjän taskussa (Finland in Russia's Pocket).

Security police keeping tabs

There has been no publicly released information linking the land purchases to espionage activities. Finland's Security Police, Supo, says that it is one of many social phenomena that it has kept tabs on and continues to do so.

The Air Force has not been very specific in comments about what can or could be observed from positions close to its bases, but it is known that flights by fighter jets and radio traffic can be monitored at a distance, even from outside the country. Arto Luukkanen himself does not consider that Finland is being targeted by especially hostile intelligence gathering, but points out that, if espionage is taking place, it is good to be aware of it.

Another perspective on the issue is that if someone wanted to carry out surveillance of bases, it could be done in a much more subtle manner. And, contrasted to Russia, Finland is a country where land has lasting value and where a building permit actually means that an owner can build something on his land.

Contemporary Situation A Tunisian-Egyptian link that shook Arab history

Bloggers lead the way

The Egyptian revolt was years in the making. Ahmed Maher, a 30-year-old civil engineer and a leading organizer of the April 6 Youth Movement, first became engaged in a political movement known as Kefaya, or Enough, in about 2005. Mr. Maher and others organized their own brigade, Youth for Change. But they could not muster enough followers; arrests decimated their leadership ranks, and many of those left became mired in the timid, legally recognized opposition parties. "What destroyed the movement was the old parties," said Mr. Maher, who has since been arrested four times.

By 2008, many of the young organizers had retreated to their computer keyboards and turned into bloggers, attempting to raise support for a wave of isolated labor strikes set off by government privatizations and runaway inflation.

After a strike that March in the city of Mahalla, Egypt, Mr. Maher and his friends called for a nationwide general strike for April 6. To promote it, they set up a Facebook group that became the nexus of their movement, which they were determined to keep independent from any of the established political groups. Bad weather turned the strike into a nonevent in most places, but in Mahalla a demonstration by the workers' families led to a violent police crackdown the first major labor confrontation in years...

'This is your country'

Then, about a year ago, the growing Egyptian youth movement acquired a strategic ally, Wael Ghonim, a 31-year-old Google marketing executive. Like many others, he was introduced into the informal network of young organizers by the movement that came together around Mohamed ElBaradei, the Nobel Prize-winning diplomat who returned to Egypt a year ago to try to jump-start its moribund political opposition...

Source: The New York Times.



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