

POLICY BRIEF

LOWY INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

FEBRUARY 2007

ANTHONY BUBALO
Program Director
West Asia
Tel: +61 2 8238 9140
abubalo@lowyinstitute.org

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA': HOW THE 'MIDDLE EAST' AND 'SOUTH ASIA' FIT INTO AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC PICTURE

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Australia's economic, political and strategic interests in the Middle East and South Asia are growing and policymakers are gradually reassessing the place of these regions in Australia's overall strategic calculus.

There is a risk, however, that in this reassessment, the two regions will continue to be viewed distinctly - a distinction that is increasingly artificial in strategic terms.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

As it incorporates the Middle East and South Asia into its overall strategic picture, Australia should view the two as a single strategic entity, ensuring that the links between the two regions are understood and factored into its strategic, political and economic analysis and policy development.



LOWY INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICY
31 Bligh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: +61 2 8238 9000
Fax: +612 8238 9005
www.lowyinstitute.org

The Lowy Institute for International Policy is an independent international policy think tank based in Sydney, Australia. Its mandate ranges across all the dimensions of international policy debate in Australia — economic, political and strategic — and it is not limited to a particular geographic region. Its two core tasks are to:

- produce distinctive research and fresh policy options for Australia’s international policy and to contribute to the wider international debate.
- promote discussion of Australia’s role in the world by providing an accessible and high quality forum for discussion of Australian international relations through debates, seminars, lectures, dialogues and conferences.

Lowy Institute Policy Briefs are designed to address a particular, current policy issue and to suggest solutions. They are deliberately prescriptive, specifically addressing two questions: What is the problem? What should be done?

The views expressed in this paper are entirely the author’s own and not those of the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

'Is this not an affront to the English Language, of which the Prime Minister is a master, in that the dictionary says that 'middle' is that which is equidistant from extremities? What is the extremity on this side from which the Middle East is equidistant?'

Sir Francis Fremantle, British Parliament, July 10, 1941

Australia's strategic horizon is being stretched westward to the Middle East¹ and South Asia². Primarily, this has been the result of major Australian military deployments in support of the United States in Afghanistan since 2001 and in Iraq since 2003. Notwithstanding the controversy over Iraq, both of these deployments fit a longstanding bipartisan tradition of Australia's sending military forces in support of alliance interests, particularly in the Middle East. Yet there are good reasons why the strategic significance of the Middle East and South Asia to Australia will outlive these specific force commitments. The continuing importance of these two regions to the United States, the rise of India as a regional if not a global power, growing global dependence on Middle East energy (and South Asian transit routes for the energy), terrorism and proliferation, among other things, make it likely that these regions will remain a significant part of Australia's overall strategic picture.

There are already signs that Australian policymakers are rethinking the place of the Middle East and South Asia in Australia's overall strategic calculus. The 2005 'Update' to the 2000 Defence White Paper declared in

unprecedented – though probably exaggerated – terms that 'Australia's vital interests [were] inextricably linked to the achievement of peace and security in the Middle East'.³ There is bipartisan support for a continuing Australian role in Afghanistan, and growing recognition of India's rising economic and strategic power. As Prime Minister Howard noted on his visit to India in 2006, once divergent geo-political views have now been replaced by shared strategic interests, including countering terrorism and maritime cooperation in Southeast Asia.⁴

The purpose of this policy brief is to make a contribution to what is likely to be a gradual and fitful official reassessment of the Middle East and South Asia's strategic importance to Australia over coming years. That is, to argue that as Australian policymakers incorporate these regions into the country's strategic calculus they would do well to view them collectively rather than separately. Of course, this is not a new idea. While the definition of what constituted the Middle East has varied and been debated – as the quotation above reflects – at one time it was seen to comprise everything from the Crimean Sea to the eastern borders of colonial India.⁵ It was only with World War Two, the partition of the subcontinent and the serious exploitation of the Gulf's oil assets that the two regions came to be viewed separately. The argument that will be put forward here is that, for a range of strategic, political and economic reasons, a revival is in order.

The name chosen here for the Middle East and South Asia, seen together, is 'West Asia'. In part, this is because it simply makes more geographic sense when the regions are viewed

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING ‘WEST ASIA’

from an Australian perspective. Nevertheless, this is not an effort to expunge the ‘Middle East’ or ‘South Asia’ from Australia’s international policy vocabulary. The virtues or otherwise of calling this region ‘West Asia’ are less important than the idea that it increasingly comprises one strategically coherent region. Moreover, it is precisely the themes and issues that link these two regions – in particular, the role of the United States, terrorism, energy security, the rise of new powers, proliferation, Islam, and democratisation – that will make ‘West Asia’ an important part of Australia’s strategic landscape for the foreseeable future.

The role of the United States

The United States has long viewed the Middle East (with the exception of Israel and Turkey) and South Asia (with the exception of India) within a single strategic framework. Central Command (CENTCOM), established in 1983, covers an area from Egypt and the Horn of Africa to Central Asia and Pakistan.⁶ In practice, however, Washington’s consistent strategic focus has tended to be on the Middle East, while its interest in South Asia has waxed and waned with that region’s periodic crises. The terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001 were, however, a watershed for how the United States viewed the broader region. It forced upon US policymakers what is likely to prove a sustained focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan in addition to the Middle East, and was a key component in the development of a new strategic relationship with India.

Indeed, since 9/11 the United States has become a hub through which key and emerging strategic issues in West Asia have become

interconnected. The war in Iraq, for example, makes the balancing act performed by President Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan between his support for the US alliance and domestic critics of it all the more difficult. The perception that the United States is losing that war also emboldens a resurgent Taliban, who are already taking note of and increasingly using the Iraqi insurgency’s most effective tactic – suicide bombing – a practice hitherto relatively unknown in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Washington’s evolving strategic partnership with New Delhi connects India to the counter-terrorism fight in the Middle East, to maritime security cooperation in the Gulf and its approaches and – if at times a little more diffidently – US efforts to pressure Iran over its nuclear program.⁷

Terrorism

Terrorism has been a key factor in the revival of West Asia as a single, coherent strategic entity. Historically, materially and ideologically, West Asia has been and will continue to be the crucible for contemporary Islamist terrorism. Islamism’s prototypical movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, was founded in Egypt in 1928. Its first radical ideologue, Sayyed Qutb, was inspired by his South Asian counterpart Abu Ala Maududi, who argued for the newly founded Pakistan to be an Islamic state rather than just a state of Muslims. It was in Iran in 1979 that Islamism had its first victory. It was the Afghan *jihad* in the 1980s and 90s that transformed Egyptian, Palestinian, Algerian and other Middle Eastern Islamists who flocked there to fight the Soviets, shifting their focus from efforts to overthrow the impious rulers of their own states to an

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

outwardly directed radicalism. The *jihad* in Afghanistan also gained state sponsorship from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which saw support of Islamists as a useful tool against their regional rivals, Iran and India, respectively.⁸ And it was amongst these radicalised foreign veterans of the Afghan *jihad* that al-Qaeda eventually emerged.

Al-Qaeda, its partisans and imitators continue to receive funding and support from sympathisers throughout West Asia and have found safe havens in the ungovernable regions of Iraq and Pakistan. This includes, in the latter case, al-Qaeda's senior leadership, which appears to be rebuilding its operational capacity along the Afghan-Pakistan border, and becoming more active in the Middle East (and not just in Iraq).⁹ Iraq has become the jihadist's principal physical and rhetorical battleground against the West, though West Asia's other unresolved conflicts – notably the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Kashmir – also provide grist for Islamist terrorism's propaganda mill. In the case of Kashmir, in particular, a resolution of that conflict could have major flow-on effects on terrorism in the rest of West Asia. It would undercut the logic that has, in part, driven a continuing alliance of convenience between the Pakistani military and intelligence services and Islamist movements whose influence in areas such as the North West Frontier Province undercuts Islamabad's ability to disrupt regional and international terrorist networks.¹⁰

Energy security

Terrorism might ultimately (and hopefully) prove a transitory strand of West Asia's

strategic interconnections. Energy security, however, is likely to prove more enduring. The Gulf has historically been at the centre of the international energy equation. This is unlikely to change. According to the International Energy Agency's reference scenario, the Gulf's share of global oil production will increase from just under 30 per cent in 2004 to almost 40 per cent in 2030.¹¹ Central Asia, on West Asia's periphery, is also, however, becoming more important, both in terms of oil, but especially with regard to natural gas. And with much of this oil and gas now heading to East Asia, West Asia is not just becoming a more important source for global energy, its South Asian end has also become a major region of transit for that energy.

Japan, China and South Korea import respectively 90, 40 and 80 per cent of their oil from the Middle East. This is likely to grow in coming years; the US Energy Information Agency predicts China's oil consumption will grow by an average annual rate of 3.8 per cent out to 2030, more than twice the global average.¹² All of it passes out of the Gulf by way of South Asian sea lines of communication, or potentially overland if the fraught politics of pipeline construction can be resolved. For example, if it is ever built, the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline could one day supply China. Thus not only will India's continued rise as a major maritime power impact (positively) on the security of oil supplies, but the politics of South Asia will also remain a key component of Asia's growing dependence on Middle East energy.¹³ India, with its growing demand for oil, has also become a major part of the global energy security equation and is in growing competition with China for equity in Middle East and

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING ‘WEST ASIA’

African oil fields (though at times they have also cooperated).

The rise of new powers

In coming years, Washington’s regional predominance in West Asia is likely to be challenged on a number of fronts. Driven by energy security interests, China is playing a greater role, Russia is reasserting itself, and new coalitions of regional and extra-regional states are emerging, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.¹⁴ India’s rise as a regional power will, in particular, give an enduring coherence to West Asia as a single strategic region. Indeed, seeing a convergence of interests, Washington has encouraged a growing Indian role; New Delhi came very close to sending a division – some 17,000 combat troops – to serve in Iraq. But India also has its own interests to pursue. The Gulf has become its second largest export market and is home to some six million Indian expatriates worth more than 20 billion US dollars in remittances. It has signed defence cooperation and counterterrorism agreements with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and conducted naval exercises in the Gulf. Meanwhile, Israel has become India’s second largest source of defence imports after Russia and a partner in joint military projects, notably the long-range Barak naval surface-to-air missile system.

The developing Indo-Saudi relationship could emerge as a key strategic partnership in West Asia, particularly if the Kashmir issue is removed as an obstacle (see Islam section). Saudi Arabia is now India’s largest single source of oil. While India will never displace

the United States as Saudi Arabia’s principal strategic partner, given growing regional disquiet about the US in the region, Riyadh probably sees advantages in internationalising the Gulf by quietly encouraging other outside powers to play a greater part. From New Delhi’s perspective a strategic partnership with Saudi Arabia offers possible curbs on funding and on support for Islamic militancy. Of course, India’s sense of having a broader regional role is not limited to West Asia; the Indian government has, for example, signalled its intention to play a greater strategic and economic part in East Asia. It will probably find, however, that it has already been beaten to the punch there by China, particularly in Southeast Asia, making it more likely that it will focus any regional power ambitions westward.

Proliferation

Outside of North Korea, West Asia is the international community’s central proliferation concern. The region contains three nuclear weapons states – Israel, India and Pakistan – with a fourth – Iran – a strong possibility of joining the nuclear weapons club in coming years. Moreover, all of these are linked. Pakistan’s nuclear program was primarily a result of its strategic competition with India. But the know-how generated by Pakistan’s nuclear program leaked into West Asia via the A.Q. Khan network. The former head of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program illicitly traded nuclear know-how to Iran and Libya (before it disbanded its nuclear program) and possibly other states in the region. Meanwhile, Iran’s nuclear program, in part a function of its strategic competition with Israel, is also

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING ‘WEST ASIA’

generating fear – and possibly new proliferation problems – amongst neighbouring Gulf States.

In direct response to the Iranian program the GCC announced at the end of 2006 that it had commissioned a study to establish a ‘common program in the area of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes’. One concern is that Saudi Arabia might implement its own crash program for a nuclear deterrent in response to the Iranian program by accessing Pakistani know-how. There are suspicions that Saudi Arabia was one of a number of unnamed regional countries that benefited from the A.Q. Khan network, in addition to Iran and Libya.¹⁵ Saudi Arabia has also been a long-time and generous aid donor to Pakistan, including by some accounts to the Pakistani nuclear weapons program.¹⁶ But even if the Pakistani leadership is unwilling to trade its country’s nuclear secrets in future, there remain issues about the security of the nuclear program, which (along with poorly secured nuclear materials in parts of the former Soviet Union) remains perhaps the greatest risk in terms of a nuclear or radiological device slipping from state control into the hands of regional terrorist groups.

Islam

Islam, as the region’s predominant religion, also links the Middle Eastern and South Asian ends of West Asia. Spiritual, intellectual, political and even strategic ties centred around a shared Islamic identity have indeed long tied the Middle East to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Since partition, Pakistan, in particular, has leveraged the causes of Islam and Islamic solidarity – particularly in its dispute with India over Kashmir – to attract material support

from Gulf states, notably Saudi Arabia. What is new is the revival of once strong historical ties between the Gulf and the state with the single largest Muslim population in West Asia – India. As already noted, there are sound economic and strategic reasons why this has been occurring in recent years. But should the current, and by some accounts promising, efforts by New Delhi and Islamabad to resolve the Kashmir dispute succeed, it will remove a major obstacle to an even deeper transformation of India’s relations with Islam’s heartland.

Nevertheless, the Islamic connection between the Middle East and South Asia also carries potentially negative implications – and not just in terms of terrorism. Current anxiety about a growing rift in the Middle East between Islam’s majority Sunni and minority Shi’ite sects is overstated, and more about the traditional rivalry between those powers supporting the status quo (such as Sunni Egypt and Saudi Arabia) and those seeking to challenge it (notably Shi’ite Iran). Nevertheless, the fact that this rivalry has taken on a sectarian hue could turn fears of a Sunni-Shi’ite sectarian confrontation into a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹⁷ And if such a sectarian conflict does indeed occur, it will be played out not just in Lebanon and Iraq – and elsewhere in the Gulf where significant Shi’ite populations exist – but also in Pakistan, which has a history of major sectarian violence, and in Afghanistan and India (around 20 per cent of whose Muslim population is Shi’ite).

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

Democratisation

A democratic deficit also, for the most part, unites West Asia, with notable exceptions at its periphery (Israel, India and Turkey). Like Islam, democracy has strategic dimensions in West Asia. For a brief period the Bush Administration vigorously pursued democratisation in the region in the hope that it would, among other things, reduce the terrorist threat to the West. Yet the few democratic elections that were held also underlined that democracy might bring to power forces inimical to American interests. Most regional states have strong Islamist oppositions, many of which prospered in democratic and semi-democratic elections, such as those in Pakistan, the Palestinian territories, Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt.

Nevertheless, the absence of democracy has contributed to political violence and terrorism by limiting the avenues for peaceful political expression in West Asian societies. There have been positive processes of democratic change under way in the region, notably in Turkey, where the ruling 'post-Islamist' Justice and Development Party has become an example for other mainstream Islamist movements in West Asia. There were also very brief moments, in the immediate aftermath of Iraq's historic elections, where regional scepticism was fleetingly replaced by a cautious embrace of new possibilities for regional political change. As one leading Arab intellectual noted to the author at the start of 2005, whatever misgivings the region had had about the US invasion, it had nevertheless disturbed – perhaps positively – the region's stagnant politics.¹⁸ Any such optimism about the American venture in Iraq is long gone, but such

sentiments nevertheless underline the possibility that political change in one part of West Asia will have ripple effects around the region.

West Asia and Australia

If the above provides the main elements around which a single strategic region is emerging in West Asia, they also underline, to differing degrees, why this region is likely to be an enduring part of Australia's strategic horizons. Of course, West Asia will never rival East Asia or the Pacific in Australia's list of strategic priorities. Nor is Australia ever likely to act independently in West Asia in the way it does in Southeast Asia or the Pacific. But neither of these facts lessens the need for Australia to find a more appropriate place for the Middle East and South Asia in its strategic calculus – and more importantly – to understand the policy implications that flow from such a reassessment.

As it has been historically, Australia's relationship with West Asia will continue to be primarily driven by its key alliance relationship with the United States. Even strategic failure in Iraq is unlikely to see the United States withdraw, militarily or politically, from the Gulf – a region that in 2005 provided some 18.5 per cent of US net oil imports.¹⁹ Washington has already signalled that as it reconsiders its policy in Iraq it is placing greater pressure on a resurgent Iran. Afghanistan will require sustained political, economic and military support from the United States and its allies for many years to come, as will Pakistan. And in India the United States is developing a major new strategic partnership.

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

On the Australian side, the Iraq war has tested the hitherto largely bipartisan support for participation in US military operations in West Asia. But it has not fundamentally altered the strategic centrality of the alliance, nor has it ruled out future participation in US military operations (illustrated by continued bipartisan support for the stabilisation mission in Afghanistan). Moreover, if as is likely, Iraq proves to be an aberration in terms of US policy in West Asia, the terms of any future requests for military support will probably sit more comfortably within the parameters that saw Coalition and Labor governments commit Australian Defence Force personnel in the past. Given the likelihood that Australian forces will return to West Asia in future, it makes sense to sustain the strategic and political networks that have developed as a result of current deployments.

Future Australian support for the alliance in West Asia cannot and should not be seen exclusively in military terms, however. One consequence of the Iraq war is that America's 'soft power' in the region has diminished – in some cases dramatically. According to the Pew Global Attitudes project, the percentage of the population holding a favourable opinion of the United States has slipped to 30 per cent or less in Egypt and Pakistan and 15 per cent or less in Jordan and Turkey in 2006.²⁰ Insofar as a stabilising American influence in West Asia remains an Australian strategic interest, Australia could and should be making greater contributions in this regard by strengthening its own ability to assess regional developments, through its own diplomatic network in the region (less encumbered by the security restriction placed on its American counterpart),

through contacts with regional political leaders and public diplomacy efforts.

In strategic terms Australia's relationship with West Asia can be seen as akin to its relationship with Northeast Asia (even if the latter will always far outstrip West Asia's economic importance to Australia). The North Korean nuclear issue or the potential for conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan, for example, contain major implications for Australia's security and national interests. Yet while Australia would never act independently on these issues, its capacity to support allies is enhanced by the bilateral ties it has with key regional countries such as China and Japan and its extensive diplomatic, defence and intelligence network in the region.

Australia's strategic interest in West Asia will, however, also grow in addition to its alliance interests and commitments. Terrorism will continue to underpin the need for greater security and intelligence cooperation with key West Asian countries, as underlined by the case of Faheem Lodhi, convicted on charges of being the local connection of a planned terrorist attack in Australia by the Pakistani Lashkar-e-Toiba. West Asian issues, notably the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and more recently the war in Iraq, will continue to provide fodder for the terrorist propaganda and recruitment machine in Australia and its region. And jihadist texts from West Asia continue to flow regularly into Southeast Asia, providing ideological inspiration for and justification of acts of violence.

Moreover, as the foregoing discussion has underlined, West and East Asia are not just

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING ‘WEST ASIA’

opposite ends of a shared land mass. Globalisation has reinvigorated the historical tendency of Muslims in Australia’s neighbourhood to look to the Middle East and South Asia for religious advice and dress codes. The countries in East Asia most dependent on Middle East oil are also Australia’s three largest export markets globally – and much of that oil passes through sea lines of communication in Australia’s close region. India, potentially an important strategic partner for Australia in East Asia on issues such as maritime security, terrorism and counter-proliferation, could be similarly important in West Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral. Finally, these strategic and political interests will continue to be underpinned by economic opportunities for Australia in West Asia, a region that has contained some of Australia’s fastest growing export markets over the last decade.

Policy implications

To some degree a view of West Asia as a single strategic region is being reflected in Australia’s international and strategic policymaking structures. There has, for example, been considerable overlap between Australia’s two major military operations in West Asia, Operation Catalyst (in Iraq) and Operation Slipper (in Afghanistan). And in an internal restructure of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Middle East, Southern and Central Asia (along with Africa) were incorporated into the same division. But more fundamental changes than these will be required to fully incorporate West Asia into Australia’s strategic picture. Indeed, in large part what is required is a change in mindset

rather than any particular organisational reordering – although this is not unimportant.

This is not to suggest that absent a view of West Asia as a single strategic region, Australian interests might suddenly be imperilled. But Australia might lose important policy opportunities. For example, current East Asian initiatives aimed at promoting energy security seem deficient without including both India – an energy competitor for China in West Asia and a country with a critical role to play in securing maritime or land transport routes for energy – and major West Asian energy suppliers like Saudi Arabia. Indeed, such cooperation could also extend into maritime security cooperation both in the approaches to the Gulf, around the Indian Ocean littoral and the maritime approaches to Southeast Asia.

The same applies to counter-terrorism cooperation. Rightly, the focus of Australia’s limited counter-terrorism resources has been on Southeast Asia where the threat is most immediate. Nevertheless, there has been a gradually expanding Australian effort toward greater counter-terrorism cooperation in South Asia and to a lesser extent the Middle East – partly in recognition of both the historical and ongoing links to the terrorist threat in Southeast Asia. By and large, however, that effort has tended to focus on each region separately. Given the limited resources available it might in fact be more useful to pursue a more coordinated approach to West Asia as a whole, focusing on key West Asian countries like Egypt, India, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and perhaps even promoting trilateral or multilateral cooperation where possible.

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

What will certainly be lost, by continued separate approaches to the Middle East and South Asia, moreover, is a fuller understanding of strategic and political developments in West Asia and the implications for Australia's own more immediate region. It is not possible, for example, to fully understand the strategic implications of India's economic rise, including the potential for greater rivalry with China, without taking into account India's growing energy dependence on the Middle East. Similarly, it is difficult to assess the flow of extremist ideas from Pakistani religious schools to Southeast Asia without considering the financial support some of these schools receive from the Middle East; or to weigh the relationship between Islamist movements and democracy in Indonesia without considering the Turkish model; or to confine any consideration of the strategic implications of Iran's possible acquisition of nuclear weapons to the Middle East or the Gulf. For these and other reasons a new perspective is required.

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

NOTES

¹ The Middle East is defined here as Egypt, Sudan, Israel and the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen.

² South Asia is defined here as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

³ Department of Defence, *Australia's National Security: A Defence Update 2005*. Commonwealth of Australia, 2005.

⁴ Prime Minister of Australia, Address to business luncheon, Diwan-I-Am Room, New Delhi, 6 March 2006.

⁵ For the origins and usage of the term 'the Middle East' see Roderic H. Davison, 'Where is the Middle East', *Foreign Affairs* 38(4) 1960 pp 665-675 and Clayton R. Koppes, 'Captain Mahan, General Gordon and the origins of the term 'Middle East'', *Middle Eastern Studies* 12(1) 1976 pp 95-98.

⁶ CENTCOM countries are Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, Yemen.

⁷ See C. Raja Mohan, 'India and the balance of power', *Foreign Affairs* 85(4) 2006 pp 17-32.

⁸ In the case of Saudi Arabia the support for everything from the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan to Islamic charitable organisations worldwide was driven in no small part by its rivalry with Iran, which following the 1979 revolution challenged the Saudi states leadership position in the Islamic world. Likewise successive Pakistani governments have seen Islamist movements as a means of pressuring India on Kashmir and securing its interests in Afghanistan. For an excellent discussion of this see Steve Coll, *Ghost wars: the*

secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001. New York, Penguin Press, 2004.

⁹ See for example M. Mazzetti and D. Rohde, 'Al-Qaeda chiefs are seen to regain power', *New York Times* 19 February 2007.

¹⁰ See International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: Madrasas, extremism and the military*. Asia Report No. 36, 29 July 2002 and International Crisis Group, *The Mullahs and the military*. Asia Report No. 49, 20 March 2003.

¹¹ International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2005: Middle East and North Africa Insights* 2005, p 90.

¹² International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2006*, table A4.

¹³ The future of Afghanistan is a case in point. It has long been seen as a key transit country for a gas pipelines linking Central Asia to India (via Pakistan) and possibly from there to East Asia. But plans for such a pipeline, which emerged in the early 1990s, were constantly disrupted by Afghanistan internal instability.

¹⁴ The SCO currently includes Russia, China Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.. Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia are currently observers but may in future become full members.

¹⁵ See for example E. Pan *Nonproliferation: the Pakistan Network Council* on Foreign relations website available at:

<http://www.cfr.org/publication/7751/nonproliferation.html>

¹⁶ See for example G. Baghat, 'Nuclear proliferation: the case of Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Journal* July 2006 and S. Harrison 'The forgotten bargain: non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament', *World Policy Journal* 23(3) 2006 pp 1-13.

¹⁷ This seems, for example, to have occurred in Iraq, where people have become reliant on their religious communities (and in some cases tribal allegiances) not because of any heartfelt belief in sectarian

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

superiority but simply for security. Under Saddam Iraq's sectarian differences, while undoubtedly present, were much less strong.

¹⁸ Interview with Sadiq al-Azm, Damascus, 3 February 2005.

¹⁹ Failure in Iraq may, of course, reinvigorate the isolationist tendency in popular American attitudes toward foreign policy. But there is still a strong consensus amongst the Republican and Democratic foreign policy elite about US interests in the Middle East. Reflecting that consensus to a degree, the Baker-Hamilton Report on Iraq (Iraq Study Group) argued, for example, that even as the United States should be withdrawing from Iraq it needed to be re-engaging in efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

²⁰ Pew Global Attitudes Project, Poll 2006.

POLICY BRIEF

REINVENTING 'WEST ASIA'

ANNEXURE



WEST ASIA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anthony Bubalo is Program Director, West Asia, at the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

Before joining the Lowy Institute, Anthony was an officer in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for some thirteen years. He has served in Australian diplomatic missions in Saudi Arabia and Israel, and was Senior Middle East Analyst with the Office of National Assessments from 1996 to 1998. From 2002 to 2003 he was a Director on the Australian government's Iraq Task Force. Immediately prior to joining the Lowy Institute, Anthony was DFAT's Senior Speechwriter.

He is the author of Lowy Institute Paper 05: *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia*.

LOWY INSTITUTE

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

WWW.LOWYINSTITUTE.ORG