

# Islamic tourism: Rethinking the strategies of tourism development in the Arab world after September 11, 2001.

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## **Islamic Tourism: Rethinking the Strategies of Tourism Development in the Arab World After September 11, 2001**

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**In lieu of** an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

### **Islamic Tourism:**

**Rethinking the Strategies of Tourism Development in the Arab World After September 11, 2001**

*Ala Al-Hamarneh and Christian Steiner*

## Introduction

The global impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on U. S. policy are obvious, in shape and rhetoric, if not in direct causality. References to the "war on terrorism" in the context of the Iraq war and occupation and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict show that causality is indeed a matter of broad interpretation by the world's single super power. The "War Against Terror," according to the prominent American philosopher Richard Rorty, is a doctrine that can be manipulated by the government of the United States to legitimize any action it may take in the future.<sup>1</sup> The September 11 attacks also affected world tourism, due to the global role and position of the U. S. as well as the global character of the Al-Qaeda terror network. However, the predicted wide-ranging collapse of the tourism industry in Arab countries after the attacks did not take place. Depending upon their existing tourists markets and orientations, Arab countries were differently affected by the fallout. The spontaneous reaction of Arab and Muslim tourists, who spent their holidays in the region and avoided European and North American destinations, saved many national tourism industries from collapse. The tourism industry in the Arab World responded to the negative publicity caused by the terrorist attacks with within-region promotions and marketing tactics. In addition, the potential of developing "Islamic tourism" received more serious discussion. These positive local changes have taken place in a larger global context of externally manipulated violence and instability, as well as anti-Arab, anti-Muslim racism.

The war against the Al-Qaeda terrorist network and the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan succeeded in destroying the most important Al-Qaeda strongholds and in enforcing a regime change in Kabul. However, some major goals of the military action have still not been achieved: eliminating the Al-Qaeda terror network or capturing Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. Terrorist acts in Tunisia, Yemen, and Pakistan in 2002, and in Saudi Arabia in 2003, have shown that the terrorist network is alive, active, and functioning.

On the one hand, the military reaction of the U. S. was understandable and acceptable to some in the Arab World. We must not forget that many Arab societies have been victims of so-called "Islamic" terrorism over the last two decades. However, four different factors weakened support for U. S. government actions in the Arab and Muslim worlds. First, the Bush administration declared the strategy of war as the only possible action against terrorism. The military actions themselves (bombing cities, using cluster bombs, alliances with non-democratic and regressive groups and countries) were brutal and disproportionate to the threat. "It was like destroying Palermo in order to eliminate the Mafia," according to Gore Vidal.<sup>2</sup> The Bush Administration never had a comprehensive strategy that addressed the socio-economic and political roots of terrorism. Second, the Bush administration's rhetoric ("crusade," "axis of evil," "you're either with us or you're with the terrorists," "we are the Good," "civilized world," "Operation Infinite Justice") was a disservice to rational public opinion. On some occasions, the religious rhetoric of George W. Bush reminded his opponents of the "Islamic" fundamentalists.<sup>3</sup> Third, newly implemented registration and migration laws, as well as control measures in the U. S., were widely criticized as being repressive, illiberal, and even racist. The liberal press in Europe likened it to the McCarthy era in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Fourth, influential governments, organizations and personalities called for alternative political strategies towards solving conflicts in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, and the rest of the world.

The appeal by renowned thinkers Juergen Habermas and Jacques Derrida is only one of the most impressive examples. They called for a new European foreign policy emancipated from the U. S., based on common European values shown in the streets during the anti-Iraq war rallies, and oriented against the "hegemonic unilateral" foreign policy of the U. S.<sup>5</sup> Stories and pictures of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim incidents in the U. S. **[End Page 173]** government (circulated worldwide...

## Islamic Tourism: Rethinking the Strategies of Tourism Development in the Arab World After September 11, 2001

ALA AL-HAMARNIJI & CHRISTIAN STEINER

### Introduction

The global impact of the September 11 terrorist attacks on U.S. policy and culture, security and identity, if not on direct security. References to the "war on terrorism" in the context of the Iraq war and occupation and/or Palestinian-Israeli conflict, those that certainty is indeed a source of great inspiration by the world's single super power. The "New Agenda Project" committee to the prominent American philosopher Richard Rorty is a doctrine that can be embraced by the government of the United States to legitimize any action it may take in the future.<sup>1</sup> The September 11 attacks also affected world tourism, the entire global market and position of the U.S. as well as the global character of the Al-Qaeda terror network. However, its practical strategic collapse of the tourism industry in Arab countries after the attacks did not take place. Denouncing open and closed tourism markets and orientation, Arab countries were differently affected by the 9/11. The spontaneous reaction of Arab and Muslim countries, who spent their budgets in the region and avoided Europe and North American destinations, saved many markets, tourism and services from collapse. The tourism industry in the Arab world responded to the negative publicity caused by the terrorist attacks with public relations promotional and marketing tactics. In addition, the potential of developing "Islamic tourism" received more serious attention. These positive local changes have also placed in a larger global context of increasing international violence and instability, as well as anti-Arab and-Muslim racism.

The war against the Al-Qaeda terrorist network and the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan, launched by destroying the main terrorist Al-Qaeda stronghold and in entering a regime change in Kabul. However, some major global and military actions have still not been achieved concerning the Al-Qaeda terror network or capturing Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar. Terrorist acts in Tunisia, Yemen and Pakistan in 2002, and in Senegal in 2003, have shown that the terrorist net-

work is alive, active, and functioning.

On the one hand, the military reaction of the U.S. was undeniably the most visible to some in the Arab World. We must not forget that many Arab countries have been victims of so-called "Islamic" terrorism over the last ten decades. However, four decades (3000's weeks) of support for U.S. government actions in the Arab and Muslim world from the Bush administration declared the "war on terror" as the only possible action against terrorism. The military actions themselves (forming of military coalitions, alliances with other democratic and republican groups and countries) were aimed and disproportionate to the threat. "It was like destroying Palermo in order to combat the Mafia" according to Gora Vidali. The Bush Administration revealed a comprehensive strategy that addresses the socio-economic and cultural issues of international tourism, the Bush administration's rhetoric "war on terror" basis of civil "public order with us or peace with the terrorists" "war on the Ground" ("war on world"), "Operation Infinite Justice" was a case study to most of public relations. On some occasions, the religious rhetoric of George W. Bush reminded his opponents of the "Islamic" for international Third world people treated organization and repression, as well as control measures in the U.S., were widely criticized as being repressive, abusive, and over reach. The liberal press in Europe depicted it as the McCarthy era in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Tourist, national governments, organizations and personalities called for actions for political and social development, especially in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, and the rest of the world.

The arrival of economist Johannes Habermas and Joseph Derdik is a lesson of the most impressive examples. They called for a new European foreign policy (unimpaired from the U.S.) based on common European values shown in the streets during the anti-Iraq war rallies, and oriented against the "imperialist and global foreign policy of the U.S. besides and beyond of its Arab and Muslim incidents by the U.S.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.newagenda.org/>, accessed 11/11/06



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