

WAR

IN THE GULF

Palestinian-born Professor Saber Elaydi of the mathematics department was born in Beersheba, Palestine in 1943. In 1948 he was forced by Israel to move to a refugee camp on the Gahza Strip, where he resided until he moved to Kuwait in 1967 to teach. In 1973, he came to the United States to the University of Missouri where he earned his doctorate in mathematics. He went home to Kuwait in 1978 and returned to teach in the United States in 1983. Elaydi came to Trinity in 1989.

For Elaydi more than most Americans, the war in the gulf was not a black and white issue. Because of his diverse background, Elaydi has relatives and friends in Kuwait, the occupied territories and Saudi Arabia.

Because of this emotional connection to the region, Elaydi said he had very mixed feelings on the Persian Gulf war. The math professor felt the United Nations should have left the sanctions in place longer before beginning a military campaign. But of even greater impor-

tance to Elaydi was the "double-standard" he saw at work in the Middle East.

He said Israel's aggressive stance against the Palestinians was just as bad

as Iraq's aggression against Kuwait. But where the United States waged war on Saddam Hussein, "it has been rewarding Israel with financial aid and arms sales while Israel was suppressing Palestinians."

"If there is no seriousness in pursuing Palestinian/Israeli sentiment now, American soldiers will have died in vain," Elaydi said. "The underlying problem is still there."

Elaydi has no immediate plans to return to Kuwait as it is "in bad shape." Several of Elaydi's professor/friends in Kuwait fled the country when the Iraqi invasion began. He met many of them at a math convention in San Francisco earlier in the semester.

Professor Graciano Diecke-Assad of the engineering science department also felt an emotional tie to the Middle East during the war. Assad's mother is of Lebanese descent and his father is Palestinian. He wanted to clearly define what he saw as "Arab:" a person is Arabic if he or she was born in the Arab world, or had relatives born there, and could speak Arabic. He also wanted to clarify the notion of Arab religions. While the majority of the Middle East is Moslem, many are Christians as well, said Assad.

Assad is second generation Arab-Mexican, a combination which he says "combines the best of both worlds" in terms of tradition and outlook on life.

"Because of my background, I sympathize with the Arab world, but it doesn't mean I have to go back," Assad said. "I was not in support of the attack. I would have preferred peaceful solutions, more time for sanctions. I don't agree with Saddam's action, but from my standpoint as a human being and not an Arab, it was a matter of human life, whether Iraqi or American."

With the onset of the war the United States went into a panic about the possibilities of Arab terrorism. U.S. News and World Report noted on Jan. 28 that "the White House has cancelled visitor tours, security has been tightened on Capitol

Hill and the FBI has stepped up investigations of Arab-Americans with suspected ties to Iraqi-backed terrorist organizations."

Senior Tarik-El-Tablawy, an Egyptian native, who this semester received his U.S. citizenship, went home for Christmas, but upon his return was stopped for an extended security check at the airport.

"They were lumping Arabs all in one category," he said. Tablawy came to the U.S. four years ago to study at Trinity and he still has family in Egypt.

Sophomore Mary Maloof, a third generation Lebanese-American, said she

wanted to clear up some misperceptions about Arab Americans.

"A lot of Arab Americans are among the most patriotic and conservative people I know. At least my relatives are," Maloof said. "They deeply appreciate what they've been blessed with here and would be mortified to even think of doing or contributing to anything out of

line with American foreign policy, even in the Middle East or their ancestral country. They don't question American foreign policy motives."

Maloof added that their might be some suspicion on the part of the FBI because Arab Americans are by nature "very family oriented" and "tend to

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—Professor Sussan Siavoshi, political science

keep close ties back home.' However she said no "law-abiding" Arab-American should have to worry.

Maloof, who has diplomatic aspirations, feels her seeking work with the government might be hin-

dered because of a "possible bias against Arab-Americans."

Iranian-born professor Sussan Siavoshi of the political science department said the majority of Arab-Americans were not happy with the decision to go to war. She felt the Arab-Americans with relatives in Arab countries not aligned with the international coa-

lition "must have felt a dual loyalty, like having two children that become enemies and later try to kill each other."

Siavoshi said she fears that since neither society, (American or Middle Eastern), is familiar with the ways of the other, this misunderstanding will cause grave consequences in the Middle East.

Misperceptions, Siavoshi said, have sprung mainly from the base rhetoric displayed in both the United States and Iraqi media "designed to boost the mood" of the society.

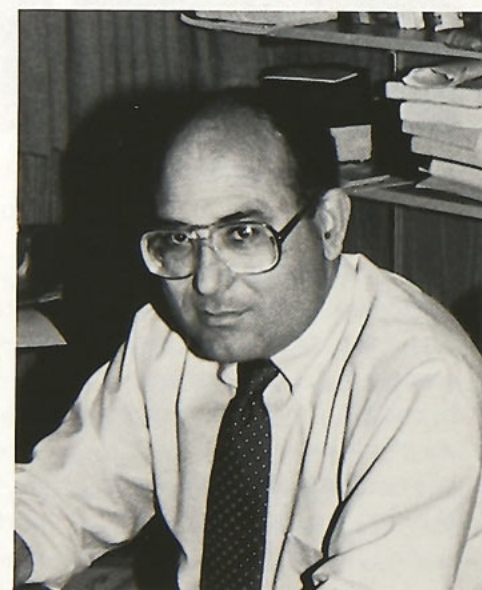
Siavoshi added that the Iraqis had little choice in choosing Hussein.

"They don't like Saddam; It's not that they consider him a good guy. He became, by default, the only strongman in the area that used certain rhetoric to address some of the very deep grievances of these people...such as unwarranted intrusions by Westerners."

Siavoshi said she feels the "Arab spirit is crushed for the time being," and that much sought after dialogue on the Palestinian issue is not on the American agenda.

In the aftermath of this brief but devastating war, many Americans celebrate the homecoming of the soldiers and are thankful of the lives that were spared. But for Arab-Americans with loved ones in the Middle East, the war is far from over.

By JULIE POUCHER



Professor Saber Elaydi,
mathematics department

WAITING IT OUT

AT TRINITY