

Hijacking Islam: An Analysis of Positive Representations of Islam and
Muslims in the U.S.

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Saeide Mirzaei

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Advisor: Associate Professor Nathaniel Mills
Co-advisor: Associate Professor Siobhan Craig

November 2022

© Saeide Mirzaei, 2022

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to my advisor, Prof. Nathaniel Mills, without whose invaluable support and treasured advice, I would have been completely lost. I am also deeply grateful to my co-advisor, Prof. Siobhan Craig, for encouraging me and offering me constructive feedback. I would also like to thank Professors Rachel Trocchio and Ryan Allen for their kind help and support. Lastly, I am grateful to my family and friends (especially Andrew Pann) for their patient and undying support throughout my doctoral studies.

Abstract

In this dissertation, I analyze positive representations of Islam and Muslims in pre- and post-9/11 legal, political, and public discourses. I focus on the prisoners' civil rights cases of the late 20th century, the *9/11 Commission Report*, and the presidential discourse since Jimmy Carter as representative data. I argue that the attempt to distinguish Islam from “terrorism”—or other “violent ideologies”—has led to the formulation of discursive constructs that frame Islam as a corruptible religion that can be easily perverted, hijacked, and weaponized. This conceptualization of Islam legitimizes policing Muslim-presenting people and justifies dictating the true meaning of Islam to Muslims. I conclude that positive representations of Islam and Muslims undermine our efforts to counter Islamophobia because they create an illusion of acceptance for “good Islam” and obscure the underlying Islamophobic ideology that operates below the threshold of our notice.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: The Dichotomous Construction of the Nation of Islam and “orthodox” Islam.....	13
Chapter Two: Pervertible Islam and the Politics of Victimhood in the <i>9/11 Commission Report</i>	51
Chapter Three: Hijacking Islam, An Analysis of the Presidential Discourse since Jimmy Carter.....	91
Conclusion	172
Bibliography	179

Introduction

Since the 9/11 attacks, Islamophobia has gained more popularity among scholars of various disciplines as a topic worth academic research and debate. Broadly speaking, these studies have focused on (1) defining Islamophobia and cataloging its causes and various manifestations; (2) outlining the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim and Muslim-presenting individuals and communities; and (3) offering proposals for countering the Islamophobic ideology. Many of these studies have examined representations of Islam and Muslims in the public sphere, showing that while negative representations openly characterize Muslims as violent, uncivilized, and anti-modern, the “good Muslim” rhetoric (positive representations) reinforces negative stereotypes and conceptualizes Muslims as forever suspects and Islam as a civilizational threat.¹ However, this body of literature has not yet offered a thorough analysis of how positive representations of “orthodox” Islam operate below the threshold of notice to preempt all efforts of countering Islamophobic ideologies. In other words, what do all positive representations of “orthodox” Islam—across legal, political, and public discourses—have in common that helps reinforce a subliminal Islamophobic ideology?

In this dissertation, I examine the imperceptible ways in which positive representations of “orthodox” Islam and Muslims in (1) the pre-9/11 legal discourses, (2)

1. See for example, Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004); Andrew Shryock, ed., *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

the widely read *9/11 Commission Report*, and (3) the presidential discourse since Jimmy Carter have jointly contributed to the construction and continuation of an Islamophobic ideology that naturalizes anti-Muslim policies and practices as common sense. This approach enables me to explain why counternarratives to Islamophobic discourses have been minimally successful. I show that, for decades, the U.S. state, presidents, courts, and media have conceptualized Islam as a corruptible creed by framing Islamic literature as unusually open to a wide range of interpretations. As an easily perverted faith, Islam thus poses a constant security threat because the risk of Muslims misinterpreting their own religious texts is deemed to be both high and perpetual. This delineation of Islam transforms the religion into a matter of national security, enabling state actors to legitimize an array of legal and political measures aimed at containing Islam and Muslims in the U.S. and abroad. I refer to this rationalization of policing Islam and Muslim communities as Islam's "interpretational risk." I argue that the construction of Islam's interpretational risk has occurred below the threshold of public notice, but it has entered the public consciousness, where it has been operating subliminally to fuel American Islamophobia and to thwart counter-Islamophobic discourses.

To achieve these goals, I will offer a nuanced analysis of (1) the positive representations of "orthodox" Islam, compared to the negative representations of African American Islam, in the pre-9/11 legal discourse; (2) the continuities between the pre-9/11 and the post-9/11 positive representations of Islam and Muslims in the *9/11 Commission Report*; and (3) the disconnect between Islamophobic state policies and practices and the positive representations of "orthodox" Islam in pre- and post-9/11 presidential discourse.

I will show continuities and disjunctions across these discourses to extract the underlying ideologies.

I. What's Islamophobia: A Brief Overview

As the endless and laborious debate over the past few decades has shown, scholars and activists are yet to reach an agreement on using the term “Islamophobia” or replacing it with one of the many coined alternatives. These attempts range from etymological analyses that problematize the use of the term “Islamophobia” to proposals for substituting it with other terms.² This debate, as Nathan Lean has noted, has been unavoidable because it is difficult to pinpoint the “underlying motivator” for Islamophobia. Racism, politics, social factors, and individual biases (against the religion of Islam or Muslim-presenting people) all seem to play a role. Lean believes that the scholarly dispute over what term best signifies the multi-faceted prejudice against Muslims and Muslim-presenting people is futile because it is “the society, not scholars, [that] usually decide what words they use to identify and describe such prejudices, and usually the matter is simply one of what sticks.”³ He declares “Islamophobia” to be “the clear victor” in this case.⁴

2. Some of these alternative terms include anti-Muslim prejudice, anti-Islam prejudice, anti-Islamism, anti-Muslim bigotry, and anti-Muslim hate.

3. Nathan C. Lean, “The Debate Over the Utility and Precision of the Term ‘Islamophobia,’” in *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia*, ed. Irene Zempi and Imran Awan (London: Routledge, 2019), 11-17.

4. Ibid.

Research by other scholars substantiates Lean's declaration of the winner. For example, Saher Selod and Steve Garner have shown that the term Islamophobia appeared in the titles of over 1,212 books, magazines, and newspaper articles between 1980 and 2014, with most of these usages (1,121) appearing in newspaper articles.⁵ As Lean notes, for over two decades, the term "Islamophobia" has been operational in the public sphere. The society has made its choice. Lean proposes abandoning the quest for a perfect term, in favor of pursuing more urgent objectives such as understanding how the Islamophobia industry operates on an ideological plane. In this dissertation, while I agree that the term "Islamophobia" is not ideal, I will follow Lean's lead and refer to the complex phenomenon that fuels the anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiments, policies, and practices in the United States as "Islamophobia."

In his 1985 article, "Orientalism Reconsidered," Edward Said argued that the "hostility towards Islam" was rooted in the Orientalist ideologies of difference and exclusion. He referred to this phenomenon as "Islamophobia."⁶ However, it was only

5. Steve Garner and Saher Selod, "The Racialization of Muslims: Empirical Studies of Islamophobia," *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2014): 9–19.

6. Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Race and Class* 27, no. 2 (1985): 1–15. Note that the debate over the origin of the term Islamophobia has not been settled yet. For example, some scholars have traced back the concept to the works of French Orientalist scholars in the early 20th century. Others have identified a Spanish historian, Americo Castro, as the first scholar who used the term in his 1968 comparative study of anti-Semitism and anti-Islam sentiments in Spain. For more in-depth discussions of the

after the term was used in the 1997 Runnymede Trust report that “Islamophobia” entered the everyday language of the public and gained popularity in academic circles. The report defined Islamophobia as “unfounded hostility towards Islam” leading to “unfair discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities... [and] the exclusion of Muslims from mainstream political and social affairs.”⁷ Islamophobic rhetoric, according to the report, characterized Islam as monolithic, static, primitive, sexist, violent, conducive to terrorism, and inferior and antithetical to Western and democratic values.

Over the years, different advocacy groups and scholars have added more keywords and complexities to the definition of Islamophobia. For example, in 2010, the European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion defined Islamophobia as a “form of intolerance and discrimination.”⁸ As Iqbal Zafar observes, despite their differences, all

early usages of the term, see Fernando Bravo López, “Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 4 (2011): 556-573; Ismail Adam Patel, *The Muslim Problem: From the British Empire to Islamophobia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). For a comprehensive history of the term “Islamophobia,” see Iqbal Zafar, *Islamophobia: History, Context and Deconstruction* (New Delhi: Sage, 2020).

7. The Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (1997), 4, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/islamophobia-a-challenge-for-us-all>.

8. Lokman Balkan, “A Proposed Definition of Islamophobia.” *European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion*, October 8, 2010, <https://www.emisco.edu/a-proposed-definition-of-islamophobia/>.

definitions of Islamophobia point to (1) negative sentiments towards Islam and/or Muslims and (2) negative consequences for Muslim and Muslim-presenting individuals and communities.⁹ Zafar categorizes different theories of Islamophobia based on the “negativities” associated with the concept. These negativities include racism, prejudice, hostility, terror, fear, otherness, hatred, violence, threat, dislike, and anti-Islam sentiments.

Some definitions of Islamophobia emphasize a fear of Islam and Muslims that generates hatred and dislike. For example, Tahir Abbas (2004) defines Islamophobia as a fear of Islam and/or Muslims.¹⁰ Jose Pedro Zúquete (2008) argues that a perception of Islam as monolithic and hostile leads to a fear of the religion and its followers. He describes Islamophobia as “a widespread mindset and fear-laden discourse in which people make blanket judgements of Islam as the enemy of the west.”¹¹ Andrew Shryock (2010) argues that by designating Muslims as the enemy, Islamophobes convert fear and hatred into phobia of Islam and all Muslims.¹² Erik Bleich (2011) defines Islamophobia

9. Iqbal Zafar, *Islamophobia: History, Context, and Deconstruction* (New Delhi: SAGE, 2019), 41.

10. Tahir Abbas, “After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism and the State,” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, no. 3 (2004): 26– 38.

11. Jose Pedro Zúquete, “The European extreme-right and Islam: New directions?,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13, no. 3 (2008), 321– 344.

12. Andrew Shryock, *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy*

as articulations of “indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims,” including fear, hatred, and dislike.¹³ Faith Uenal (2016) defines Islamophobia as “an irrational or exaggerated fear of Islam as a religion.”¹⁴

Prejudice has also been a common component in definitions of Islamophobia—often associated with fear, hostility, and hatred. For example, Edward Said (1975) conceptualized Islamophobia as a Eurocentric hostility and prejudice against Islam and Muslims.¹⁵ John V. Tolan (2002) shows that fear and extreme prejudice have led to hatred and hostility against Muslims and Islam.¹⁶ Other common definitions of Islamophobia associate it with racism or race-based hate. For example, Halliday (1999) argues that Islamophobia can best be described as hate or racism rather than fear

and Friend (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

13. Erik Bleich, “What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? Theorizing and Measuring An Emerging Comparative Concept,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 12 (2011): 1581.

14. Faith Uenal, “Disentangling Islamophobia: The Differential Effects of Symbolic, Realistic, and Terroristic Threat Perceptions as Mediators Between Social Dominance Orientation and Islamophobia,” *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 4, no. 1 (2016): 68.

15. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin, 1978).

16. John Victor Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

(phobia). He proposes “anti-Muslim hate” or “anti-Muslim racism” instead.¹⁷ In his later work, Halliday (2003) further postulates that Islamophobia is a “practical hatred” of Muslims rather than a psychological fear of Islam.¹⁸ Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood (2009) hold that Islamophobia is a form of cultural racism.¹⁹ Tyrer (2010) defines Islamophobia as the racialization of Muslims based on their “degree of difference from the white.”²⁰ Pnina Werbner (2013) argues that the effects of Islamophobic discourse are racist, in that they legitimize racist policies and practices.²¹ Finally, Sayyid (2014) posits that Islamophobia is “a form of racialized governmentality... a series of interventions and classifications” targeting Muslims and the religion of Islam.²²

17. Fred Halliday, “Islamophobia Reconsidered,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 5 (1999).

18. Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

19. Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, “Refutations of Racism in the ‘Muslim Question,’” *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3-4 (2009): 335-354.

20. David Tyrer, “Flooding the Embankments: Race, Bio-politics and Sovereignty,” in *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, ed. by Vakil Sayyid, Salman Sayyid, and Vakil, Abdool Karim (London: Hurst, 2010), 104.

21. Pnina Werbner, “Folk Devils and Racist Imaginaries in a Global Prism: Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism in the Twenty-First Century,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 450-467.

22. Salman Sayyid, “A Measure of Islamophobia,” *Islamophobia Studies Journal*

In this dissertation, the term “Islamophobia” refers to what Chris Allen (2010) describes as “an ideology, similar in theory, function and purpose to racism and other similar phenomena, that sustains and perpetuates negatively evaluated meaning about Muslims and Islam.”²³ Islamophobia ideology, Allen continues, influences social actions and interactions, shapes and determines “understanding, perceptions and attitudes in the social consensus—the shared languages and conceptual maps—that inform and construct thinking about Muslims and Islam as Other.”²⁴ In other words, the Islamophobia ideology operates by generating a static and monolithic Muslim identity and ascribing to it negative immutable attributes that are in turn deployed to justify negative sentiments and discriminatory policies and practices that target Muslims and Muslim-presenting people. Like all other ideologies, Islamophobia (1) is not a monolithic and static construct, (2) is not linear and one-dimensional, and (3) primarily operates below the level of human consciousness. Underpinning the Islamophobic discourse “exists a highly fluid, protean and largely inconsistent phenomenon” that, Allen believes, has not yet been adequately captured.²⁵ In this dissertation, I hope to bring some of these underlying discourses to the level of my readers’ consciousness.

II. Chapter Outline

In Chapter One (“The Dichotomous Construction of the Nation of Islam and

2, no. 1 (2014): 19.

23. Christopher Allen, *Islamophobia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 190.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid, 210.

“Orthodox” Islam in Prisoners’ Civil Rights Cases of the Late 20th Century”), I analyze the Nation of Islam prisoners’ civil rights cases of the late 20th century. Following months of research in legal archives and compiling over 600 pages of raw data and notes, I uncovered a hidden ideological construct that seems to run across a vast array of legal documents, including House and Senate hearings and reports, FBI reports, court cases, and legislative acts. I selected the prisoner’s civil rights cases of the late 20th century as representative data. Analyzing these court cases, this chapter argues that, in the government’s legal battles against the Nation of Islam, state and federal courts departed from the historical construction of “orthodox” Islam as a radical political system with ambitions for world domination. Instead, state and courts framed “orthodox” Islam as an apolitical, peaceful, and sincere faith that served as a rhetorical foil to Black American Islam, which was in turn delineated as violent, hateful, and politically motivated. In the process, Islamic scripture was framed as uniquely open to (mis)interpretations and thus readily manipulated by extremists with anti-democratic, anti-Christian, or anti-American agenda. Islam, in turn, was framed as easily pervertible and thus posing a permanent security threat (what I have termed an “interpretational risk”).

In Chapter Two (“Pervertible Islam and the Politics of Victimhood in the *9/11 Commission Report*”), I analyze the *9/11 Commission Report* to examine its departures from and continuities with the pre-9/11 legal discourse about “orthodox” Islam and Muslims. As a widely read historical account of the 9/11 attacks and the events leading up to them, the report launched fervent public debates about U.S. national security, with Islam and the Muslim world at the center of most inquiries. An analysis of the report, thus, can help shed light on the public discourse on Islam and Muslims after the 9/11

attacks. As Oz Frankel has argued, the report was universally circulated to provide the public with “mass education” that the commissioners presumed was much needed. “The *Report*’s compilers,” Frankel also points out, “pride[d] themselves on the attention, even *voice*, their account [gave] to the perpetrators of the attacks.”²⁶ Whether and to what extent the attackers and other Muslims—who were expected to collectively bear the responsibility of the attacks—were given a “voice” in the report is up for debate. I will show that the report’s seemingly positive rhetoric—even its attempts to give “voice” to Muslim attackers and to the “Muslim world”—constructs Islam as a pervertible ideology and Muslims as forever suspects, misguided by a myth of victimhood and guilty by signifier.

In Chapter Three (“Hijacking Islam: An Analysis of Presidential Discourse Since Jimmy Carter”), I delve into the National Archives and the American Presidency Project archives to examine the political discourse about Islam and Muslims in the U.S. since the early 20th century. As discourse analysts have reached no consensus on what constitutes political discourse, I will follow the tradition of scholars who have generally focused on “the discourses of (institutionalized) political elites.”²⁷ Moreover, I have selected

26. Oz Frankel, “The 9/11 Commission Report: History Under the Sign of Memory,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, ed. Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 654.

27. François Randour, Julien Perrez, and Min Reuchamps, “Twenty Years of Research on Political Discourse: A Systematic Review and Directions for Future Research,” *Discourse and Society* 31, no. 4 (June 2020): 428-443,

presidential discourse because, as some scholars have shown, presidential discourse has the power to enter the nation's collective unconscious and control how Americans view themselves and their country, by constructing a national identity against the un-American other. I will examine how U.S. presidents have framed Islam and Muslims as "un-American" or less American, in their public statements since the late 20th century. More specifically, I analyze a wide range of presidential statements at news conferences, in public speeches, at Iftar dinners, in messages to the Muslim world, and at various ceremonies. This chapter shows that the pre- and post-9/11 legal discourse about "orthodox" Islam (discussed in the previous chapters) flowed into the post-9/11 governmental rhetoric. I then show that even seemingly positive presidential discourse frames Islam as a religion that can be easily hijacked and adopted into national and partisan interests, making Islam a constant political threat and justifying the U.S. state's Islamophobic domestic and foreign securitization policies and practices.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, I discuss the continuities between discourses discussed in previous chapters and show that, for many decades, Islam has been conceptualized as a pervertible creed that poses a constant security threat. I will also examine the implications of my findings for discussions around defining and countering Islamophobia.

Chapter One

The Dichotomous Construction of the Nation of Islam and “Orthodox” Islam in Prisoners’ Civil Rights Cases of the Late 20th Century

I. Introduction

“Here [in prison] their smoldering hatred against the white man builds up to the point of explosion,” wrote sociologist Eric C. Lincoln in his 1961 book, *The Black Muslims in America*.¹ According to Lincoln, despite having reached critical levels, this caged-up racial hostility was not about to erupt instantaneously. Luckily, there was a poppet valve: “Muhammad's ministers are trained to prevent any such release.”² Like all other valves, the Muslim minister valve functioned as a channeling device. It contained prisoners’ volatile energy and controlled the pressure and timing of its release. “Muhammad’s ministers,” Lincoln thought, were “adept at channeling aggression and hostility into a kind of leakproof reservoir for *future use*” (emphasis added).³ Whatever “future use” Lincoln believed Muslim ministers had in mind for what he identified as a pressurized cache of incarcerated anti-white wrath and rancor, his portrait of the Nation of Islam (NOI) and of the black conversion to Islam was not entirely foreboding and grim.

1. Eric C Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 114.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Naming prisons as the most fertile recruiting grounds for the NOI, Lincoln noted that inmates “invariably improv[ed] in behavior and outlook” upon conversion.⁴ This he attributed to the reforming powers of the NOI. Muslim inmates were instructed to “respect constituted authority” and to refrain from violence against prison staff and correctional officials.⁵ Writing in 1961, before the prisoners’ civil rights movement was in full swing, Lincoln praised the NOI for succeeding where the state had failed in “rehabilitating certain categories of social outcasts,” but he also sounded the alarm on what he perceived as a potential threat growing and lurking inside the country’s prison system.⁶ In fact, Lincoln’s dualistic rhetoric and ambiguous conclusions proved invaluable in the carceral state’s legal battles against the NOI prisoners during the late 20th century.

Primarily led by the incarcerated NOI Muslims across the U.S., the prisoners’ civil rights movement resulted in a series of court rulings that

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 115. The federal government shared Lincoln’s concerns about the growing numbers of the NOI converts inside prisons. For example, a 1960 FBI report declared that the “organization” had taken over prisons in multiple states and that the NOI prisoners were harassing prison and state officials by litigating in courts. The report added that the inmates were not interested in Islam as a religion but as a means for challenging the authority of white prison officials by causing racial conflicts and using prison discord as “a propaganda weapon to stir up” blacks outside prisons.

considerably improved prisoners' rights and changed the prison administration landscape. Through litigation, prison organizing, and message building, Muslim inmates campaigned for the freedom of religious expression and other constitutional rights. This unprecedented movement laid the legal groundwork for extending protections and rights to prisoners who were hitherto viewed as "slave[s] of the State."⁷ A growing body of research from multiple disciplines has examined the origins, mechanisms, and outcomes of the prisoners' civil rights movement.⁸ Scholars have shown that in response to the

7. *Ruffin v. The Commonwealth*, 62 Va. 790, (Va. 1871).

8. For research on prisoners' civil rights cases, see Christopher E. Smith, "Black Muslims and the Development of Prisoners' Rights," *Journal of Black Studies* 24, no. 2 (1993): 131–46, which examines circumstances and results of the 1960s litigations; Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement* (California: Stanford University Press, 1994), which recounts a comprehensive history of the California prison movement between 1950-1980; Dan Berger and Toussaint Losier, *Rethinking the American Prison Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2018), which offers insight into the late 20th century litigations in the context of the American prison movement to the present time; Dan Berger, *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), which examines the 1950s-1980s NOI prisoners' litigation in the context of the black freedom movements and black political activism; Zoe Colley, "'All America Is a Prison': The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners, 1955–1965," *Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 2 (May 2014): 393–415, which examines the rise of

“Black Muslim threat” both in and outside prisons, the state deployed a variety of strategies, many of which, in Caldwell’s words, “emerged from institutionalized forms of Islamophobia.”⁹ From criminalizing Black conversion to Islam, surveillance of

the NOI in the American penal system; Malachi D. Crawford, *Black Muslims and the Law: Civil Liberties from Elijah Muhammad to Muhammad Ali* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015) which examines the legal encounters between the NOI and the state; James B. Jacobs, “The Prisoners’ Rights Movement and Its Impacts, 1960-80,” *Crime and Justice* 2 (1980): 429–70, which studies the prisoners’ litigation movement as a sociopolitical movement, focusing on the impact of the inmates’ legal victories on prison management, public opinion, and the prisoners’ self-esteem; Will Caldwell, “‘A Sword of Wrath, the Executor of Sinister Adventures’: Domestic Islamophobia and International Black Muslim Solidarities during the Cold War,” *Journal of Africana Religions* 7, no. 1 (2019): 172–79, which studies FBI’s repression of the “Black Muslims” during the Cold War era; Edward E Curtis, “The Black Muslim Scare of the Twentieth Century,” in *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*, ed. Carl W. Ernst (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 75–106, which examines what Curtis terms “the Black Muslim Scare” and the FBI surveillance of and disinformation campaigns against the NOI during the Cold War; and Khaled A. Beydoun, “Islam Incarcerated: Religious Accommodation of Muslim Prisoners before *Holt v. Hobbs*,” *University of Cincinnati Law Review* 84, no. 1 (2016): 99-152, which examines the NOI prison movement as a missing chapter of the legal history of Muslims in the U.S.

9. Will Caldwell, “A Sword of Wrath,” 172.

the NOI leaders and prisoners, and disinformation campaigns, to delegitimizing the NOI as a bona fide religion in courts and in the public eye, the state sought to control social and legal discourses about the NOI. In this pursuit, the state found unlikely allies in the “orthodox” Islamic groups in the U.S. (immigrant Muslims) who claimed monopoly rights over interpreting the Islamic literature and asserted ownership of the Islamic faith.

In his seminal treatise, *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State*, Garret Felber examines what he terms “the dialectics of discipline,” which he describes as the constant “interplay between Muslim responses to state repression” and the carceral state’s “new modes of surveillance, punishment, and *ideological knowledge production*.” (emphasis added)¹⁰ Felber notes that in the ideological campaign against the NOI, state officials acted as “producers of knowledge” and meaning about Islam and Black Nationalism, which helped shape local and national policies and steered public opinion in the state’s desired direction.¹¹ Felber further argues that courts “should not be studied solely for legal proceedings and rulings,” but as “arenas of struggle.”¹² In this chapter, I answer Felber’s call by approaching the courts in prisoners’ civil rights cases as sites of ideological struggle and knowledge production. I will critically analyze the state’s

10. Garret Felber, *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020), 2.

11. Ibid., 9.

12. Ibid., 5.

binary conceptualization of the NOI and what the state recognized as “orthodox” Islam to show how the state weaponized Islamic orthodoxy against the NOI and black and Muslim political activism.¹³

Although scholars have drawn attention to many similarities between the post-9/11 war on terror and the state’s responses to the NOI during the Cold War era, the complex discursive strategies and clandestine ideological maneuvers by which the state weaponized “orthodox” Islam against the NOI have not yet been fully examined and exposed. An analysis of the prisoners’ civil rights cases can help us better understand the oppositional construction of the NOI and “orthodox” Muslim identities and the implications of these discourses for black and Muslim communities. Furthermore, it can help reveal continuities and inconsistencies in the state’s Islamophobic discourses, while also pointing to the inherent contradictions in the state’s legal arguments against the NOI inmates. Moreover, as Khaled Beydoun has argued, “[n]on-black Muslim Americans largely regard the radical political voices and

13. In the prisoners’ civil rights cases, the state officials and courts defined “orthodox” Islam or the “Mohammedan” Islam as Islam of the 7th century Arabia, but as used in courts, “orthodox” Islam referred to a particular Islamic sect (Sunni Islam) most commonly practiced by a growing number of recent Muslim immigrants from Muslim majority countries. Henceforth, I will use “orthodox” to refer to the same Islamic sect, not because I believe in the accuracy of the terminology (Islam is more orthopraxical than orthodoxical), but in order to retain the meaning of Islamic orthodoxy as understood by the state and courts.

traditions of black Muslims, whether the NLM of today or the Nation of Islam of yesterday, as obstacles toward the normalization and assimilation that offers greater proximity to (what-dominated) state power and societal acceptance.”¹⁴ By showing that the state’s seemingly positive formulation of “orthodox” Islam in civil courts during the late 20th century, which helped justify the suppression and surveillance of the NOI Muslims, was not as ideologically innocuous (for non-NOI Muslims) as it appeared, I hope to emphasize the importance of coalition building and sustained solidarity between non-black and black Muslims in the charges against Islamophobia and anti-black racism.

In this chapter, I will critically analyze a number of prisoners’ civil rights cases (chosen for their representative rhetoric), focusing on the state officials’ and courts’ invocation of “orthodox” Islam to frame the NOI as a threat both within and without prisons.¹⁵ I argue that, despite what some scholars have said, the state or federal government (i.e., the prison officials and other state actors named as defendants in these court cases) deployed a positive image of “orthodox” Islam (as opposed to a negative one) to abnormalize social identities intersecting at black and Muslim, which in turn

14. Khaled Beydoun, *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 168.

15. In these court cases, one or more prisoners brought a lawsuit against prison officials vis-à-vis the state or the federal government that run the prison in question. In this chapter, when I use the word “state,” I’m referring to the defendant (the state or the federal government) in these civil cases.

served a multi-fold purpose, allowing the state to: (1) act as an arbiter of knowledge about Islam, black and Muslim political activism, and black conversion to Islam; (2) discipline the study and practice of Islam in prisons and justify any similar measures taken outside prisons; (3) suppress the NOI Muslims—racialized as black—within and without prisons; (4) demand unconditional support and submission from all Islamic sects—racialized as non-black; and (5) justify suppression and surveillance of black and Muslim communities.

In other words, I argue that although the state's vilification of the NOI was at least partially predicated upon characterizing "orthodox" Islam as a peaceful, sincere, and inclusive faith, Islam at large was framed as posing what I term an "interpretational risk." Islamic literature was portrayed as unusually open to a wide range of interpretations, making Islam readily adaptable to terrorist causes. This construction allowed the construal of Islam as a ticking ideological bomb, without using explicitly discriminatory language. By creating an illusion of relative acceptance for immigrant Islam, the state's surface strategy of designating "orthodox" Islam as "good Islam" secured the state an alliance with immigrant Muslim communities against the "Black Muslim" threat. To achieve this goal, the state politicized "black Islam" and depoliticized "orthodox" Islam. Depoliticized Islam could then be weaponized both against the NOI and other Islamic sects viewed by the state as undesirable.

II. Islam vs. Islam in Prisoners Civil Rights Cases

One of the earliest prisoners' civil rights cases of the late 20th century was *In re Ferguson* (1961).¹⁶ Jesse L. Ferguson and several other NOI prisoners at Folsom State Prison petitioned to the Supreme Court of California for a *writ of habeas corpus*, seeking privileges afforded to other religious groups (Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Christian Scientists), including uninterrupted religious meetings, prayer room, visits from religious leaders, possession of Muslim literature, and freedom to discuss their religious doctrines. The state argued that the NOI was not a religion, but a front for an anti-white hate group. In response to the petitioners' cruel and unusual punishment claims, the defense declared—as it did in many future cases—that the restrictions enforced on the plaintiffs' liberties guaranteed “the health, safety, welfare and morals of the prison.”¹⁷

The petitioners' counsel noted that the Muslims' “violation of prison rules [had] been directly caused by the prison official's refusal to accord the Muslims the status of a religious group, and ... if the Muslims were accorded the same privileges as other religious groups in prison, the cause of the friction would be removed.”¹⁸ But the state insisted that the inmates' “hostility” towards the prison staff was solely based on their rejection of “the authority of members of the white race.”¹⁹ The inmates' infractions, the

16. *In re Jesse L. Ferguson et al. on Habeas Corpus*, 55 Cal.2d 663, (Cal. 1961).

17. *Ferguson*, 756.

18. *Ibid.*, 758.

19. *Ibid.*, 756.

state posited, were occasioned only by their “black supremacist” and anti-Christian ideologies. Judge White concurred, noting that the inmates’ noncompliance with the prison staff’s demands had roots in their doctrines of “solidarity and supremacy of the dark-skinned races,” their “reluctance to yield to any authority exercised by ‘some one [who] does not believe in [their] God,’ and their conviction that their religion was superior “over other religions.”²⁰ As such, the inmates’ “beliefs and actions” presented “serious danger” to the prison security and peace, and the restrictions placed upon their liberties, discriminatory or not, were reasonable exercises of the prison officials’ disciplinary powers.²¹

20. *Ferguson*, 754 and 757.

21. *Ibid.*, 758. Here, Judge White invoked the hands-off doctrine. Originally adopted by federal courts in 1866, following the U.S. Supreme Court’s declaration in *Pervear v. Massachusetts* that prisoners forfeited their constitutional rights upon lawful incarceration, this doctrine precluded the federal government from interfering with state incarceration policies and practices. See *Pervear v. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 72 U.S. 475, (U.S. 1867). In 1961, the Second Circuit Court in *Pierce v. La Vallee* declared that the NOI inmates, claiming religious persecution, were entitled to seek legal remedy in federal courts. See [Pierce, et. al. v. J. E. La Vallee, 293 F.2d 233, \(2d Cir. 1961\)](#). Nevertheless, it was not until 1963 that the *Pervear* ruling and along with it the hands-off doctrine was abolished by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Jones v. Cunningham* (1963). The Court ruled that state prisoners could file orders of *habeas corpus*, challenging “the legality of a given restraint on liberty” and of their incarceration.

Clearly, some of the propositions and assumptions of the state's argument in *Ferguson* correspond with the centuries-long orientalist and American orientalist stereotypical portrayals of Muslims—racialized as Arab or Middle Eastern—as fanatical, anti-white, anti-Christianity, and aggressive. A great example of American orientalist representation of Islam can be found in Wayne McVeagh's dichotomous conceptualization of Islam and Christianity in his 1901 address at the hall of the House of

See [*John R. Jones v. W. K. Cunningham, Jr.*, 371 U.S. 236, \(U.S. 1963\)](#). Even after *Jones*, some courts showed reluctance to review prison rules and regulations. In *Sostre v. McGinnis* (1964), Judge Hays wrote, “no romantic or sentimental view of constitutional rights or of religion should induce a court to interfere with the necessary disciplinary regime established by the prison officials.” See [*Martin X. Sostre v. Paul D. McGinnis*, 334 F.2d 906, \(2d Cir. 1964\), 909](#). Following *Jones*, Thomas Cooper, an Illinois State Prison inmate and a recent convert to the NOI, brought an action to the Northern District Court of Illinois, alleging religious discrimination. The court dismissed his petition for failure to state a claim. Cooper appealed to the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. See *Cooper v. Pate*, 324 F.2d 165, (7th Cir. 1963). The appellate court rejected his claim, arguing that incarceration brought about deprivation of *most* constitutional rights. Then in 1964, Cooper brought his case to the U.S. Supreme Court, petitioning for a *writ of certiorari*. See [*Cooper v Pate*, 378 U.S. 546 \(U.S. 1964\)](#). In a per curium decision, the Court reversed the previous courts' judgments, granted Cooper's petition, and reinstated his lawsuit. This pivotal decision, which affirmed that the Bill of Rights applied inside prisons, spurred a litigation movement led primarily by the incarcerated NOI Muslims.

Representatives. Addressing an audience of American politicians and legislators, including the President, his Cabinet, the Chief Justice, and members of the Congress, McVeagh spoke proudly of the U.S.-Filipino war and America's mission to fight this "noble" war and help "a struggling people to secure their independence." Referencing a speech by a Catholic bishop, McVeagh compared "the Moslem virtues of war, of slaughter, [and] of rapine" with the "Christian virtues of self-denial and kindness and brotherly love."²² In this formulation, which is a classic case of polarization schema, Islam is construed as both anti-Christianity and antithetical to Christianity. Unlike Christians (the in-group or "us"), Muslims (the out-group or "them") harm but not help, Muslims hate but not love, and Muslims are inherently militant and lack self-restraint. Unlike altruistic Christians who fight to help the "weak or lowly," Muslims seek world domination and consider war, slaughter, and conquest as "virtues." In *Ferguson* and many later cases, similar stereotypical trait associations that had been used for centuries to represent "orthodox" Muslims were used to frame the NOI Muslims as hateful, bigoted, and belligerent toward whites and non-Muslims. Here lies the contradiction in the state's polarization of the NOI and "orthodox" Islam. Despite deriving from the same referential strategies that had for long otherized "orthodox" Islam, the state vilified the NOI as a hate group by highlighting its differences from "orthodox" Islam.

Deferring to the Department of Corrections (DOC), Judge White refused to examine the Muslims' claims of membership in the broader Islamic

22. ["Address of Wayne McVeagh, ESQ," 180 U.S. 643, \(U.S., 1901\), 657.](#)

community. Three years ago, in 1958, the state's Director of Corrections had considered the NOI inmates' religious status claims, concluding in a resolution that the NOI Muslims "were not entitled to be accorded the privileges of a religious group or sect."²³ This policy, Judge White underlined, was later approved by the State Advisory Committee on Institutional Religion in 1961. According to the Committee, NOI was not a religion, but a "movement" with ominous political aspirations. Although Judge White refused to directly assess the NOI inmates' religious status claims, he compared "orthodox" Islamic scriptures with the NOI literature to address the legality of the states' ban on the latter. According to a correctional officer who had confiscated "Ferguson's Muslim religious scrapbook," the book "consisted of the usual 'Muslim' trash, advocating hatred of the white race, [and] superiority of the black man."²⁴ The court noted that the NOI scriptures (referred to as "their bible") were "some version" of the orthodox Qur'an "adapted to their 'Black Muslim' doctrines."²⁵ The NOI literature was an aberration from "the standard Mohammedan scriptures," described as "the orthodox Holy Koran, recognized as the scriptures of the Mohammedans and containing the professed revelations to Mohammed, and which is the basis for the religious, social, civil, commercial, military and legal regulations of the Mohammedan world."²⁶ Conversely, the NOI literature was described as "inflammatory" because it prioritized "black supremacy" doctrines over a

23. *Ferguson*, 754.

24. *Ibid.*, 755.

25. *Ibid.*, 759.

26. *Ibid.*, 759.

sincere faith in Islam. This argument, as I will show later, soon developed into a rationalization for disciplining the study and discussion of Islam in prisons. The state soon argued that the main difference between the NOI and “orthodox” Islam was that the latter was apolitical, and the NOI Muslims had hijacked Islam and infused the “purely religious” Islamic literature with their black political agenda. Suggesting that, for the NOI inmates, racial supremacy and political extremism took precedent over their professed Islamic faith weakened the inmates’ freedom of religious expression claims, delegitimized the NOI as an authentic Islamic sect (or in some cases as a religion), and justified the state’s indirect, thus imperceptible, involvement in disciplining the study and practice of Islam in prisons.

In *Ferguson*, we find an early example of the comparative construction of the NOI and “orthodox” Islam in courts, where invoking Islamic orthodoxy undermined the NOI as a legitimate religion or an Islamic sect. The state argued that since the NOI theology and scriptures widely digressed from the “standard Mohammedan” Islam (never mind that the Qur’an was neither compiled nor transcribed for years after the Prophet’s passing), then the NOI could not be Islam.²⁷ Stripping the NOI of its contended status as a legitimate Islamic sect could in theory disqualify it as a religion. The NOI converts were not true

27. According to Reza Aslan, “when Muhammad died ... the Quran had neither been written down nor collected, let alone organized.” See Reza Aslan, *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006), 113.

Muslims, but opportunistic troublemakers who used Islam as a front for a political organization. This logic later became a staple argument in courts. Initially, the state successfully discredited the NOI as a bona fide religion by submitting that the NOI was *not Islam*, hence *not a religion*. But this position became progressively untenable as a growing body of legal precedent solidified the NOI's legal status as a religious group.²⁸ By the late 1960s and the early 1970s, as Judge

28. On January 25, 1962, The New York State Court of Appeals in *Brown v. McGinnis* referred to the NOI inmates' activities as religious. See [*Matter of Brown v. McGinnis*, 180 N.E.2d 791, \(N.Y. 1961\)](#). As Crawford notes, this was the first time that a court "interpreted ... the NOI member's activities to be of primarily religious nature." See Crawford, *Black Muslims*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 80. But it was in the July of that year that the NOI was for the first time recognized as a religion when Judge Matthews of the District Court of California declared "the Muslim faith is a religion." See [*William T. X. Fulwood v. Donald Clemmer*, 206 F. Supp. 370, \(D.D.C. 1962\)](#). A year later, in *William SaMarion v. Paul McGinnis* (1963), Judge Henderson ruled that "Muslimism" as practiced in prisons constituted a religion despite its exclusion from "orthodox" Islam. Then, in 1964, when the Supreme Court denied *certiorari* in *Sostre v McGinnis*, some lower courts interpreted that as a confirmation of the NOI's legitimacy as a religious group. See *Sostre v. McGinnis*, 379 U. S. 892, (U.S. 1964). In *Willis v. McGinnis* (1978), for example, Chief Judge Curtin wrote: "[On] October 26, 1964, the United States Supreme Court denied certiorari in *Sostre v McGinnis*, ...thus finally

J. Smith Henley wrote in *Holt v. Hutto* (1973), it was “thoroughly established by judicial opinions too numerous to mention that the Black Muslims confined in prisons in this country constitute a religious sect and are entitled, within reasonable limitations dictated by the conditions of prison life, to the protection of the First

This meant that the state could no longer invoke “orthodox” Islam to deny the NOI’s religious status claims, but it didn’t stop the state from dichotomizing Islam and the NOI to describe the NOI as “heretical,” not “purely religious,” and hence pseudo-Islam or *bad* Islam. In several cases, after the NOI was recognized as a religion in courts, the state attempted to distinguish the political elements of the NOI as non-religious, thus framing Islam as non-political. An early example of this reasoning can be found in *Sostre v. McGinnis* (1964). Based on the evidence on record, Judge Hays confirmed the district court’s finding that “the *beliefs* of the organization with which plaintiffs associate[d] themselves constitute[d] a ‘religion’,” but “the *activities* of the group [were] *not exclusively religious*” (added emphasis). This was because the NOI had “far more striking [differences] than the similarities” with “other religions, including, incidentally, the orthodox Islam of several hundred millions of Asians and Africans.”³⁰ This implied

resolving the issue of whether or not Muslimism was, in fact, a religion.” See [*Willis X. Bryant, Jr. v. Paul D. McGinnis*, 463 F. Supp. 373, \(W.D.N.Y. 1978\).](#)

29. [*Lawrence J. Holt et al., v. Terrell Don Hutto et al.*, 363 F. Supp. 194, \(E.D. Ark. 1973\).](#)

30. [*Martin X. Sostre v. Paul D. McGinnis*, 334 F.2d 906, \(2d Cir. 1964\).](#) Also see [*State v. Cabbage* 210 A.2d 555, \(Del. Super. Ct. 1965\).](#), where the state argued that the

that “orthodox” and purely religious Islam was “incidentally” more similar to other world religions than it was to the partially political NOI. The political elements in the NOI outweighed the NOI members’ faint interest in cultivating religious virtues and practicing Islam, and Islamic values were subordinate to the doctrines of “black supremacy and the equation of the white race with ‘total evil.’” Rather than a *pure* religion, the NOI was a hybrid movement with political and racist doctrines wrapped in a religious veneer.

Among several problems and ideological inferences inherent in this construction, the obvious ones include: (1) the presumption that it was possible to draw definitive lines around the concept of religion, which in turn gave rise to the inference that as a belief system with blurred boundaries, the NOI could not be adequately categorized as a religion, even if it was legally accepted as a religion in courts; (2) the presumption that, for all NOI adherents, certain teachings of Elijah Muhammad, i.e.,

NOI teachings and beliefs were not religious because, unlike “orthodox” Islam, the NOI doctrines were primarily political and social. One of the state’s witnesses testified that “the Black Muslims had never been known to discuss prayer or virtue of brotherly love of any sort—seemingly limiting such discussions to their political, social and economic aspirations”; See also *Cooke v. Tramburg* (1964), where the state, based on testimony by Dr. Henri Yaker’s, a prison consulting psychologist, argued that the NOI leaders had “superimposed” their doctrines of anti-white hatred over the “normative Islamic theology and doctrines,” and the NOI was thus primarily a hate group and a anti-white political movement.

those teachings that were framed by the state as exclusively black—as opposed to Islamic which was code for Arab or Middle-Eastern—took precedent over the practice of Islam; and (3) the presupposed conclusion that the NOI inmates did not deserve to be treated the same as other religious groups in prisons. This reasoning is fallacious because, as Edward E Curtis notes, Islam was not “superstructural to the movement,”³¹ but an integral part of the NOI members’ beliefs and daily lives. Like his predecessors (Noble Drew Ali and Wallace Fard Muhammad), Elijah Muhammad believed that slavery had separated blacks from their original Islamic identity. This alienation, Muhammad argued, was the root cause of some of the most pressing problems of black people in the United States—problems that could only be solved by a recommitment to Islam. Curtis writes: “Elijah Muhammad offered Islamic ritual as a means by which black men and women could save their bodies from emasculation, violation, and contamination.”³² In other words, the NOI members did not see themselves as converting to Islam, but as recommitting to it for salvation.

The state, however, insisted on separating “orthodox” Muslims from the NOI Muslims, arguing that while the NOI was primarily a political and hateful group, Islam was purely religious, peaceful, apolitical, inclusive of all races,

31. Edward E. Curtis, “Islamizing the Black Body: Ritual and Power in Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam,” *Religion and American Culture: A journal of Interpretation* 12, no. 2, (2002): 178.

32. Ibid, 172.

subservient to the state authorities, and friendly to the adherents of all faiths. At first glance, this argument casts “orthodox” Islam in a positive light by framing it as a religion that’s neither racist, nor hateful and intolerant of Christianity. While this is in fact true of Islam, framing Islam as “purely religious” imposes the state’s definition of religion on Islam.³³ While Islam is unquestionably a religion, it has traditionally regulated social life “as comprehensively as personal ritual life” by pushing for social reform, economic justice, abolition of slavery, and other egalitarian causes that by certain standards can be viewed as political.³⁴ These Islamic politics have throughout the centuries been used against Islam to frame it as an untrue faith and not a religion. In fact, the construction of Islam as a military and political force dates back to the Crusades, when, as Reza Aslan notes, “the papal propaganda” framed Muslims “as the soldiers of the Antichrist in

33. This is ironic because religion in general and Christianity in particular have historically wormed their way into public functions in the United States. Take for example the use of the Bible (and other scriptures) to swear in witnesses and public officials, chaplain prayers in Congress, the “one nation under god,” and even the celebration of Christmas (originally Christ’s birth) and Easter (Christ’s ascent to heaven) as national holidays. In other words, while theoretically and officially, in the United States, religion belongs in the personal realm, in practice, that has never been the case. Ironically, most anti-Muslim political movements in the United States are pushing for a religious/Christian American state.

34. Samuel J. Rascoff, “Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter-Radicalization,” *Stanford Law Review* 64, (2012): 183.

blasphemous occupation of the Holy Lands (and, far more importantly, of the silk route to China).”³⁵ This projection of Islam has survived for centuries and can be presently viewed in the Islamophobic discourses today. In more recent American history, the perceived political elements in “orthodox” Islam have at times been foregrounded to denounce “orthodox” Islam as an extremist perversion of Islam (with the construction of Taliban in the war on terror era and ISIS more recently) but downplayed in the prisoners’ civil rights cases of the late 20th century to justify the state’s classification of the NOI as a political and racist group.

In addition to forcing a constraint on Islam, depoliticizing “orthodox” Islam to vilify the NOI is problematic also because it attempts to distinctively construct black and Muslim identities as incompatible. During the civil rights era, black Islam or what Sherman Jackson terms the black “appropriation” of Islam was marked as false Islam or as Islam contaminated by black politics (hence not “purely religious,” as Islam should be).³⁶ From the viewpoint of both the state and immigrant Muslims—who identified as the true authority over and the rightful owner of Islam—Black Americans had hijacked a religion and injected it with their political ideologies to deceive the American legal system by retaining some of the religious elements of “orthodox”

35. Reza Aslan, *No god but God*, 80.

36. Jackson defines appropriation as “the act of enlisting the aid of a set of nonindigenous ideas or doctrines in one’s own existential or ideological struggle.” See Sherman A. Jackson, *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 28.

Islam. This conceptualization reinforced the notion that black and Muslim identities were distinct and irreconcilable, which in turn further racialized Islam as distinctly Arab or Middle Eastern. The construction of black and Muslim identities as incompatibly distinct was however not a 20th century invention. As Beydoun argues, during the antebellum era, Black and Muslim identities were constructed as distinct “racial classifications” that could never coexist.³⁷ Although many enslaved black Africans were Muslim, “the law furiously denied conjoining these identities, because doing so would undo the subhuman blackness branded upon the bodies of the enslaved, while also disrupting the narrow way in which Muslim identity was racially configured” as Middle Eastern or Arab, who were in turn framed as unassimilable aliens.³⁸ It was during the 1920s and 1930s that African Americans began reclaiming their Islamic heritage, but even today African American Muslims are rarely recognized as bona fide Muslims.³⁹

37. Ibid., 57.

38. Ibid., 58.

39. Aminah Beverly McCloud argues that amid the Jim Crow era and the rapidly changing political and religious landscapes in the African American communities in the 1920s and 1930s, the Great Migration brought African Americans into contact with the rising number of immigrants from Muslim majority countries. Many African Americans began to reclaim and actively practice Islam by forming communities that identified as “Islamic.” One of these groups was the Moorish Science Temple which became a predecessor to the Nation of Islam. See Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Moreover, depoliticizing “orthodox” Islam enabled the state to weaponize depoliticized Islam against all Islamic sects (including the NOI) that were deemed as less desirable. Black Islam, as bad or untrue Islam, could be legitimately suppressed because it was not purely religious. This logical construct could give license to a chain of inferences and warrant the suppression of Muslim sects that don’t adhere to the state-sanctioned apolitical definition of Islam. Lastly, in some cases, the state deployed the distinction between political elements in the NOI and the religious components retained from “orthodox” Islam to deny the inmates certain rights, particularly the right to possess religious literature. For example, in *Sostre v. McGinnis* (1964), the state argued that the NOI inmates, as members of an “organization” that was divisible into religious *beliefs* and nonreligious *activities*, were entitled to “some measure of constitutional protection,” subject to practical limitations at the state’s discretion.⁴⁰ The source of the prisoners’ political doctrines that caused their disciplinary problems was the “Black Muslim Koran,” which was different from the apolitical “orthodox” Qur’an. As a result, the inmates were not entitled to their requested literature. Judge Hays agreed, further arguing, and correctly so, that offering “expurgated” literature and “censored sermons” to the inmates would “engage [the government] in the very activities the first amendment was designed to avoid.” Apparently, the only acceptable alternative was the state’s ban on the NOI literature.

Whereas some courts allowed the state’s absolute ban on the NOI literature on the grounds discussed above, others suggested compromises. In

40. *Sostre v. McGinnis*, 379 U. S. 892, (U.S. 1964).

Knuckles v. Prasse (1969), the inmates wanted access to the Holy Qur'an and Elijah Muhammad's books. The state refused to grant these requests arguing that the NOI literature contained inflammatory content. Judge Higginbotham's compromise was nothing short of policing how Islam was taught, studied, and understood in prisons. Before offering a solution, the court reviewed the evidence, concluding that, in and of itself, the Holy Qur'an, whether in Arabic or English, was not "so inflammatory as to be harmful to prison security."⁴¹ Note that this statement carries the implicature that the Qur'an is somewhat or negligibly inflammatory, just not "so inflammatory" as to cause serious problems. However, Elijah Muhammad's interpretations of Qur'an were problematic because they were "readily susceptible to a broad range of contradictory and varied interpretations." The court explained, "from one perspective, a rational person could interpret the writings and teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad as an endorsement" of anti-white hatred and disobeying prison authorities, but from an equally "rational" perspective, the same teachings could be interpreted "as merely a partisan historical analysis of racial discrimination, past and present, in the United States and other Anglo-Saxon nations."⁴²

This logic not only implies the potential for inflammatory interpretations of the Holy Qur'an, but it also presupposes the conclusion that policing how Islam is taught and interpreted is a legitimate security measure. Put simply, even if Qur'an is given the benefit of the doubt, the interpretations of Quranic verses and the interpretations of those

41. [*Knuckles v. Prasse*, 302 F. Supp. 1036](#), (E.D. Pa. 1969), 1050.

42. *Ibid.*, 1040.

interpretations could be inflammatory. As a result of this openness and susceptibility to multiple and even contradictory interpretations, Islamic literature are viewed as posing what I term an interpretational risk. In this chain of reasoning lies one of the core tenets of Islamophobia: Even if Islam were to be trusted as a true and peaceful religion, in the wrong hands, it could easily be weaponized and adapted for indoctrination and terrorist purposes. In fact, a myth about Islam is that Islam, among all religions, is exceptionally prone to adaptation into terrorist causes, which renders Muslims as uniquely prone to radicalization. Similarly, Islamic scriptures have been tagged as unusually polysemic and imprecise, as if no other discourses, including other religious scriptures and codes of law, are as equally open to multiple interpretations. In the context of the NOI prisoners' cases, "orthodox" Islamic scriptures were frequently juxtaposed with the NOI literature as a demonstration of the inflammatory and political content of the prisoners' requested literature, and yet "orthodox" scriptures were simultaneously implicated as potentially dangerous.

The *Knuckles* court decided that inmates could access their literature only if they received education on "the meaning and proper interpretation of Muslim doctrines," provided by a state-approved minister. But because "the literature could be subject to inferences urging such defiance if not properly interpreted by a trained Muslim minister, [the court ruled] that it is not mandatory that the prison authorities make available to prisoners the writings." Given that many prisoners converted to the NOI after imprisonment, this may appear to be a reasonable compromise and even beneficial to the inmates, except that the state sought to

maintain full control over who got to teach which interpretations of Islam to whom. In *Knuckles*, the inmates' requested edition of the Qur'an was reviewed by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Corrections, deemed unacceptable, and banned. Instead, the Bureau had approved another edition of the Qur'an published and distributed by the "orthodox" immigrant Islamic groups in the United States. The Bureau's preferred Qur'an was provided by "the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C." and published by a "recognized" publisher.⁴³

One of the state's witnesses, Minister Jeremiah Shabazz, a prison minister employed by the Department of Corrections and "qualified to explain the teachings of the Muslim religion," testified that, if decoded accurately, Islamic scriptures enjoined Muslims "to be obedient to those in lawful authority."⁴⁴ Since inmates, by disobeying the prison officials, had erred in their understanding of Islam, they could not be left to their own devices to interpret their literature. The assumption here is that "orthodox" and accurate interpretations of Islam must invariably breed subservient and obedient Muslims regardless of the circumstances. Judge Higginbotham endorsed the state's decision about the Qur'an's edition that was made available to inmates.^a As an added security measure,

43. Bashir SL, "The Mosque in Washington," *The Islamic Monthly*, April 15, 2014, <https://www.theislamicmonthly.com/the-mosque-in-washington/>. Originally conceived by the Turkish ambassador in 1944, the Islamic Center in Washington was (and still is) built and funded by multiple Muslim-majority countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt, and opened in 1954.

44. *Knuckles v. Prasse*, 302 F. Supp. 1036, (E.D. Pa. 1969), 1041.

he also sought assurance from Minister Jeremiah Shabazz that, if he were to be appointed as the prison minister for the inmates in question, his teachings would be “*identical to those he testified to during court proceedings.*” (my emphasis)⁴⁵ In other words, Minister Shabazz’s appointment was contingent upon his uninterrupted adherence to his court-approved and state-sanctioned interpretations of the Islamic scriptures.⁴⁶ In effect, the “proper” interpretations of Islamic literature were to be determined by the state by proxy—i.e., through selecting both the editions of Qur’an and the prison ministers to teach state-approved Islam.

Even well into the 1990s, the state argued in several courts that the inmates who understood political meanings from the “purely” religious Islamic literature were either uneducated on Islam or insincere and thus not entitled to their requested rights.⁴⁷ In *Thacker v. Dixon* (1991), the state argued that name

45. Ibid., 1057.

46. See also *Bryant v. McGinnis*, 463 F. Supp. 373, (W.D.N.Y. 1978), at 387, where the Assistant Warden of the Attica State Prison argued that “converts to the religion of Islam” can have visitations from a Muslim minister, provided that the “we were constantly alert and ascertain the movement is confined to the channel of the religion and not permitted to get out of the bounds and be taken over by individuals and groups for their own particular purposes, or to advance themselves in status in the institution.”

47. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) prohibits the government from “substantially” burdening the free exercise of religion except for

changing was an African American political expression, not a religious requirement.⁴⁸ At the time of the trial, Robert Lee Thacker was in the custody of the North Carolina Department of Corrections, Raleigh Division. He had converted to Islam in 1959 while serving a lengthy sentence. Following his conversion, he had legally changed his name to Rabah Muhammad Ali. Prison officials refused to add his adopted name to the prison records or to address him with his “new name.” Litigation ensued, and in 1991, the Eastern District Court of North Carolina reviewed the case and held evidentiary hearings. At the hearings, the defense successfully challenged the plaintiff’s sincerity claims by first asking him a mixture of religious and political questions, and then comparing his responses with testimonies elicited from state-approved Muslim ministers and “experts” on orthodox Islam and the NOI. Over the plaintiff’s objections, Khalil Abdullah Akbar, an “orthodox” prison chaplain and the coordinator of Islamic

advancing a “compelling governmental interest.” To place a substantial burden on a practice motivated by a *sincere* religious belief, the state must show a controlling and substantial interest and take “the least restrictive” measure. Because only *sincere* religious beliefs are protected, establishing the inmates’ insincerity could undermine their First Amendment claims. To achieve this result, the state could show that the inmates had nonreligious motivations (making political statements, acting upon racial hatred, harassing state officials, litigating in courts for entertainment and show, etc.) or were ignorant of the teachings of their professed religion.

48. [*Thacker a.k.a. Rabah Muhammad Ali v. Gary T. Dixon et al.*](#), 784 F. Supp. 286, (E.D.N.C. 1991).

services for the Department of Corrections for the western part of North Carolina, was brought in as an expert on the Qur'an and Islamic traditions. Apparently, Mr. Akbar's history of testifying in federal courts (in cases involving NOI and other Muslims) established his credibility.

During the hearings, the state drew a sharp line between the NOI's sociopolitical teachings and "orthodox" Islam's purely religious instructions. Name changing, according to the state and their witnesses, was a politically and socially motivated practice and exclusive to American blacks.⁴⁹ When questioned about adopting a new name, Ali referenced Wallace D. Muhammad's teachings, explaining that the new name signified a renaissance, a new self, and a new lifestyle: "The name we were living under is ... a slave master's name and we must throw the shackles off of us."⁵⁰ Ali saw name

49. The name changing practice had roots in the NOI's religious philosophy. Slavery had separated blacks from their Islamic identity and self-knowledge. In order to understand the divinity of God, the NOI members first had to gain self-knowledge, which required shedding the identity imposed on them by the "slave masters." To restore their lost identities, the first step was to change the "slave names." The MTSA followers added "El" or "Bey" to their surnames, indicating their connection to the "homeland" of Morocco. Elijah Muhammad's followers replaced their inherited surnames (slave names) with "X." After Muhammad's death in 1975, Wallace D. Muhammad, encouraged the Lost-Found members to legally adopt "Muslim names" as a part of a movement toward a more "orthodox" Islam.

50. *Thacker*, 290.

adoption as a religious expression, but the defense claimed that adopting Arabic names was an exclusively black practice and a political statement, not a religious necessity.

Mr. Akbar endorsed the state's view; name changing was not a Muslim practice, but an "African American" custom historically observed for non-religious purposes.⁵¹ This testimony confirmed that name changing was an "unorthodox" black practice, which in turn validated the state's position that the NOI members' "blackness" and black politics placed them outside Islam. Drawing on this testimony, the state concluded that name adoption was a politically motivated practice, rather than a sincere expression of the Islamic faith, and that Ali was insincere in his professed religious beliefs. Mr. Akbar, on the other hand, interjected that the inmate had simply erred in his judgement, an error that indicated his ignorance of the "correct" Islamic teachings. This was of course not a position that the state would vigorously oppose. The court agreed with the state's position that even if name changing had *some* religious significance (from the inmate's perspective) and that Ali sincerely saw name adoption as an expression of his Islamic faith, he was clearly uninformed on how to be a good or "orthodox" Muslim. This helped further the state's case that the NOI was an aberration from "orthodox" Islam, and that the inmate's requested accommodation was not a religious necessity.

To demonstrate the inmate's poor understanding of Islam, the defense questioned Ali about the "then-current Persian Gulf conflict."⁵² Whose side was he on? The U.S.

51. Ibid., 291.

52. Ibid., 290.

side or Saddam Hussein's? Would he "feel obligated to fight on the 'religious side,' meaning the side of Saddam Hussein"?⁵³ Where did his loyalties lie in a fight between a Muslim and a non-Muslim? If he were "to come upon a Muslim and non-Muslim fighting," what would he do?⁵⁴ Ali responded that "his first objective would be to stop the fight, but if he could not, he perceived his duty as being to aid the Muslim."⁵⁵ In the Gulf War scenario, if peace-making was not an option, Ali would have to support the Muslim cause. The state's selection of questions hardly seems disinterested or random. Since the objective was to examine the inmate's understanding of Islam, the state could have posed religious questions, rather than loaded political questions. Saddam Hussein was not only at war with the United States at the time but was a despised Muslim political figure with a heavy record of human rights violations. Perhaps these questions were selected for their shock value, but one could argue that they were meant to probe the plaintiff's political loyalties, rather than his religious sincerity. Whatever the case, these were pointed questions, designed to discredit the plaintiff and portray him as untrustworthy (bad Muslim) and treacherous (unpatriotic and un-American).

The "correct" responses to these questions were then solicited from Mr. Akbar. He was convinced that both "Wallace D. Muhammad, and the

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

international Islamic leadership, supported the position of the multinational coalition in the Persian Gulf crisis.”⁵⁶ (my emphasis) He also explained that the inmate’s political positions were “erroneous” and that “the correct position of a Muslim upon encountering a Muslim and non-Muslim in a struggle” did not match the plaintiff’s responses.⁵⁷ The defense successfully argued that since the plaintiff’s political views did not match the political positioning of the “international Islamic leadership,” Ali was either insincere in his beliefs or had failed to properly interpret the true Islamic teachings.⁵⁸

Here lies one of the main contradictions in the state’s dichotomous construction of the NOI as a political group and “orthodox” Islam as apolitical. Ali’s political views disqualified him as a real Muslim because they did not match what Mr. Akbar claimed to be the political positioning of the “international Islamic leadership.” While the “international Islamic leadership” enjoyed designation as authentic Muslims because of their political support of the U.S. government’s foreign policies, the state relentlessly criticized the NOI leaders for turning the “purely religious” Islam into a religious-political monstrosity. This double standard exemplifies the U.S. state’s long-lasting policy of favoring and tolerating some Muslim groups (“good Muslims”) over others

56. Ibid., 291.

57. Ibid.

58. For similar cases, see *Masjid Muhammad v. Keve*, 479 F. Supp. 1311 (D. Del. 1979); *St. Claire v. Cuyler*, 634 F.2d 109 (3d Cir. 1980); and *In re Long Term Administrative Segregation of Inmates Designated as Five Percenters*, 174 F.3d 464 (4th Cir. 1999).

(“bad Muslims”) and marks a contemporary difference between the concern that many groups and governments have taken toward the persecution of Christians by Boko Haram and other groups, in which little energy is spent on wondering if these are “good” Christians or “bad” ones. In other words, while all Christians are good, Muslims can be good or bad and treated accordingly.

The “good Muslim/bad Muslim” dichotomy, as Mahmood Mamdani and other scholars have argued, enables the state to justify surveillance and persecution of Muslims in the U.S. and abroad.⁵⁹ Over the last few decades, the good/bad dichotomy has evolved into a Muslim menace spectrum, with “good Muslims” on one end and radicalized ones on the other. Those in between the poles are ranked from the most to the least prone to radicalization. In the post-9/11 era, as Emmanuel Mauleón observes, the assumption that all Muslims “shared responsibility for terrorism” pressured them to “counteract their perceived culpability” by performing the “good Muslim” role.⁶⁰ Khaled Beydoun notes that this required performance included “denouncing terrorism, supporting the war on terror, and waving the American

59. Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004); See also, Karen Engle, “Constructing Good Aliens and Good Citizens: Legitimizing the War on Terrorism,” *University of Colorado Law Review* 75, no. 1, (2004): 59-114.

60. Emmanuel Mauleón, “Black Twice: Policing Black Muslim Identities,” *UCLA Law Review* 65, no. 5, (2018), 1376.

flag.”⁶¹ Similarly, in today’s “counter-radicalization era,” the good Muslim role is performed by endorsing the government’s “CVE Program, partnering with DHS as a community stakeholder to carry it forward in designated communities, and ... serving as an informant.”⁶²

Interestingly, while today, with the Sharia law scares, the rise of ISIS, and the counter-radicalization programs, bad Muslims are “orthodox” Muslims, in the state’s late 20th century legal battles with the NOI, good Islam was “orthodox” Islam, and it was purely religious. Today’s good Islam is a non-religious (secular) and purely cultural form of Islam. But good Muslims, both then and now, are obliged to be Americans first (in a very particular sense of the word that denotes blind support for the government’s foreign and domestic policies) and Muslims second and to be both apolitical and political. Only in so far as they adhere to a set of state-dictated views and values, Muslims are allowed to have and publicly express political opinions.

III. Discussion and Conclusions

In cases discussed above, the state and courts constructed Muslim identity in such a way that it excluded all interpretations of Islam not aligned with the state’s preferred—or rather tolerated—version of Islam. In these courts, there were two types of Islam: a (1)

61. Khaled A Beydoun, “Bisecting American Islam? Divide, Conquer, and Counter-Radicalization,” *Hastings Law Journal* 69, (2018): 489.

62. *Ibid.*

“orthodox” Islam, a.k.a. “historical,” “Mohammedan,” “standard,” “normative,” “international,” “official,” and “mainstream”; and (2) the pseudo-Islam of the “Black Muslims,” a.k.a. the “Muslim cult,” “Elijah Muhammad Muslimism,” or, in the words of the Commissioner of Corrections in the State of New York in 1965, a “sham.”

The dichotomous conceptualization of “orthodox” Islam and the NOI helped construct the latter as a political movement or as “bad” pseudo-Islam. By establishing the prisoners’ insincerity or their ignorance of Islam, the state justified Muslim registries and other means of regulating Islam in prisons. In most cases, the NOI was characterized as an illegitimate offshoot of the Islamic faith that was politically motivated, violent, extremist, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and racially exclusive. But “orthodox” Islam was peaceful, purely religious, inclusive of all races/religions, and supportive of the coalition forces in the Gulf War. Interestingly, it was only in this context that faith in Islam was framed as sincere. Historically, as Beydoun points out, faith in Islam, in comparison with “the ‘true faith’ of Protestant Christianity, has been marked as insincere, untrue, and a façade for world domination: “Orientalists yesterday and Islamophobes today routinely proclaim, ‘Islam is not even a religion; it is a social, political system that uses a deity to advance its agenda of global conquest.’”⁶³

While “true” Islam was racialized as Arab or Middle Eastern, “false” Islam was racialized as black. In these courts, race and religion intersected to

63. Khaled A Beydoun, *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 13.

profile social identities that intersected at black and Muslim as abnormal. The relentless cleavage of black and Muslim identities goes hand in hand with racial and faith-based fears of Muslims and blacks. The centuries-long racial construction of blacks as prone to criminality and the concurrent construction of Muslims as a violent race have created a dual fear of these. Just four decades before the *Ferguson* court, Lothrop Stoddard was alarmed with the “rapid spread of militant Mohammedanism” in Africa and the “anti-white propaganda spread by negro radicals from America.” He warned the white world of an unholy marriage between the Muslim and black identities.⁶⁴ A proponent of scientific racism, Stoddard believed that blacks lacked “constructive originality” and were thus “susceptible to external influences.”⁶⁵ As a result, there was a race between Islam and Christianity in claiming the black souls. In this inevitable competition, Christianity was at a disadvantage because of its “gentle, peace-loving, high moral standard” and also because blacks resented “white tutelage.”⁶⁶ Islam, which he racialized as “Arab,” was a better match for blacks’ “natural preference for a militant faith.”⁶⁷ Stoddard warned the white man of the grave consequences of black conversion to Islam:

In so far as he is Christianized, the negro’s savage instincts will be restrained and he will be disposed to acquiesce in white tutelage. In so far as he is Islamized, the

64. Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921), 95 and 100, Gutenberg Project.

65. Ibid., 92.

66. Ibid., 95.

67. Ibid., 96.

negro's warlike propensities will be inflamed, and he will be used as the tool of Arab Pan-Islamism seeking to drive the white man from Africa and make the continent its very own.⁶⁸

Black and Muslims identities have been constructed as distinct and incompatible for centuries, and yet they have been feared for a shared inclination towards barbarism and anti-white hatred.

Despite the fact that, in the cases discussed above, it was black Islam that was on trial, the network of assumptions, inferences, and conclusions that were made available by the state's and courts' dichotomous conceptualization of "orthodox" Islam and the NOI carried implications for blacks and all Muslims alike. First, officially christening one form of Islamic expression as "standard" or "orthodox" and others as "nonstandard" or "heretical" is predicated upon the assumption that there can only exist one "correct" interpretation of Islam. Muslims who fail to subscribe to the state-approved Islam are either radical, insincere, or mis/uneducated on Islam. Second, for "orthodox" Islam to be hailed as good Islam by playing the foil to the NOI, it had to commit to the state's definition of religion which was innocuously packaged as apolitical and purely religious. Depoliticized Islam can be weaponized to preemptively dismiss as radical any

68. Ibid., 97.

interpretations of Islam that are not aligned with the state's vision of good Islam, it can be an equally effective tool in suppressing both black and Muslim political activism, and it can also legitimize profiling Muslims and blacks and targeting their communities, in the name of national security and in an endless search for the "bad Muslims" hiding among the "good" ones. Third, for the state's dichotomous construction of "orthodox" Islam and the NOI to hold true, Islam had to have a Pope-like figure. Even though leadership in Islam is not centralized, references to "the international Islamic leadership" or "the official Islamic leadership" can function as a legitimacy and sincerity barometer that also dictate the exact political/apolitical opinions to which all Muslims were bound to adhere—which in turn imposes monolithicity on Islam. Fourth, if there is a "true" Islam and a "false" Islam, each at an opposite pole of a legitimacy scale, then there exists a hierarchy of normativity and sincerity among different Muslim sects, and a corresponding hierarchy of tolerability by the state. One can thus expect a race among different sects for securing power (to dictate the true meaning of Islam to other Muslims and to demand conformity and explain Islam to non-Muslims) by acquiring the state's approval and relative toleration, which, in turn, would enable the state to recruit Muslims into its counter-radicalization and counter-violent-extremism programs. Islamic legitimacy and goodness are thus determined through adherence and vicinity to power.

Although, in the NOI prisoners' cases, "orthodox" Islam was characterized as a peace-loving and all-embracing faith to which the NOI played the evil foil, Islamic literature were framed as open to a broad range of interpretations. Islam, thus, was framed as a corruptible religion that is readily adaptable to racist and extremist causes. This logic, used to suppress the NOI in the late 20th century, persists today and lies at the

heart of the Islamophobic discourse that legitimizes surveillance of black and Muslim and communities.

Chapter Two

Pervertible Islam and the Politics of Victimhood

in the 9/11 Commission Report

In chapter one, I analyzed the Nation of Islam (NOI) prisoners' civil rights cases of the late 20th century. I argued that, in the government's legal battles against the NOI, state and federal courts departed from the Orientalist construction of "orthodox" Islam as a radical political system with ambitions of world domination. Instead, state actors (government officials, judges, etc.) framed "orthodox" Islam as an apolitical, peaceful, and sincere faith that could serve as a foil to Black American Islam, which was in turn characterized as a violent and hateful political ideology. In the process, Islamic scriptures were framed as uniquely open to (mis)interpretation and thus easily manipulated by extremists with anti-democratic, anti-Christian, or anti-American agenda. Islam, as a result, was framed as easily pervertible and posing a constant security threat.

This construction of Islam transforms it into a matter of national security, enabling the state to legitimize an array of legal and political measures aimed at containing Islam and Muslims in the U.S. and abroad. This rationalization of anti-Muslim policing revolves around the positing of what I call Islam's "interpretational risk." In my analysis, I also compared four different discursive constructions of Islam: (1) Islam as a radical political ideology with a world domination agenda; (2) Islam as a purely religious faith entitled to some first amendment religious protections; (3) Islam as a racial category—excluding blacks—entitled to some anti-discrimination or 14th amendment protections; and (4) Islam as a faith practiced by "good" Muslims—characterized as law-abiding people who can be recruited in the wars against crime and terror.

In this chapter, I will analyze the *9/11 Commission Report* to examine its departures from and continuities with the pre-9/11 legal discourse about “orthodox” Islam and Muslims. This 567-page bestselling book has been praised for its clarity, accessibility, literary style, empirical foundations, and academic vigor. As a widely read historical account of the events leading up to the attacks, the report launched fervent public debates about U.S. national security, with Islam and the Muslim world at the center of most inquiries. As Oz Frankel has argued the report was universally circulated to provide the public with “mass education” that the commissioners presumed was much needed. “The *Report*’s compilers,” Frankel also points out, “pride[d] themselves on the attention, even *voice*, their account [gave] to the perpetrators of the attacks.”¹ Whether and to what extent the attackers and other Muslims—who collectively bore the responsibility of the attacks—were given a “voice” in the report is up for debate. I will show that the report’s seemingly positive rhetoric—even its attempts to give “voice” to Muslim attackers and to the Muslim world—constructs Islam as a pervertible ideology and Muslims as forever suspects, misguided by a myth of victimhood and guilty by signifier.

I. About the *9/11 Commission Report*

1. Oz Frankel, “The 9/11 Commission Report: History Under the Sign of Memory,” *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, ed. B. Bevernage and N. Wouters (Palgrave: 2018), pp. 653-668.

The Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004), also known as the *9/11 Commission Report*, was authored by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States.² The bipartisan commission was mandated on November 27, 2002, by President George W. Bush, to study the 9/11 attacks; to write a report that explained why the attacks had happened, whether they could have been prevented, and how well the government had responded to the catastrophe; and to provide recommendations for preventing future threats to homeland security. Chaired by former New Jersey Republican Governor, Thomas Kean, the commission consisted of four other Republicans and five Democrats.³ Over the course of

2. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004).

3. Commissioners included Fred F. Fielding (Republican attorney and former White House Counsel); Slade Gorton (former Republican U.S. Senator from Washington); John F. Lehman (former Republican Secretary of the Navy); James R. Thompson (former Republican Governor of Illinois); Lee H. Hamilton (the Vice Chairman and former Democrat U.S. Representative for the 9th congressional district of Indiana); Richard Ben-Veniste (Democrat attorney and former chief of the Watergate Task Force); Max Cleland (former Democrat US Senator from Georgia); Jamie Gorelick (former Democrat US Deputy attorney General during the Clinton administration); and Timothy J. Roemer (former Democrat US Representative for the 3rd congressional district of Indiana). In December 2003, Max Cleland resigned from the commission,

the investigations, the commissioners interviewed over 1,200 witnesses in ten countries (including almost all senior officials from both Clinton and Bush administrations), held 19 total days of hearings, took public testimony from 160 witnesses, and reviewed over 2.5 million pages of documents. The commissioners began the hearings in spring 2003 in New York City and released their findings as a public report on July 22, 2004.

The authors of the report framed it as a “narrative” presented by the bipartisan commission—“without dissent” from any of the commissioners—to “the President of the United States, the United States Congress, and the American people for their consideration.”⁴ The purpose of the report was to provide “the fullest possible accounts of the events surrounding 9/11 and to identify lessons learned.”⁵ The media hailed the report as a jargon-free, accessible, and inclusive narrative that reads like “a Shakespearean drama” or a novel.⁶ *Time*, for example, applauded the commissioners for producing “one of the most riveting, disturbing and revealing accounts of crime,

accusing the White House of playing “cover-up.” He was replaced by Bob Kerrey (former Democrat US Senator from Nebraska).

4. *9/11 Commission Report*, xv.

5. *Ibid*, xvi.

6. “The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States,” *Publishers Weekly Reviews* 251, no. 33 (2004): 56. Also see, Richard A. Posner, “The 9/11 Report: A Dissent (Looking at the Failings of the 9/11 Commission),” *New York Times Book Review*, Aug. 29. 2004, 9. The book was also compared to the writings of John Grisham and Tom Clancy.

espionage and the inner workings of government ever written.”⁷ President Bush’s declaration that the report “reads like a mystery, a novel” was, however, met with a mixture of head nods and criticism by reporters and commentators.⁸ Scholars from multiple disciplines celebrated the report as a literary success. John Updike called it a “masterpiece” and compared it with the King James Bible (1611).⁹ As Craig A. Warren wrote, the report became “one of the most unlikely literary successes in American history.”¹⁰ Within a few days after its publication, the report climbed to the number one bestseller on Amazon.com. By mid-November, W. W. Norton and Company had sold almost 1.2 million copies of the report, even though the book was available for free on

7. James Carney, “If You Don’t Have Time to Read It ...,” *Time*, Aug. 2, 2004, 60. Also see Harry Rosenfeld, “9/11 Report Is A Must Read,” *Times Union*, Aug. 1, 2004; Frank Davies, “U.S. Report on 9/11 to Be ‘Explosive,’” *Miami Herald*, Jul 10, 2003; Heidi Benson, “9/11 Report Creates a Stir in Bookstores,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 1, 2004; Heidi Benson, “‘The 9/11 Commission Report’ Is a Compelling Read. But Does it Deserve a Literary Reward?” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 12, 2004.

8. Angela K. Brown, “Taking Note of 9/11 Report, Bush Considers His Options,” *Associated Press*, Jul. 27, 2004.

9. John Updike, “The Great I Am: Robert Alter’s New Translation of the Pentateuch,” *The New Yorker*, Nov. 1, 2004, 100.

10. Craig A. Warren, “‘It Reads Like a Novel’: *The 9/11 Commission Report* and the American Reading Public,” *Journal of American Studies* 41, no. 3 (2007): 533-556.

government websites.¹¹ Shortly after its publication, the report was named a finalist for the National Book Award in nonfiction.¹² As some scholars have noted, the packaging and marketing strategies utilized in presenting the book—the content of which had been kept secret—to the public can explain its success in the literary marketplace.¹³ For example, in his analysis of the writing and publication of the report, Oz Frankel characterized the *9/11 Commission Report* as a “sleek corporate artifact marketed through

11. See Oz Frankel, “The 9/11 Commission Report: History Under the Sign of Memory,” *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, ed. B. Bevernage and N. Wouters (Palgrave: 2018): 653-668. Frankel also argues that the commission systematized and presented its findings “as history” (i.e., as a historical document) in order to “legitimize the commission’s policy recommendations for its constructed and affirmed diachronic continuities... [and] as an instrument of normative rationalization.”

12. Additionally, since its publication, seven million copies have been downloaded by internet users. The *Report* has also been repackaged as a best-selling graphic novel, and countless TV docudramas, films, and literary works have relied on the *Report* as a primary source of information about the 9/11 attacks and the history behind them.

13. Some scholars believe that the report’s prose aligned with the contemporary taste of the audience for creative nonfiction that blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction and that foregrounds the narrator’s point of view—contributing to the report’s literary success.

commercial venues as a \$10 book.”¹⁴ The commissioners’ desire, Frankel also points out, “to deposit [the] book in the hands of each and every citizen echoes the American originary myth of national birth through extensively circulated printed texts, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.”¹⁵

However, interwoven with the public praise for the report’s literary merit were dual responses to its content. Some found it disappointing that the report refused to assign blame for the government’s inability to prevent the attacks. Others questioned the reliability of an investigation of the government by the government and accused the commission of a cover-up. Some argued that the language used in various parts of the report closely resembled the Bush administration’s public policy pronouncements, undermining the report’s credibility. Many thought that the report failed to provide concrete recommendations for preventing future attacks based on the provided narrative.¹⁶ Yet, there were those who applauded the report’s thoroughness, objectivity, and educational prowess. At 567 pages, regardless of the conflicting reviews it drew from the public, the report clearly attracted a large audience and became one of the most widely read documents produced by a government committee in the history of the United States.

14. Frankel, “The 9/11 Commission Report,” 658.

15. *Ibid.*

16. See for example Joshua Rovner and Austin Long, “The Perils of Shallow Theory: Intelligence Reform and the 9/11 Commission,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 18, no. 4 (2006): 609-637.

Richard A. Falkenrath has identified four distinct parts in the report. A sizeable part of the report is written in a narrative style and provides a historical overview of Islam and the evolution of al Qaeda's terrorist network (chapters 2, 5, and 7), as well as the U.S. counter efforts to prevent al Qaeda's conspiracies against America (chapters 3, 4, 5, and 8). A less substantial part of the report reads like a gripping thriller of fine prose interwoven with crisis management analysis and reviews the U.S. government's response to the 9/11 attacks (chapters 1 and 10) and the preparedness and performance of first responders at the site of the attacks (chapter 9). Chapter 11 ("foresight—And Hindsight") contextualizes the history outlined in the previous chapters and draws lessons to drive future policies. Finally, the concluding two chapters recommend counterterrorism strategies (chapter 12) and a reorganization of government agencies and offices (chapter 13).¹⁷

Although the most focused content about Islam and Muslims can be found in the first part of the report, references to Islam and Muslims that warrant analysis occur throughout the document. In my analysis, I have therefore drawn from different passages across the report to provide an aggregate picture of the report's representation of Islam and Muslims. Moreover, the report constructs Muslims by interweaving four frames of reference: (1) the lens through which, according to the report, Muslims perceive themselves, their faith, and the United States; (2) the lens through which, according to the report, Islamic extremists and terrorists perceive themselves, their faith, and their

17. Richard A. Falkenrath, "The 9/11 Commission Report," *International Security* 29, no. 3 (2004): 170-190.

countries in relation to the U.S. and the West; (3) the lens through which, according to the report, the United States and Americans perceive themselves (“us”) and Islam and Muslims (“them”); and (4) the lens through which the authors of the report perceive the United States, American people, Muslims, terrorists, and Islam. Clearly, the first three lenses are filtered through the fourth one (i.e., that of the authors of the report). For example, a bad Muslim’s perception of Islam or of the United States is, in reality, the report authors’ perception of a bad Muslim’s perception of Islam or of the United States. From now on, I will use the phrase “according to the report” to refer to this fourth lens, which is the dominant frame of reference used in the discursive construction of Islam and Muslims in the report.

II. Analysis

Broadly speaking, the report attempts to answer the dual questions of “how did this happen, and how can we avoid such tragedy again?”¹⁸ At the heart of these questions, lies a central inquiry tackled throughout the report: “Why do ‘they’ hate us?”¹⁹ Scholars such as Ted Galen Carpenter have praised the report’s response to this question for offering “a more sophisticated” explanation than “Bush administration’s argument that the terrorists hate America because of its values.”²⁰ But as this chapter will show, despite its “sophisticated” appearance, the report’s characterization of Muslims barely goes

18. *9/11 Commission Report*, xv.

19. *Ibid*, 51.

20. Ted Galen Carpenter, “Missed Opportunities: The 9/11 Commission Report and US Foreign Policy,” *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2005): 56.

beyond the stereotypical angry savages who bear an inexplicable but deeply rooted resentment against the United States and the West. In fact, the report's response to the 'why they hate us' question centers on the construction of Muslims as an uncivilized population that share an ethno-political identity based on false narratives of victimhood. This framework—contrary to many commentators' claims—borrows heavily from the civilizational clash theories.

A. Civilizational Clash, Emotional Soup, and the Politics of Victimhood

In his 1990 *Atlantic* article, Bernard Lewis polarized the Muslim world and the West, arguing that Islamic values were antithetical to liberty, equality, and tolerance (which he categorized as Western values).²¹ Muslims, he believed, not only envied the technological and economic advancement of the Christian West but also blamed Western democracies for the decline of the "Islamic civilization." Mixed with Muslims' envy and condemnation were admiration and rage. Lewis thought that these mixed feelings were at the root of a centuries-long hatred for the unsuspecting Christian West—a hatred that the U.S. and Europe would be well advised to fear. A few years later, Samuel P. Huntington "developed and popularized the clash of civilizations thesis" that was originated by Lewis.²² Huntington posited that the wars of the future would not be fought on battlefields, but on cultural and religious grounds. A conflict between the democratic

21. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslims Deeply Resent the West, and Why Their Bitterness Will Not Easily Be Mollified," *Atlantic* 266, no. 3 (1990): 47-60.

22. Todd H. Green, *The Fear of Islam* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 103.

West and the fundamentalist Islam, Huntington predicted, was inevitable because Western and Islamic “civilizations” rested on opposite poles of a global value hierarchy—an ideological polarity that fueled the Muslim hatred for and condemnation of the Christian West.²³

Although the 9/11 report tacitly disavows the civilizational clash theories, some of the central assumptions of the report can be mapped onto the main tenets of Huntington’s thesis—i.e., that democratic values are quintessentially Western and un-Islamic and that Muslims simultaneously hate, envy, admire, and blame the United States for the political and social ills that plague the Muslim world. According to the report, this toxic emotional soup—that ultimately manifested as hijacked planes crashing into the Twin Towers—has been in the making for centuries and can be traced back to the anticolonial movements of the post-World War I era and the unfortunate consequences of modernization processes and nation-building experiments by the newly independent Arab and Muslim countries following World War II. Bin Ladin, the authors of the report explain, has exploited anticolonial grievances of the past to rally support for his anti-American brand of terrorism.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, according to the report, Muslim “fundamentalists helped articulate anticolonial grievances but played little role in the overwhelmingly secular struggles for independence after World War I.”²⁴

23. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

24. *9/11 Commission Report*, 52.

Fundamentalists, therefore, were among the primary authors of anticolonialism. However, secular and “Western-educated lawyers, soldiers, and officials led most independence movements.”²⁵ Note that implied in this argument is the certification of the West as the de facto leader of anticolonial movements in the Muslim world, whereas Muslims are cast as credit-grabbing beneficiaries of Western-style thought and benevolence. Following World War II, Muslim-majority nations, the report argues, gained “independence from Western powers,” and “the Arab Middle East followed an arc from initial pride and optimism to today’s mix of indifference, cynicism, and despair,” caused by tribalism and by corrupt, repressive, and autocratic regimes.²⁶ According to the report, this “bankruptcy of secular, autocratic nationalism” inflamed internal conflicts and competition for legitimacy (“Islamists” vs. secular regimes) and led to a series of “experiments in political Islam” (i.e., “Islamists” as dominant political powers), all of which failed during the 1990s. Muslims, however, blame the U.S. and other Western powers for these failed “experiments” and for the “social and economic malaise” in their countries today. But the truth, according to the report, is that the socioeconomic plague in today’s Muslim world was primarily caused by the “unprecedented flood of wealth” in the newly independent Muslim nations after World War II. In the absence of colonial presence, the report seems to imply, Muslims were incapable of managing their own wealth. The “economic drain from many unprofitable development projects,” unchecked “population growth,” and state corruption led to stagnant and crippled economies,

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

“repression and isolation of women,” and other social ills such as unemployment and poverty. These conditions, the report claims, were particularly devastating for a rising population of “young men” whose exclusive attendance in religious schools—where they learned nothing about “the rest of the world’s thought, history, and culture”—left them with no useful “skills needed in their societies.”²⁷ Desperate to assign blame, Muslims chose a bystander, the United States, to hold accountable.

During the early 1990s, the report explains, Americans were celebrating the end of the Cold War, “hop[ing] to enjoy a peace dividend” in a country that, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, could cut its national security budget and emerge as the globe’s superpower. The U.S. “stood out as an object for admiration, envy, and blame.”²⁸ At the same time, Muslims were “disoriented” by the forces of globalization and modernity. They looked upon the U.S. with a mixture of awe, envy, and anger, believing that the U.S. progress was made at the cost of the Muslim world’s regression and downfall. The city upon the hill, in this instance, didn’t serve as a beacon of hope, but as a hypervisible object of envy and misplaced anger. This hypervisibility, the report continues, “created a kind of cultural asymmetry. To us, Afghanistan seemed very far away. To members of al Qaeda, America seemed very close. In a sense, they were more globalized than we were.”²⁹ Here, the report characterizes Americans as unsuspecting pacifists who were not

27. Ibid, 54. The report also notes that these young men have become “easy targets for radicalization.”

28. Ibid, 340.

29. Ibid.

only geographically and culturally distant from the Muslim world but also single-mindedly focused on post-Cold War peace. On the contrary, Afghans, Arabs, and other Muslims are conceptualized as careful observers of the United States—in an almost reverse Orientalist manner—brewing a blend of admiration, obsession, and envy in their hearts. In fact, as Anna M. Agathangelou argues, not just in this passage but throughout the document, the report seems to imply that “to Americans, the Middle East remains a place far, far away, stuck in a time long, long ago, filled with the unknown and unknowable, whereas [Muslims] know the US all too well given America’s openness, generosity, and grandness.”³⁰

This framing not only ignores the political interferences and military presence of the U.S. in the Middle East and North Africa (that made U.S. a constant, involved, and visible presence in the Muslim world), but it also poses three contradictions.³¹ First, Muslims are characterized as “more globalized” than the average American. Although to some extent that is true (i.e., average Americans are blissfully ignorant of the rest of the

30. Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, “Power and Play through Poisies: Reconstructing Self and Other in the 9/11 Commission Report,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 830-831.

31. This omission is a significant gap in the report’s supposedly full narrative. For more on this topic, see, for example, Ernest R. May, “When Government Writes History: A Memoir of the-9/11 Commission,” *The New Republic* 232, no. 19 (2005): 30–35; and Philip Shenon, *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation* (New York: Twelve, 2008).

world), the report also criticizes Muslims for their inability to understand other cultures and adapt to the modern world (see, for example, above where young Muslim men were described as unfit for life in modern world due to their ignorance of “the world’s thought, history, and culture.”) Second, cultural ignorance signifies innocence and pacifism in Americans but is a sign of backward thinking and inadequate Islamic education in Muslims. Third, Americans who—in a postmodern fashion—are distant from the unknowable Muslims bear no responsibility for educating themselves about the Muslim world and Islamic culture, whereas Muslims—as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter—are somehow both ominously “globalized” and culturally ignorant and bear the burden of educating themselves about (what the report perceives as) American values of democracy and equality.

Indeed, the report differentially frames Middle Eastern Muslims and Americans in such a way that Muslims become the evil, uncivilized foil to the peace-loving, civilized Americans. While Muslims are consumed with rage and resentment, stuck in tribalism, and holding onto ancient grudges, Americans are benevolent freedom-fighters and leaders of the civilized world. This differential framing is also a central tenet of the civilizational clash theses. Talal Asad deconstructs the binary categorization of the West as “civilized” and the Muslim world as “uncivilized,” arguing that this framework justifies the “war on terrorism” as a necessity by evoking differential moral responses.³²

32. Note that for Talal Asad, civilizations are not self-contained and do not have fixed values. In fact, “there is no such thing as clash of civilizations because there are no

Interpretive frameworks (like the civilizational clash framework), Asad explains, regulate our moral responses, causing us to experience a stronger sense of moral outrage and horror for certain lives that are lost in certain circumstances, but little or none for others. Some political killings, as a result, are perceived as legitimate violence while others are illegitimate and invoke moral outrage. For example, while the “just war” or “war on terrorism” framework permits the bombing of Muslim villages by state military as a necessity and a protective measure, instances of Muslim anti-colonial resistance are delegitimized as “terrorism.” Similarly, within the civilizational clash framework, wars that are initiated by the West are viewed as necessary attacks on an “uncivilized” people whose lives are less worth than the lives of the civilized. On the contrary, attacks on the West are cast as attacks on a “civilized” society or even the civilization itself. Cruelties experienced by the “civilized” are viewed as more horrendous than those experienced by the “uncivilized.” This framing justifies acts of war by the West through painting them as less evil—thus evoking no moral repulsion and horror. For example, when Israel pulls out of Lebanon and leaves cluster bombs behind, this act, although aimed at civilians, does not evoke moral outrage in the West because they are perpetrated by a “civilized” population against an “uncivilized” people. It is then no surprise that the report, a document that is essentially meant to justify the war on terror, tacitly endorses the civilizational clash theory.

self-contained societies to which fixed civilizational values correspond.” Talal Asad, *On Suicide Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 12.

Indeed, the report seems to imply that it is exactly the primitive nature of Muslim societies that makes radicalization possible. Today, Bin Ladin and other fundamentalists draw on the anticolonial grievances of the past to demonize the U.S., to cultivate a tribalist revenge mindset, and to promote anti-American and anti-democratic sentiments in the Muslim world:

The enemy rallies broad support in the Arab and Muslim world by demanding redress of political grievances, but its hostility toward us and our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious and political pluralism, the plebiscite, and equal rights for women.³³

Here, in fact, lies one of the contradictions in the report's framing of Muslim grievances against the U.S. On one hand, the grievances shared by Muslims today have their roots in the anticolonial grievances of the previous centuries that were collaboratively authored by the Islamic fundamentalists and the West (through the proxy of "Western-educated" and secular Arabs and Muslims). The West, in this narrative, is credited with the authorship of anticolonial theories and with the leadership of anticolonial movements. On the other hand, the same anticolonial grievances (1) shape Muslim grievances today, (2) are rooted in fundamentalist traditions, (3) constitute the foundation of Bin Ladin's arguments against the United States, and (4) are baseless and misguided accusations used by fundamentalists to deface the U.S. and recruit simple-minded Muslims to anti-American campaigns. Put simply, the report, on behalf of the West, claims authorship of the grievances that liberated Muslims from colonial rule, but when similar grievances are

33. *9/11 Commission Report*, xvi.

directed at the United States today, they are discredited as false, inflammatory, and fundamentalist ideologies.

The report seems to strongly suggest that misguided Muslims today are stuck in the past and projecting anticolonial sentiments that belonged to another century onto contemporary American policies and practices around the world—including but not limited to: the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia, viewed by Muslims as “the home of Islam’s holiest sites”; “the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of sanctions imposed after the Gulf War”; “policies perceived as anti-Arab and anti-Muslim”; and the U.S. support of Israel.³⁴ As noted earlier, this type of framing is problematic because it undercuts valid political concerns among Muslims today as either extremist ideology or as outdated feud with no relevancy in today’s world. Muslims, in this conceptualization, become fanatics who continue to hold on to perceived injustices of centuries past. Dismissing Muslim opposition to current U.S. policies as an old grudge is analogous to dismissing demands for reparations by characterizing slavery as a relic of the past. Such (il)logic willfully ignores the lasting generational impact of past injustices and atrocities on Muslim and black communities today.

Continuing in this vein, the report repeatedly frames contemporary U.S. policies—listed above among Muslim grievances—as (1) prudent U.S. foreign policy decisions and activities made in the name of national security and democracy, and (2) humanitarian efforts to liberate and civilize Muslims and Arabs. Muslim oppositions to such policies are either implicitly cast as ingratitude for the United States’ freedom fights

34. Ibid, xvi, 48, 51, 52, and 362.

across the world or are directly characterized as an inability to adapt to the forces of globalization and modernism and a failure to recognize the U.S. government's absolute right to protect its national security. While this framing attempts to preemptively shun any responsibility for the consequences of U.S. foreign policies in the Middle East, it ironically reveals the interventions that the U.S. has made in Middle Eastern countries that also have the right to protect their own national security.

At the heart of the report's counterargument for debunking "grievances stressed by Bin Laden and widely felt throughout the Muslim world" is a rebuttal of what the report identifies as the Muslim world's myth of victimhood.³⁵ Muslims, the report suggests, share an ethnic identity based on an assumption of innocence and a narrative of suffering: Muslims view themselves as "victims of successive foreign masters,"³⁶ especially and most recently of the United States. According to the report, Muslims embrace this identity because of the comfort it offers to a people "disoriented by cyclonic change as they confront modernity and globalization" in regions plagued with "political and economic malaise."³⁷ Looking back at centuries ago (i.e., a time when Muslims were not victimized by the West), Muslims yearn for a return to Islam's golden age of uninterrupted civilizational expansion:

Many Muslims look back at the century after the revelations to the Prophet Mohammad as a golden age. Its memory is strongest among the Arabs. What

35. Ibid, 362 and 52.

36. Ibid, 49.

37. Ibid, 49.

happened then—the spread of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and even into Europe within less than a century—seemed, and seems, miraculous. Nostalgia for Islam’s past glory remains a powerful force.³⁸

Extremists like Bin Ladin capitalize on this nostalgia for Islam’s past glory and the myth of victimhood to promote their anti-American agenda. They promise a return to Islam’s glorious past, blaming “the decline from Islam’s golden age” on (1) Muslim rulers who diverged from the true Islamic path, “leaving Islam vulnerable to” foreign intruders; and (2) “encroaching foreign powers” who took advantage of Islam’s vulnerability and stole Muslim “land, wealth, and even their souls.”³⁹ These promises appeal to Muslims not only because of their tribalist mentality and desire for world domination, but also because Muslims perceive Islam as “an embattled faith.” It’s from this position that, according to the report, Islamic extremists “rationalize even unprovoked mass murder as righteous defense” of their faith:

38. Ibid, 50. Note that in this formulation, the spread of Islam is characterized both as miraculous (as in aided by divine intervention) and as supernaturally fast, far-reaching, and ominous. Reminiscent of Samuel Huntington’s argument that the epidemic spread of the Islamic civilization was only impeded by a dose of western democracy and globalization, the report almost describes Islam as a viral pandemic, spreading with a nearly unstoppable force *even* into Europe.

39. Ibid, 50.

[Extremists claimed that] America had attacked Islam; America is responsible for all conflicts involving Muslims... These charges found a ready audience among millions of Arabs and Muslims angry at the United States because of issues ranging from Iraq to Palestine to America's support for their countries' repressive rulers.⁴⁰

The report frames the 9/11 attacks as “unprovoked” retaliation for *self-inflicted wounds* (i.e., internal sectarian conflicts in the Muslim world). According to the report, if there is any war on Islam, it's not launched by the United States. Rather, the U.S., an uninvolved bystander, has been caught in “a clash *within* a civilization,” spilling “over into expatriate Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries.”⁴¹ In other words, in what seems like a calculated departure from the civilizational clash theories, the report identifies the civilizational conflict as one *within* the Muslim world, rather than one between the U.S. and Muslim-majority nations. The United States happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and was caught in the crossfire of a sectarian conflict. Here, in one strike, the report denies any allegations of war on Islam, abdicates any U.S. responsibility for the

40. Ibid, 51. The Muslim belief that Islam is an embattled faith, according to the report, allows extremists and bad Muslims to market themselves as the defenders of the faith, safeguarding Islam against “America.” In other words, they justify their terrorist acts by fabricating an imaginary foreign assault on Islam.

41. Ibid, 365

conflicts in the Muslim world today, and lays ground for demanding reparations or at least global cooperation in the U.S. efforts to seek restitution.⁴²

Ironically, this narrative of American innocence and suffering serves as a counternarrative to the Muslim narrative of victimhood (i.e., that Islam is an embattled faith, that Muslims have been victimized by successive foreign powers including the U.S., and that America is at war with Islam) that the report dismisses as a myth. In *Social Suffering*, Kleinman, Das, and Lock argue that narratives of suffering can be

42. The United States has in fact played a crucial role in fueling and even orchestrating some of the regional conflicts in the Muslim world. For example, in 1953, the CIA orchestrated the overthrow of the democratically elected prime minister Mohammed Mossedegh in Iran, reinstated the pro-U.S. Shah on the throne, and looked the other way while the autocratic Shah brutalized the Iranian people for a quarter of a century. The Islamic Revolution that followed was a reaction to Shah's brutality and corruption. Had the democratic regime of Mossedegh remained in power, Iran's history could have looked drastically different. For more information on the U.S. role in creating political, economic, and social instability and violence in Muslim countries, see Rahul Mahajan, *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002); Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2003); and Samir Amin, *The Liberal Virus: Permanent War and the Americanisation of the World* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004).

“appropriated... for political and moral uses.”⁴³ Narratives of suffering or victimhood are powerful discursive tools because, as Laura Jeffery and Matei Candea have argued, victimhood claims to be non-political: “Victimhood can be a prime way of suspending or attempting to suspend the political through an appeal to something non-agentive and ‘beyond’ or ‘before’ politics, such as poverty or suffering.”⁴⁴ In other words, an appeal to “the ontological primacy of victimhood or suffering” can achieve a suspension or negation of politics. By invalidating the Muslim narrative of victimhood and laying claims to recognition of the U.S. as a non-agentive victim, the report attempts to exist in a non-political space. However, alleging an existence in a non-political space, as Jeffery and Candea note, “establishes a space for a specific kind of politics” by posing as a “neutral or indisputable starting point from which discussion, debate, and action—in a word, politics—can and must proceed.”⁴⁵ As Kleinman et al. suggest, just as perpetrators can enforce silence through violence, the languages of victimhood can silence and erase.⁴⁶ In a way, narratives of victimhood can shape and modify the contours of debate, curtail negotiation, and define the boundaries of what can or cannot be said. The report’s claim of American victimhood is an attempt to neutralize any counternarratives by posing

43. Das Kleinman et al., *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xi.

44. Laura Jeffery and Matei Candea, “The Politics of Victimhood,” *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (2006), 289.

45. Ibid.

46. Kleinman et al., *Social Suffering*.

as neutral and establishing the starting points for the debate. Moreover, recognition as a non-agentive victim encourages support for the U.S. claims of recompense, retaliation, or other political campaigns.

However, in narratives of victimhood, often the boundaries between victims and perpetrators are blurred. The presumption that the victim (the U.S.) was merely an innocent non-agent conceals the complexities of the events that occurred or are occurring as a result of past victim-perpetrator encounter/s or relationship/s. As Zerrin Özlem Biner shows in her case study of a plea-bargaining law in Turkey, designation of perpetrator and victim is also a matter of perspective.⁴⁷ By formulating one group's victimhood in a particular way, one can downplay that group's agency (the U.S. as an active agent) and another group's suffering (Muslims in the Middle East). The report's narrative of American suffering thus helps downplay the agency and role of the United States in creating the political, social, and economic circumstances in the Muslim world that led to the events of the September 11, 2001.

B. Pervertible Islam

"Islam is not the enemy. It is not synonymous with terror. Nor does Islam teach terror," the report declares, negating the terrorists' claims and the Muslim world's fears that "America" is at war with Islam.⁴⁸ If the enemy is not Islam, then who or what is? The enemy, the report clarifies, is not our Muslim or Arab friends, quoting President Bush:

47. Zerrin Özlem Biner, "From Terrorist to Repentant: Who Is the Victim?"

History and Anthropology 17, no. 4 (2006).

48. *9/11 Commission Report*, 364.

“‘The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them.’”⁴⁹ This framing, as Paul Chilton has argued, establishes “who is ‘us’ and who is ‘them,’” asserting that there is “no neutral or middle ground.” Indeed, Muslim or non-Muslim nations are “either ‘with us’ or ‘against us.’”⁵⁰ With some Muslims as friends and others as enemies, it is crucial to differentiate between good and bad Muslims. The most salient feature of good Muslims, the report tacitly notes, is an unconditional support for the war on terror. Since the cooperation of the oppressed makes oppression more sustainable, it is essential that Muslims buy into the good Muslim profile. However, selling the good Muslim cutout to Muslims requires a customer-centric marketing strategy that prioritizes customers’ needs and interests: defining good Islam (authentic and peaceful) and demarcating it from bad Islam (perverted and extremist). Muslims who are desperate to dissociate themselves from terrorism are more likely to subscribe to the state’s good Muslim framing. As I will show later, even though the report differentiates between good Islam/Muslims and bad Islam/Muslims, the lines drawn between Islam and terrorism are so fluid that they negate the exoneration of Islam as a terrorist-spawning religion.⁵¹

49. Ibid, 337.

50. Paul Chilton, *Analyzing Political Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 159.

51. Also, note that differential framing of good Muslims and “terrorists” can function as a political wedge thrust between different Muslim communities.

Unlike U.S. courts and state actors (discussed in previous chapter) that constructed “orthodox” Islam as purely religious, the report describes Islam as “both a faith and a code of conduct for all aspects of life.”⁵² While in the prisoners’ civil rights cases of the late 20th century, delineating Islam as a pure religion (in the Protestant sense of the word) helped discredit black Muslims as a legitimate religious group protected by the First Amendment, the political exigencies of the post-9/11 era demanded a return to the Orientalist construction of Islam as a hybrid entity between religion and state.⁵³ This construction, as discussed in chapter one, reinforces the myth that Islam is not a true religion or a sincere faith—a myth that is further bolstered by the report’s characterization of Muslims as uncomfortable with distinctions between religion and state. This discomfort, according to the report, allows the “extremists” to capitalize on an ideology that (1) condemns the separation of religion and state as “usurping God’s authority over all aspects of life”; and (2) attributes the demise of the Islamic civilization to the failure of some Muslim rulers to commit to a fusion of state and religion.⁵⁴ Islamic

52. *9/11 Commission Report*, 50.

53. The problem with this conceptualization is imposing a Protestant definition of religion on Islam. Orthodox Islam is not a religion in a Protestant sense of the word (i.e., it’s not separate from the state). To a Christian audience, Islam is both a religious and political ideology. For a more in-depth discussion, see the previous chapter (Chapter One: The Dichotomous Construction of the Nation of Islam and “orthodox” Islam in Prisoners’ Civil Rights Cases of the late 20th Century).

54. *9/11 Commission Report*, 50.

terrorists, the report argues, do “not distinguish politics from religion, thus distorting both.”⁵⁵ This extremist and distorted “strain of Islam” has periodically surged in the Islamic world. The report, “for want of a better term,” labels the distorted Islam as “fundamentalism,” explaining that fundamentalists demand a full integration of religion and state by observing “the literal teachings of the Qur’an and Hadith.”⁵⁶ Some fundamentalist clerics, the report goes on, urge Muslims to interpret “the Qur’an and Hadith” for themselves (instead of depending on state-sanctioned interpretations) and—presumably based on their own interpretation of the scriptures—police the quality of other people’s adherence to Islam.⁵⁷

Simply put, the report distinguishes between good Muslims (“America’s” friends) and bad Muslims (enemies/terrorists) by demarcating good Islam from bad or distorted Islam in the following ways:

- (1) Bad Islam takes good Islam’s “code of conduct for all aspects of life” too literally, attempting to force its way into politics.

55. Ibid, 362.

56. Ibid, 50.

57. Ibid. Here, the report is referring to *Amr bi al-Maruf wa'l-Nahy an al-Munkar*, which is a phrase repeated throughout Qur’an and literally means “encourage what is right and forbid what is wrong.” It is God asking Muslims to remind each other to do good and to refrain from doing evil. Contrary to what the report says, the concept was not invented by extremists or fundamentalists.

- (2) By failing to distinguish between politics and religion, bad Islam *distorts* both Islam and politics.
- (3) Bad Islam encourages Muslims to interpret the Qur'an and Hadith for themselves—as opposed to subscribing to state-sanctioned interpretations.
- (4) Bad Islam encourages Muslims to practice Amr bi al-Maruf wa'l-Nahy an al-Munkar.

These distinctions, I argue, fail not only to dissociate Islam from terrorism (i.e., Islamic terrorism as described in the report) but also to deliver the promised acquittal of all Muslims from charges of terrorism.

On one hand, the report defines orthodox Islam (i.e., Islam that originated in the 7th century Saudi Arabia) as both a religion and a code of conduct for all aspects of life—essentially characterizing Islam as partially a religion and partially a body of laws and policies governing the everyday lives of Muslims. Islam, to put it simply, does not just oversee people's spiritual and personal lives but also their social and political actions. On the other hand, the report distinguishes between peaceful Muslims and fundamentalists by characterizing the latter as those who demand an integration of religion and state. If we accept the report's definition of Islam as both a religion and a comprehensive code of conduct, then the extremist "strain of Islam" is not a wild distortion of Islam, but authentic Islam. To be a "good Muslim" poses a contradiction: One would have to denounce Islam's jurisdiction over one's social and political existence—thus effectively turning away from what the report describes as orthodox or true Islam.

Furthermore, the report implies that "fundamentalists" or "bad Muslims" rely on their personal and false interpretations of Islamic scripture to justify their opposition to

the United States, and yet, the report also speaks repeatedly of educating Muslims to help them understand their own religion. In other words, Muslims cannot be trusted to correctly interpret their own faith; the United States should dictate accurate interpretations of Islam—to mitigate the threat of Islam’s interpretational risk. Ironically, even as the report’s authors, in their recommendations for preventing future attacks, prescribe educational campaigns and extreme policing practices to promote a state-sanctioned image of the United States and to encourage Muslims to act a certain way and follow a certain set of rules, the report also demonizes “bad Muslims” for their practice of *Amr bi al-Maruf wa'l-Nahy an al-Munkar* (encouraging others to do good and forbidding them from doing bad).

The report further distinguishes between good and bad Islam by noting that “America and its friends oppose a perversion of Islam, not the great world faith itself.”⁵⁸ Bad Islam, which is the true ““face of terror”” as President Bush noted, is not Islam, but perverted or distorted Islam.⁵⁹ “Most Muslims,” the report argues, “prefer a peaceful and inclusive vision of their faith” rather than the perverted strain.⁶⁰ However, fundamentalists like Bin Ladin are adept at enlisting other Muslims in their terrorist

58. Ibid, 364.

59. Note that, as I will show in Chapter Three: An Analysis of the Presidential Rhetoric on Islam and Muslims Since Jimmy Carter, these and similar metaphors (“perverted,” “twisted,” “distorted,” “hijacked,” “poisoned,” etc.) are often used by American presidents to differentiate between good and bad Islam.

60. Ibid, 54.

causes by focusing “on attacking America” and using “Islam’s most extreme, fundamentalist traditions as [their] match.” Because “political, social, and economic problems” in Muslim countries have “created inflammable societies,” striking a religious match can cause an explosion: “All these elements—including religion—combined in an explosive compound.”⁶¹ In fact, Bin Ladin’s “distinctive appeal” in the Muslim world is rooted in his anti-American brand of terrorism and a promise of severing “the head of the snake” (i.e., the United States).⁶² In line with the civilizational clash theory and the report’s ‘Muslim narrative of victimhood’ thesis, the report suggests that Bin Ladin’s brand of Islam appeals to Muslims because of their inexplicable animosity with the United States.

On surface, the report seems to effectively set Islam apart from terrorism: Islam and terrorism are not synonymous; most Muslims are not terrorists; and terrorist ideology triumphs only when it strikes a religious match in economically and politically unstable Muslim societies where a deep-rooted rage against the U.S. acts as a radicalizing catalyst. However, a closer look reveals the underlying construction of Islam as pervertible ideology and of Muslims as forever suspects. First, Islam can be easily perverted and then weaponized in highly flammable Muslim societies. One minute a fine religion not espousing terrorism, but the next minute, misinterpreted and perverted, Islam becomes a

61. Ibid.

62. Both in the Bible and in the Quran, one of Satan’s forms is a snake. Bin Ladin wasn’t the first or only Muslim leader to refer to the U.S. as the Satan. For example, Khomeini (Iran’s first Supreme Leader) has famously called America “the Great Satan.”

match that triggers an explosion or a plane-sized missile crashing into American democracy.⁶³ Note that the report appears to differentiate between good Muslims and terrorists on a scale of anti-Americanness: Muslims in general hate “America,” but the hate is mostly passive; terrorists, on the other hand, act upon their anti-American sentiments and activate other Muslims’ passive anti-Americanness. In a way, the boundaries between terrorists and other Muslims are blurred because, according to the report, Muslims in general share anti-American sentiments even though most of them do not act upon their hate. Indeed, the report also notes elsewhere that despite their comparatively small numbers, radicalized Muslims enjoy a good “degree of approval from millions more” who are not actively committing acts of terror.⁶⁴ In the same vein, the report repeatedly describes al Qaeda not as a finite group of people, but as a manifestation of “a radical ideological movement in the Islamic world” that inspires and initiates terrorists.⁶⁵ “Al Qaeda and its affiliates” are “an omnipotent, unslayable hydra of destruction.”⁶⁶ They are the multi-headed monster with presence “all over the world,

63. As noted in chapter one, this widely used characterization of Islam as a pervertible ideology draws on a centuries-long criticism of Islam for lacking a centralized power (a Pope-like figure) which leaves Islamic scriptures widely open to harmful interpretations by individual practitioners.

64. *9/11 Commission Report*, 48.

65. *Ibid*, 363.

66. There are multiple studies on the significance of “hydra” as a metaphor for Islamic terrorism. For example, see W. J. T. Mitchell, *Cloning Terror: The War of*

adaptable, resilient, needing little higher-level organization, and capable of anything.”⁶⁷ Eliminating groups like al Qaeda, the report explains, can make Americans safer, but it can’t guarantee national security—apparently because all Muslims can potentially be radicalized at a drop of a kufi cap. Muslims, good or not, are forever suspects because Islamic terrorism, like Islam itself, is a decentralized ideology that lives as long as Islam exists.

To counter the almost inevitable radicalization of the Muslim population, the report calls for educating Muslims and Arabs and reforming their societies: “It is among the large majority of Arabs and Muslims that we must encourage reform, freedom, democracy, and opportunity, even though our own promotion of these messages is limited in its effectiveness simply because we are its carriers.”⁶⁸ This U.S.-centric proposal presupposes that Arabs and Muslims are under-civilized and that democracy, freedom, and reform are uniquely American values. It also projects that the U.S. educational campaigns in the Muslim world would have “limited ... effectiveness” because Muslims will not be able to look past the identity of the messenger; the widespread anti-American sentiments have blinded Muslims so much so that “our”

Images, 9/11 to the Present (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011).

67. *9/11 Commission Report*, 364.

68. Ibid, 375. Indeed, the United States has, over the last several decades, invested millions of dollars in cultural campaigns in the Muslim and Arab worlds (from running radio/TV channels to sending Arab American rappers on tours in the Middle East).

altruistic and liberating words will fall on deaf ears.⁶⁹ This prophecy not only serves as a preemptive justification for more aggressive approaches (e.g., military excursions, preemptive arrests, CVE programs, etc.), but it also shifts liability to the Muslim world. Simply put, Muslims are to be held accountable for the war on terror and the death and destruction that it spawns. Similarly, the report obligates Muslims to sculpt their communities in the image of the United States and reform their societies according to American standards: “Muslims themselves will have to reflect upon such basic issues as the concept of jihad, the position of women, and the place of non-Muslim minorities. The United States can promote moderation, but cannot ensure its ascendancy. Only Muslims can do this.”⁷⁰ However, while it is on Muslims to deliver the U.S.-approved curriculum to their own kind, it is the United States government that is in charge of dictating Muslim behavior and thought: “The U.S. government must define what the message is.”⁷¹

Moreover, underneath the seemingly humanitarian reeducation programs for Muslims lies the true mission of the United States government: “If the United States does

69. Note that, to a great extent, it is because of this projection that most counter-radicalization and counter violent extremism programs focus on recruiting Muslims into the war on terror. The failure-to-civilize theory not only presupposes that Muslims are uncivilized, but it also predicts that all civilizing attempts will invariably fail. As a result, preemptive measures (including recruiting informers among Muslim communities) are viewed as not only justifiable, but also vital in the war on terror.

70. 9/11 Commission Report, 376.

71. Ibid.

not act aggressively to define itself in the Islamic world, the extremists will gladly do the job for us.”⁷² The striking revelation here is that the proposed educational policies are in fact a form of image-repairing public diplomacy—i.e., a creative rebranding of the United States—aimed at winning the hearts and minds of Muslims. As the report explains in another passage, the United States has fallen victim to the “coarse expression[s] of a fashionable ‘Occidentalism’ among [Muslim] intellectuals who caricature U.S. values and policies.”⁷³ Rectifying Muslims’ warped perception of U.S. policies in the Middle East is packaged as a charitable effort to educate Muslims about women’s rights and democracy. As some scholars have observed, the report’s hegemonic suggestion that the U.S. government should “engage the struggle of ideas” through educating Muslims about American values serves only one purpose: securing the United States’ “moral and intellectual leadership” over the Muslim world.⁷⁴ After all, given that Islam can be easily perverted into anti-American and terrorist ideology, it is essential that the U.S. government “engage” Muslims on an ideological level to preclude radicalization through perversion of Islam.

72. Ibid, 377.

73. Ibid, 375.

74. Anna M. Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling, “Power and Play through Poisies: Reconstructing Self and Other in the 9/11 Commission Report,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 829.

Not surprisingly, preventive strategies “must focus clearly on the Arab and Muslim world, in all its variety.”⁷⁵ Muslim bodies, in all their varieties (i.e., nationality, race, sect, etc.), become the clear sites of the war on terrorism. Throughout the document, multiple passages describe (1) the appearance, (2) the cultural behavior, and (3) the daily lives and activities of the 9/11 terrorists. These descriptions are often put forth as clear signs of radicalization or as missed opportunities for preemptive arrests. For instance, the report cites a friend of Mohammad Atta who suggested that Atta’s decision to grow a beard was an obvious sign of radicalization: “According to his friend, Atta had changed a great deal, had grown a beard, and had ‘obviously adopted fundamentalism’ by that time.”⁷⁶ Identifying bad Muslims based on their appearance criminalizes, for example, growing a beard, a facial feature that would not be suspicious if, for instance, George Clooney were to grow a beard after filming *Ocean’s Eleven*, released in 2001. Islam encourages Muslim men to wear a beard as a sign of submission to God, but devotion to one’s religious beliefs and practices is not evidence that one is a terrorist. Of course, given the pervertible nature of Islam, a beard can mean more than a sincere faith in God; it can mean gravitation towards perverted Islam espoused by the bad bearded Muslims. Similarly, the report considers other cultural behavior such as living frugally (an Islamic cultural value) and being fluent in both Arabic (the language of Quran) and English (bilingualism criminalized!) as signifiers of radicalization.

75. *9/11 Commission Report*, 364.

76. *Ibid*, 161.

In addition to Islamic cultural behavior, living while Muslim also signifies guilt. The report laments the blindness, hesitance, or incompetence of intelligence agencies and law enforcement officers to interpret men who wore beards, ate pizzas, and withdrew cash at ATMs. Discussing missed opportunities for preemptive arrests, the report describes two of the 9/11 terrorists as spending “their last night pursuing ordinary activities: making ATM withdrawals, eating pizza, and shopping at a convenience store.”⁷⁷ However, racial profiling of Muslims attending to their everyday lives cannot be justified because two of the 9/11 attackers ate food and shopped at a convenience store. According to this (il)logic, since the attackers grew beard, ate pizza, prayed at mosques, and walked down the streets, any Muslim-presenting person exhibiting similar behavior is guilty by signifier and a reasonable suspect. This type of discourse evokes a sense of fear that people who perform the most ordinary activities mask terrorist dangers. As Talal Asad has noted, the “discourse of terror enables a redefinition of the space of violence in which bold intervention and rearrangement of everyday relations can take place and be governed in relation to terror.”⁷⁸ Every Muslim-presenting body engaged in eating a pizza or buying mints at a convenience store could fly a plane into the Twin Towers a day or two later. In other words, “they” are hiding among “us,” like sleeper cells that, after dipping a barbecue rib into their favorite sauce, will blow themselves up at an airport or shopping mall. While such descriptions are not problematic if they are individualized, they reinforce the racial profiling of Muslim or Muslim-presenting people

77. Ibid, 253.

78. Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*, 28.

by using bodies and behaviors as potent signifiers of alleged terrorism—ultimately framing Muslim bodies as the obvious sites of the war on terror and the necessary securitization efforts of the U.S government.

III: Conclusion

In “Foresight—And Hindsight,” a slim chapter squeezed between the historical narrative of the first nine chapters and two concluding chapters with policy recommendations, the report argues, “We believe the 9/11 attacks reveal four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management,” stating that “[t]he most important failure was one of imagination.” Lack of imagination, the report goes on, prevented “leaders [from understanding] the gravity of the threat.” In the absence of imaginative thinking, no one realized that the United States was facing “a threat beyond any yet experienced,” and no one “connect[ed] the dots” between Muslim-presenting people strolling down our streets, ordering Italian cuisine, and speaking Arabic fluently. These declarations, made in preparation for policy recommendations of the last two chapters, promote a reimagination of United States through changes in modes of governmentality and through imaginative fear (fear of the unknown and the unknowable).

State (and media), as Judith Butler argues, monopolize, promote, and distribute fear in ways that reinforce a perceived need for greater securitization and militarization. Such manipulation of a population’s sense of insecurity and fear, Butler proposes, can erode critical thinking. Butler also notes that frames can craft our perception of reality by regulating affect (especially, in the case of the War on Terror, fear, rage, and grief) and nullifying our ethical responses that are normally triggered when we encounter a

suffering other.⁷⁹ Realities constructed as such conform to discriminatory, violent, and often hyper-defensive state policies that conceptualize some populations as threats to human life. While the universal and inescapable condition of precariousness of life equalizes all living beings, an unequal distribution of precarity or vulnerability—made possible through frames constructed by certain operations of power—marks some lives as

79. Grief and outrage evoked by a sense of unbearable loss and injustice, combined with fear, are potent affective responses with immense political potential. Often heavily regulated and differentially distributed by regimes of power, these affective responses are either amplified or censored. For example, as Judith Butler notes in *Precarious Life*, in the case of the victims of the 9/11 attacks, public grieving was highly dedicated to American lives. Images and stories of American citizens who had died at the attacks became iconic while non-U.S. nationals were considerably less grieved publicly, and undocumented immigrants and gay and lesbian lives were never publicly grieved. Regulating affect also allows regulating nationalist belonging. For example, conservative media and commentators framed showing and analyzing photos of Abu Ghraib in the U.S. media as un-American. Bill O'Reilly, for instance, argued that it was un-American to air a negative image of the United States for the world's gaze. Similarly, Donald Rumsfeld considered displaying the Abu Ghraib photos as anti-American. Such attempts at censoring the public outrage over the U.S. military's acts of torture is another example of how affect is regulated, on a cognitive level, through carefully constructed frames. By controlling outrage over Abu Ghraib, systems of power attempted to prevent public opinion from turning against the war in Iraq.

less human by framing them as outside the realm of accepted civilizational and cultural norms that make humans human.⁸⁰ These lives thus become ungrievable and disposable. Framing, in other words, acts on a cognitive level to manipulate our perception of reality and to regulate our morally triggered responses (inaction or reaction) to news and images of state-sanctioned violence. By framing Islam as pervertible and Muslims as pre-modern and barbaric, the report conceptualizes Muslims as not having conformed to recognizable norms that make us human. As less human than others, Muslim bodies are easily transformed into sites of violence, and the loss of Muslim lives fails to evoke the same sense of outrage and horror as would the loss of American and non-Muslim lives. Moreover, marking the appearance and behavior of Muslims as missed signs of radicalization is an example of the ‘guilt by signifier’ fallacy (i.e., assigning guilt based on physical or observable signifiers such as having darker skin tone or facial beard),

80. Note that precariousness and precarity are different concepts. In *Precarious Life*, Butler defines precariousness as the vulnerability of life that’s inherent in “living socially, the fact that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all.” Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 14. In this sense, precariousness is “a social condition from which clear political demands and principles emerge.” Ibid, xxv. Precarity, on the other hand, is a “politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death.” Ibid, 25.

which is even more fallacious than the guilt by association fallacy. In the first case, adhering to Islamic cultural standards is criminalized, but in the second, living while Muslim signifies guilt. In both cases, the associations between physical descriptions and terrorist actions call up the missed opportunities for preemptive arrest.

Clearly, there is a disconnect between the report's positive rhetoric about Islam and Muslims—that is meant to distinguish bad Islam/Muslims from good Islam/Muslims—and the Islamophobic ideology underlying much of the report's construction of Islam and Muslims. On the surface, the report denounces a clash between the U.S. and the Muslim world, but it relies heavily on the main tenets of the civilizational clash theory to explain why the 9/11 attacks happened. On the surface, the report gives voice to the terrorists, but in reality it draws on an American narrative of victimhood to undermine the legitimacy of Muslim grievances that led to the 9/11 events. On the surface, the report carefully differentiates between Islam and terrorism or between good/orthodox Islam and bad/fundamentalist Islam, but in effect it conceptualizes Islam as posing an interpretational risk that threatens to morph any Muslim individual or community into a hijacked plane or a ticking bomb. Everyone who looks or behaves like a Muslim is a suspect capable of the next 9/11.

Chapter 3

Hijacking Islam: An Analysis of Presidential Discourse

Since Jimmy Carter

In this chapter, I will examine how U.S. presidents have framed Islam and Muslims in their public statements since the late 20th century. Although my analysis focuses primarily on presidential discourse, my goal is to show where legal and political discourses converge and diverge in their representations of Islam and Muslims. Scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the definition of “political discourse,” but I will follow the tradition of those scholars who analyze “the discourses of (institutionalized) political elites.”¹ As research by critical discourse scholars has shown, the discourse of the political elites plays a significant role in the construction of national identities and the notions of inclusion and exclusion.²

I will focus on presidential discourse because I am interested in the cognitive and social consequences of presidential utterances about Islam and Muslims.³ As Frank

1. François Randour, Julien Perrez, and Min Reuchamps, “Twenty Years of Research on Political Discourse: A Systematic Review and Directions for Future Research,” *Discourse and Society* 31, no. 4 (June 2020): 428-443, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926520903526>.

2. See, for example, Ruth Wodak et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

3. In this chapter, I use “discourse” to refer to “conventional ways of talking that

Austermühl has argued in his seminal book on intertextuality in presidential discourse, certain presidential utterances, due to the intertextual nature of presidential discourse, “take on a life of their own. Key sections enter the nation’s collective discursive memory.”⁴ American presidential discourse, beyond its political value, is “a cultural phenomenon” that, among other functions, “contributes significantly to the formation and affirmation of identities.”⁵ In other words, presidential discourse controls and guides how Americans see themselves and their country—especially by creating images of un-American others. In addition, presidential discourse shapes “the nation’s perception of its political system, its political institutions, and its political actors” and helps create “homogenized and politically powerful assumptions, attitudes, and images” on a national level.⁶ Through these functions, presidential discourse strengthens the institutional power

create and perpetuate systems of ideology, sets of beliefs about how the world works and what is natural.” Barbara Johnstone, *Discourse Analysis* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 29-30.

4. Frank Austermühl, *The Great American Scaffold: Intertextuality and Identity in American Presidential Discourse* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2014), 5.

5. Ibid, 8-9. For discussions of how presidential discourse shapes the nation’s identity, see Vanessa B. Beasley, *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2011); and Mary E. Stuckey, *Defining Americans: The Presidency and National Identity* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

6. Ibid, 9.

of both individual presidents and the office of the president of the United States, and in doing so, it legitimizes American presidents' political actions and decisions and motivates "the American body politic" to embrace certain agenda or policies.⁷

Ultimately, I argue that the positive presidential rhetoric about Islam and Muslims is often negated by discursive contradictions and Islamophobic assumptions and premises that underlie presidential discourse.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson centralized metaphor as one of "our principal vehicles for understanding" the world.⁸ Metaphors, according to the conceptual metaphor theory, are not limited to rhetorical and ornamental language but are the foundation of the language we use every day to speak about our experiences. Indeed, metaphors, rather than being flourishes of language, are cognitive mechanisms that allow us to conceptualize and create realities by "mapping" conceptual structures from experientially (physical and cultural experiences) grounded and thus more familiar "source domains" onto less familiar and/or abstract "target domains." These conceptual domains (target and source) may bear no similarity at all. Meanings (i.e., elements and their relations) from the source domain, by way of implicit analogy, are mapped onto the target domain. This cognitive process is facilitated by the correlations between our experience in both domains that enables us to understand one concept in terms of

7. Ibid, 9.

8. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 159.

another.⁹ I will draw on the conceptual metaphor theory to show that the metaphors used by American presidents to describe the relationship—or disconnect—between Islam and terrorism have instead conceptualized Islam as pervertible and Muslims as forever suspects.

Finally, some scholars have argued that the pre-9/11 presidents of the twentieth century (Bush Sr. and Clinton) rejected the civilizational clash theory, and it was only after the 9/11 attacks that the Bush administration revived the clash of civilization rhetoric.¹⁰ However, as I will show in this chapter, despite openly rejecting the

9. For more in-depth discussions of conceptual metaphors and the use of metaphor in political discourse, see, for example, Nicholas Howe, “Metaphor in Contemporary American Political Discourse,” *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 3, no. 2 (1988): 87–104; Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Terrell Carver and Jernei Pikalo, *Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and Changing the World* (London: Routledge, 2011).

10. See for example, Deepa Kumar, “Framing Islam: The Resurgence of Orientalism during the Bush II Era,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 3 (2010): 255. Kumar writes: “Since the events of 9/11, the range of debate on issues pertaining to Muslims or Islam has narrowed to a point where Orientalist modes of thought are once again dominant. The ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis eschewed by the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations (Gerghes, 1999) became a central framing mechanism under the Bush administration.”

civilizational clash theories, the pre-9/11 presidents heavily drew from Orientalist modes of representing Islam and Muslims as did the post-9/11 presidents. In the post-9/11 presidential discourse, the discourse of ideological war that replaced the civilizational clash rhetoric, I further argue, continued to legitimize Islamophobic policies and the war on terror through the construction of the Muslim other as consumed by what Bush called a “culture of victimization in which someone else [i.e., U.S. and the West] is always to blame and violence is always the solution.”¹¹

I. Presidential Discourse

I start my analysis with President Jimmy Carter because there are few instances of American presidential utterances that openly discuss Islam and Muslims prior to Iran’s hostage crisis (that lasted from November 4, 1979, to January 20, 1981). For example, in 1796, President John Adams wrote:

As the government of United States of America is not in any sense founded upon the Christian religion, —as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of the Mussulmen,—and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever

11. George W. Bush, “Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy,” *The American Presidency Project*, October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>.

produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.¹²

In this statement, Adams declared a perpetual state of peace between the United States and Muslim-majority countries (Mahometan nations). He provided three interconnected reasons why the U.S. and Muslim nations could continue a harmonious coexistence: (1) The United States was not founded upon Christianity; (2) the United States was not against Muslim laws, faith, and peace; and (3) the United States had never been at war with or showed hostility towards Muslim nations. Declaring that the U.S. had never been at war with “Mahometan nations” could be a reference to the Crusades and the fact that the U.S. was a new nation and had no part in the previous conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Europe and Asia. Here, Adams seems to advocate for continued peace based on the premise that Islam’s war is with Christianity, not with the secular government of the United States.

In contrast to Adam’s declaration of peace and long before Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington’s civilizational clash theses, John Quincy Adams declared an ongoing war between Islam and Christianity and, by extension, Islamic and Christian states (including the U.S.). He even argued that this war could only end by exterminating Islam.¹³ Islam, he believed, was a twisted adaptation of Christianity and a religion of “undistinguishing and exterminating war... against all the rest of mankind.” The essence

12. John Adams, Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary, (1797), Article XI.

13. Joseph Blunt, *The American Annual Register for the Years 1827-8-9* (New York: E & G W Blunt, 1830), 269.

of Islam “was violence and lust: to exalt the brutal over the spiritual part of human nature.”¹⁴

The next significant presidential statement concerning Islam or Muslims can be found in the late 1950s. On June 28, 1957, at the opening ceremony of the Islamic Center in Washington, President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously removed his shoes to enter the mosque and address a Muslim audience. It was the first time a U.S. president delivered a speech at a mosque, and the event made the news as a momentous occasion.¹⁵ The Islamic Center was funded and built by several Muslim-majority countries.¹⁶ In his speech, Eisenhower praised the sponsoring Muslim nations for their contributions “to the building of civilization” throughout the past centuries.¹⁷ Like John Adams before him, Eisenhower ensured his Muslim audience that there was a “just and lasting peace” and a “strong bond of friendship” between “the countries of Islam” and the United States.

14. Ibid, 29.

15. W. H. Lawrence, “President and Wife Doff Shoes at Rites Dedicating Mosque,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1957, 1. Also see Jean White, “Ike Stresses Free Religion at Mosque Rites,” *Washington Post and Times Herald*, June 29, 1957; and Dana Adams Schmidt, “President Opens A Mosque Today,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1957.

16. His wife, Mamie Eisenhower, was accompanying the president at the mosque. She too removed her shoes before entering.

17. Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Remarks at Ceremonies Opening the Islamic Center,” *American Presidency Project*, June 28, 1957, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/233310>.

Most American presidents of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have repeatedly declared that the United States has not, is not, and will not be at war with Islam. Many of these presidents have also maintained that most Muslims are not terrorists because (1) they support the U.S. war on terrorism and other U.S. foreign and domestic policies concerning Muslim populations; and (2) they are against the perverted version of their faith used by terrorists as a façade for their violent and hateful ideology. In short, American presidents, from conservative to liberal, have generally used a seemingly positive rhetoric to talk about Islam and Muslims. However, as I will show in this chapter, there is a disconnect between these seemingly positive statements and the Islamophobic ideology embedded in presidential discourse. I believe these discrepancies can explain the parallel disconnect between presidents' positive discourse and their Islamophobic politics.

A. President Jimmy Carter

Unlike some presidents after him, Jimmy Carter never used blatantly Islamophobic rhetoric. Today, Carter is remembered for his rhetoric of comity among nations and his efforts to quell Islamophobic sentiments and opinions that were rising in the U.S. as a result of Iran's hostage crisis. On one occasion, he even defended the rights of the Iranian refugees who were admitted to the United States during the hostage crisis.¹⁸ Carter was

18. Jimmy Carter, "The President's News Conference," *The American Presidency Project*, March 14, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250048>. In response to a

also careful to differentiate between “terrorists” and the rest of Iranians.¹⁹ In short, the

question about why the U.S. had let over 9000 Iranian refugees to enter the U.S. after “they [Iranians] took Americans hostages,” Carter responded: “We have screened the immigrants very closely, and in every instance, they have been determined to have a real, genuine, legal interest and reason for coming to our country. It would not be advisable for us, it would not be humane for us, it would not even be decent for us, in my opinion, when we have an intense confrontation—an extremely emotional confrontation with a revolutionary country like Iran, to refuse to accept refugees who are trying to escape circumstances there and coming to our Nation for a haven. This was a decision made by me, it’s in accordance with the American law, and I believe it’s in the best interests of our own country to do so.”

19. See, for example, Jimmy Carter, “Merced, California Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting,” *The American Presidency Project*, July 04, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250526>. In response to a question about Carter’s policy towards Iran, he explained that the Iranian people he was negotiating with were “fanatics, some of them; they’re terrorists, some of them...” Also see Jimmy Carter, “Situation in Iran and Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan Remarks at a White House Briefing for Members of Congress,” *The American Presidency Project*, January 08, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250505>. Carter told the reporters that “the most powerful single political entity in Iran consists of the international terrorists or the kidnapers who are holding our hostages,” but he also

following analysis is in no way a suggestion that Carter was Islamophobic. My analysis attempts to show that despite Carter's positive or neutral rhetoric about Muslims and Islam, some of the Islamophobic rhetoric of the time seeped into his statements and policies.

Carter was the first U.S. president compelled by the political exigencies of his time to repeatedly refer to Muslims and Muslim-majority countries in his public statements. As mentioned earlier, this change in presidential discourse was mainly due to the Iran's hostage crisis. According to a 1981 report by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, on November 4, 1979, a group of "Islamic students" seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and detained 52 American diplomats and staff as hostages.²⁰ In the wake of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the U.S. government had come under widespread criticism for its

differentiated between the terrorists and other Iranians. He explained that a "small group of people—who may originally have comprised some students, but who are not students and should not be referred to as students—have achieved, with the holding of American hostages, a great and significant political influence in Iran. They don't necessarily have as one of their prime interests the integrity of Iran as a nation or the well-being of the Iranian people or even the security of the country within which they live. And so there is no legitimate political bargaining leverage that can be exerted on them...."

20. United States Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The Iran Hostage Crisis: A Chronology of Daily Developments, January 1-25, 1981 Report*, G.P.O., 1981,

https://primo.lib.umn.edu/permalink/f/1q7ssba/UMN_ALMA21471397230001701.

decades-long support of Muhammad Reza Pahlavi's authoritarian regime, fueling the circumstances that led to the first televised hostage crisis in the United States.²¹ As James F. Larson wrote, "[t]he Iran hostage crisis was quintessentially visual in nature."²² Media outlets were flooded with images of angry-looking and armed crowds surrounding or overrunning the U.S. embassy in Tehran. In the 444 days of the crisis, the American public was exposed to daily doses of bearded men standing guard next to blindfolded American hostages or setting fire to American flags, of Ayatollah Khomeini paying visits to American hostages at Easter and Christmas, and of the "charred bodies of U.S. servicemen left in the desert after an abortive rescue mission."²³ Scholars and media

21. Between 1953 and 1979, eight American presidents had provided the Shah with both economic and military support to keep him on the throne. In return, the Shah provided the U.S. with a steady supply of oil and a promise to never nationalize Iran's oil industry. For more information, see for example, "The Hostage Crisis in Iran," *The Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum*, https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/hostage_crisis_in_iran.

22. James F. Larson, "Television and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Iran Hostage Crisis," *Journal of Communication* 36, no. 4 (1986): 108–130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1986.tb01454.x>. Note that this was not the last time Americans were taken hostage in a Muslim-majority country, but it was the first televised hostage crisis.

23. Ibid, 108. Note that the eight U.S. servicemen who died on the rescue mission

described the hostage crisis as “America’s first encounter with radical Islam,”²⁴ constantly reminding viewers and readers that America was “held hostage” by Islamic fundamentalism.²⁵ As Carter himself declared in his opening remarks at the Society of Newspaper Editors’ Annual Convention on April 10, 1980, “No single situation so aggravates the American people, so tests our maturity, so tries our patience, so challenges

were not killed by Iranian forces. They were caught in a sandstorm, two crafts crashed into each other due to technical malfunction, and the mission was quickly aborted as a result. All remaining U.S. soldiers returned home safely.

24. David R. Farber, *Taken Hostage: the Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Also see, United States Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The Iran Hostage Crisis: A Chronology of Daily Developments, January 1-25, 1981 Report*, G.P.O., 1981, https://primo.lib.umn.edu/permalink/f/1q7ssba/UMN_ALMA21471397230001701; Brigitte Lebens Nacos, *Terrorism and the Media: from the Iran Hostage Crisis to the World Trade Center Bombing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and L. A. Wolf, “America Held Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979–1981 and U.S.-Iranian Relations,” *Magazine of History* 20, no. 3 (2006): 27–30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/maghis/20.3.27>.

25. ABC, for example, added an evening news special called “America Held Hostage.”

our unity, as does the continued captivity of American hostages in the Tehran Embassy.”²⁶

It was in such volatile political climate that Carter had to make public statements and hold news conferences about a country that was newly renamed “the Islamic Republic of Iran”—formerly known as Persia or Iran in the West.²⁷ The White House issued its first official statement on November 09 (one week into the crisis). This 221-word document validated the American public’s “outrage,” “frustration,” and “deep anger”; praised the pride and courage of American hostages and their families; ensured Americans that the President was taking all necessary measures—many “conducted without publicity”—to free the detainees; and, on behalf of the President and the families of the hostages, called for restraint in reacting to the hostage crisis. Americans were asked to refrain “from any action that might increase the danger to the American hostages in Tehran.”²⁸

26. Jimmy Carter, “American Society of Newspaper Editors Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Society’s Annual Convention,” *The American Presidency Project*, April 10, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250580>.

27 Historically, people in the West used the term Persia to refer to the country that is now known as Iran. In 1935, on the eve of the Persian new year (Nowruz), Reza Shah Pahlavi (Shah is Farsi for King) formally requested foreign delegates to use the term Iran (meaning the land of Aryans) to refer to the country. After the Islamic Revolution, the new regime decided to rebrand the nation as “the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

28. Jimmy Carter, “White House Statement on American Hostages in Iran,” *The*

By the end of his tenure (January 20, 1981), Carter had issued several White House or presidential statements on the Iran hostage crisis. In neither of these statements, did Carter make any references to the hostage takers' Islamic faith—which was in stark contrast with the media discourse that repeatedly referred to the hostage takers as Muslim terrorists or Islamic fundamentalists, hence foregrounding the hostage takers' religion and downplaying their political grievances against the United States. Nor did any of the White House or presidential statements directly implicate all Muslims in the terrorist acts of one group of Muslims in one Muslim country (again in contrast with the popular media rhetoric). In fact, Carter frequently framed Iran and Iranians (a nation and a nationality) as terrorists who had violated basic human rights and international laws, but he never drew a direct line between the Iranian terrorists' religion and their terrorist acts. However, in his statement during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend (November 17, 1979), he didn't include Muslims in his special prayers request for the hostages:

We join with people of all faiths throughout the world who adhere to fundamental principles of human rights and international law. We are united with them in seeking an end to acts of terrorism against innocent people.

On Thanksgiving Day and during the holiday weekend, I ask all Americans to make a special prayer at churches and synagogues and places of public meeting.²⁹

American Presidency Project, November 09, 1979,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248800>.

29. Jimmy Carter, "American Hostages in Iran White House Statement," *The*

In this statement, Muslims, vis-à-vis mosques, are excluded from two important groups: (1) people of all religions worldwide who are united in their adherence “to fundamental principles of human rights and international law”; and (2) Americans who qualify for participating in the president’s nationwide prayer for hostages in Iran. It is only in “churches and synagogues” that Americans are to pray for the release of American hostages, not in mosques. Muslims, thus, are collectively excluded from civilized society and from the in-group of patriotic Americans.

As mentioned earlier, in presidential or White House statements, Carter did not engage in the widespread public discourse that drew a link between the terrorist act of hostage taking and the religion of Islam. In fact, Carter’s official statements never addressed or acknowledged the public anti-Islam and anti-Muslim rhetoric in relation to the hostage crisis. It was only when circumstances or people solicited public responses from the president that Carter directly engaged with the Islamophobic discourse of his time: (1) When he was asked—in interviews, news conferences, informal exchanges with reporters, or formal question-and-answer sessions—to comment on the nature of Islam and the correlation between terrorism and the Muslim faith or to explain why Iranian Muslims hated the United States; and (2) When the anti-Muslim and anti-Iranian sentiments and hate crimes skyrocketed, and Muslims around the world expressed

American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249023>; Also see, Jimmy Carter, “American Hostages in Iran Statement Requesting Special Prayers for the Hostages During the Thanksgiving Holiday Weekend,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 17, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249039>.

concerns over the increasing hostility towards their communities, compelling Carter to respond with a statement regarding the U.S. relations with Islamic nations, the first presidential Eid-al-Fitr message in the history of the U.S., and occasional remarks against “abus[ing] the fine tens of thousands of Iranians who live in our country and who have a voice to speak out, as they have to me directly.”³⁰

When reporters, community leaders, or ordinary Americans solicited Carter’s opinion on Islam and Muslims, he refuted the assumption that the hostage taker’s Islamic faith was the root of their rage or the motivation behind their terrorist acts. For example, in a news conference on November 28, 1979, a reporter asked if the president was considering building a coalition with his opponents from other political parties in response to the threat “of international tension and volatility, especially in the Islamic world.” Carter responded:

30. Jimmy Carter, “Iranian Situation and United States Energy Conservation Remarks at a White House Briefing for State Governors,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 16, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248981>. However, it’s noteworthy that Carter never issued a formal statement requesting Americans not to abuse Iranians and Muslims in the United States. He only, in very few occasions and mostly in response to direct questions, cautioned the nation against harassing Iranian and Muslims in the country. For Carter’s Fitr message, which was the first Eid-al-Fitr message ever issued by a U.S. president, see Jimmy Carter, “Id-al-Fitr Message of the President,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 11, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/251716>.

I don't think the identity of the Islamic world is a factor. We have the deepest respect and reverence for Islam and for all those who share the Moslem faith. I might say that, so far as I know, all the Islamic nations have joined us in condemning the activities and the actions of the Government of Iran. So, I don't think religious divisions are a factor here at all.³¹

While Carter here repudiates a conceptualization of Islam as inherently violent and incompatible with the values shared by people of other faiths, he simultaneously predicates the inculpability of Muslims on their condemnation of the Iranian government's political opposition to the policies and practices of the United States in the Middle East. This rhetoric is a pre-9/11 example of the polarizing either-with-us-or-against-us presidential logic, later popularized by George W. Bush.

In the same news conference, another reporter expressed concern about a possible "cold war with the Islamic countries." The reporter was worried that "watching TV news for 25 days, Americans soon [would] believe the whole Moslem world [was] hating them." The reporter wanted to know the president's "policy towards... the Islamic countries under these circumstances." Carter again emphasized that "Moslem nations" had condemned Iran's actions. In fact, according to Carter, because other Islamic countries perceived the acts of the Muslims in Iran "as something of a disgrace for their own religious faith," the United States was "drawn closer to these people" (meaning non-

31. Jimmy Carter, "The President's News Conference," November 28, 1979, *The American Presidency Project*, November 28, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249292>.

Iranian Muslims), including some Muslim countries that didn't use to be "close friends" of the U.S. (e.g., Iraq and Libya). Again, in an early example of the 'good Muslim vs. bad Muslim' rhetoric, Carter predicated friendly relations between the U.S. and Islamic countries upon three requirements met by the latter: (1) expressing unconditional support for the U.S. interests in the Middle East; (2) denouncing any Muslim political opposition to the U.S. as a "disgrace" to Islam; and (3) publicly distancing oneself from Muslim groups that did not join the friends of the U.S. club.

Carter explained that it was "certainly not part of the Islamic faith to condone" the Iranian government's acts of terrorism. Authentic Muslims would view the hostage taking as a "disgrace" to Islam.³² Iran's act of political aggression towards the U.S., it is implied in this statement, constitutes a deviation from orthodox Islam. Characterizing Islam as a religion that can be disgraced by the political actions of one group of Muslims is an earlier version of the U.S. presidents' framing of Islam as pervertible in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Ironically, discursive constructs that frame Islam as a corruptible religion often conflate the political beliefs and actions of Muslims with their religious faith while also critiquing the blurred boundaries of religion and state in orthodox Islam.

32. For similar rhetoric, see for example, Jimmy Carter, "The President's News Conference," *The American Presidency Project*, March 14, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250048>. In response to a question about hostages in Iran, Carter argued that the hostage taking was "in direct violation not only of international law but the very Islamic principles which these militants profess to espouse and to support."

Presidents after Carter, as I will show later in this chapter, used terms such as “twisted,” “distorted,” “hijacked,” “perverted,” and “poisoned” to differentiate between bad Islam (i.e., Islam as practiced by Muslims who are not supportive of the U.S. state’s policies and practices worldwide) and good Islam. As mentioned in earlier chapters, conceptualizing Islam as an easily corruptible faith is a legitimization technique that justifies Islamophobic policies and practices at home and abroad.

In the spring and summer of 1980, Carter began offering his positive views of Islam and Muslims, without being solicited for his opinions during public events. Perhaps he was conscious of the anti-Muslim sentiments in the U.S., or he was concerned about the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan. The crouching shadow of communism over the Middle East threatened U.S. relations with Muslim-majority countries that were growing increasingly nervous about rising Islamophobia in the American media. The Cold War era politics dictated forming or maintaining alliances with Islamic nations. On February 7, 1980, Carter read a statement at the beginning of a meeting with Islamic Studies professors from the Washington area universities.³³ He opened his statement with

33. Jimmy Carter, “Relations with Islamic Nations Statement by the President,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 07, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249921>. In this statement, Carter wanted to assure his audience that despite the sense of indignation and “just anger” among Americans, caused by the “events in one Islamic country,” no “false resentment” would be directed towards “Islam or its faithful” because “respect for religious faith [was] so deeply

a history lesson:

The history of Islam is very long compared to that of the United States. Islam is celebrating the first year of its 15th century. As an independent nation, we have only just entered our third. But from the beginning, the United States has enjoyed close and valued ties with the Muslim world.... I have been struck, personally and in my experience as President, by the human and moral values which Americans as a people share with Islam.³⁴

Like Eisenhower before him and other U.S. presidents after him, Carter conflated Islam (a religion) with Islamic states (geographical and political entities). Comparing the long history of Islam with the more recent birth of the United States as a nation, as this chapter will show, later became a recurrent theme in presidential rhetoric—particularly when addressing a Muslim audience.³⁵ One problem with the conflation of Islam and Muslim-majority states is that it perpetuates the Orientalist myth that Islam is not a religion, but a political ideology bent on world domination. Moreover, “Americans as a people,” Carter argued, share many values “with Islam.” Note that Americans, in this conceptualization, are “a people” whose single most important identifying feature is not their religion, but

ingrained in the character of the American people.” He also declared that the United States had “the deepest respect and reverence for Islam and all who share the faith of Islam.”

34. Ibid.

35. For instance, Obama’s famous Cairo speech opens with a celebration of Islam’s long history, compared to which the U.S. as a nation is very young.

their Americanness. However, “Islam” in this sentence has replaced a phrase like “people from Muslim-majority countries.” In other words, people who come from Muslim-majority countries or who practice Islam are singularly defined by their religious beliefs.³⁶ Islam, a religion, thus becomes interchangeable with people from these countries or of Muslim faith—implying that all behavior, beliefs, and actions of such people are rooted in or dictated by their faith. Their political opposition to U.S. policies and practices, for example, can only be rooted in a single-minded, fanatical devotion to their “version” of Islam. It naturally follows that if one Muslim or one group of Muslims engage in an act of terrorism, then the answer to ‘why did this happen?’ and ‘why do they hate us?’ can be explained only by the version of Islam professed by that Muslim or that group of Muslims—as opposed to any wrongdoing or injustice that provoked the violent act of opposition in the first place.³⁷

36. Note that in presidential rhetoric (including Carter’s), people from Muslim-majority countries are often primarily referenced by their religion (e.g., “the Islamic people” or “people of Islam”), rather than by their nationalities. Religion, this way, becomes the single identifying feature of people from diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and with often contradictory and distinct values and beliefs.

37. Carter also engaged in this type of revisionist history by repeatedly arguing that Iran’s grievances against the U.S. were unjustified and that Iran’s act of political aggression was unprovoked. See, for example, Jimmy Carter, “Gannett Newspaper and Broadcast Executives Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a White House

Briefing,” *The American Presidency Project*, December 13, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248222>. In this session held on December 13, 1979, Carter dismissed the relevancy of the historical facts (including the U.S.-backed Shah’s autocratic rule of Iran) that had led to the hostage crisis. He even denied any U.S. interference with Iran’s internal affairs. In other instances, Carter simply dismissed the historical events that had led to the hostage crisis as irrelevant. See, for example, Jimmy Carter, “Interview with the President Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Magazine Editors,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 15, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250195>. In this question-and-answer session with magazine editors, held on February 15, 1980, Carter argued against the relevancy of “misunderstandings that have existed in the past... between ourselves and Iran.... I don’t think it’s good at this sensitive moment to resurrect an analysis of the last 35 years of Iran’s history.” Also see Jimmy Carter, “Interview With the President Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters From the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, Inc.,” *The American Presidency Project*, April 18, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249614>. Carter was asked what he thought was in the mind of the hostage takers in Iran. Erasing the U.S.’s pivotal role in keeping Shah in power, Carter responded that some Iranians erroneously conflated Shah with the U.S. and projected their anger against the Shah onto the United States: “There’s an intense hatred of the United States of America itself, brought about by the last 30 years of administration by the Shah, who was a friend of our country during all those years,

B. President George H. W. Bush

As this chapter has so far shown, it is usually in reaction to cultural and political events that U.S. presidents have publicly discussed Islam or Muslims. The first major international crisis of George H. W. Bush's term (1989-1993) was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait which led to the Gulf War.³⁸ In August 1990, Saddam Hussein's troops invaded and occupied parts of Kuwait, a neighboring Muslim-majority country. An occupied Kuwait gave Iraq control over the world's largest oil supplies that could potentially wreak havoc on oil prices and the U.S. economy. President Bush drew parallels between Saddam Hussein and Hitler, condemned Iraq's unprovoked aggression, and built an international coalition to liberate Kuwait.³⁹ However, international sanctions and

beginning even when President Eisenhower was in office. And I think that burning hatred of the United States and of the Shah is combined in the minds of some, like the Ayatollah Khomeini.”

38. Although not included in the present chapter, the Salman Rushdie affair, the 1989 bookstore bombing in Berkeley, the press building bombing in New York City, and the American hostages in Lebanon all occurred during Bush's presidency.

39. Bush argued that if “half a century ago” the United States and the world had stopped Hitler immediately, they would have not “paid so dearly for appeasing an aggressor.” See Bush's “Remarks to Department of Defense Employees Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 15, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265217>. Note that Bush has been praised by

negotiations failed to persuade Hussein to withdraw his forces from Kuwaiti territories. Neither was Hussein dissuaded, under international pressures, from further advancing in Kuwait. On November 29, 1990, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 678, authorizing member states to forcibly remove Hussein's troops from occupied lands. Led by the U.S. military, operation Desert Storm was launched on August 2, 1990, and by February 29, 1991, the U.S.-led coalition celebrated a decisive victory and declared cease-fire.

Among the 35 nations that joined the coalition forces, 11 were Muslim-majority states.⁴⁰ However, many Muslims and Muslim-majority countries opposed the U.S. leadership of the coalition. In Pakistan (one of the allied nations), for examples, thousands of protestors marched on streets, denouncing the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia and demanding an "Arab solution" to Arab-on-Arab violence. Similar protests broke out in Algiers, Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, and many other Muslim-majority countries. Capitalizing on these sentiments, Hussein cast the conflict as a religious war, hoping to mobilize Muslim support.

In response, Bush repeatedly reminded his American or international audiences

many historians and political commentators for his successful coalition-building attempts. Not only did Bush convince Israel to stay out of the coalition (which paved the way for Muslim-majority countries to join the coalition), but he also managed to recruit China and Russia (considered as hostile states).

40. These Muslim-majority states included Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and United Arab Emirates.

that the United States' "action in the Gulf is not about religion, greed, or cultural differences, as Iraq's leader would have us believe."⁴¹ Instead, he insisted that the U.S. involvement was about upholding American values of standing against aggression, "standing by old friends," "preserving the sovereignty of nations" (i.e., Kuwait), protecting U.S. national security and interests, and "ensuring the peace and stability of the entire world."⁴² Time after time, Bush stressed that, in the Gulf conflict, "America

41. George W. H. Bush, "Remarks to Department of Defense," *The American Presidency Project*, August 15, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265217>.

42. Ibid. Bush explained that the U.S. involvement in the Gulf war was to protect American jobs, "way of life," and freedom, as well as "the freedom of our friendly countries around the world [that] would suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell into the hands of that one man, Saddam Hussein." Later, Bush went as far as claiming that Hussein's occupation of Kuwait and his control of the oil reserves was a direct threat to innocent civilians in all countries that imported oil from Kuwait. For example, see George Bush, "Remarks at the Annual Conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Baltimore, Maryland," *The American Presidency Project*, August 20, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265243>. Bush argued, "We must not delude ourselves; Iraq's invasion was more than a military attack on tiny Kuwait; it was a ruthless assault on the very essence of international order and civilized ideals. And now, in a further offense against all norms of international behavior, Iraq has imposed restrictions on innocent civilians from many countries. This is unacceptable." By framing

[stood] where it always [had]—against aggression.”⁴³ He even compared Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait with the dictator’s earlier invasion of the post-revolutionary Iran in 1980.⁴⁴ Interestingly, before Hussein’s declaration of war on the United States, U.S. presidents never portrayed the Iraq-Iran war as an act of aggression. Iraq was never the

Hussein’s acts as a direct assault on innocent civilians all around the world, Bush could easily legitimize food sanctions on Iraq. In fact, he was frequently confronted by journalists about his decision to ban food exports to Iraq, which had led to starvation of Iraqi children and women. Bush’s defense was that Hussein was doing worse to children and women in countries who relied on oil imports from Kuwait. Bush also adamantly argued that the blood of starved Iraqi children was on Hussein’s hands.

43. Ibid. For another example of Bush framing the U.S. involvement as a continuation of the American policy to stand against aggression, see George Bush, “Remarks at the Annual Conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Baltimore, Maryland,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 20, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265243>, where Bush said, “America stands where it always has -- against aggression, against those who would use force to replace the rule of law.”

44. Also see “Text of Bush’s Television Message to Iraqi People,” *The New York Times*, September 17, 1990, in which Bush reminded his audience about the tragic and devastating consequences of the last time that the Iraqi leaders had “plunged” the people of Iraq into a war with Iran. This address was recorded in the Oval Office at the White House on September 12 and broadcast unedited on TV in Iraq.

aggressor; neither was Iran the victim. Hussein's invasion of the neighboring Shiite-majority country (Iran) was just a territorial and sectarian conflict, in which the United States was but an impartial and uninvolved party. It was not until 2013 that declassified CIA documents showed that not only was the United States government aware of Hussein's use of chemical weapons (e.g., mustard gas and sarin) on Iranian civilians but aided the Iraqi army by feeding them satellite imagery, maps, and other types of intelligence.⁴⁵ Rather than standing against Hussein's aggression, "America" stood with the aggressor, abetting him in violating international laws and human rights in Iran.

But unlike Hussein's invasion of Iran in 1980, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait turned Hussein into an aggressor and Kuwait into a victim in need of American intervention. As Bush stated in an address to the people of Iraq, "Kuwait was the victim; Iraq, the aggressor."⁴⁶ Casting Iraq as the aggressor helped portray the U.S. as an

45. See Shane Harris and Matthew M. Aid, "CIA Files Prove America Helped Saddam as He Gassed Iran," *Foreign Policy*, August 26, 2013. It is ironic that in his address to the people of Iraq on September 16, 1999, Bush reminded Iraqis that they owed the end of the Iraq-Iran war to the United States: "And the war with Iran would not have ended 2 years ago without U.S. support and sponsorship in the United Nations."

46. George Bush, "Address to the People of Iraq on the Persian Gulf Crisis," *The American Presidency Project*, September 16, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/264505>. For another example of the aggressor-victim rhetoric see, George Bush, "Remarks at a Republican Party Fundraising Luncheon

objective dealer of justice and offered a counternarrative to Hussein's characterization of the war as a faith-based conflict between Iraq and the United States. Since both the aggressor and the victim were Arabs and Sunni Muslims, Bush argued, how could America's war be against Muslims or Arabs?

However, Bush's denial of a faith-based conflict was at odds with his frequent invocation of God, use of Bible quotations, and call for prayer services in support of the U.S. forces and the allied cause in the Gulf. For example, addressing the U.S. forces on board the U.S.S. Nassau in the Persian Gulf, during a Thanksgiving Day service, he recited Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." Given the long history of Christianity marketing itself as a religion of peace and casting Islam as a foil to Christianity and a religion of sword, it is not surprising that many Muslims refused to buy what Bush was selling. Similarly, in his remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters on January 28, 1991, even as he cast the Gulf war "not as a Christian war, a Jewish war, or a Moslem war," he described the conflict as "a just war" legitimized by a well-known "verse from Ecclesiastes—there is 'a time for peace, a time for war.'" Pledging that this war "will not be another Vietnam," Bush promised victory, stressing that American people were "armed with a trust in God" and prayers led by evangelists such as Reverend Billy

in Denver, Colorado," *The American Presidency Project*, September 18, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/264533>. Bush condemned Hussein's "illegal act" of aggression and brutalization and characterized "the brave people of Kuwait [as] victimized...."

Graham.⁴⁷ The time-honored American tradition of invoking God, the Bible, and the authority of the church to legitimize the office of the U.S. president, while not problematic per se, can gesture faith-based differences in the context of war with a Muslim-majority country—even if that war is waged on one Muslim-majority country on behalf of another Muslim-majority country that happens to be the beating heart of an oil-dependent global economy. Considering that Bush and his wife spent the night that the Gulf war began with Billy Graham at the White House, one cannot help but wonder if the news of an evangelist holding hands with the U.S. president as the U.S. forces rained air strikes on Kuwait would be interpreted differently by a Muslim audience.⁴⁸

Amid ongoing protests in Muslim-majority countries, in a 1991 interview with Middle Eastern journalists, Bush was asked, “what is your message to the Arab people?” Bush responded, “I see some demonstrations in various countries against my country, and I have a hurt about that. I guess every American loves to be loved, you know, around the world.” He then advised “the Arab people” not to listen to the “accusations by

47. George Bush, “Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters,” *The American Presidency Project*, January 28, 1991, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265929>.

48. See “Billy Graham: Pastors to Presidents,” *Billy Graham Evangelist Association*, May 17, 2021; D’Arcy Jenish, “Islam and the Gulf War: Why Many Muslims Support Iraq,” *Macleans*, Feb 11, 1991; and “Leaders Wrestle with Faith and War,” *Christianity Today*, Feb 11, 1991.

fundamentalists against us” (i.e., against the American people).⁴⁹ He explained that although recent demonstrations justified a retaliatory response by the U.S., he would instead say that “our argument isn’t with Islam; our argument isn’t with Arabs.” He added that although he was “not a student of religion,” he didn’t “find anything in... the principal teachings of Islam that put us in contradiction at all.” However, he warned that if “the Arab world” continued to “assign motives to my country that are not correct, then I’m going to fight, stand up, and say, wait a minute, you’re wrong, And we’ve got some healing to do, but we also have some convincing to do.”⁵⁰ Ironically, even as Bush warned Arabs and Muslims not to assign motives to the U.S., he precisely did the same to Arabs and Muslims. His portrayal of the protestors as “fundamentalists” who hurled false and hurtful accusations at the United States echoed the now long-established presidential demand that Muslims show unconditional support of the U.S. policies in the Middle East

49. George Bush, “Interview with Middle Eastern Journalists,” *The American Presidency Project*, March 08, 1991, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265348>.

Note that in response to Muslim opposition to the U.S. leadership of the coalition forces, Bush argued that “American leadership” was an irreplaceable condition for success. For example, in his remarks to the Department of Defense employees, Bush argued, “But events of the past 2 weeks remind us that there is no substitute for American leadership, and American leadership cannot be effective in the absence of America's strength.”

George Bush, “Remarks to Department of Defense Employees,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 15, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265217>.

50. Ibid.

in return for inclusion in the ‘good Muslim’ category. Refusal to comply signifies fundamentalism.

In the same vein, Bush continued his predecessors’ tradition of demanding that Muslims, especially Muslim leaders, speak out against acts of terror committed by other Muslims. These demands were made either as direct calls on Muslims to denounce radical Islam publicly and loudly or as acknowledgements and praise directed at Muslims who had already done so. In a news conference (March 7, 1989), Bush was asked about the Palestine Liberation Organization’s chairman’s response to recent conflicts in Israel: “Yasser Arafat has refused to criticize any of the raids within Israel that have been carried out. Is he backing down on his promise against terrorism?” Bush responded:

I hope not, and I’d like to see him forthrightly condemn any terror that might be perpetrated by the Palestinians. I stop short of saying he’s condoning it or that he is furthering it. I’m not saying that. But I’d like to see him speak out. It would do wonders. It would be very good for future dialog.⁵¹

Although here Bush does not equate the Muslim leader’s silence with condoning terrorism, his response to the follow-up question does. “Well, is he jeopardizing the dialog as it sits now?” asked the journalist. Bush explained, “To the degree terrorist acts are condoned, it doesn’t help the dialog.” Muslims who do not publicly condemn acts of terrorism—which are often acts of opposition or self-defense cast as acts of terrorism—are in effect condoning those acts. If they are not condemning it aloud, then they must be

51. George Bush, “The President’s News Conference,” *The American Presidency Project*, March 07, 1989, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248213>.

condoning it in their hearts. By the same logic, since only fundamentalists condone acts of “terrorism,” then silence signifies fundamentalism.

In a climate of fear, the implications of this line of logic are grave for Muslim communities—especially when fear of “Islamic fundamentalism” is stoked by the Commander-in-Chief. In an interview with Christian Malar of Channel 5, French Television (May 24, 1990), held in the Family Dining Room at the White House, Bush was asked, “What would you fear most today, Mr. President, communism or the growing of Muslim fundamentalism?” Bush responded:

Communism is on the wane; it’s on the way out. In our hemisphere, there’s only one left, and that’s Castro.... And so, I don’t fear communism at all. I don’t like that ideology, and so, I worry about that.

But in terms of Muslim fundamentalism, the real extremes there, I am concerned about that. We lived through a terrible time in Iran. We still have difficulties there.... So, I worry about this problem.⁵²

52. George Bush, “Interview with Christian Malar of Channel 5, French Television,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 24, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265067>. The full quote is: “Communism is on the wane; it’s on the way out. In our hemisphere, there’s only one left, and that’s Castro. And I don’t know what he believes, but he darn sure can’t be excited about the way things are going for good, old Communists—going down the drain. And I think when you see people have a free choice, nobody’s speaking up: Hey, I want to have a Communist

With the Cold War nearing its end, communism was losing its long-held seat as the top national security threat. As many scholars have noted, the seat had to be filled with a new and equally vicious enemy to legitimize a continuous state of emergency and draconian laws and policies in the name of national security. Muslims and “Muslim fundamentalism” inherited communism’s empty chair. If “fundamentalist” Muslims ranked higher than communists on the U.S. president’s existential threat hierarchy, Muslims who did not openly and loudly condemn other Muslims’ acts of “terror” risked guilt by silence.⁵³ In addition to silently admitting guilt, Muslims who did not speak up

government. It just isn’t happening. And so, I don’t fear communism at all. I don’t like that ideology, and so, I worry about that. But in terms of Muslim fundamentalism, the real extremes there, I am concerned about that. We lived through a terrible time in Iran. We still have difficulties there. But I’m hopeful some day we can have better relations because I think Mr. Rafsanjani is showing a sense of reasonableness in some areas that perhaps his predecessor didn’t feel he could show or didn’t feel like showing. So, I worry about this problem.”

53. It is then no surprise that anti-Muslim and anti-Arab hate crimes in the U.S. skyrocketed during the Gulf war. Whereas Bush did not address the anti-Muslim and anti-Arab violence in any of his remarks addressed to the entire nation, he did, in a Q&A at the White House with representatives of Arab-American communities in the U.S. (September 24, 1990), condemn the Islamophobic hate crimes: “And this is a sad irony that while our brave soldiers fight aggression overseas, a few hatemongers here at home

against bad Muslims like Hussein were traitors to their own faith. Even as Bush admitted that he wasn't a student of religion, he never refrained from telling Muslims how to practice their faith. Muslims, Bush noted many times, who refused to act a certain way were in fact failing to practice their own religion faithfully. For example, in his remarks at the annual conference of the veterans of foreign wars in Baltimore, Maryland (August 20, 1990), Bush informed "the leaders of Iraq" that by taking foreign citizens as hostages in Kuwait, "you are violating the norms of your own religion."⁵⁴ Declaring that Muslims

are perpetrating their own brand of cowardly aggression. Death threats, physical attacks, vandalism, religious violence, and discrimination against Arab-Americans must end." See George Bush, "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a White House Briefing for Representatives of the Arab-American Community," *The American Presidency Project*, September 24, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-and-question-and-answer-session-white-house-briefing-for-representatives-the-arab>. Noting that hate crimes were not tolerated in "a free society," Bush added, "I've been appalled by reports from some of you, friends of mine, here in this room—by reports of discrimination against Arab-Americans. And I condemn such acts, and I will continue to condemn them." (Ibid) However, condemning Islamophobia in front of an Arab-American audience, without making similar announcements to a wider American audience, seems like an act of appeasement that doesn't carry much political and cultural weight.

54. George Bush, "Remarks at the Annual Conference of the Veterans of Foreign

who don't follow U.S.-sanctioned rules of conduct and speech are in fact violating the norms of their own religion is just another form of American presidents drawing the lines between being good/orthodox/authentic Muslims and bad/terrorist/inauthentic Muslims.

C. President William J. Clinton

Shortly after Clinton took office, Ramzi Yousef and a group of other extremists carried out the World Trade Center bombing on February 26, 1993.⁵⁵ Next day, Clinton opened his economic address on the radio with a brief acknowledgement of the tragedy without referencing the attackers' Islamic faith or using popular phrases such as "Islamic terrorism" or "Muslim fundamentalism." He, however, as Carter had done before him, excluded mosques as places of prayers and remembrance for the victims and their families: "To their families, you are in the thoughts and prayers of my family. And in the synagogues and churches last night, today, and tomorrow you will be remembered and

Wars in Baltimore, Maryland," *The American Presidency Project*, August 20, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265243>. Note that many U.S. presidents—including Bush himself—frequently violate the norms of Christianity (e.g., by telling political lies, killing innocent people, etc.).

55. Six people died and more than 1000 sustained injuries. The attackers included Ramzi Yousef, Mohammad Salameh, Abdul Yasin, Mahmoud Abouhalima, Ahmed Ajaj, Nidal Ayyad, and Eyad Ismoil. For more information, see William A. Manning, *The World Trade Center Bombing: Report and Analysis*, Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration, National Fire Data Center, 1993.

thought of again and again.”⁵⁶ In the following months, in multiple news conferences, Q&A sessions, and interviews, every time Clinton was asked whether the World Trade Center attack was an act of Islamic terrorism, Clinton refused to respond, simply stating that the investigations were still ongoing. Instead, he urged Americans not to allow fear to interrupt their daily lives. Meanwhile, as he later noted in an exchange with reporters on July 27, 1993, his administration was reviewing immigration policies and implementing new measures “to deal with the whole threat of actual or potential terrorism.”⁵⁷

A few months later, Clinton’s stance on the topic became clearer as he started talking about America’s vulnerability to terrorist attacks and describing terrorists as militant fanatics and outlaws who had “fundamentally [misunderstood] the character of America.”⁵⁸ Terrorists, Clinton noted, attempted “to legitimize their voice through

56. William J. Clinton, “The President’s Radio Address,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 27, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219510>.

57. William J. Clinton, “Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on Immigration Policy,” *The American Presidency Project*, July 27, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220234>.

58. William J. Clinton, “Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Pan Am Flight 103 Memorial in Arlington, Virginia,” *The American Presidency Project*, December 21, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220007>. For an example of Clinton discussing America’s vulnerability to terrorist attacks, see William J. Clinton,

violence, to advance their agenda through threats, to cripple our daily lives through fear.”⁵⁹ They did so because they didn’t understand us. Apparently, bridging this knowledge gap became one of Clinton’s personal missions in his presidency.⁶⁰ By mid-1995, Clinton had established that the threat of terrorism was closer to home than he had

“Remarks on the Swearing-In of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Louis Freeh,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 01, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217351>. For an example of Clinton describing terrorists as “militant fanatics,” see William J. Clinton, “Remarks to the 48th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 27, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217952>.

59. William J. Clinton, “Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Pan Am Flight 103 Memorial in Arlington, Virginia,” *The American Presidency Project*, December 21, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220007>.

60. This is not to say that Clinton did not take any other measures to combat terrorism. By February 8, 1995, when Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf was arrested and placed in Federal detention, Clinton had signed an executive order to prevent, as he put it in his statement on the apprehension of Ramzi Yusef, “fundraising for Middle East terrorist groups.” He had also proposed an omnibus antiterrorism act and had increased budget for law enforcement, intelligence, and diplomatic collaborations required for more effective anti-terrorism efforts. See William J. Clinton, “Statement on the Apprehension of Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 08, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220614>.

originally been inclined to admit. Terrorists were both within and beyond American borders, pursuing political ends through violence. There was now a full-blown “war against terrorism”⁶¹—a war that, as Clinton repeatedly observed, drew the national “family” closer.

American citizens, whether at home or abroad, Clinton reiterated many times, were “not immune” to the now high-tech and organized terrorists.⁶² Conjuring images of

61. William J. Clinton, “The President's Radio Address,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 20, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221569>.

62 For examples of Clinton’s immunity metaphor, see William J. Clinton, “The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt,” *The American Presidency Project*, April 06, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219602>; William J. Clinton, “Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Louis Freeh To Be FBI Director,” *The American Presidency Project*, July 20, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219931>; William J. Clinton, “Remarks to the United States Coast Guard in Seattle,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 20, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218702>; William J. Clinton, “Remarks in a Town Meeting With Russian Citizens in Moscow,” *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219095>; William J. Clinton, “The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy in Rome,” *The American Presidency Project*, January 14, 1994, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219140>; William J. Clinton, “Remarks to the

body cells under viral attack, Clinton's immunity metaphor helped legitimize his administration's preventive and aggressive policies in the war on terrorism. Along with the immunity metaphor, Clinton grew a habit of invoking images of porous national borders, arguing that forces of terrorism, now armed with new technologies and connected through the internet, knew no boundaries and could easily slip in and out of the pores in the country's immigration and national security systems. The solution of course was intensified and more aggressive anti-radicalization (i.e., preventive) and anti-terrorism (i.e., punitive) efforts at home and abroad, in collaboration with intelligence and law enforcement agencies of other countries such as the Great Britain, Panama, and

Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia," *The American Presidency Project*, March 28, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221622>; William J. Clinton, "The President's Radio Address," *The American Presidency Project*, May 20, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221569>; William J. Clinton, "Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia," *The American Presidency Project*, May 29, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221730>; William J. Clinton, "Remarks at the Dartmouth College Commencement Ceremony in Hanover, New Hampshire," *The American Presidency Project*, June 11, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221063>; William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City," *The American Presidency Project*, October 22, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220788>; William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the Democratic Leadership Council," *The American Presidency Project*, November 13, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220762>.

Argentina. In 1996, Clinton's rhetoric of immunity and porous borders naturally culminated in the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, followed by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, both of which disproportionately impacted Arabs, Arab-Americans, and Muslim communities.⁶³

Neither Carter nor Reagan claimed expertise on Islam. Bush, despite declaring himself to be no religious scholar, didn't refrain from sharing his thoughts on the nature and teachings of Islam as a rhetorical necessity. But William J. Clinton opened a new chapter in the presidential discourse on Islam. He declared himself an expert on Islam, and he took a direct approach to addressing and negating Islamophobic rhetoric that cast Islam as a manufacturer of terrorism. A few months after the World Trade Center bombing, in a joint news conference with President Ramiro De Leon of Guatemala, Clinton was asked about his meeting with Salman Rushdie: "Mr. President, many Muslims, including some who support the United States, are upset about your meeting with author Salman Rushdie.... Do you think that it might undercut support for the Middle East peace process?"⁶⁴ Five days earlier on November 25, in a departure from his

63. For in-depth discussions of these acts, see "Statement by Legislative Counsel Gregory T. Nojeim on the Use of Secret Evidence in Immigration Proceedings before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims," *ACLU*, <https://www.aclu.org/other/statement-legislative-counsel-gregory-t-nojeim-use-secret-evidence-immigration-proceedings>.

64. William J. Clinton, "The President's News Conference with President Ramiro

predecessor's policy of avoiding a meeting with Salman Rushdie, Clinton and his aides had a meeting with the author of *The Satanic Verses*, a novel that was perceived by many Muslims as an outrageous insult to Prophet Muhammad. The book had provoked death threats, assassination attempts, and other violent responses from the angered Muslims. Above all, Ayatollah Khomeini, who was the Supreme Leader and the highest-ranking Shiite religious leader in Iran, had issued a fatwa, ordering Rushdie's assassination.⁶⁵ According to a *New York Times* article, Clinton's meeting with the author "was intended to convey America's abhorrence of Iran's refusal to lift the death threat against the novelist."⁶⁶ Douglas Jehl reports, "Mr. Rushdie also conferred at length with Secretary of

De Leon of Guatemala," *The American Presidency Project*, November 30, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218213>.

65. Fatwa is a legal ruling in Islamic law that can only be issued by a select number of qualified jurists. Fatwas can nullify all conflicting laws. For example, killing is prohibited in Islam unless in the context of wars. Killing is so wrong that, in some Muslim countries like Iran, Muslims aren't even authorized to harm home invaders. In Iran, for example, if someone harms a home invader, the intruder or his/her next of kin can seek reparation in court. A fatwa on someone's life not only sanctions the killing as legitimate, but it also obligates the jurist's followers to fulfill said fatwa—which explains the magnitude of the problem caused by Khomeini's fatwa on Rushdie's life.

66. Douglas Jehl, "Clinton and Aids Meet Rushdie at White House in Rebuke to Iran," *The New York Times*, November 25, 1993,

State Warren Christopher and Anthony Lake, the national security advisor.”⁶⁷ Describing the meeting as a political act, a senior State Department official had stated that the presence of top national security advisors was meant to communicate the administration’s “willingness to fight back.”⁶⁸

Five days after the meeting, when he was asked about the consequences of his decision to meet with Rushdie, Clinton clarified that the meeting had only lasted “for a couple of minutes,” and that the author was brought to him for handshaking by his national security advisor who had first spend some time conferring with Rushdie. He then explained that his decision did not mean that he “agree[ed] with the attacks on Islam in the book.”⁶⁹ He had simply meant to make a point that “in our country and in the countries who respect freedom of speech, freedom of speech includes especially the willingness to respect without threatening the life of the rights of people who write things that we do not agree with.” To dispel any doubts over his true intentions, Clinton added:

Indeed, for a Westerner, I have tried for more than 20 years now to study and have an appreciation of Islam. And I respect the religion, and I respect the culture

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/25/world/clinton-and-aides-meet-rushdie-at-white-house-in-rebuke-to-iran.html>.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. William J. Clinton, “The President’s News Conference with President Ramiro De Leon of Guatemala,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 30, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218213>.

enormously. So I mean no disrespect to the people who have that religious faith. But I do think it's important that here in the United States we reaffirm our commitment to protect the physical well-being and the right to speak of those with whom we may intensely disagree. That's what our Constitution does. So I hope that I will not be misunderstood. I believe I made the right decision.⁷⁰

Even discounting Clinton's implication that twenty years of studying Islam and developing an appreciation for it is unusual "for a Westerner" and perhaps a praiseworthy endeavor, attempting to establish himself as an expert on Islam in the context of denouncing Muslims' responses to Rushdie's book is an interesting choice. Put simply, Clinton's rhetoric could be interpreted as an attempt to dictate the correct interpretation of his decision by declaring himself as a longtime appreciative student of Islam. Any reading to the contrary, thus, would be a gross misinterpretation of the President's intentions. If the predictions of the journalist who had posed the question came true and the meeting with Rushdie undercut Clinton's efforts to rally support among Muslims for his proposed peace process in the Middle East, then the blame would fall on Muslims for misinterpreting Clinton's intentions. To put it simply, since Clinton proclaimed that he had studied and respected Islam, his actions should never be perceived as Islamophobic.

Even as he was proposing, signing, and implementing policies and practices that were Islamophobic in nature, Clinton never stopped defending Islam from charges of violent extremism. For instance, in his remarks at a Democratic National Committee dinner on October 21, 1993, Clinton spoke of "America's responsibilities" at home and

70. Ibid.

abroad. As the world's only superpower, it was upon the U.S. to attempt and solve as many world problems as it could. The American belief "in democracy and freedom" and an urgent need to curb "the proliferation of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction" were compelling reasons for taking charge of the restoration of the world peace and prosperity. Among issues in which the U.S. had interests, Clinton spoke of reducing Russia's nuclear arsenal and peacemaking in the Middle East. He explained that "if we could bring peace to the Middle East, it might revolutionize the range of options we have with the Muslims all over the world and give us the opportunity to beat back the forces of radicalism and terrorism that unfairly have been identified with Islam by so many people."⁷¹

Among Clinton's defenses of Islam, his use of cloak as a metaphor for the relationship between Islam and terrorism stands out as a predecessor of later presidential metaphors that cast Islam as exploitable and pervertible. In his remarks to the Jordanian Parliament in Amman, Jordan (October 26, 1994), Clinton spoke of "the forces of terror and extremism, who cloak themselves in the rhetoric of religion and nationalism but behave in ways that contradict the very teachings of their faith and mock their patriotism."⁷² Similarly, in an address to the nation on military action against terrorist

71. William J. Clinton, "Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner," *The American Presidency Project*, October 21, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217612>.

72. William J. Clinton, "Remarks to the Jordanian Parliament in Amman, Jordan,"

sites in Afghanistan and Sudan (August 20, 1998), Clinton stated that “our actions are aimed at fanatics and killers who wrap murder in the cloak of righteousness and in so doing profane the great religion in whose name they claim to act.”⁷³ In both of these metaphors and similar instances, Islamic faith (target domain) acts as a cloak (source domain) for terrorists’ violent and fanatical ideology. The conceptual metaphor here is ISLAM IS A CLOAK, with the following entailments:

- Islam can be used as a disguise;
- When it is used as a “wrap,” it conceals the true identity of people who pose an existential threat to the rest of the world;
- Islam can thus pose an existential threat by providing a harmless façade for terrorists;

The American Presidency Project, October 26, 1994,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217879>.

73. William J. Clinton, “Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 20, 1998, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/224582>. The full quote is as follows: “I want you to understand, I want the world to understand that our actions today were not aimed against Islam, the faith of hundreds of millions of good, peace-loving people all around the world, including the United States. No religion condones the murder of innocent men, women, and children. But our actions were aimed at fanatics and killers who wrap murder in the cloak of righteousness and in so doing profane the great religion in whose name they claim to act.”

- Since Islam can hide the true identity of terrorists, it is difficult to identify real/good Muslims from fake/bad Muslims;
- All Muslims are suspects.

Rooted in the Islamophobic rhetoric that frames Islam as a fake religion and a front for a world domination plot, this conceptual metaphor casts a shadow of doubt over all Muslims and Muslim-presenting people. In other words, Clinton's defense of Islam, although well-intentioned, has Islamophobic implications.

Similarly, Clinton's frequent rejections of a civilizational clash between the United States and the Islamic world is in stark contrast with his relentless reliance on the main tenets of the civilizational clash theses to explain the roots and rise of terrorism in Muslim-majority countries. Terrorists, Clinton noted in a teleconference, "accumulate[d] political power on the human misery that ha[d] dominated the Middle East for decades."⁷⁴ In an interview with the French media in Paris, held on June 07, 1994, Clinton explained:

We are very concerned about the rise of militant fundamentalism in the Islamic states. And the potential is enormous. There are—17 of the 22 Islamic states in the world have declining incomes. Seventy percent of the Muslims in the world today are young people. The potential for explosion is great.... But what the United States wants to do is to stand up against terrorism and against destructive

74. William J. Clinton, "Teleconference Remarks with B'nai B'rith," *The American Presidency Project*, August 24, 1994, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218314>.

fundamentalism, but to stand with the people of Islam who wish to be full members of the world community, according to the rules that all civilized people should follow.⁷⁵

This statement is a compact version of the civilizational clash theory that locates, to put it in Bernard Lewis's words, "the roots of the Muslim rage" in the decline of the Islamic civilization and a growing population of disenfranchised and poverty-stricken young men who, in the absence of any prospect or hope, blame the West for their self-inflicted wounds. Based on the civilizational clash theses, the combination of religious fanaticism, centuries-long grudges, and socioeconomic decline of the "Muslim world" has created combustible societies on course for collision with the Western civilization. According to Clinton, over 77% (17 out of 22) of Muslim-majority countries are ticking bombs (with "potential for explosion"), and seventy percent of these bombs are filled with young Muslim shrapnel. The United States, Clinton explained, was opposed to terrorism, not to "the people of Islam who wish to be full members of the world community, according to the rules that all civilized people should follow," suggesting that admission to the civilized "world community" is withheld from "the people of Islam" until they meet U.S.-approved standards of civilized behavior.

It appears that Clinton was unaware of his own reinforcement of the civilizational clash theory, or perhaps he carefully constructed his messages based on his audience. A few months after the abovementioned remarks in front of French media, Clinton

75. William J. Clinton, "Interview with the French Media in Paris," *The American Presidency Project*, June 07, 1994, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219294>.

addressed the Jordanian Parliament on October 26, 1994, explaining that “there are those who insist that between America and the Middle East there are impassible religious and other obstacles to harmony, that our beliefs and our cultures must somehow inevitably clash.”⁷⁶ Clearly excluding himself from the ranks of the civilizational clash supporters, Clinton declared:

But I believe they are wrong. America refuses to accept that our civilizations must collide. We respect Islam. Every day in our own land, millions of our own citizens answer the Moslem call to prayer. And we know the traditional values of Islam, devotion to faith and good works, to family and society, are in harmony with the best of American ideals. Therefore, we know our people, our faiths, our cultures can live in harmony with each other.

These remarks emphatically and in good faith reject the idea that “America” is at odds and at war with Islam. Islamic and American values, contrary to the claims of the civilizational clash proponents, are not incompatible. And yet in countless other speeches, interviews, news conferences, and statements, Clinton continued to draw on the civilizational clash theory to explain Islamic terrorism. The most striking examples of Clinton’s blind reliance on the theories that he so ardently opposed are his references to Benjamin Barber’s *Jihad Versus McWorld* (1995) and his use of a map to illustrate the division of the world into the civilized and the uncivilized parts.

76. William J. Clinton, “Remarks to the Jordanian Parliament in Amman, Jordan,” *The American Presidency Project*, October 26, 1994, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217879>.

In *Jihad Versus McWorld*, Barber expands on the work of the previous civilizational clash scholars to describe a world that is torn between two mutually exclusive forces of Islamic Jihad (which Barber describes as a holy war waged against modern democracy) and globalization (which Barber refers to as “McWorld”).⁷⁷ In the closed-off world of Islam, the concept of Jihad offers a sense of identity to people who have been left behind in a rapidly changing world. While the forces of globalization have been bringing down the cultural and regional borders in the non-Muslim world, Muslim states have remained intolerant, tribal, and resistant to open markets and modernization. Both forces (Islamic Jihad and economic globalization) threaten democracy. Globalization causes an imbalance of wealth, freedom, and power, creating resentment among the populations that are not benefitting from the globalized neoliberal economy. Islamic Jihad, on the other hand, spawns fundamentalism.

In his remarks at a breakfast with religious leaders held on September 8, 1995, Clinton recommended Benjamin Barber’s book as a must-read, quickly declaring that it was “not an anti-Muslim book, by the way. Islam is a beautiful religion with great values.” After summarizing the book’s main arguments, Clinton explained that the merit of the book was in its effective exposition of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the concept of “jihad”:

[A]s people face a world that they cannot control, when they think that democracy is not going to work for them... they are vulnerable—because their nerves are raw and they have no sense of certainty—to extreme manifestations of people who

77. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

claim to have revealed truth, so that the likelihood of having more conflicts rooted in ethnic, racial, or religious differences increases perversely as the world becomes more economically integrated.

In other words, Muslims are prone to radicalization and a jihad mentality because they interpret their poverty as a sign that democracy does not benefit them. Poverty, not legitimate political grievances, lies behind the Muslim opposition to the U.S. domestic and international policies that have for decades been impacting the Muslim world.⁷⁸

Clinton also negated his own denial of the civilizational clash theory by dividing the world into Western Christian civilization and the world of Islam. He sometimes even held up a map to illustrate the division. For example, in his address to the nation on airstrikes against Serbian targets in Yugoslavia (March 24, 1999), Clinton explained America's national interest in carrying out the strikes. He invited his audience to view his map and noted:

It is important to America's national interest. Take a look at this map. Kosovo is a small place, but it sits on a major fault line between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, at the meeting place of Islam and both the Western and Orthodox branches

78. Here, it appears that there is some mingling of conservative economic discourse with anti-terrorist and anti-Muslim discourse. Ironically, it is only in Muslim-majority countries with poor and non-capitalist societies that poverty and large wealth gaps cause unrest. In the United States, however, according to the trickle-down economics, as the rich aggregate more wealth, some of it trickles down to the working classes and raises all boats.

of Christianity.... All the ingredients for a major war are there: ancient grievances; struggling democracies; and in the center of it all, a dictator in Serbia who has done nothing since the cold war ended but start new wars and pour gasoline on the flames of ethnic and religious division.⁷⁹

In this statement, a collection of conceptual metaphors draws a fault line between the world of Islam and the world of Christian West. As with the geological fault lines that separate tectonic plates, the religious and ethnic fault lines that separate Islamic and Christian worlds are susceptible to earth-shattering events. Almost a week later, in his remarks to the military community at Norfolk Naval Station (April 01, 1999), Clinton referred to his earlier address on March 24, explaining that by showing the map, he had demonstrated that despite its small size, Kosovo sat “right at the dividing line of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East; the dividing line between Islam and Christianity.”⁸⁰

D. President George W. Bush

The 9/11-era president, George W. Bush, famously and repeatedly declared that America was not at war with Islam and that Islam did not necessarily promote terrorism.

79. William J. Clinton, “Address to the Nation on Airstrikes Against Serbian Targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro),” *The American Presidency Project*, March 24, 1999, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/229752>.

80. William J. Clinton, “Remarks to the Military Community at Norfolk Naval Station,” *The American Presidency Project*, April 01, 1999, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/229946>.

For example, just a few days after the 9/11 attacks, in his remarks at the Islamic Center of Washington (September 17, 2001), Bush stated, “The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam. That's not what Islam is all about. Islam is peace. These terrorists don't represent peace. They represent evil and war.”⁸¹ Two days later, following a meeting with Congressional leaders, a reporter asked, “Sir, you've been stressing that this is not a war against Islam. However, there are some around the world who view the coming battle along religious lines. I'm wondering how worried you are that some view this as a holy war, and are declarations of jihad at all affecting U.S. plans?” Bush quickly responded:

We don't view this as a war of religion, in any way, shape, or form. As a matter of fact, Islam preaches peace. The Muslim faith is a peaceful faith, and there are millions of good Americans who practice the Muslim faith who love their country

81. George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Islamic Center of Washington,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 17, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/212939>. Similarly, on September 10, 2002, in his remarks at the Embassy of Afghanistan and in his exchange with reporters, Bush noted, “All Americans must recognize that the face of terror is not the true faith—face of Islam. Islam is a faith that brings comfort to a billion people around the world. It's a faith that has made brothers and sisters of every race. It's a faith based upon love, not hate.” George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Embassy of Afghanistan and an Exchange with Reporters,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 10, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-embassy-afghanistan-and-exchange-with-reporters>.

as much as I love the country, who salute the flag as strongly as I salute the flag.⁸²

82. George W. Bush, “Remarks Following a Meeting with Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 19, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/211543>. For other examples of similar rhetoric, see George W. Bush, “Remarks by President George W. Bush and President Megawati of Indonesia,” *The White House Archives*, September 19, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/ramadan/islam.html>. Bush said, “I’ve made it clear, Madam President, that the war against terrorism is not a war against Muslims, nor is it a war against Arabs. It’s a war against evil people who conduct crimes against innocent people”; Also see George W. Bush, “Remarks to Airline Employees at O’Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 27, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-airline-employees-chicago-illinois>. Bush said, “Americans understand we fight not a religion; ours is not a campaign against the Muslim faith. Ours is a campaign against evil”; See also, George W. Bush, “Remarks Prior to Discussions with King Abdullah of Jordan and An Exchange with Reporters,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 28, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-prior-discussions-with-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-and-exchange-with-reporters-2>. Bush stated, “I have assured His Majesty that our war is against evil, not against Islam. There are thousands of Muslims who proudly call themselves Americans, and they know what I know—that the Muslim faith is based upon peace and love and compassion. The exact opposite of the teachings

Here and in many other instances, Bush denied the allegations of an American war on Islam and described Islam as a religion of peace and millions of Muslims as good,

of the al Qaeda organization, which is based upon evil and hate and destruction”; See also see George W. Bush, “Remarks to the Community at Travis Air Force Base, California,”

The American Presidency Project, October 17, 2001,

[https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-community-travis-air-force-](https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-community-travis-air-force-base-california)

[base-california](https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-community-travis-air-force-base-california). Bush stated, “I want to assure the people of the world that our military fights not against Muslims or fights not against the Islam religion. We fight against evil people. We fight against people who believe that they can harm the United States of

America. We fight against people who have no country, no ideology; they’re motivated by hate”; See also George W. Bush, “Remarks at a Townhall Meeting in Ontario,

California,” *The American Presidency Project*, Jan 05, 2002,

[https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-townhall-meeting-ontario-](https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-townhall-meeting-ontario-california)

[california](https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-townhall-meeting-ontario-california). Bush explained, “because this great Nation of many religions understands, our war is not against Islam or against faith practiced by the Muslim people; our war is a war

against evil”; Finally, also see, George W. Bush, “The President’s News Conference with President Havel of Czech Republic in Prague,” *The American Presidency Project*, Nov

20, 2002, [https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-](https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-vaclav-havel-the-czech-republic-prague-czech)

[with-president-vaclav-havel-the-czech-republic-prague-czech](https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-vaclav-havel-the-czech-republic-prague-czech). Bush argued, “Ours is a

war not against a religion, not against the Muslim faith. But ours is a war against

individuals who absolutely hate what America stands for, and hate the freedom of the

Czech Republic.”

patriotic Americans. However, he too both drew from and contributed to an Islamophobic discourse that marked Islam as pervertible and Muslims as prone to radicalization.

One of Bush's key contributions to the pool of presidential metaphors about Islam is his conceptualization of Islam as both a "veneer" for terrorist ideology and a plane that, if hijacked, would pose an existential threat to democracy and the free world. Like Clinton who had conceptualized Islam as a "cloak" or "wrap" for an apocalyptic worldview, Bush described the relationship between Islam and extremist ideologies as one between a hideout and a criminal. For example, in his remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City (Nov 10, 2001), Bush thanked "Arab and Islamic countries that [had] condemned" terrorism and noted that as a growing number of Muslims condemn terrorism, "the terrorists are increasingly isolated by their own hatred and extremism. They cannot hide behind Islam."⁸³ Here, Bush simply meant that by condemning terrorism, Muslims alienate the terrorists among them. Yet, the conceptual metaphor that's posited in this statement is ISLAM CAN BE A HIDEOUT FOR EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES. The entailments are similar to the ISLAM IS A CLOAK metaphor. Simply put, the true identity of Muslims is unknowable because Islam offers a foxhole for terrorists. Similarly, in his remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy (October 06, 2005), Bush compared the "murderous ideology of the Islamic radicals" with communism's "endless ambitions of imperial domination," arguing that

83. George W. Bush, "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City," *The American Presidency Project*, Nov 10, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216893>.

the two were the same even though the former was hidden under a “veneer of religious rhetoric.”⁸⁴ The veneer metaphor justifies McCarthyism—an endless witch-hunt. Indeed, just as, during the Cold War era, hundreds of Americans suspected of harboring communist beliefs were hunted down and interrogated, during the post-9/11 era, Muslims and Muslim-presenting people were surveilled and imprisoned—because each and every one of them could be using Islam as a cloak.

Islam, Bush repeated many times, was not synonymous with terrorism. And yet, in making his case for Islam, he conceptualized the relationship between Islam and terrorists as one between a plane and hijackers. One of Bush’s favorite ways to vindicate Islam was declaring that the terrorists had hijacked the religion. The metaphor was meant to abdicate the United States’ “Arab and Muslim friends” by differentiating between authentic/good Islam/Muslims and fake/bad Islam/Muslims. It also served as a proof that the U.S. was not at war with Islam. For example, in his address before a joint session of the Congress on the U.S. response to the terrorist attacks of September 11 (Sep 20, 2001), Bush addressed Muslims worldwide to tell them that America was not at war with Islam:

I also want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We respect your faith. It’s practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. Its teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name of Allah blaspheme the name of

84. George W. Bush, “Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy,” *The American Presidency Project*, October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>.

Allah. The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself.⁸⁵

85. George W. Bush, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11,” *The American Presidency Project*, Sep 20, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/213749>. For other examples of Bush’s hijacking metaphor, see George W. Bush, “Remarks to the Community at Travis Air Force Base, California,” *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-community-travis-air-force-base-california>. Bush stated, “We don’t quarrel with the innocent folks of Afghanistan; they’re not our enemy. Nor is any religion the enemy of the United States of America. The evil ones have tried to hijack a religion to justify their murder.”; George W. Bush, “Remarks on U.S. Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan,” *White House Archives*, October 11, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/text/20021011-3.html>. Bush noted, “Islam is a vibrant faith. Millions of our fellow citizens are Muslim. We respect the faith. We honor its traditions. Our enemy does not. Our enemy don’t follow the great traditions of Islam. They’ve hijacked a great religion.”; George W. Bush, “Interview with Print Journalists,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 29, 2003, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-print-journalists>. After condemning anti-Semitism with “an anti-Islamic bent,” he bragged about his speech at the Islamic Center in Washington as an act signaling “that the evil people who hijacked

The conceptual metaphor posited here is ISLAM IS A PLANE AND CAN BE HIJACKED.⁸⁶ Other vehicles, such as cars and ships, can also be hijacked, but in the

a great religion should not condemn that religion. In other words, Americans shouldn't hold Islam accountable for the deaths."

86. Also note that like his predecessors, Bush offered the presence of Muslims in the U.S., and especially their presence in the armed forces, as proof of America's friendship with Islam and emphasized the high speed at which Islam was growing in the U.S., but he also, more emphatically than Clinton, spoke of diversity of the "American Muslim community." For similar rhetoric, see George W. Bush, "Remarks on the celebration of Eid-al-Fitr," *The American Presidency Project*, December 05, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-celebration-eid-al-fitr>. Bush stated, "Here in the United States, our Muslim citizens are making many contributions in business, science and law, medicine and education, and in other fields. Muslim members of our Armed Forces and of my administration are serving their fellow Americans with distinction, upholding our Nation's ideals of liberty and justice in a world at peace. And in our Nation's Capital, this center contributes greatly to our spiritual and cultural life."; George W. Bush, "Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy," *The American Presidency Project*, November 06, 2003, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-20th-anniversary-the-national-endowment-for-democracy>. Bush noted, "As men and women are showing from Bangladesh to Botswana to Mongolia, it is the practice of democracy that makes a nation

context of the 9/11 attacks, it is more likely that the metaphor conjures images of hijacked planes. The entailments are as follows: Like a plane, Islam—if handled with care—is harmless, but if it’s not securitized, it can be hijacked and weaponized. Apparently, if the pilot is the U.S. government, the plane of Islam can be securitized. The metaphor thus conceptualizes Islam as vulnerable and justifies surveillance and securitization of Muslim communities.

Reinforcing the entailments of Bush’s conceptual metaphors (veneer, hideout, and hijacked plane) was his relentless defense of Islam as having been exploited, distorted, converted, and defiled by terrorists. The terrorists, Bush repeated, claimed to be defenders of Islam, but they had in fact exploited, perverted, and distorted Islam (and the concept of Islamic jihad) into an evil ideology. “Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant jihadism; still others, Islamo-fascism. Whatever it’s called, this ideology is very different from the religion of Islam. This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision,” Bush explained in his remarks to the National

ready for democracy, and every nation can start on this path. It should be clear to all that Islam, the faith of one-fifth of humanity, is consistent with democratic rule. Democratic progress is found in many predominantly Muslim countries, in Turkey and Indonesia and Senegal and Albania, in Niger and Sierra Leone.... More than half of all Muslims in the world live in freedom under democratically constituted governments. They succeed in democratic societies, not in spite of their faith but because of it. A religion that demands individual moral accountability and encourages the encounter of the individual with God is fully compatible with the rights and responsibilities of self-government.”

Endowment for Democracy (October 06, 2005).⁸⁷ In another example of his effort to

87. George W. Bush, “Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy,” *The American Presidency Project*, October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>. Also see George W. Bush, “Remarks to the Military Officers Association of America,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 05, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/267962>. Bush noted, “These Al Qaida terrorists, and those who share their ideology, are violent Sunni extremists. They’re driven by a radical and perverted vision of Islam that rejects tolerance, crushes all dissent, and justifies the murder of innocent men, women, and children in the pursuit of political power. They hope to establish a violent political utopia across the Middle East, which they call a caliphate, where all would be ruled according to their hateful ideology.” In the same speech he also said, “This caliphate would be a totalitarian Islamic empire encompassing all current and former Muslim lands, stretching from Europe to north Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. We know this because Al Qaida has told us. About 2 months ago, the terrorist Zawahiri—he’s Al Qaida’s second in command—declared that Al Qaida intends to impose its rule in ‘every land that was a home for Islam, from Spain to Iraq.’ He went on to say, ‘The whole world is an open field for us.’ ... The goal of these Sunni extremists is to remake the entire Muslim world in their radical image. In pursuit of their imperial aims, these extremists say there can be no compromise or dialog with those they call infidels, a category that includes America, the world’s free nations, Jews, and all Muslims who reject their extreme vision of Islam.

vindicate good Muslims and true Islam, Bush noted:

I take great comfort in knowing that the true Muslim—Islam, itself, is a peaceful religion, and those who adhere to Islam are people that respect the rights of others.... And what we cannot allow happen is for these totalitarians, these Islamic extremists, to distort a great religion and define the nature of that religion.⁸⁸

Similarly, in his remarks on American competitiveness in Highland Heights, Kentucky, Bush described Islamic radicalism as “fascism and communism but with a different flavor to it,” explaining that the Islamic radicalism was “totalitarian in nature,” in that the Islamic terrorists “strongly believe they should distort a great religion and convert it to meet their means.”⁸⁹ In a 2002 address to the nation from Ellis Island on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Bush explained that terrorists, and not Islam, were the enemy: “We

They reject the possibility of peaceful coexistence with the free world.” In the same speech he said, “Al Qaida and its allies intend to create numerous, decentralized operating bases across the world, from which they can plan new attacks and advance their vision of a unified, totalitarian Islamic state that can confront and, eventually, destroy the free world.”

88. George W. Bush, “Interview with Kai Diekmann of Bild,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 05, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/215559>.

89. George W. Bush, “Remarks on American Competitiveness in Highland Heights, Kentucky,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 19, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217079>.

respect the faith of Islam, even as we fight those whose actions defile that faith.”⁹⁰

Similarly, Bush sometimes described Islamic radicalism as perverted Islam. For instance, in his remarks to the Military Officers Association of America (September 05, 2006), Bush explained that Al Qaida terrorists and “violent Sunni extremists... [are] driven by a

90. George W. Bush, “Address to the Nation From Ellis Island, New York, on the Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks of September 11,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 11, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/211982>. For more examples of this rhetoric, see George W. Bush, “Remarks on U.S. Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan,” *White House Archives*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/text/20021011-3.html>. Bush said, “remember that they are nothing but a bunch of radical terrorists who distort history and the values of Islam.”; George W. Bush, “Remarks by President George W. Bush and President Megawati of Indonesia,” *The White House Archives*, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/ramadan/islam.html>. Bush stated, “Terrorists who claim Islam as their inspiration defile one of the world’s great faiths”; Also see Bush’s interview with Kai Diekmann of Bild (May 05, 2006), where he said, “Islamic extremists, to distort a great religion and define the nature of that religion.” See “Interview with Kai Diekmann of Bild,” *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/215559>.

radical and perverted vision of Islam.”⁹¹ In short, during his presidency, in countless instances, Bush spoke of how Islam was distorted, exploited, perverted, converted, and defiled by Islamic radicals.

Like Clinton, Bush was an adamant civilizational clash denier whose rhetoric was riddled with some of the main principles of the civilizational clash theses. On one hand, Bush rushed to remind his audience that there was no clash of civilizations. For example, in his commencement address at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs (June 2, 2004), Bush spoke of the “great challenge of our time”: “History is once again witnessing a great clash. This is not a clash of civilizations. The civilization of Islam, with its humane traditions of learning and tolerance, has no place for this violent sect of killers and aspiring tyrants. This is not a clash of religions.”⁹² Similarly, in his remarks at an iftar dinner (November 7, 2002), he sent a message of tolerance “to all Americans”:

91. George W. Bush, “Remarks to the Military Officers Association of America,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 05, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/267962>.

92. George W. Bush, “Commencement Address at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado,” *The American Presidency Project*, June 2, 2004, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/214968>. Likewise, in his commencement address at of the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York (June 1, 2002), he noted, “When it comes to the common rights and needs of men and women, there is no clash of civilizations. The requirements of freedom apply fully to Africa and Latin America and the entire Islamic world.”

“Our Nation is waging a war on a radical network of terrorists, not on a religion and not on a civilization.... No one should be treated unkindly because of the color of their skin or the content of their creed. No one should be unfairly judged by appearance or ethnic background or religious faith.”⁹³

On the other hand, Bush cast the war on terror as a civilizational and ideological struggle—echoing Huntington’s prophesy that the wars of the future would be fought on ideological battlefields. For example, in his remarks at the luncheon for the gubernatorial candidate, Robert R. Riley, in Birmingham, Alabama (September 28, 2006), Bush noted:

In a recent series of speeches, I made it clear that we’re in the early hours of a long struggle for civilization. I have made it clear that we’re in the ideological struggle of the 21st century. I’ve also made it clear that the safety of the American people depends on the outcome of the battle in the streets of Baghdad. I strongly believe that Iraq is a central front in the war on terror.⁹⁴

Similarly, in a series of speeches and addresses (including but not limited to 2006 remarks at a reception for senatorial candidate, Orrin G. Hatch in Salt Lake City; 2006 remarks at the American Legion National Convention in Salt Lake City; 2006 radio address; 2006 remarks to the Georgia Public Policy Foundation in Atlanta, Georgia; 2006

93. George W. Bush, “Remarks at an Iftaar Dinner,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 7, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/214694>.

94. George W. Bush, “Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Robert R. Riley in Birmingham, Alabama,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 28, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/269180>.

address to the nation on the war on terror on the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks; 2006 remarks at Latvia University in Riga; 2006 remarks at the NATO summit; 2007 address to the nation of military operations in Iraq; 2007 address before a joint session of the Congress on the State of the Union; 2007 budget message; and remarks to the Conservative Political Action Conference), Bush described the war on Islamic terrorism as an ideological war: “This war is more than a clash of arms; it is a decisive ideological struggle. And the security of our Nation is in the balance. To prevail, we must remove the conditions that inspire blind hatred and drove 19 men to get onto airplanes and to come and kill us.”⁹⁵

Moreover, borrowing several pages out of Huntington’s book (and the *9/11 Commission Report*), Bush repeatedly framed Islam (a religion) as a rich but declining civilization, critiqued the culture of victimization shared by many Muslims worldwide (i.e., Muslims blaming the West for their socioeconomic problems), and ferociously theorized about the Muslim nostalgia for Islam’s past glorious days and the Muslim plot to establish a global empire or caliphate. In his remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy (October 06, 2005), for example, Bush argued that Islamic radicals exploited “local conflicts to build a culture of victimization in which someone else [i.e., U.S. and

95. George W. Bush, “Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 20, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/269307>.

the West] is always to blame and violence is always the solution.”⁹⁶ Terrorists, Bush explained, capitalized on grievances of Muslim young men and women to their them into “pawns of terror.”⁹⁷ Islamic radicals and Muslim dictators (e.g., Saddam Hussein), Bush explained in his remarks on the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy (November 06, 2003), promised “a return to ancient glories.”⁹⁸ Time and again (in dozens of different speeches), Bush declared that Islamic militants planned “to establish a radical Islamic empire that spans from Spain to Indonesia.”⁹⁹ Similarly, in his remarks to the Military Officers Association of America (September 5, 2006), Bush described Al Qaida terrorists and Sunni extremists as ideology-driven men who “hope to establish a violent utopia across the Middle East, which they call a caliphate, where all would be ruled according to their hateful ideology.” He then explained that this “caliphate would be a totalitarian Islamic empire encompassing all current and former

96. George W. Bush, “Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy,” *The American Presidency Project*, October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>.

97. Ibid.

98. George W. Bush, “Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 06, 2003, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/215869>.

99. George W. Bush, “Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy,” *The American Presidency Project*, October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>.

Muslim lands, stretching from Europe to north Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.” Contrary to what Bush seems to have assumed, referring to an “ideological war” as opposed to a “civilizational clash” does not erase the underlying Islamophobic ideology. Muslims are still constructed as uncivilized populations, dreaming of world domination, of reviving an Islamic “civilization,” and of bringing back a centuries-old form of government (i.e., caliphate).

E. President Barack Obama

Obama both continued and discontinued some of his predecessors’ rhetoric in talking about Islam and Muslims. More than any president before him, Obama attempted to build bridges with Muslim communities, and early in his term, he delivered his celebrated speech in Cairo on June 4, 2009, at Cairo University in Egypt.¹⁰⁰ However, even though in his rhetoric, Obama showed a departure from the previous presidential rhetoric on Islam and Muslims, he too continued to construct Islam as a pervertible religion. For example, in an interview, John Dickerson of CBS asked Obama about

100. Titled “A New Beginning” and co-hosted by Al-Azhar University (Egypt’s most prestigious Islamic studies university), the speech was praised by international commentators for ushering a new era in the U.S.-Middle East relationships. It was the first time that a U.S. president gave a major address to a Muslim audience from a major Muslim capital in the Middle East.

Donald Trump's "criticism of you for not using the phrase radical Islam."¹⁰¹ Obama responded:

The reason that I haven't used the particular phrase "radical Islam" on a regular basis is because, in talking to Muslim allies, in talking to the Muslim-American community here, that was being heard as if we were ascribing to crazy groups like ISIL or al Qaeda the mantle of Islam.

And since we need them as allies, I think it's useful for us to listen to how the president of the United States' words and messages are being received, because, if we're going to defeat those organizations, we need help from the billion-plus Muslims in this world, so that they can help root out this perversion of Islam that's taking place.¹⁰²

Here, even as Obama differentiates between good/orthodox Islam and bad/terrorist Islam, he draws on the same conceptual metaphor as previous presidents (i.e., ISLAM CAN BE PERVERTED), reinforcing the ideology that Muslims, even the good ones, are prone to

101. Barack Obama, "Interview with John Dickerson of CBS's "Face the Nation," *The American Presidency Project*, July 24, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-john-dickerson-cbss-face-the-nation>. Obama refused to use the popular term "radical Islam" to refer to terrorist groups such as ISIL or al Qaida.

102. Ibid.

radicalization because of the pervertible nature of their religion—a religion that, according to legal, political, and public discourses discussed in this dissertation so far, is the single most important defining characteristic of people from Muslim-majority countries. Also, note that Obama’s main reason for avoiding the term is a political desire to recruit Muslims into the war on terror, rather than a genuine belief in the inaccuracies of the term “radical Islam.”

As mentioned above, Obama continued—and added to—some of his predecessors’ rhetoric with underlying Islamophobic ideology. Describing terrorists’ ideology as a perverted, distorted, twisted, warped, and misinterpreted brand of Islam, for example, served as evidence that the U.S. was not at war with Islam, but with terrorism. In a news conference (September 10, 2010), Obama noted, “We were at war with terrorists and murderers who had perverted Islam, had stolen its banner to carry out their outrageous act.”¹⁰³ Similarly, in his remarks on the U.S. efforts to combat Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (July 6, 2015), he declared that “we will never be at war with Islam. We’re fighting terrorists who distort Islam and whose victims are mostly Muslims.”¹⁰⁴ In his remarks at the UN leaders’ summit on countering ISIL and violent

103. Barack Obama, “The President’s News Conference,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288156>.

104. Barack Obama, “Remarks on the United States Efforts To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization and an Exchange With Reporters,” *The American Presidency Project*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311206>.

extremism, held in New York City (September 29, 2015), Obama described ISIL's ideology as "warped interpretations of Islam."¹⁰⁵ In his remarks at the White House summit on countering violent extremism, Obama described terrorist groups' ideologies as "twisted interpretation of their faith."¹⁰⁶ In his remarks at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York (December 01, 2009), he described Al Qaida as "a group of extremists who had distorted and defiled Islam, one of the world's great religions, to justify the slaughter of innocents."¹⁰⁷ As explained earlier in this

105. Barack Obama, "Remarks at the United Nations Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism in New York City," *The American Presidency Project*, September 29, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310737>.

106. Barack Obama, "Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism," *The American Presidency Project*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310811>.

107. Also see Barack Obama "Remarks on Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo," *The American Presidency Project*, December 10, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-accepting-the-nobel-peace-prize-oslo>. Obama explained that "the cultural leveling of modernity" was causing fear among people who were worried about losing "their particular identities: their race, their tribe, and perhaps most powerfully, their religion," adding that some people, exploiting these fears, "have distorted and defiled the great religion of Islam." To be fair, he also said that "These extremists are not the first to kill in the name of God; the cruelties of the Crusades

dissertation, these conceptual metaphors ultimately construct Islam as a pervertible, hence combustible and hijackable religion, justifying the securitization of the religion and its practitioners.

Obama periodically declared that the United States was not at war with Islam and that true Islam was a peaceful religion—often when addressing a Muslim audience or when he felt compelled to quell the assimilationist fears that Islam was incompatible with American values.¹⁰⁸ Two days after Obama’s speech in Cairo, for example, in a news conference with the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, held in Caen, France (June 6, 2009), a *Le Monde* reporter asked Obama whether he was concerned that “the ban on

are amply recorded.”; also see Barack Obama “Remarks at the Iftar Dinner,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 13, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-iftar-dinner-0>. Obama argued, “Al Qaida’s cause is not Islam; it’s a gross distortion of Islam.” He described Muslim extremists as vicious plotters and exploiters and pathological liars: “They no more represent Islam than any madman who kills innocents in the name of God represents Christianity or Judaism or Buddhism or Hinduism.”

108. See, for example, Barack Obama, “The President’s News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Caen, France,” *The American Presidency Project*, June 6, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-nicolas-sarkozy-france-caen-france>. A reporter asked if he had a message for “the Muslim community,” and he responded that there was “no contradiction between America and Islam.”

headscarves and veils for young girls in French schools and the President Sarkozy's position on Turkey's entry into the European Union [was] likely to hinder the new approach to Islam that you presented in Cairo two days ago?"¹⁰⁹ Arguing that there "should not [be] two standards for freedom of religious expression, one for Muslims and one for non-Muslims," Obama advocated for integrating Muslim communities not through "suppress[ing] their customs or traditions," but by implementing more inclusive policies that offer them "a chance for full participation in the life of their country."¹¹⁰ The goal, Obama explained, was "sending a message to Muslims around the world that we welcome and want their participation in a world community that is peaceful" and prosperous for all people. Reiterating the central message of his Cairo speech, Obama noted:

[T]here's no contradiction between America and Islam because we have Muslim Americans who actually have higher education and income averages than is the average in the United States. That's a testament to the degree to which they've been able to succeed, thrive, remain true to their religion, and be full-fledged, patriotic Americans.¹¹¹

109. Barack Obama, "The President's News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Caen, France," *The American Presidency Project*, June 6, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/286716>.

110. Ibid.

111. Ibid. For other examples of similar rhetoric (i.e., America is not at war with

Islam and the two are not incompatible), see Barack Obama, “Remarks to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara,” *The American Presidency Project*, April 06, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/286340>; Barack Obama, “Remarks in Cairo,” *The American Presidency Project*, June 04, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/286614>; Barack Obama, “The President's News Conference,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288156>; Barack Obama, “Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 11, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288157>; Barack Obama, “Press Release: Remarks of President Barack Obama in Jakarta, Indonesia - As Prepared for Delivery,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/290583>; Barack Obama, “Remarks at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288464>; Barack Obama, “Remarks on the Death of Al Qaida Terrorist Organization Leader Usama bin Laden,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 01, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/289988>; Barack Obama, “Remarks to the Parliament in London,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 25, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/290331>; Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation on the Drawdown of United States Military Personnel in Afghanistan,” *The American Presidency Project*, June 22, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/290660>; Barack Obama, “Statement on the 10th

As Obama stated here and in countless other occasions, fulfilling the American dream and achieving a status as a “full-fledged, patriotic American” was enough indication that Muslims were thriving in the United States.

Indeed, Obama rejected the Orientalist notion of Islam’s incompatibility with

Anniversary of the Commencement of United States Military Operations in Afghanistan, *The American Presidency Project*, October 07, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/297298>; Barack Obama, “The President's Weekly Address,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 08, 2012, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/302444>; Barack Obama, “Remarks at National Defense University,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 23, 2013, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/304467>; Barack Obama, “Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,” *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/307980>; Barack Obama, “Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310811>; Barack Obama, “Remarks on the United States Efforts To Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization and an Exchange With Reporters,” *The American Presidency Project*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311206>; Barack Obama, “The President's News Conference,” *The American Presidency Project*, December 18, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/312033>; Barack Obama, “Remarks at the Islamic Society of Baltimore in Catonsville, Maryland,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 03, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311781>.

Western values and denounced the inevitability of a civilizational clash between “America” and Islam. For example, in his remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City (September 24, 2012), Obama noted:

When it comes to America and Islam, there is no us and them, there is only us, because millions of Muslim Americans are part of the fabric of our country. So we reject any suggestion of a clash of civilization. So we reject any suggestion of a clash of civilizations. Belief in permanent religious war is the misguided refuge of extremists who cannot build or create anything and therefore peddle only fanaticism and hate. And it is no exaggeration to say that humanity’s future depends on us uniting against those who would divide us along the fault lines of tribe or sect, race or religion.¹¹²

Interestingly, Obama’s rejection of the civilizational clash theory came with a twist. According to Obama, the civilizational clash theory that propagated a permanent war along the religious lines (i.e., the Islamic civilization of the East and the primarily Christian civilization of the West) was an invention of terrorists, as opposed to an ideological construct originating in the writings of Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. In his remarks at National Defense University (May 23, 2013), Obama explained:

Most, though not all, of the terrorism we faced is fueled by a common ideology, a

112. Barack Obama, “Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City,” *The American Presidency Project*, September 24, 2014, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/307980>.

belief by some extremists that Islam is in conflict with the United States and the West.... This ideology is based on a lie, for the United States is not at war with Islam. And this ideology is rejected by the vast majority of Muslims, who are the most frequent victims of terrorist attacks.¹¹³

As Obama clarified here and in many other statements, terrorist groups such as ISIL, who were desperate for legitimacy in the Muslim world, had popularized the “terrorist narrative that the West and Islam are in conflict” and exploited it to radicalize and recruit young Muslims.¹¹⁴ The narrative Obama described here and elsewhere bears a remarkable resemblance to the *9/11 Commission Report*’s argument that Muslims hate the United States because of a shared identity based on politics of victimhood. Although most Muslims, Obama believed, rejected this hateful ideology, some bought “into the notion that the Muslim world [had] suffered historic grievances” in the hands of the United States. Some Muslims, Obama continued, believed that “many of the ills in the

113. Barack Obama, “Remarks at National Defense University,” *The American Presidency Project*, May 23, 2013, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/304467>.

114. Barack Obama, “Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism,” *The American Presidency Project*, February 18, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310811>. Also see Obama’s remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism (February 18, 2015), in which Obama characterized the war between Islam and America as “a lie” told by of the terrorists who were “desperate for legitimacy” in the Muslim world and who used the war on Islam “lie” to “recruit” and “radicalize young people.

Middle East flow from a history of colonialism or conspiracy; ... that Islam is incompatible with modernity or tolerance....”¹¹⁵ These widespread beliefs, Obama believed, made people “ripe for radicalization.” In a departure from previous presidents’ rhetoric and the authors of the *9/11 Commission Report*, Obama admitted that some of these grievances had roots in historical realities. However, he continued to downplay the role of the United States in the problems faced by Muslim communities around the world and focused instead on the explosive potential of Muslim grievances against the United States, which he characterized as terrorist propaganda.

Like Bush, Obama argued that, rather than a civilizational clash, the United States was engaged in a clash of ideas or an ideological war that was fought for the “hearts and minds” of young Muslims worldwide.¹¹⁶ However, Obama clarified that this ideological war was not to be “ultimately... won or lost by the United States alone.”¹¹⁷ Instead, Obama explained, the outcome of this war “will be decided by the countries and communities that terrorists like ISIL target. It’s going to be up to Muslim communities, including scholars and clerics, to keep rejecting warped interpretations of Islam and to

115. Barack Obama, “Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism.”

116. Barack Obama, “Remarks on United States Efforts to Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization and an Exchange With Reporters,” *The American Presidency Project*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311206>.

117. Ibid.

protect their sons and daughters from recruitment.”¹¹⁸ In addition to the conceptual metaphor that constructs Islam as a religion that can be warped (i.e., twisted, perverted, etc.), here, Obama, in continuation of previous presidential rhetoric, holds all Muslims accountable for the acts of “bad Muslims” by declaring that the ideological war (i.e., the war on terror) is in fact fought within Islam and along sectarian lines. In this delineation of the war on terror, Islam and by extension Muslim bodies become the immediate sites of the fight between “good” and “evil,” legitimizing the securitization of a religion and of Muslim-presenting people.

Throughout his presidency, Obama reminded Muslims worldwide that they had a responsibility to, publicly and in private, reject the myth of a civilizational war, just as the United States had, and to counter Islam’s interpretational risk. This presidential expectation was also weaved into Obama’s Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) programs. In his address to the nation on the United States counterterrorism strategy (December 06, 2015), Obama identified the spread of extremist ideology “within some Muslim communities” as a “real problem that Muslims must confront, without excuse.”¹¹⁹ Defeating terrorism, Obama explained, would only be possible if we “enlist Muslim communities as some of our strongest allies.”¹²⁰ He then clarified:

118. Ibid.

119. Barack Obama, “Address to the Nation on United States Counterterrorism Strategy,” *The American Presidency Project*, December 06, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/313213>.

120. Ibid.

Muslim leaders here and around the globe have to continue working with us: to decisively and unequivocally reject the hateful ideology that groups like ISIL and Al Qaida promote; to speak out against not just acts of violence, but also those interpretations of Islam that are incompatible with the values of religious tolerance, mutual respect, and human dignity.

In fact, Obama's frequent calls for Muslim cooperation in the war on terror was rooted in the Obama-era Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) programs that relied on Muslim informants.

Obama's counterterrorism strategy was two-pronged: (1) outreach programs that targeted Muslims who were not yet radicalized—hence not beyond saving yet, and (2) CVE initiatives that were aimed at the already “radicalized.” Outreach programs, as Obama explained in his remarks at the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Presidential Summit (August 03, 2015), were preventive measures meant to educate and “inoculate” Muslims against extremist ideologies. CVE programs, on the other hand, were designed to identify signs of radicalization in those who were “so brainwashed that all you can do is incapacitate them.”¹²¹ For these efforts to succeed, informants from within Muslim communities were considered as critical chess pieces without whom the war on terror could not be won. Like presidents before him, Obama

121. Barack Obama, “Remarks at the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Presidential Summit Town Hall and a Question-and-Answer Session,” *The American Presidency Project*, August 03, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310468>.

predicated inclusion in the “good Muslim” category on unconditional and public support of and participation in the U.S. government Islamophobic policies and practices that targeted Muslim individuals and communities.

II: Conclusion

Many scholars and commentators have observed that most American presidents of the 20th and 21st centuries have taken it upon themselves to explain Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.¹²² This phenomenon, as my analysis of the presidential discourse since Jimmy Carter shows, often occurs when American presidents differentiate between good/orthodox Islam and bad/terrorist Islam, in an effort to appease, recruit, or maintain Muslim allies. In their portrayal of the good/bad Islam/Muslim binaries, American presidents have often used a range of conceptual metaphors that characterize Islam as a hybrid between religion and political ideology that can be easily hijacked, twisted, poisoned, perverted, disgraced, and misinterpreted. Some presidents have constructed Islam as a veneer, a cloak, or a hideout for violent ideologies.

122. See, for example, David A. Graham, “A Short History of U.S. Presidents Explaining Islam to Muslims,” *Atlantic*, May 21, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/american-presidents-explain-islam-to-muslim/527415/>; and Reihan Salam, “Barack Obama Is Not a Muslim: He Should Stop Trying to Interpret Islam,” *Slate*, February 20, 2015, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/02/obama-and-isis-its-not-the-presidents-job-to-interpret-islam.html>.

Even the most positive presidential rhetoric about Islam and Muslims, which is meant to defend Islam against charges of terrorism, is often negated by discursive contradictions and Islamophobic assumptions and premises that draw from the civilizational clash theories and construct Islam as a pervertible religion. Moreover, U.S. presidents have repeatedly conflated the religion of Islam with Islamic states as geopolitical entities, framing Islam (a religion) as interchangeable with people from Muslim-majority countries. In the case of the Arab-majority countries, for example, the conflation of Islam and a nation both racializes Islam as Arab and erases ethnic, racial, and political diversity within Muslim-majority countries. People who look Muslim or come from Muslim- or Arab-majority countries are lumped into a category with a devotion to Islam as its most prominent identifier. Given Islam's perceived vulnerability to perversion and hijacking, racialized Muslim-presenting people become forever suspects because they are either already radicalized or are prone to radicalization.

Conclusion

Contrary to the popular belief, Islamophobia is not a post-9/11 phenomenon. Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter argue that Islam has always been central to the construction and presentation of the Western people's identity as Christians and "as citizens of free and egalitarian liberal democracies."¹ Serving as a foil to the Western culture and values, Islam has come to represent a series of lacks: "of freedom; of a disposition of scientific inquiry; of civility and manners; of love of life; of human worth; of equal respect for woman and gay people."² As Edward Said has shown, Muslims vis-a-vis Islam have long served as the evil other to the Western people and culture. However, as my analysis of the NOI prisoners' civils rights cases of the late 20th century shows, a positive image of "orthodox" Islam (as opposed to a negative one) was deployed in courts to discipline the study and practice of Islam in prisons and to justify the suppression and surveillance of black and Muslim communities in and outside prisons.

Although the vilification of the NOI was at least partially predicated upon a seemingly positive representation of "orthodox" Islam (as a peaceful, sincere, and inclusive faith), Islam at large was framed as posing what I term an "interpretational risk." Islamic literature was portrayed as unusually open to a wide range of interpretations, some potentially inflammatory. Good interpretations of Islam separate "good Muslims" from "bad Muslims." Good interpretations of Islam are purely religious

1. Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter, "Mapping and Mainstreaming Islamophobia: Between the Illiberal and Liberal," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia* (London: Routledge, 2019), 58.

2. Ibid.

(apolitical), in that they don't encourage Muslims to criticize the U.S. state's Islamophobic policies and practices. And yet, good interpretations of Islam are also political, in that they dictate an unconditional support of the state's domestic and foreign policies that impact Muslims worldwide. In short, good interpretations of Islam invariably breed obedient and subservient Muslims who are only licensed to hold state-sanctioned political opinions and who are required to express those opinions loudly and frequently as proof of their innocence. Muslims who adhere to the "good interpretations" of Islam are "orthodox" or "true" Muslims. Those who fail to subscribe to the state's profile of a "true" Muslim are either insincere in their faith, or they have misunderstood Islam or are just radicalized.

This formulation justifies policing Islam (how it is taught and interpreted) as a legitimate security measure. The "correct" or acceptable interpretations of Islam are to be determined by the state because even if Islamic literature are given the benefit of the doubt, their interpretations and the interpretations of those interpretations could be inflammatory. As a result of this openness and susceptibility to multiple and even contradictory interpretations, Islam can be readily adaptable to terrorist causes. In this chain of reasoning lies one of the core tenets of Islamophobia: Even if Islam were to be trusted as a true and peaceful religion, in the wrong hands, it could be easily weaponized and adapted for indoctrination and terrorist purposes.

Islam is thus effectively framed as a ticking ideological bomb, making Muslims impossible to trust. One moment, they are "good Muslims," but the next, they fall for "bad" interpretations of Islam and turn into supervillains. Along the same lines, if there is a "true" or "good" Islam and a "false" or "bad" Islam, Muslims are ranked on a sincerity

and legitimacy scale of true/good to false/bad Muslims and a corresponding scale of tolerability by the state. Muslims can easily slide further to the right or to the wrong side of these scales by a slight shift in their political opinions, appearance, or cultural practices. To stay on the state's "good Muslim" side means to secure legitimacy and proximity to power. It allows the legitimized sects to dictate the true meaning of Islam to other Muslims and to demand conformity from them. A race between different sects seems inevitable. Winning the race, however, requires being co-opted into the state's counter-radicalization and counter-violent-extremism programs. In effect, Muslim sects are pitted against each other in a gladiator fight for legitimacy, disassociation from terrorism, and relative toleration by the state.

In a manner similar to the deployment of "good" Islam in the mid- to late-twentieth century prisoners' civil rights cases, the *9/11 Commission Report* relies on a seemingly positive representation of Islam and Muslims to explain the why, the how, and the what of the 9/11 attacks. In one breath, the report's authors denounce both the civilizational clash theory and the widespread belief that Islam is the enemy, but in the same breath, they construct Muslims as uncivilized people who are consumed by a false narrative of victimhood. The report's central argument about Muslims assumes that Muslims simultaneously admire, envy, and hate Western nations (especially the United States) for the latter's economic prosperity and technological advancement, while also blaming the West for the Muslim world's social, political, and economic ills.

This mixture of contradictory emotions, the report argues, fuels and is fueled by a false narrative of victimhood. Muslims, in other words, falsely view Islam as an "embattled faith" and its followers as unjustly victimized by the Christian West. An

assumption of innocence and a narrative of suffering, the report seems to suggest, gives Muslims worldwide a shared ethnic identity, connecting them to a collective unconscious filled with rage and a desire for world domination, which in turn makes Muslims (even the “good” ones) vulnerable to “bad” interpretations of Islam and radicalization. Thus, ignoring the United States’ decades-long political interferences and military presence in the Middle East and North Africa, the report’s authors frame the U.S. as an innocent bystander and Muslims as consumed by unjustified rage and resentment. Valid political concerns and the lasting generational impact of past injustices and injuries are also dismissed as ancient grudges that no longer apply in today’s world. Any U.S. responsibility for the conflicts in Middle East and North Africa is abdicated, allegations of war on Islam are denied, and grounds for demanding reparations or cooperation with the U.S. efforts to seek restitution are laid. The authors of the report further distinguish between good and bad interpretations of Islam by declaring the latter a distortion of the former. Islam per se, the report argues, is not synonymous with terrorism, and most Muslims are not terrorists. However, when misinterpreted, Islam breeds fundamentalism and terrorism. As discussed earlier, this formulation constructs Islam as easily perverted and weaponized.

A similar construction of Islam as a pervertible creed lies at the heart of presidential discourse since Jimmy Carter. Even the most positive presidential rhetoric is often undermined by contradictions and Islamophobic assumptions. Many American presidents have perpetuated the civilizational clash myth, even as they have openly rejected a war between Islamic and Western “civilizations” or between Islam and the United States. In fact, in the post-9/11 presidential rhetoric, the discourse of an

“ideological war” borrows heavily from and replaces the civilizational clash rhetoric, allowing for legitimization of Islamophobic policies and the continued war on terror that goes beyond the U.S. geographical borders. Reminiscent of the *9/11 Report*’s construction of the Muslim other as consumed by a culture of victimization, the post-9/11 presidents justified the war on terror by characterizing Muslim communities around the world as volatile clusters of people who unfairly blame their economic, social, and cultural ills on the West.

As I showed in Chapter Two, the disconnect between positive presidential rhetoric and negative implications is most prominent in the metaphors used by American presidents to describe the difference between Islam and terrorism or between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims.” According to many U.S. presidents discussed in this study, the U.S. is not against “good Islam” or “good Muslims.” The U.S. is against “perverted,” “twisted,” “distorted,” “hijacked,” “poisoned,” or bad Islam, which can be weaponized or used as a façade for violent and hateful ideology. “Perverted” Islam is distinguished from authentic or good Islam in that the former encourages political opposition to the U.S. policies that impact Muslims in and outside the United States (especially in the Middle East). Any act of political aggression towards or opposition to the U.S., thus, not only constitutes a deviation from authentic or orthodox Islam (i.e., good Islam), but it also disgraces Islam as a religion. It is this type of “distorted” Islam that can be used as a “cloak” or “veneer.” As discussed in Chapter Three, when used as conceptual metaphors to differentiate between bad and good Islam, “cloak” and “veneer” can cast a shadow of doubt over all Muslims and Muslim-looking people. If Islam can be used as a disguise for

violent ideologies, it can conceal the identity of people who pose an existential threat to the United States. Everyone who is or is perceived as a Muslim is then a suspect.

In much of presidential rhetoric, while Americans are conceptualized as a people whose most signifying feature is their Americanness, people who come from Muslim-majority countries or who share the Islamic faith are often singularly defined by their religious beliefs. Islam, as a religion, becomes interchangeable with people from Muslim-majority countries or of Muslim faith. Anything that Muslims do, say, or think, according to such conceptualization, is rooted in Islam. If someone of the Islamic faith opposes the U.S. politics and practices in the Middle East, a fanatical and single-minded devotion to Islam is the only logical explanation, as opposed to the decades-long U.S. incursions and interventions in the region. Along the same lines, as a population whose identity and existence in this world is defined by their religion, Muslims are held accountable for the actions of other Muslims. This guilt by association can only be partially negated by nonstop and loud denunciation of “bad Muslims” and fundamentalism—as silence can either signify condoning terrorism or disgracing/betraying Islam. In other words, the U.S. presidential rhetoric on Islam and Muslims has for decades dictated the correct interpretations of Islam to Muslims.

Finally, as I hopefully showed in previous chapters, Islamophobia is not simply a hatred, fear, or open prejudice against Islam and Muslims. It is a complex and fluid discursive apparatus that, like racism and other similar ideologies, operates below the level of consciousness and functions by generating a series of often contradictory networks of meaning and assumptions about Islam and Muslims to justify negative sentiments and discriminatory policies and practices targeting Muslims and Muslim-

presenting people. In fact, what appears to be contradictions within these discourses are precisely constructed that way in order to satisfy contradictory political, social, and cultural needs of the dominant groups (mostly the U.S. state's interests). The delegitimization of terrorism has been predicated upon a distinction between orthodox/good Islam and fundamentalist/bad Islam. On one hand, most U.S. presidents have reserved the term "terrorism" to refer to a small sect of fundamentalists, stressing that Islam is the opposite of terrorism and that the United States is not at war with Islam and all Muslims. On the other hand, both the casual invocation of the Muslim world as synonymous with the Arab world and the conflation of Islam with Muslim-majority countries eradicate cultural, ethnic, and political differences within these communities. In other words, the concept of terrorism changes constantly with geopolitical realities of the time, in such a way that terrorism and Islam seem to overlap in legal, political, and public discourses in the United States. As a result, even when the target of Islamophobic discourse seems to be terrorism and not Islam, in effect, the boundaries between the two are so porous that the distinction between Islam and terrorism collapses. Islam is thus transformed into a matter of national security, enabling state actors to legitimize a variety of legal and political policies aimed at neutralizing the threat posed by Islam and Muslims in the U.S. and abroad.

Bibliography

- Abbas, Tahir. "After 9/11: British South Asian Muslims, Islamophobia, Multiculturalism and the State." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, no. 3 (2004): 26–38.
- Adams, John. "Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States of America and the Bey and Subjects of Tripoli of Barbary." (1797).
- Adams Schmidt, Dana. "President Opens a Mosque Today." *New York Times*. June 28, 1957, 21.
- Agathangelou, Anna M., and L. H. M. Ling, "Power and Play through Poisies: Reconstructing Self and Other in the 9/11 Commission Report." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 830-831.
- Amin, Samir. *The Liberal Virus: Permanent War and the Americanization of the World*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004.
- Asad, Talal. *On Suicide Bombing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.
- Aslan, Reza. *No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*. New York: Random House, 2006.
- "Address of Wayne McVeagh, ESQ," 180 U.S. 643, (U.S., 1901), 657.
- Allen, Christopher. *Islamophobia*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010.
- Austermühl, Frank. *The Great American Scaffold: Intertextuality and Identity in American Presidential Discourse*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2014.
- Barber, Benjamin R. *Jihad vs. McWorld*. New York: Times Books, 1995.
- Beasley, Vanessa B. *You, the People: American National Identity in Presidential Rhetoric*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2011.

- Benson, Heidi. "9/11 Report Creates a Stir in Bookstores." *San Francisco Chronicle*. August 1, 2004.
- Benson, Heidi. "'The 9/11 Commission Report' Is a Compelling Read. But Does it Deserve a Literary Reward?" *San Francisco Chronicle*. November 12, 2004.
- Berger, Dan. *Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Berger, Dan, and Toussaint Losier. *Rethinking the American Prison Movement*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Beydoun, Khaled. *American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.
- Beydoun, Khaled. "Bisecting American Islam? Divide, Conquer, and Counter-Radicalization." *Hastings Law Journal* 69, (2018): 429-497.
- Beydoun, Khaled. "Islam Incarcerated: Religious Accommodation of Muslim Prisoners before *Holt v. Hobbs*." *University of Cincinnati Law Review* 84, no. 1 (2016): 99-152.
- "Billy Graham: Pastors to Presidents," *Billy Graham Evangelist Association*. May 17, 2021.
- Biner, Zerrin Özlem. "From Terrorist to Repentant: Who Is the Victim?" *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (2006): 339-353.
- Bleich, Erik. "What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? Theorizing and Measuring an Emerging Comparative Concept." *American Behavioral Scientist* 55, no. 12 (2011): 1581-1600.

Blunt, Joseph. *The American Annual Register for the Years 1827-8-9*. New York: E & G W Blunt, 1830.

Brown, Angela K. "Taking Note of 9/11 Report, Bush Considers His Options." *Associated Press*, July 27, 2004.

Bryant v. McGinnis, 463 F. Supp. 373, (W.D.N.Y. 1978).

Bush, George H. W. "Address to the People of Iraq on the Persian Gulf Crisis." *The American Presidency Project*. September 16, 1990,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/264505>.

Bush, George H. W. "Interview with Christian Malar of Channel 5, French Television." *The American Presidency Project*. May 24, 1990,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265067>.

Bush, George H. W. "Interview with Middle Eastern Journalists." *The American Presidency Project*. March 08, 1991,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265348>.

Bush, George H. W. "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a White House Briefing for Representatives of the Arab-American Community." *The American Presidency Project*. September 24, 1990,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-and-question-and-answer-session-white-house-briefing-for-representatives-the-arab>.

Bush, George H. W. "Remarks at a Republican Party Fundraising Luncheon in Denver, Colorado." *The American Presidency Project*. September 18, 1990,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/264533>.

- Bush, George H. W. "Remarks at the Annual Conference of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Baltimore, Maryland." *The American Presidency Project*. August 20, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265243>.
- Bush, George H. W. "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters." *The American Presidency Project*. January 28, 1991, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265929>.
- Bush, George H. W. "Remarks to Department of Defense Employees." *The American Presidency Project*. August 15, 1990, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/265217>.
- Bush, George H. W. "Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy." *The American Presidency Project*. October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>.
- Bush, George H. W. "Text of Bush's Television Message to Iraqi People." *The New York Times*. September 17, 1990.
- Bush, George H. W. "The President's News Conference." *The American Presidency Project*. March 7, 1989, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248213>.
- Bush, George W. "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11." *The American Presidency Project*. Sep 20, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/213749>.
- Bush, George W. "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union." *The American Presidency Project*. September 20, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/269307>.

Bush, George W. "Address to the Nation from Ellis Island, New York, on the Anniversary of the Terrorist Attacks of September 11." *The American Presidency Project*. September 11, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/211982>.

Bush, George W. "Commencement Address at the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado." *The American Presidency Project*. June 2, 2004, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/214968>.

Bush, George W. "Interview with Kai Diekmann of Bild." *The American Presidency Project*. May 05, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/215559>.

Bush, George W. "Interview with Print Journalists." *The American Presidency Project*. May 29, 2003, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-print-journalists>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks at an Iftaar Dinner." *The American Presidency Project*. November 7, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/214694>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks at a Luncheon for Gubernatorial Candidate Robert R. Riley in Birmingham, Alabama." *The American Presidency Project*. September 28, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/269180>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks at a Townhall Meeting in Ontario, California." *The American Presidency Project*. January 05, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-townhall-meeting-ontario-california>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks at the Embassy of Afghanistan and an Exchange with Reporters." *The American Presidency Project*. September 10, 2002,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-embassy-afghanistan-and-exchange-with-reporters>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks at the Islamic Center of Washington." *The American Presidency Project*. September 17, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/212939>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks by President George W. Bush and President Megawati of Indonesia." *The White House Archives*. September 19, 2001, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/ramadan/islam.html>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks Following a Meeting with Congressional Leaders and an Exchange with Reporters." *The American Presidency Project*. September 19, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/211543>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks on American Competitiveness in Highland Heights, Kentucky." *The American Presidency Project*. May 19, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217079>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks on the celebration of Eid-al-Fitr." *The American Presidency Project*. December 05, 2002, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-celebration-eid-al-fitr>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy." *The American Presidency Project*. November 06, 2003, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-20th-anniversary-the-national-endowment-for-democracy>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks on U.S. Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan." *White House Archives*. October 11, 2002, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/text/20021011-3.html>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks Prior to Discussions with King Abdullah of Jordan and An Exchange with Reporters." *The American Presidency Project*. September 28, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-prior-discussions-with-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-and-exchange-with-reporters-2>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks to Airline Employees at O'Hare International Airport, Chicago, Illinois." *The American Presidency Project*. September 27, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-airline-employees-chicago-illinois>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks to the Community at Travis Air Force Base, California." *The American Presidency Project*. October 17, 2001, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-community-travis-air-force-base-california>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks to the Military Officers Association of America." *The American Presidency Project*. September 05, 2006, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/267962>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks to the National Endowment for Democracy." *The American Presidency Project*. October 06, 2005, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216179>.

Bush, George W. "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City."

The American Presidency Project. November 10, 2001,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/216893>.

Bush, George W. "The President's News Conference with President Havel of Czech

Republic in Prague." *The American Presidency Project*. November 20, 2002,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-vaclav-havel-the-czech-republic-prague-czech>.

Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* New York: Verso, 2009.

Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Morning and Violence*. New York: Verso, 2004.

Caldwell, Will. "'A Sword of Wrath, the Executor of Sinister Adventures': Domestic

Islamophobia and International Black Muslim Solidarities during the Cold War."

Journal of Africana Religions 7, no. 1 (2019): 172–79.

Carney, James. "If You Don't Have Time to Read It." *Time*. August 2, 2004, 60.

Carpenter, Ted Galen. "Missed Opportunities: The 9/11 Commission Report and US

Foreign Policy." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2005): 52-61.

Carter, Jimmy. "American Hostages in Iran Statement Requesting Special Prayers for the

Hostages During the Thanksgiving Holiday Weekend." *The American Presidency*

Project. November 17, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249039>.

Carter, Jimmy. "American Hostages in Iran White House Statement." *The American*

Presidency Project. November 17, 1979,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249023>.

- Carter, Jimmy. "American Society of Newspaper Editors Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at the Society's Annual Convention." *The American Presidency Project*. April 10, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250580>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Gannett Newspaper and Broadcast Executives Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a White House Briefing." *The American Presidency Project*. December 13, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248222>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Id-al-Fitr Message of the President." *The American Presidency Project*. August 11, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/251716>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Interview with the President Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Magazine Editors." *The American Presidency Project*. February 15, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250195>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Interview With the President Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters from the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, Inc." *The American Presidency Project*. April 18, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249614>
- Carter, Jimmy. "Iranian Situation and United States Energy Conservation Remarks at a White House Briefing for State Governors." *The American Presidency Project*. November 16, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248981>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Merced, California Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a Town Meeting." *The American Presidency Project*. July 04, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250526>.

- Carter, Jimmy. "Relations with Islamic Nations Statement by the President." *The American Presidency Project*. February 07, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249921>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "Situation in Iran and Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan Remarks at a White House Briefing for Members of Congress." *The American Presidency Project*. January 08, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250505>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "The President's News Conference." *The American Presidency Project*. March 14, 1980, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/250048>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "The President's News Conference." *The American Presidency Project*. November 28, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/249292>.
- Carter, Jimmy. "White House Statement on American Hostages in Iran." *The American Presidency Project*. November 09, 1979, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/248800>.
- Carver, Terrell, and Jernei Pikalo. *Political Language and Metaphor: Interpreting and Changing the World*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Chilton, Paul. *Analyzing Political Discourse*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Chomsky, Noam. *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2003.
- Clinton, William J. "Address to the Nation on Airstrikes Against Serbian Targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)." *The American*

Presidency Project. March 24, 1999,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/229752>.

Clinton, William J. "Address to the Nation on Military Action Against Terrorist Sites in Afghanistan and Sudan." *The American Presidency Project*. August 20, 1998,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/224582>.

Clinton, William J. "Interview with the French Media in Paris," *The American Presidency Project*. June 07, 1994,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219294>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on Immigration Policy." *The American Presidency Project*. July 27, 1993,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220234>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Louis Freeh to Be FBI Director." *The American Presidency Project*. July 20, 1993,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219931>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Dinner." *The American Presidency Project*. October 21, 1993,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217612>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks at the Dartmouth College Commencement Ceremony in Hanover, New Hampshire." *The American Presidency Project*. June 11, 1995,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221063>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Pan Am Flight 103 Memorial in Arlington, Virginia." *The American Presidency Project*.

December 21, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220007>.

- Clinton, William J. "Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia," *The American Presidency Project*. May 29, 1995,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221730>
- Clinton, William J. "Remarks in a Town Meeting with Russian Citizens in Moscow." *The American Presidency Project*. January 14, 1994,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219095>.
- Clinton, William J. "Remarks on the Swearing-In of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Louis Freeh." *The American Presidency Project*. September 01, 1993,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217351>.
- Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia." *The American Presidency Project*. March 28, 1995,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221622>.
- Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the Democratic Leadership Council." *The American Presidency Project*. November 13, 1995,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220762>.
- Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the 48th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City." *The American Presidency Project*. September 27, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217952>.
- Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the Jordanian Parliament in Amman, Jordan." *The American Presidency Project*. October 26, 1994,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/217879>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the Military Community at Norfolk Naval Station." *The American Presidency Project*. April 01, 1999,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/229946>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City." *The American Presidency Project*. October 22, 1995,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220788>.

Clinton, William J. "Remarks to the United States Coast Guard in Seattle." *The American Presidency Project*. November 20, 1993,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218702>.

Clinton, William J. "Statement on the Apprehension of Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf." *The American Presidency Project*. February 08, 1995,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/220614>.

Clinton, William J. "Teleconference Remarks with B'nai B'rith." *The American Presidency Project*. August 24, 1994,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218314>.

Clinton, William J. "The President's News Conference with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt." *The American Presidency Project*. April 06, 1993,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219602>.

Clinton, William J. "The President's News Conference with President Ramiro De Leon of Guatemala." *The American Presidency Project*. November 30, 1993,

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/218213>.

- Clinton, William J. "The President's News Conference with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy in Rome." *The American Presidency Project*. June 02, 1994, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219140>.
- Clinton, William J. "The President's Radio Address." *The American Presidency Project*. February 27, 1993, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/219510>.
- William J. Clinton, "The President's Radio Address," *The American Presidency Project*. May 20, 1995, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/221569>.
- Colley, Zoe. "'All America Is a Prison': The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners, 1955–1965." *Journal of American Studies* 48, no. 2 (May 2014): 393–415.
- Cooper v. Pate*, 324 F.2d 165, (7th Cir. 1963).
- Cummins, Eric. *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement*. California: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Curtis, Edward E. "Islamizing the Black Body: Ritual and Power in Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam." *Religion and American Culture: A journal of Interpretation* 12, no. 2, (2002): 168-196.
- Curtis, Edward E. "The Black Muslim Scare of the Twentieth Century." In *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*, edited by Carl W. Ernst, 75–106. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013.
- Crawford, Malachi D. *Black Muslims and the Law: Civil Liberties from Elijah Muhammad to Muhammad Ali*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015.
- Davies, Frank. "U.S. Report on 9/11 to Be 'Explosive.'" *Miami Herald*. July 10, 2003.

- Eisenhower, Dwight D. "Remarks at Ceremonies Opening the Islamic Center." *American Presidency Project*. June 28, 1957,
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/233310>.
- Engle, Karen. "Constructing Good Aliens and Good Citizens: Legitimizing the War on Terrorism." *University of Colorado Law Review* 75, no. 1, (2004): 59-114.
- Falkenrath, Richard A. "The 9/11 Commission Report." *International Security* 29, no. 3 (2004): 170-190.
- Farber, David R. *Taken Hostage: the Iran Hostage Crisis and America's First Encounter with Radical Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Felber, Garret. *Those Who Know Don't Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Movement, and the Carceral State*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020.
- Frankel, Oz. "The 9/11 Commission Report: History Under the Sign of Memory." In *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, edited by Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters, 653-668. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- Garner, Steve, and Saher Selod. "The Racialization of Muslims: Empirical Studies of Islamophobia." *Critical Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2014): 9-19.
- Graham, David A. "A Short History of U.S. Presidents Explaining Islam to Muslims." *Atlantic*. May 21, 2017,
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/american-presidents-explain-islam-to-muslim/527415/>.
- Green, Todd H. *The Fear of Islam*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019.

- Halliday, Fred. *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.
- Halliday, Fred. "Islamophobia Reconsidered." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 5 (1999): 892-902.
- Harris, Shane, and Matthew M. Aid. "CIA Files Prove America Helped Saddam as He Gassed Iran." *Foreign Policy*. August 26, 2013.
- Howe, Nicholas. "Metaphor in Contemporary American Political Discourse." *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 3, no. 2 (1988): 87–104.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- In re Jesse L. Ferguson et al. on Habeas Corpus*, 55 Cal.2d 663, (Cal. 1961).
- In re Long Term Administrative Segregation of Inmates Designated as Five Percenters*, 174 F.3d 464 (4th Cir. 1999).
- Jacobs, James B. "The Prisoners' Rights Movement and Its Impacts, 1960-80." *Crime and Justice* 2 (1980): 429–70.
- Jackson, Sherman A. *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking toward the Third Resurrection*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Jeffery, Laura, and Matei Candea. "The Politics of Victimhood." *History and Anthropology* 17, no. 4 (2006): 287-296.
- Jehl, Douglas. "Clinton and Aids Meet Rushdie at White House in Rebuke to Iran." *The New York Times*. November 25, 1993,
<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/11/25/world/clinton-and-aides-meet-rushdie-at-white-house-in-rebuke-to-iran.html>.

- Jenish, D'Arcy. "Islam and the Gulf War: Why Many Muslims Support Iraq." *Maclean's*. February 11, 1991.
- John R. Jones v. W. K. Cunningham, Jr.*, 371 U.S. 236, (U.S. 1963).
- Johnstone, Barbara. *Discourse Analysis*. Malden: Blackwell, 2008.
- Kleinman, Das et al., *Social Suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Knuckles v. Prasse*, 302 F. Supp. 1036, (E.D. Pa. 1969), 1050.
- Kumar, Deepa. "Framing Islam: The Resurgence of Orientalism during the Bush II Era." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 3 (2010): 254-277.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Larson, James F. "Television and U.S. Foreign Policy: The Case of the Iran Hostage Crisis." *Journal of Communication* 36, no. 4 (1986): 108-130.
- Lawrence J. Holt et al., v. Terrell Don Hutto et al.*, 363 F. Supp. 194, (E.D. Ark. 1973).
- Lawrence, W. H. "President and Wife Doff Shoes at Rites Dedicating Mosque." *New York Times*. June 29, 1957, 1.
- "Leaders Wrestle with Faith and War," *Christianity Today*. February 11, 1991.
- Lean, Nathan C. "The Debate Over the Utility and Precision of the Term 'Islamophobia.'" In *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia*, edited by Irene Zempi and Imran Awan, 11-17. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Lewis, Bernard. "The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslims Deeply Resent the West, and Why Their Bitterness Will Not Easily Be Mollified." *Atlantic* 266, no. 3 (1990): 47-60.
- Lincoln, Eric C. *The Black Muslims in America*. Boston: Beacon, 1961.

- Lokman Balkan. "A Proposed Definition of Islamophobia." *European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion*. October 8, 2010, <https://www.emisco.edu/a-proposed-definition-of-islamophobia/>.
- López, Fernando Bravo. "Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 4 (2011): 556-573.
- Mahajan, Rahul. *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002.
- Mamdani, Mahmood. *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2004.
- Manning, William A. *The World Trade Center Bombing: Report and Analysis*. Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration, National Fire Data Center, 1993.
- Martin X. Sostre v. Paul D. McGinnis*, 334 F.2d 906, (2d Cir. 1964).
- Masjid Muhammad v. Keve*, 479 F. Supp. 1311 (D. Del. 1979).
- Matter of Brown v. McGinnis*, 180 N.E.2d 791, (N.Y. 1961).
- Mauleón, Emmanuel. "Black Twice: Policing Black Muslim Identities." *UCLA Law Review* 65, no. 5, (2018): 1376-1386.
- May, Ernest R. "When Government Writes History: A Memoir of the-9/11 Commission." *The New Republic* 232, no. 19 (2005): 30-35
- Meer, Nasar, and Tariq Modood. "Refutations of Racism in the 'Muslim Question.'" *Patterns of Prejudice* 43, no. 3-4 (2009): 335-354.
- McCloud, Aminah Beverly. *African American Islam*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Mitchell, W. J. T. *Cloning Terror: The War of Images, 9/11 to the Present*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Mondon, Aurelien, and Aaron Winter. "Mapping and Mainstreaming Islamophobia: Between the Illiberal and Liberal." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Islamophobia*, edited by Irene Zempi and Imran Awan, 58-70. London: Routledge, 2019.

Nacos, Brigitte Lebens. *Terrorism and the Media: from the Iran Hostage Crisis to the World Trade Center Bombing*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Nojeim, Gregory T. "Statement by Legislative Counsel Gregory T. Nojeim on the Use of Secret Evidence in Immigration Proceedings before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims." *ACLU*, <https://www.aclu.org/other/statement-legislative-counsel-gregory-t-nojeim-use-secret-evidence-immigration-proceedings>.

Obama, Barack. "Address to the Nation on the Drawdown of United States Military Personnel in Afghanistan." *The American Presidency Project*. June 22, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/290660>.

Obama, Barack. "Address to the Nation on United States Counterterrorism Strategy." *The American Presidency Project*. December 06, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/313213>.

Obama, Barack. "Interview with John Dickerson of CBS's 'Face the Nation.'" *The American Presidency Project*. July 24, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-john-dickerson-cbss-face-the-nation>.

Obama, Barack. "Press Release: Remarks of President Barack Obama in Jakarta, Indonesia—As Prepared for Delivery." *The American Presidency Project*. November 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/290583>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks at the Iftar Dinner." *The American Presidency Project*. August 13, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-the-iftar-dinner-0>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks at the Islamic Society of Baltimore in Catonsville, Maryland." *The American Presidency Project*. February 03, 2016, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311781>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks at the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders Presidential Summit Town Hall and a Question-and-Answer Session." *The American Presidency Project*. August 03, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310468>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks at National Defense University." *The American Presidency Project*. May 23, 2013, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/304467>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks at the United Nations Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism in New York City." *The American Presidency Project*. September 29, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310737>.

Obama, Barack. "Remarks at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta." *The American Presidency Project*. November 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288464>.

- Obama, Barack. "Remarks at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism." *The American Presidency Project*. February 18, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/310811>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks at a Wreath-Laying Ceremony at the Pentagon Memorial in Arlington, Virginia." *The American Presidency Project*. September 11, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288157>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks in Cairo." *The American Presidency Project*. June 04, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/286614>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks on Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo." *The American Presidency Project*. December 10, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-accepting-the-nobel-peace-prize-oslo>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks on the Death of Al Qaida Terrorist Organization Leader Usama bin Laden." *The American Presidency Project*. May 01, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/289988>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks on the United States Efforts to Combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) Terrorist Organization and an Exchange with Reporters." *The American Presidency Project*. July 6, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/311206>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara." *The American Presidency Project*. April 06, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/286340>.

- Obama, Barack. "Remarks to the Parliament in London." *The American Presidency Project*. May 25, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/290331>.
- Obama, Barack. "Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City." *The American Presidency Project*. September 24, 2014, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/307980>.
- Obama, Barack. "Statement on the 10th Anniversary of the Commencement of United States Military Operations in Afghanistan." *The American Presidency Project*. October 07, 2011, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/297298>.
- Obama, Barack. "The President's News Conference." *The American Presidency Project*. December 18, 2015, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/312033>.
- Obama, Barack. "The President's News Conference." *The American Presidency Project*. September 10, 2010, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/288156>.
- Obama, Barack. "The President's News Conference with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Caen, France." *The American Presidency Project*. June 6, 2009, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-with-president-nicolas-sarkozy-france-caen-france>.
- Obama, Barack. "The President's Weekly Address." *The American Presidency Project*. September 08, 2012, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/302444>.
- Patel, Ismail Adam. *The Muslim Problem: From the British Empire to Islamophobia*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Randour, François, Julien Perrez, and Min Reuchamps. "Twenty Years of Research on Political Discourse: A Systematic Review and Directions for Future Research."

- Discourse and Society* 31, no. 4 (June 2020): 428-443,
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926520903526>.
- Rascoff, Samuel J. "Establishing Official Islam? The Law and Strategy of Counter-Radicalization." *Stanford Law Review* 64, (2012): 125-189.
- Rovner, Joshua and Austin Long. "The Perils of Shallow Theory: Intelligence Reform and the 9/11 Commission." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 18, no. 4 (2006): 609-637.
- Pervear v. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 72 U.S. 475, (U.S. 1867).
- Pierce, et. al. v. J. E. La Vallee*, 293 F.2d 233, (2d Cir. 1961).
- Posner, Richard A. "The 9/11 Report: A Dissent (Looking at the Failings of the 9/11 Commission)." *New York Times Book Review*. August 29, 2004, 9-10.
- Rosenfeld, Harry. "9/11 Report Is A Must Read." *Times Union*. August 1, 2004.
- Ruffin v. The Commonwealth*, 62 Va. 790, (Va. 1871).
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Penguin, 1978.
- Said, Edward. "Orientalism Reconsidered." *Race and Class* 27, no. 2 (1985): 1-15.
- Salam, Reihan. "Barack Obama Is Not a Muslim: He Should Stop Trying to Interpret Islam." *Slate*. February 20, 2015, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/02/obama-and-isis-its-not-the-presidents-job-to-interpret-islam.html>.
- Sayyid, Salman. "A Measure of Islamophobia." *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2, no. 1 (2014): 10-25.
- Shenon, Philip. *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation*. New York: Twelve, 2008.

- Shryock, Andrew, ed. *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- SL, Bashir. "The Mosque in Washington." *The Islamic Monthly*. April 15, 2014, <https://www.theislamicmonthly.com/the-mosque-in-washington/>.
- Smith, Christopher E. "Black Muslims and the Development of Prisoners' Rights." *Journal of Black Studies* 24, no. 2 (1993): 131–46.
- Sostre v. McGinnis*, 379 U. S. 892, (U.S. 1964).
- St. Claire v. Cuyler*, 634 F.2d 109 (3d Cir. 1980).
- State v. Cabbage* 210 A.2d 555, (Del. Super. Ct. 1965).
- Stoddard, Theodore Lothrop. *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921.
- Stuckey, Mary E. *Defining Americans: The Presidency and National Identity*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004.
- Thacker a.k.a. Rabah Muhammad Ali v. Gary T. Dixon et al.*, 784 F. Supp. 286, (E.D.N.C. 1991).
- The Runnymede Trust. *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All* (1997), <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/islamophobia-a-challenge-for-us-all>.
- The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2004).
- "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States," *Publishers Weekly Reviews* 251, no. 33 (2004).

- Tolan, John Victor. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Tyrer, David. "Flooding the Embankments: Race, Bio-politics and Sovereignty." In *Thinking through Islamophobia: Global Perspectives*, edited by Vakil Sayyid, Salman Sayyid, and Abdool Karim Vakil, 93-110. London: Hurst, 2010.
- Uenal, Faith. "Disentangling Islamophobia: The Differential Effects of Symbolic, Realistic, and Terroristic Threat Perceptions as Mediators Between Social Dominance Orientation and Islamophobia." *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 4, no. 1 (2016): 66-90.
- United States Congress, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *The Iran Hostage Crisis: A Chronology of Daily Developments, January 1-25, 1981 Report*, G.P.O., 1981, https://primo.lib.umn.edu/permalink/f/1q7ssba/UMN_ALMA21471397230001701.
- Updike, John. "The Great I Am: Robert Alter's New Translation of the Pentateuch." *The New Yorker*. November 1, 2004, 100.
- Warren, Craig A. "'It Reads Like a Novel': The 9/11 Commission Report and the American Reading Public." *Journal of American Studies* 41, no. 3 (2007): 533-556.
- Werbner, Pnina. "Folk Devils and Racist Imaginaries in a Global Prism: Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism in the Twenty-First Century." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (2013): 450-467.
- White, Jean. "Ike Stresses Free Religion at Mosque Rites." *Washington Post and Times Herald*. June 29, 1957.

- William T. X. Fulwood v. Donald Clemmer*, 206 F. Supp. 370, (D.D.C. 1962).
- Willis X. Bryant, Jr. v. Paul D. McGinnis*, 463 F. Supp. 373, (W.D.N.Y. 1978).
- Wodak, Ruth et al. *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.
- Wolf, L. A. “America Held Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979–1981 and U.S.-Iranian Relations.” *Magazine of History* 20, no. 3 (2006): 27–30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/maghis/20.3.27>.
- Zafar, Iqbal, *Islamophobia: History, Context and Deconstruction*. New Delhi: Sage, 2020.
- Zúquete, Jose Pedro. “The European extreme-right and Islam: New directions?” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13, no. 3 (2008): 321– 344.