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## ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN THE MIND OF AMERICA: INFLUENCES ON THE MAKING OF U.S. POLICY

FAWAZ A. GERGES

*This essay examines the ways in which the U.S. public, media, interest groups, and foreign policy elite, including Congress, influence the making of American policy toward political Islam. After analyzing the focal historical, cultural, and current political developments that inform Americans' attitudes on Islamic resurgence, the paper argues that contemporary security and strategic considerations, not just culture and ideology, account for America's preoccupation with Islamism.*

According to the eminent French scholar Maxime Rodinson, "Western Christendom perceived the Muslim world as a menace long before it began to be seen as a real problem."<sup>1</sup> This view is echoed by the late British historian Albert Hourani, who argued that Islam from the time it appeared was a problem for Christian Europe. Looking at Islam with a mixture of fear and bewilderment, Christians could not accept Muhammad as a genuine prophet or the authenticity of the revelation given to him. The most widely held belief among Christians, noted Hourani, was that "Islam is a false religion, Allah is not God, Muhammad was not a prophet; Islam was invented by men whose motives and character were to be deplored, and propagated by the sword."<sup>2</sup> As the thirteenth-century Crusader and polemicist Oliver of Paderborn claimed: "Islam began by the sword, was maintained by the sword, and by the sword would be ended."<sup>3</sup>

Centuries of interaction have left a bitter legacy between the world of Islam and the Christian West, deriving largely from the fact that both civilizations claim a universal message and mission and share much of the same Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman heritage.<sup>4</sup> The nineteenth-century German thinker Friedrich Schleiermacher argued that Christians and Muslims were "still contending for the mastery of the human race."<sup>5</sup> However, this portrait of unrelenting Western-Muslim hostility is misleading. The pendulum of Western-Muslim relations has swung between rivalry/confrontation and collaboration/accommodation. Although conflict arising from cultural, religious, and ideological factors has been the norm, realpolitik and interstate interests also have shaped the relationship between the two civilizations.

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Unlike Europe, the United States did not engage in any prolonged, bloody encounters with Muslim states and societies. It never directly ruled over Arab and Muslim lands. In the first part of the twentieth century, the United States, unrestrained by colonial and geographic requirements, established dynamic and cordial relations with Arabs and Muslims, who viewed America as a progressive island amid European reaction.

Even after it became a superpower, the United States was much less constrained by colonial, historical, and cultural factors than its European counterparts. Political and economic control have been the driving force behind Washington's Near East policy. Furthermore, in contrast to the Europeans, Americans do not appear to be concerned about the presence of a large immigrant Muslim community in their midst; in the United States, it is the Hispanics who are the focus of assimilation fears concerning the "immigrant threat."<sup>6</sup> Although the religious and intellectual challenge of Islam continues to seize the imagination of many people in the United States, it is the security and strategic implications of the mass politics of Islam that resonate in the mind of America.

### A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

The emergence of a U.S. global role after World War II dramatically changed the foreign policy elite's attitude toward rapid sociopolitical change in the third world. Although U.S. officials in the first part of the twentieth century supported the concept of self-determination and opposed the perpetuation of colonialism, in the second half of the century they looked with suspicion on populist third world movements. By the late 1940s, containing the perceived Soviet threat and ensuring the security of the pro-Western Middle Eastern regimes was higher on the U.S. foreign policy agenda than coming to terms with third world nationalisms. True, some officials in the Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy administrations advocated an alliance between the United States and local nationalist forces to contain Soviet expansionism, but they were a minority.<sup>7</sup>

On the whole, between 1955 and 1970 U.S. policy in the Arab world was framed in opposition to secular Arab nationalism led by President Gamal Abdel-Nasser of Egypt. In U.S. eyes, revolutionary nationalism, not political Islam, represented a security threat to the pro-Western, conservative monarchies. Symbolic representations, such as "extremist" and "satellite," were applied to radical nationalist elements throughout the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, in the 1950s and 1960s the United States hoped to build an alliance of Islamic states with sufficient prestige to counterbalance "godless communism" and the secular nationalist forces represented by Nasser. U.S. policy was driven by cold war considerations and strategic calculations, not by history, culture, or any intrinsic fear or hatred of Islam.

The U.S. perception of the Middle East situation underwent a radical shift in the 1970s, largely because of the explosion of Islamic politics onto the scene.

*Ironically, in the 1950s and 1960s the United States hoped to build an alliance of Islamic states to counterbalance "godless communism" and secular Arab nationalism.*

Regional events—the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the consequent Arab oil embargo, and the 1978–79 Iranian revolution and ensuing hostage crisis—shocked many U.S. officials into viewing Islam as a threat to Western interests.<sup>9</sup>

Whereas Nasser had fought the 1967 Arab-Israeli war under the ideological banner of Arab nationalism, his successor Anwar Sadat could be argued to have fought the 1973 Ramadan War under the banner of Islam. The new Islamic assertiveness was accompanied by the OPEC oil boycott, which triggered escalating oil prices and inflation and, according to Zbigniew Brzezinski, assistant for national security affairs for President Jimmy Carter, “had an acute effect on the daily life of virtually every American; never before had we felt such an impact in peacetime.”<sup>10</sup> For the first time, the U.S. government had to contend with a return of the power of Islam.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in the early 1970s Libyan leader Mu‘ammar Qaddafi employed Islamic symbols to legitimize his populist rule and to assist revolutionary movements throughout the Middle East and Africa. According to a U.S. official who served as an ambassador to a Central African state, Qaddafi’s Islamic campaign influenced U.S. official perceptions of Islamic revivalism long before the Iranian revolution.<sup>12</sup>

### THE IMPACT OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN

Of all the regional developments in the 1970s, the Iranian revolution and the hostage crisis had the most formative effect on the U.S. foreign policy establishment and the public’s views of Islam. Accustomed to seeing their country as the most democratic and generous, Americans were shocked to hear Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini calling it the “Great Satan.” As one U.S. official noted, “the Iranian experience extremely conditioned U.S. thinking about the violent, anti-American nature of fundamentalist Islam.”<sup>13</sup>

Never before had the U.S. government been subjected to this type of confrontation, which it deemed uncompromising and “irrational.” As President Carter described his negotiations with the Iranian mullahs: “We are dealing with a crazy group.”<sup>14</sup> By holding fifty-two Americans hostage for 444 days, Khomeini’s Iran inflicted daily humiliation on the United States, eliciting an intense degree of hostility and a deep sense of powerlessness that Americans had not been used to. Iran became a national obsession.<sup>15</sup>

As with Arab nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, labels such as “extremist,” “terrorist,” and “fanatical” were applied to the Islamic revolution in Iran.<sup>16</sup> In a poll of mainstream Americans conducted in 1981, 56 percent of the respondents cited *hostage* as coming to mind when Iran was mentioned; also commonly cited, after *Khomeini*, *oil*, and the *Shah*, were *anger*, *hatred*, *turmoil*, and *troublesome country*. Moreover, 50 percent of the respondents described “all” or “most” Muslims as “warlike and bloodthirsty,” 49 percent described them as being “treacherous and cunning,” and 44 percent as “barbaric” and “cruel.”<sup>17</sup> It was under the impact of the Iranian revolution, then, that Islamism replaced in U.S. eyes secular revolutionary nationalism as a security threat to American interests, and fear of a clash between Islam and the West crystallized. One of the major

reasons that former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance gave for his objection to a military mission to rescue American hostages in Iran was the specter of an Islamic-Western war: "Khomeini and his followers, with a Shi'ite affinity for martyrdom, actually might welcome American military action as a way of uniting the Moslem world against the West."<sup>18</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. fears that the Iranian revolution would destabilize neighboring Gulf states was reinforced by Khomeini's vehement denunciation of Saudi and other Gulf monarchies as "un-Islamic" and his disdainful characterization of their ties with the United States as "American Islam." He further called on the Gulf countries to "follow the path of revolution, resort to violence, and continue their struggle to regain their rights and resources."<sup>19</sup>

Events of the following years only sharpened U.S. fears of the power of resurgent Islam. At the end of 1979, Saudi Arabia, the United States's most valued client in the Middle East, was rocked by the two-week takeover of the Grand Mosque at Mecca by rebellious Islamists who denounced the Saudi royal family's monopoly on political and economic power.<sup>20</sup> The 1981 assassination of President Sadat of Egypt and bloody attacks against U.S. personnel and installations in Lebanon, Kuwait, and elsewhere heightened U.S. officials' concern over the export of Iranian "fundamentalism."<sup>21</sup>

The Islamic revolution in Tehran colored U.S. attitudes toward political Islam. The above-mentioned poll shows the extent to which Islam and Iran were linked for mainstream Americans. When asked what comes to mind when the words *Muslim* or *Islam* are mentioned, the two most common responses—which received an equal number of votes—were *Muhammad* and *Iran*.<sup>22</sup> The politics of Islam were confused with the politics of Iran, with many Americans unable to imagine relations with an Islamic government in which the United States was not cast in the role of the Great Satan.<sup>23</sup>

## THE FEAR OF TERRORISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON U.S. POLICY

Terrorism has emerged as one of the most important political issues in the United States. Some U.S. officials and commentators have linked it to Islamic militancy, particularly to Iran. Secretary of State Warren Christopher said that "Iran is the foremost state sponsor of terrorism in the world," representing "one of the greatest if not the greatest threat to peace and stability in the region."<sup>24</sup> U.S. fears that Iran was attempting to obtain nuclear weapons appeared confirmed in January 1995 when Russia signed a \$1-billion contract with Iran to build two nuclear reactors there. U.S. congressional leaders threatened to cut aid to Russia, while Clinton called the sale profoundly disturbing, warning that if it went ahead "Russian national security can only be weakened in the long term."<sup>25</sup> The United States was willing to risk a crisis with Russia over the issue, giving it higher priority than the U.S.-Russian summit scheduled for May 1995.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike Europe, the United States virtually escaped the horror of terrorism on the home front during the cold war era. This is no longer true. Terrorists now select targets in the United States. A series of explosions shattered America's

peace of mind, raising fears about further attacks and calls for punitive action against the perpetrators and their alleged state sponsors. Perhaps the most memorable of these instances was the February 1993 World Trade Center bombing as a result of which ten Muslims were convicted of waging “a war of urban terrorism” against America and of plotting to kill President Mubarak.<sup>27</sup> The subsequent trial—coupled with the revelations that the perpetrators conspired to carry out a bloody campaign to destroy the United Nations and other New York landmarks and force the United States to abandon its support for Israel and Egypt—deepened Americans’ fears about the security threats associated with the Islamists. According to Professor Richard Bulliet of Columbia University, Americans have quite readily accepted the notion that acts of violence committed by some Muslims “are representative of a fanatic and terroristic culture that cannot be tolerated or reasoned with.”<sup>28</sup> Some observers added fuel to the fire by warning of the existence of a coordinated international network of “Islamic terrorist” groups throughout the United States aiming its guns against Western interests.<sup>29</sup>

Although no evidence emerged about the existence of an “Islamic Internationale,” the World Trade Center bombing did considerable damage to the Muslim image and presence in the United States. As the *New York Times* commented, by linking “Muslims and domestic terrorism in the minds of many Americans,” the bombing made Muslims vulnerable targets for racism and political discrimination.<sup>30</sup> For example, in two surveys on American attitudes toward Islam taken just after the bombing, more than 50 percent of respondents said that “Muslims are anti-Western and anti-American.”<sup>31</sup> Of the various religious groups that respondents were asked to list as the most unfavorable, Muslims topped the list.<sup>32</sup>

The explosion in New York also had broader implications for U.S. foreign policy. As a senior State Department official remarked, the World Trade Center

bombing was a setback to the Clinton administration’s efforts to define a positive, accommodationist policy toward Islam and was linked to the growth of Hamas on the West Bank and Gaza, of Hizballah in Lebanon, and of other militant Islamists in Sudan and Algeria.<sup>33</sup> Some Middle Eastern states, particularly Israel and Egypt, sought to capitalize on the bombing by pressing the

United States to support them further in the struggle against local Islamist opposition groups. In the United States, those subscribing to variations of the “clash of civilizations” hypothesis used it to advocate a tough policy toward Islamists.

It was within this charged atmosphere that Muslims in the United States became targets of harassment after the April 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City. Within hours of the blast, some of the media’s “terrorism experts” linked Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners to the crime.<sup>34</sup> In the three days after the bombing, more than 200 violent attacks against Muslim Americans were recorded.<sup>35</sup>

To his credit, President Bill Clinton was quick to caution against leaping to conclusions in the face of initial accusations that it bore the marks of Middle East-style terrorism:

*The World Trade Center bombing was a setback to the administration’s efforts to define a positive policy toward Islam.*



This is not a question of anybody's country of origin. This is not a question of anybody's religion. This was murder, this was evil, this was wrong. Human beings everywhere, all over the world, will condemn this out of their own religious convictions, and we should not stereotype anybody.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, a direct consequences of the Oklahoma City bombing was to give a new lease of life to the 1995 Omnibus Counterterrorism Act, passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate and signed into law by President Clinton.<sup>37</sup> One of the law's provisions allows the U.S. government to use evidence from secret sources in deportation proceedings for aliens suspected of terrorist involvement. A second provision allows the government to deport aliens who have made charitable contributions to organizations branded as terrorist by the authorities.

Despite the denials by Clinton administration officials, observers note that this counterterrorism legislation was partly targeted against "Mideast terrorism," a synonym for "Islamic terrorism."<sup>38</sup> In April 1993, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism Laurence Pope noted: "Twenty years ago in the Arab world, secular nationalism was the preferred ideology. And so it was the ideology that terrorists adopted as a cover for their actions. Increasingly, it's Islamic ideology, extremist Islamic ideology, which provides that cover."<sup>39</sup> A National Security Council (NSC) official remarked that while individuals and states who practice terrorism do not represent Islam, they might succeed in doing so if the United States comes to be seen as anti-Islamic.<sup>40</sup> Although the Clinton administration, according to two NSC members, does not accept the claims of the Israeli, Egyptian, and Algerian governments that the mainstream Islamist opposition fosters terror, the administration fails to distinguish effectively between Islamists who participate in the political field and those who carry out violence. The blurring of the lines between the two groups may explain the ambiguity in U.S. policy statements on political Islam.<sup>41</sup>

## THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

Although observers of the American scene agree that the mainstream media's negative news coverage of Islam and Muslims conditions public perceptions of and attitudes toward Muslim societies, they find it difficult to delineate the complex relationship between the mainstream media and U.S. policy. To some, the "dominant media are themselves members of the corporate-elite establishment,"<sup>42</sup> so fundamental tensions between the foreign policy and media establishments seldom arise.<sup>43</sup> Under this view, a number of factors contribute to this situation, including the media's overwhelming dependence on government sources for their news stories; the lack of public contestation of government propaganda campaigns; and the government's use of ideological weapons like anticommunism, a demonized enemy, or potential national security threats. Only

rarely do offbeat reporters dare to challenge the fundamentals of official policy.<sup>44</sup>

A slightly different perspective holds that the media subordinated their usual interests to cold war requirements in the name of national security, resulting in a "journalism of deference to the national security state."<sup>45</sup> Under this view, the press is not *part* of the foreign policy establishment but has been a willing participant in foreign policy-making insofar as it helps "establish the boundaries within which policy can be made."<sup>46</sup> This is evident in the case of Islam and Muslims, who often are portrayed in a negative light. Although mass public opinion may not count much in the foreign policy equation, elite opinion does: Decision makers and members of the policy elite get much of their information from the press.<sup>47</sup> What both views—of the media as a supportive arm of the state whose negative coverage of Islam reinforces and reflects U.S. policymakers' fears and prejudices, and of the press as an indirect participant in the process insofar as it contributes to the climate in which policy is made—have in common is the notion that the media's coverage of Islam and Muslims sheds much light on the making of U.S. policy.

Many U.S. officials, however, deny any connection between the negative portrayal of Islam in the press and U.S. policy. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau, for example, sharply criticizes the media for coverage that fosters the tendency both in scholarship and public debate to equate Islam with Islamic fundamentalism and extremism,<sup>48</sup> but he does not consider the impact of the media's coverage of Islam on foreign policy-making or vice versa. Other U.S. policymakers, while agreeing that a flow of information exists on a multiplicity of levels between nongovernmental and policy-making agencies, assert that the desire of U.S. decision makers to exchange ideas with the media and academe depends on the situation and the need for crisis management. A comment frequently heard is that U.S. officials base their decisions on their perception of national interests.

Moreover, how U.S. officials define national interests is related closely to their perception of reality, and policy is not formulated in a vacuum. The role of Congress, the media, and domestic considerations all drive policy and influence opinion within the foreign policy community, especially on such issues as the Arab-Israeli conflict and political Islam. Samuel Lewis, former director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, agrees that the media's hostile coverage of "extremist Islamist groups" reinforces American perceptions of Islam, thus complicating the task of U.S. policymakers.<sup>49</sup>

## THE ROLE OF ISRAEL AND ITS FRIENDS

Most U.S. officials at the State Department and NSC deny any Israeli connection<sup>50</sup> in the formulation of U.S. policy toward the Islamists, contending that U.S. national interests are the sole consideration. There were, however, a few dissenters: According to a senior State Department official, "we are very much influenced by the Israeli definition of Islamists. To a large extent, Israel's view of



Islamic fundamentalism shapes U.S. officials' perception of this phenomenon."<sup>51</sup> Another member of the State Department noted that U.S. suspicions of the Islamists is related partly to the latter's opposition to peace with Israel.<sup>52</sup> President Clinton's vow before the Jordanian parliament in October 1994 to resist "the dark forces of terror and extremism" is a clear reference to militant Islamist groups.<sup>53</sup> Arthur Lowrie, a former State Department official, asserted that Clinton's dual containment policy of Iran and Iraq and his subsequent 1995 announcement of a complete trade embargo on Iran were influenced by the lobbying efforts and political pressures of Israel's friends.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, the *Economist* suspected Clinton of relying partly on information supplied by Israel to appear personally tough on the issue of the day—terrorism.<sup>55</sup> The *Economist's* point raises further questions about the broader context of domestic politics, particularly the input of interest groups and the role of the Congress and the relationship between the latter and the presidency.

### CONGRESSIONAL INFLUENCE ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Clinton administration officials whom I have interviewed expressed their anxiety about the general atmosphere in the Congress. One NSC official remarked that Congress and the public hold "simplistic" and "prejudiced" views about Islam and Muslims.<sup>56</sup> According to Elaine Sciolino of the *New York Times*: "In the absence of other compelling threats to the United States, Islamic radicalism has also seized the imagination of some in Congress."<sup>57</sup> A cursory review of statements by some congressmen reveals deep concern about security threats associated with the rise of political Islam. These include terrorism, acquisition of nuclear weapons, and the security of Israel and the Gulf states.

*Administration officials are concerned that Congress and the public hold "prejudiced" views about Islam and Muslims.*

House Speaker Newt Gingrich has called for "a coherent U.S. strategy for fighting Islamic totalitarianism."<sup>58</sup> Congressional hearings are rife with questions about the threat that Middle East or Islamic "terrorism" poses to the United States and Western security in general.<sup>59</sup> Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen accused the State Department of underestimating the uniform nature of "Islamic extremism" and of stressing instead its eclectic character; in her view, Islamic groups represent a monolithic movement "sworn to fight the Great Satan America for the global supremacy of Islam."<sup>60</sup> The chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Benjamin Gilman, a New York Republican, attacked the administration's terrorism policy as ineffectual, using the security lapse in the World Trade Center bombing to demand radical changes in U.S. immigration laws: "We cannot continue to allow these people [Shaykh Omar 'Abd al-Rahman and his followers] into our country. The laws are wrong. We've allowed our United States to become a dumping ground for hoodlums, terrorists, and people who are not interested in any good. They merely wish to destroy the United States. I demand changes be made, and tomorrow will not be too soon."<sup>61</sup>

As to whether Congress has had an impact on the U.S. approach toward political Islam, some Clinton administration officials intimated that public and congressional perceptions of Islam do influence and set constraints on the policy-making process.<sup>62</sup> One striking example is the Clinton administration's approval in December 1995 of \$20 million in covert aid to change the Iranian government or at least change its behavior.<sup>63</sup> Speaker Gingrich, an ex-officio member of the House Intelligence Committee and the one who appoints its Republican members, used his great influence over government spending to force the president to fund the "secret mission" despite administration and CIA convictions that there is no viable alternative to the current Iranian leadership and that such a policy was likely to fuel paranoia and anti-Americanism in Teheran.<sup>64</sup>

Another example of Congress's indirect participation in the making of American foreign policy was President Clinton's decision in April 1995, first announced before the World Jewish Congress, to impose a total trade embargo on Iran in an effort to change its behavior. Again, the President's decision, as Todd S. Purdum of the *New York Times* remarked, was suffused with domestic politics. Clinton administration officials were fully aware that anti-Iranian sentiment was building in the Senate and House, with some proposals aimed at punishing not only Iran but also foreign companies that continue to do business with it. By acting on its own, the White House hoped to seize the initiative and preempt the tougher anti-Iran Republican bills in the Congress.<sup>65</sup>

The president's actions, however, did not mollify influential Senate and House members. During a Capitol Hill hearing, Representative Gilman took credit for the additional sanctions against Iran by reminding Assistant Secretary of State Pelletreau that the administration would not have acted without sustained pressure from Congress. Gilman also stated that the Congress views the economic ban as "the beginning and not the end of the process," demanding a showdown with foreign companies that continue to trade with Iran.<sup>66</sup> Again, the president bowed to the Congress's wishes when the latter passed legislation stipulating the punishment of any foreign company that invests \$40 million or more in the Iranian oil and industrial sector. Despite warnings by Europe and Japan, Clinton signed this new legislation into law in the summer of 1996.

The effective pressure applied by Congress on the Clinton administration shows the extent of the legislative influence in foreign policy-making. The case of Iran is just one example in which the Congress keeps a watchful eye on foreign policy as well as participates in its formulation.

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In conclusion, it seems clear that politics and contemporary security concerns, more than culture or history, account for America's preoccupation with Islamism. This point, which is borne out by a recent study that found American perceptions of Islam and Muslims fluctuating in accordance with outside events,<sup>67</sup> is an important one given tendencies in both the Muslim and Western camps to depict their complex relationship as a clash of cultures. Despite the claims of a few

commentators, academics, and politicians, the “clash of civilizations” hypothesis has not found a receptive audience in official Washington. President Clinton himself has stated that those who “insist that between America and the Middle East there are impassable religious and other obstacles to harmony” are wrong and that “America refuses to accept that our civilizations must collide.”<sup>68</sup> Yet paradoxically, Clinton’s own confrontational approach toward populist, revolutionary Islam in such places as Iran and Sudan could result in the very clash of civilizations he has so decisively rejected.

## NOTES

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2. Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 7–8, 10.
3. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), p. 127.
4. Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, chapter 1. Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, p. 8. John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 25. Bernard Lewis, “Islam and Liberal Democracy,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1993), p. 89.
5. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube in Samtliche Werke*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: n.p., 1842), part I, vol. III, p. 47; English trans., *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1928), p. 37.
6. Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 182–84.
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8. Paper by the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant (Francis Russell), “U.S. Policies Toward Nasser, Washington, 4 August 1956,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Suez Crisis, 1956*. Vol. XVI. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1989), pp. 86, 142; and Richard W. Cottam, “U.S. and Soviet Responses to Islamic Militancy,” in Nikki R. Keddie and Mark J. Gasiorowski, eds., *Neither East Nor West: Iran, the Soviet Union and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 267–70.
9. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 17. Cottam, “U.S. and Soviet Responses,” p. 277; and Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. x.
10. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977–1981* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1983), pp. 532–33.
11. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, p. 17; and Said, *Covering Islam*, pp. x, 33.
12. State Department official, interview with author, Princeton, NJ, 27 May 1995.
13. Ibid. Other U.S. officials, with whom John Esposito met, saw political Islam through the prism of Iran/Khomeini. See Robert H. Pelletreau, Jr., Daniel Pipes, and John Esposito, “Symposium: Resurgent Islam in the Middle East,” *Middle East Policy* 3, no. 2 (1994), p. 9.
14. Gary Sick, *All Fall Down: America’s Fateful Encounter with Iran* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1985), p. 277.
15. Ibid., 275.
16. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), pp. 12, 499, 506.
17. One might note that the poll shows the low opinion of Arabs/Muslims is largely due to the perception that Arabs/Muslims are hostile to the United States—in other words, a largely defensive reaction. Opinion is also affected by Americans’ perception of Muslims as being anti-Christian. For example, of those Americans believing that Muslims have a respect for Christianity, 45.8 percent have a high opinion of Arabs. Conversely, of those respondents who believe Muslims

have contempt for Christianity, only 28.5 percent have a high opinion of Arabs. See Shelley Slade, "The Image of the Arab in America: Analysis of a Poll on American Attitudes," *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 2 (1981), pp. 144-45, 147-49, 150, 157-58.

18. Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), pp. 408, 410.

19. Cottam, "U.S. and Soviet Responses," p. 276; and Jacob Goldberg, "The Shi'i Minority in Saudi Arabia," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, eds. Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 242-43.

20. *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 November 1979; and Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, pp. 21-22.

21. Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, pp. 484, 533.

22. Slade, "The Image of the Arab in America," pp. 148-49, 157.

23. Graham E. Fuller and Ian O. Lesser, *A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1995), p. 22.

24. "Statement by Secretary of State Warren Christopher Regarding U.S. Sanctions Against Iran" [State Department Briefing], *Federal News Service*, 1 May 1995, p. 1.

25. Eric Schmitt, "Republicans Warn Russia that Its Deal with Iran Threatens Aid," *New York Times*, 8 May 1995.

26. Fawaz Gerges, "Washington's Misguided Iran Policy," *Survival* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1996-97), p. 7.

27. *New York Times*, 2 October 1995.

28. Richard W. Bulliet, ed., *Under Siege: Islam and Democracy*, Occasional Papers 1 (New York: The Middle East Institute of Columbia University, 1994), p. iii. Ironically, medieval Christians believed that Muslims were barbaric, irrational creatures and Muhammad's actions often were invoked as examples of how Islam encouraged and praised the use of force. Jacques de Vitry wrote the "use of force in Islam derived from Muhammad's own practices." Daniel, *Islam and the West*, pp. 123-24.

29. For example, see the documentary, "Jihad in America," produced for PBS by journalist Steven Emerson and aired on 21 November 1994 (SAE Productions, 1994).

30. James Brooke, "Attacks on U.S. Muslims Surge Even as Their Faith Takes Hold," *New York Times*, 28 August 1995.

31. This survey was sponsored by the National Conference on Inter-Group Relations, the Ford Foundation, and the Joyce Foundation. It was conducted between 6 and 8 August 1993 by L.H. Research. The number of respondents was 2,755.

32. This survey was sponsored by The American Muslim Council and conducted between 16 and 23 March 1993 by the John Zogby Group International. The number of respondents was 905.

33. Interview with author, Princeton, NJ, 27 May 1995.

34. *CBS Evening News*, 19 April 1995. *New York Times*, 20 April 1995. *Washington Post*, 20 April 1995; and *International Herald Tribune*, 26 April 1995. See also Arthur Lowrie, "The Campaign Against Islam and American Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy* 4, nos. 1-2 (September 1995), p. 213.

35. Brooke, "Attacks on U.S. Muslims Surge."

36. Cited by *New York Times*, 21 April 1995.

37. For the background and the complex issues surrounding the counterterrorism legislation, see *New York Times*, 21, 24, 27, 29, and 30 April; 8 and 9 June; and 3 October 1995.

38. Anthony Lewis, "This Is America," *New York Times*, 1 May 1995. Some Zionist groups said they hoped the measure could be used to dry up potential contributions in the United States for terrorist groups like Hamas. *New York Times*, 21 April 1995.

39. Lawrence Pope, "Hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Terrorism and America: A Comprehensive Review of the Threat, Policy, and Law," 21 April 1993 (Washington: GPO, 1994), p. 39.

40. Interview with author, Washington, 29 March 1995.

41. Two NSC officials, interviews with author, Washington, 29 and 30 March 1995.

42. Edward S. Herman, "The Media's Role in U.S. Foreign Policy," *Journal of International Affairs* 47, no. 1 (Summer 1993), p. 25.

43. *Ibid.* See also Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1973), pp. 42-49.

44. Sigal, *The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking*, pp. 42–60; and Herman, “The Media’s Role,” p. 26.

45. Dorman qualifies his assertion by noting that the U.S. media are not a monolith or that journalists take their orders from official Washington; rather, “the effects of ideology work their way more through cultural osmosis than directive.” William A. Dorman, “Media, Public Discourse, and U.S. Policy Toward the Middle East,” in *The United States and the Middle East: A Search for New Perspectives*, ed. H. Amirahmadi (New York: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 289, 291–92, 304.

46. *Ibid.*, 289, 291.

47. *Ibid.*, 297. On a broader level, Andrea Lueg notes that the Western media’s portrayal of Islam is the primary source for Western conception of Islam and the region in which it predominates. See Andrea Lueg, “The Perception of Islam in Western Debate,” in *The Next Threat: Western Perceptions of Islam*, eds. Jochen Hippler and Andrea Lueg (Boulder: Pluto Press, 1995), pp. 7, 15–16.

48. Pelletreau, “Symposium: Resurgent Islam,” p. 2.

49. Samuel Lewis, interview with author, Chicago, 23 February 1995.

50. According to the Israeli writer, Haim Baram, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism, Israeli leaders attempted to enlist the United States and Europe in the battle against “Islamic fundamentalism,” portraying it as a larger-than-life enemy; their strategy is designed to convince U.S. public opinion and policymakers of the continuing strategic value of Israel in a turbulent and threatening world. Haim Baram, “The Demon of Islam,” *Middle East International*, 2 December 1994, p. 8.

51. Interview with author, Princeton, NJ, 27 May 1995.

52. Member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, interview with author, Washington, 27 March 1995.

53. Remarks by President Clinton to the Jordanian Parliament (Washington: White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 26 October 1994), p. 1.

54. Lowrie, “The Campaign Against Islam,” pp. 215–16.

55. *Economist*, 6 May 1995. In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs

Committee in July 1993, Undersecretary for Global Affairs Timothy Wirth acknowledged that the U.S. government has “very, very good contacts with Israeli intelligence,” especially on Iran. Cited by Timothy Wirth, “Hearing of the Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations, and Human Rights, Subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives; the Future of U.S. Anti-Terrorism Policy,” 103d Congress, 1st Sess., 13 July 1993 (Washington: GPO, 1993), p. 23.

56. Interview with author, Washington, 29 March 1995.

57. Elaine Sciolino, “The Red Menace Is Gone, But Here’s Islam,” *New York Times*, 21 January 1995.

58. *Ibid.*; and *Inter Press Service*, Washington, 21 February 1995.

59. According to Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chairperson of the Subcommittee on Africa, “Islamic militancy has emerged as one of the most serious threats to Western security.” “Prepared Testimony of the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives; The Threat of Islamic Extremism in Africa,” *Federal News Service*, 6 April 1995, p. 1.

60. *Ibid.*

61. According to Gilman, this quote was taken from a letter sent to him by one of his New York constituents. Pope, “Hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee,” *Terrorism and America*, p. 2. Gilman’s point should be interpreted in a larger context. The World Trade Center and Oklahoma City bombings, noted sociologist Nathan Glazer of Harvard, focused attention in the United States on “Middle Eastern immigrants and their political activities, though the guilt [in the case of Oklahoma] turned out to lie elsewhere.” Nathan Glazer, “Debate on Aliens Flares Beyond the Melting Pot,” *New York Times*, 23 April 1995.

62. Nevertheless, these diplomats insisted that U.S. policy toward political Islam ultimately is determined by official statements, which are not “sensational and panic-stricken.” Member of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, interview with author, Washington, 27 March 1995; and NSC official, interview with author, Washington, 30 March 1995.

63. Tim Weiner, "U.S. Plan to Change Iran Leaders Is an Open Secret Before It Begins," *New York Times*, 26 January 1996.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Todd S. Purdum, "Clinton to Order a Trade Embargo Against Tehran," *New York Times*, 1 May 1995. See also "Punishing Iran," in *Economist*, 6 May 1996, p. 14.

66. Robert Pelletreau, "Hearing with Defense Department Personnel; House International Relations Committee; International Economic and Trade Subcommittee—U.S. Sanctions on Iran," *Federal News Service*, 2 May 1995, p. 4.

67. The analysis was based on five surveys: a Roper Survey of July 1993, a

*Los Angeles Times* survey of 1993, a joint survey by the American Muslim Council and the Zogby Group in 1993, a Gallup poll of October 1994, and an American Arab Institute survey of 1995. See David Pollock and Elaine El Assal, eds., *In the Eye of the Beholder: Muslim and Non-Muslim Views of Islam, Islamic Politics, and Each Other* (Washington: Office of Research and Media Reaction, United States Information Agency, August 1994), pp. 52–54.

68. Remarks by President Clinton to the Jordanian Parliament, 26 October 1994.