

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**Political Islam and the United States' New "Other": An Analysis
of the Discourse on Political Islam (2001-2007)**

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Abstract:

In this thesis I examine how and why political Islam has come to occupy the position of ontological “other” for the United States, in particular in the period after September 11th and in the context of the “war on terror”. In order to do this, I argue that much of the language employed in analyses of political Islam within the various genres of academic writing, political statements, opinion pieces and think-tank reports during this period can be seen to constitute a “discourse” in the Foucaudian sense. In considering its epistemological, historical and ideological roots and manifold contemporary expressions, I demonstrate how this discourse has come to perform both an identity-constructing/affirming role, as well as a politically expedient, rhetorical justificatory function in mainstream political thought and action vis-à-vis the Muslim world. Despite its seemingly hegemonic hold on mainstream perspectives on political Islam, I examine the increasing body of literature that attempts to subvert the discourse on political Islam through critical reflection on issues of U.S./western identity, deconstruction of the discourse’s central assumptions and paradigms and, finally, the development of a counter-discourse in its place. These critical endeavours, as well as my own contributions to the counter-discourse, are also discussed in this thesis.

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Introduction

The question of Islam as a political force is a vital question of our times, and will be for several years to come. The precondition for its treatment with a minimum of intelligence is probably not to start from a platform of hatred.

-Michel Foucault¹

Now, it is only by speaking to the other (not giving orders but engaging in dialogue) that I can acknowledge him as a subject, comparable to what I am myself.

-Tzvetan Todorov²

Over the last two decades, and with renewed energy in the aftermath of the September 11th 2001 attacks on U.S. soil, academics, pundits and politicians across the globe have engaged in extensive research and analysis, seeking to explain the origins, goals and character of Islamist movements.³ In an editorial for *The Washington Post*, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice discussed her perspective, remarking that lack of freedom and hope in the Muslim world were to blame for religious “fanaticism,” which reaches its pinnacle in the act of suicide bombing. In many parts of the world, argued Rice, “a sense of hopelessness provides a fertile ground for ideologies of hatred that persuade people to forsake university educations, careers and families and aspire instead to blow themselves up — taking as many innocent lives with them as possible.”⁴

It was along similar lines that U.S. President George W. Bush elaborated his “Proposed Middle East Initiatives” for “Promoting Economic Growth,” proposals for strengthening and liberalizing the economies, media, and educational and judicial systems in the

¹ Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits III* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 708, quoted in Francois Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 177.

² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. R. Howard (New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 132.

³ Throughout this thesis I use the term “Islamist movement” interchangeably with “political Islam” to refer to those movements “whose purpose is to attain political power at the national level,” and who “generally accept the nation-state, operate within its constitutional framework, eschew violence (except under conditions of foreign occupation), articulate a reformist rather than revolutionary vision and invoke universal democratic norms.” When referring to individuals who belong to such movements, I employ the term “Islamist”. “Understanding Islamism,” *International Crisis Group*, no. 37 (2 March 2005), i.

⁴ Condoleezza Rice, “Transforming the Middle East,” *The Washington Post*, 7 August 2003.

region.⁵ According to Bush, the underlying rationale behind these proposals is the United States' desire to enable the "men and women of the Muslim world," who maintain "natural hopes of liberty," to realize all the benefits inherent to membership in the "modern world." Similar in substance and rhetoric to other proposals and policies of successive U.S. administrations (regardless of party political affiliation), *vis-à-vis* the Muslim world, and the Middle East more specifically, this statement is based on a dichotomous understanding of the relationship between the "Muslim" and "modern" worlds, in which the term "modern," despite its cloak of neutrality, actually signifies a very particular set of social, economic and political developments that have taken place in Europe and the United States, which the rest of the world is expected to emulate.

The use of sets of binary oppositions, perhaps most importantly the modern/anti-modern one, to define, explain and justify the West's position *vis-à-vis* its various "others" is hardly a new phenomenon. Although one could reasonably argue that this discursive construction has been somewhat arbitrary in terms of "who at any given time fills the role of other," it is clear that Islam has occupied that role quite consistently throughout the West's modern, and even pre-modern, history.⁶ Iver B. Neumann, for example, has argued that while the "Turkish other" was vital in the creation and consolidation of a modern European identity which "evolved from the ashes of Western Christendom" between the fourteenth and nineteenth century, one can see evidence of the conceived existence of a general Muslim "other" over the last 1300 years of "European" history.⁷ Zohair Husain and David Rosenbaum concur, arguing that it was the West's perception of its increasing vulnerability in the face of the "formidable political, ideological, and military" Muslim power encroaching on its eastern borders during the period of Islam's radical expansion that led to the conceptualization of Islam as Europe's most threatening "other."⁸ Realizing this force could not be easily subdued on the battlefield, "Christian Europeans vilified Muslims and denigrated Islam, describing it as a dangerous monolithic

⁵ George W. Bush, "Remarks by the President in Commencement Address at the University of South Carolina," *White House News and Policies* (9 May 2003).

⁶ Iver B. Neumann, *Classical Theories in International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1999), 41.

⁷ Neumann, 52.

⁸ From here on the term "other" will appear without quotation marks.

force, a faith founded on deception and clumsy plagiarism of Judaism and Christianity, and depicting its believers as frightful caricatures.”⁹

While defining the other in terms of religion served the purposes of Western Christendom throughout the Middle Ages and even into the Renaissance, by the 1500s the “Turk” came to be defined less in terms of his religious or cultural deficiencies and more in terms of his temporal distance from a civilized West. Once Europe entered what is now described as the period of Enlightenment, a period in which “reason” is said to have gained ascendancy over religion in the struggle to explain and structure human relations, a new conceptualization of its adversary was necessary.¹⁰ While religion could no longer be employed to explain or confirm the superiority of the European in relation to the Muslim other, its level of civilization could. As the former was an enlightened, rational, scientific, progressive — in essence a thoroughly “modern” human being — the latter could justifiably be marginalized or exploited insofar as he/she lacked the various attributes that made the European “modern.”¹¹ A new dichotomy was elaborated in which a “civilized” and modern Europe, “defined by criteria such as ‘humanity,’ ‘law,’ and ‘social mores,’” stood in stark contrast to a backward, tyrannical and barbarian Turkish “other,” thus substantiating a “temporal identity” of Europe as more fully evolved than the rest of the world.¹²

Friedrich Nietzsche alluded to the function of the other in Western identity construction when discussing man’s attempt to cope with the onset of nihilism, which he viewed as an inevitable consequence of Enlightenment-derived modernity.¹³ In an effort to come to terms with the uncertainty that would arise in such a context, in which man’s desire for

⁹ Zohair Husain and David Rosenbaum, “Perceiving Islam: The Cause and Consequence of Islamophobia in Western Media,” in *Religious Fundamentalism in the Contemporary World: Critical Social and Political Issues*, ed. Santosh C. Saha, 171-206 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003).

¹⁰ Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London: Routledge, 2006), 48.

¹¹ According to Gerrit Gong, nineteenth-century lawyers even developed a legal language to differentiate between those who were considered “full members of the ‘civilized’ international society [e.g., Western Europeans] from those who were merely part of the European international system [e.g., ‘Turks’].” (quoted in Neumann, 56.

¹² *Ibid.*, 55; Hansen, 48.

¹³ Nihilism as a philosophical concept was given its most definitive form by Nietzsche, for whom it is “the radical repudiation of value, meaning and desirability.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 7.

transcendental values was increasingly met with the modern realization that these values are essentially rooted in “nothingness,” and where all “external guarantees” ceased to exist along with their “ontological preconditions,” a highly disciplined system capable of providing order for the individual and world would need to be created.¹⁴ In lieu of secure foundations, a clear conception of the other was necessary to substantiate this all-encompassing order. This other would be viewed as “dirt, matter out of place, irrationality, abnormality, wasted, sickness, perversity, incapacity, disorder, madness, unfreedom,” which was in need of “rationalization, normalization, moralization, correction, punishment, discipline, disposal, realization, etc.”¹⁵

One could view the development of “the human subject as universal man,” who was born, according to Coker, on the eve of the French Revolution and whose natural rights were elaborated in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (1789), as part of the conceptual effort to evade the deleterious affects of creeping nihilism on a Europe intoxicated with the belief that it had succeeded in developing, in the words of Bakunin in 1867, “the most integral theory of humanity ever advanced.”¹⁶ The only task remaining for proponents of this revolutionary grand theory was to locate an alternative foundation on which it could be justified and perpetuated. This alternative came *via* the “othering” of individuals, societies, civilizations and religions outside the acceptable parameters set by a self-proclaimed “modern” and “enlightened” Europe. There was an added sense of urgency to the construction of the other for reasons of political expedience, as the “emergence of new and secular sovereigns instead of the centralized and religiously based sovereigns in Europe required the creation of new mediation instruments.”¹⁷ It is within this context that the “civilizing missions” of nineteenth and twentieth century European colonialism and the relentless Cold War struggle of the United States against the “Red Threat” can be seen. In the post-Cold War West, those who employ the discourse of democracy and freedom (most recently and evidently exemplified in the rhetoric of U.S. President

¹⁴ William E. Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 14.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁶ Christopher Coker, *The Twilight of the West* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1997), 13.

¹⁷ Nizar Messari, “Identity and Foreign Policy: The Case of Islam in U.S. Foreign Policy,” in *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, ed. Vendulka Kubalkova, 227-48 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 238.

George W. Bush to justify the “war on terror,” although certainly predating his presidency) claim that these concepts can, and indeed do, provide the ontological preconditions necessary to explain and justify certain transcendental truths, most important among them, the validity of U.S. exceptionalism.

While the nations constituting either side of the modern/anti-modern (“us”/“them”) divide have slightly altered over time, the basis for the existence of the dividing line, as defined by the children of the Enlightenment in their efforts to distinguish between “universal man” and those who refuse to see the light, has remained largely the same. On our side, with the United States at its helm since World War II, you have the democratic, “modern,” secular states, which abide by the rules of an ostensibly “universal,” “international” human rights regime and which are comprised of “modern,” law abiding individuals. On the other side, you have the pariah states or “tyrannies” that are anti-modern, that fail to respect individual rights, that resist liberal economic reforms, that are comprised of human beings who privilege the community over the individual, and that fail to make a clear separation between “church” and state.

Considering the United States’ overwhelming economic, political and cultural power in the world today and its ability to influence (by applying pressure directly or by the proxy of “international” institutions) the polities, societies and economies of non-Western states, the West’s “other” is more often than not non-state actors who reject the policies and practices of their “modernizing” governments because they desire a state, or an altogether different political configuration based on some or all of the characteristics that define the pariah state. In the context of the “war on terror,” Islamist movements are seen to pose the greatest threat to United States/Western ideological and material hegemony in the Muslim world.

By replacing the Turkish, Arab or Muslim other, political Islam has fulfilled what Todorov refers to, in his three-pronged analysis of the self/other relationship, as the “axiological axis,” where a value is expressed (e.g., good/bad, or superior/inferior) in

order to justify imposition of the self on to the other.¹⁸ In doing so, the general Muslim other has been relegated to the “epistemic axis,” where the self is defined either by emphasizing similarities with the other, or by denying the other’s existence altogether.¹⁹ In this case, the Muslim other, as opposed to the Islamist other, is acceptable so long as it assimilates, and hence relinquishes its unique ontological identity. The principal aim of this thesis is to explain how and why the Islamist other has come to occupy this space in relation to U.S. identity-construction, in particular in the period after September 11th and in the context of the “war on terror”.

I. Methodology

In order to accomplish this, I argue that the language employed in analyses of political Islam within the various “genres”²⁰ of academic writing, political statements, opinion pieces and think-tank reports can be seen to constitute a “discourse” in the Foucaudian sense, in other words, they form a “structured system of meaning which shapes what we perceive, think” and to a certain extent “do” in regards to Islamism.²¹ Though the methodology employed in this thesis is based on a qualitative rather than quantitative approach, it was necessary to consider thousands of written and spoken statements on the subject in order to demonstrate the extent of the discourse’s sway over mainstream depictions of political Islam in the United States throughout the “war on terror”. In addition to the vast quantity of academic sources considered from a diverse range of disciplines, including International Relations, Sociology, Political Economy and Middle Eastern Studies, I considered the following types of written documents: strategy documents, press releases, press conference and speech transcripts, and interviews with prominent members of both the Democratic and Republican parties; opinion pieces written by highly esteemed journalists from a variety of political perspectives and writing for some of the country’s most influential newspapers and journals, including the *New*

¹⁸ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, trans. R. Howard (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

¹⁹ Messari, 230.

²⁰ As Hansen argues, these “different genres of foreign policy writing adopt different forms of knowledge,” which gain their authority through their interconnectedness, or “intertextuality,” a concept which is explained in greater depth later on in the introduction. Hansen, 8, 52.

²¹ Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 184.

York Times, *Washington Post* and *New Republic*; and, analyses written for leading think-tanks, from the neoconservative Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) and American Enterprise Institute (AEI) to the liberal Brookings Institution. Though the focus of the political, journalistic and think-tank components of this thesis is the written and spoken analyses of individuals and institutions based in the United States in the post-September 11th period, the academic component of the thesis is broader in scope, considering prominent writers on the subject from beyond the U.S. borders and predating September 11th, as this component's purpose is to explain the intellectual roots of the discourse rather than solely demonstrate its current manifestations

As I argue in this thesis, the function of these analyses of political Islam, which are neither entirely descriptive nor explanatory, but rather constitutive in nature, is to create and reinforce certain subjectivities and relationships of power.²² In this case, the power relationship in question is that which exists between a culturally, economically and politically hegemonic United States that views itself as the rightful heir of Europe's position as the world's beacon of democracy and human rights and leader of the "free world" *vis-à-vis* those political movements that place their Muslim identity at the centre of their political practice, which use the "language of Islamic metaphors to think through their political destinies," and which see "in Islam their political future."²³

According to the Foucaudian conception of discourse, one cannot put "knowledge on one side and society on the other," as to do so would be to overlook the "fundamental forms of [the] knowledge/power" relationship.²⁴ As with European Orientalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the "regime of power"²⁵ that results from this relationship and that is internal to the discourse on political Islam means that "no one writing, thinking, or acting" on the subject can do so "without taking account of the

²²Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan-Smith (London: Routledge, 2002).

²³Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 17.

²⁴Michel Foucault, "Theories et institutions pénales," *Annuaire du Collège de France, 1971-1972*, 283, cited in Sheridan, 125.

²⁵Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power." Translated by Paul Patton and Meaghan Morris. In *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*. Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton, Eds. (Sydney, Australia: Feral Publications, 1979), 29-48.

limitations on thought and action imposed by” it.²⁶ In order to explain the intricacies of the construction and maintenance of the discourse on political Islam, this thesis focuses on its intertextuality, in other words, on the explicit and implicit ways in which authoritative references are made within certain texts and statements to other texts and statements and how, taken together, this body of self-referential discourse constructs and regulates the context in which people make sense of the images and words they come into contact with on a daily basis.²⁷ As Edward Said wrote in *Covering Islam*, the “context” is the discourse’s/image’s “setting, its place in reality, the values implicit in it, and not least, the kinds of attitude it promotes in the beholder.”²⁸

As I am seeking to “radically” unsettle various “stable concepts and conceptual oppositions” that form the basis of the discourse on political Islam, I have chosen to employ the post-modern method of *deconstruction* throughout the dissertation.²⁹ In doing so, I seek to expose not only the erroneous grounds on which many of the central assumptions of the mainstream discourse are constructed, but also to demonstrate how various material interests are served by its particular formulation, which seeks “to naturalize and legitimize particular forms of knowledge and political practices.”³⁰

Indeed, to point out the importance of identity issues to U.S. foreign policy considerations vis-à-vis the Muslim world is not to deny the significance of material and geo-strategic factors, such as the United States’ need for abundant and secure sources of oil, or its general antipathy towards radical upheaval because of the potential threat it poses to the economic and political stability of the international system.³¹ Rather than seeing identity and material interests as mutually exclusive, this thesis argues that often, as has been the case in the “war on terror,” these interests are co-constituting and mutually dependent.

²⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 3.

²⁷ Hansen, 56.

²⁸ Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (London: Vintage Books, 1997), 48.

²⁹ Devtek, 190.

³⁰ Richard Jackson, “Constructing Enemies: ‘Islamic Terrorism’ in Political and Academic Discourse,” *Government and Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394–426.

³¹ Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Though I will consider the complex relationship that exists between the various foreign policies of successive U.S. administrations vis-à-vis the Muslim world, as well the orientalist³² discourse of the Islamist other and the identity functions it serves, I will not argue that a direct causal link exists between them. In this sense, the methodology employed here differs from that of constructivists who are similarly concerned with identity issues though they view them as independent variables capable of causally explaining various policy choices, as this perspective views state identity itself as a dependent factor in need of understanding and explaining. In other words, this thesis starts from the premise that there are no objective material factors completely independent of the context of discourse and identity. Even such seemingly objective factors as the interests of the military-industrial-complex or oil companies, which are often associated, in more materialist analyses, with the development and implementation of those foreign policies designed to create, respectively, perpetual war or complete energy “security”, must be understood within this context as they too are the “products of older and competing discourses,”³³ which can be traced back to Manifest Destiny and various other elements of America’s exceptional identity.

Overall, my work is guided, both normatively and methodologically, by the late Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, in particular by his desire to expose the role of power in the production and dissemination of the various “truths” regarding the “Oriental other” throughout the West’s colonial/imperial relations with the region, and the various forces that have led to such synergy in the descriptions of the “Orient” found in a wide variety of work from various disciplines and professions.³⁴

Although I am aware that uncritical use of such terms as the “Muslim world,” and the “West,” both constructed concepts with varying degrees of correspondence to some tangible reality, can be a problematic starting place for this sort of inquiry, I use them in this context to examine the dominant worldviews commonly associated with each, rather

³² In this thesis I will use a lower case “o” when using the term “orientalist” as an adjective.

³³ Hansen, 30.

³⁴ Said, 1978.

than to approximate some “objective” reality, a usage I believe helps to overcome rather than compound essentialist views of both.³⁵ Furthermore, I have chosen to employ the term “Muslim world” rather than “Middle East” as the principal unit of analysis in this thesis as I am considering the ways in which the identity of the West, and the United States in particular, has been constructed vis-à-vis its perceived Islamist other, as opposed to the Arab other of Said’s Orientalism, as it entails a religious, rather than racial, ethnic or geographical delineation, though the Middle East figures prominently in the religious delineation as the birthplace of Islam. However, I employ the term “Middle East” when that is the term used by authors under consideration, even if it is erroneously employed by these authors to describe a broader geographical region where Islam is the predominant religion (e.g. southeast Asia, Muslim Africa, etc.). I also use this term when discussing U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis this region, which is generally assumed to include those states located in the geographical area stretching from Iran in the east to Lebanon, Israel and Palestine in the west and including North Africa, as this is the term most commonly used in foreign policy circles to describe the region.

II. Thesis Structure

Chapter One of the thesis considers the discourse’s epistemological foundations in Enlightenment thought, focusing in particular on the various narratives on which mainstream International Relations (IR) theories and methodologies are founded, while taking into consideration the various challenges posed to these narratives from within the Western social sciences themselves, as well as from Islamic/Islamist political philosophy, with an eye towards pointing out areas of convergence and divergence between the two. By critically examining IR’s mainstream narratives of the state, modernity and the Enlightenment, this chapter demonstrates how the capacity of the discipline, and of the Western social sciences in general, to understand Islamist movements is limited by their narrow understanding of what constitutes legitimate politics. In doing so, I aim to

³⁵ For a good summary of the critical perspectives on “Western” identity, in particular vis-à-vis its relationship with its Muslim Other, see Lockman, 8-38. Meyda Yeğenoğlu also presents a cogent argument against essentializing the “Western subject” in *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2-4. For a similarly critical view of essentialist conceptions of the “Islamic”/ “Muslim” worlds, see Said, 1978 and Sayyid.

contribute to the increasingly vibrant efforts of scholars and activists (both secular and religious) to “de-center” the West, a necessary precursory step to the eventual prying open of a theoretical and methodological space within IR, and the Western social sciences in general, in which religious political movements can be seriously considered.

Though in this chapter I acknowledge the potential critiques that can be leveled at my analysis for using Islam as the alternative narrative with which to probe the limits of mainstream IR narratives in analyzing developments in the Middle East, considering the various other vibrant narratives that have developed out of the region, including Arab nationalism, socialism, and various liberal, secular ideologies, I would argue that Islam continues to serve as the “master-signifier”³⁶ for a majority in the Muslim world and as “a central criterion of reference, despite the inroads made by secularism, westernization and, more recently, globalization.”³⁷ As Graham Fuller has pointed out, Islam has acted as a “unifying force” across such a diverse and vast region of the world and for such an extensive period of time, that it has produced a “broad civilization that shares many common principles of philosophy, the arts, and society; a vision of the moral life; a sense of justice, jurisprudence, and good governance...”³⁸ Furthermore, Islam is also the only one of these narratives to pose an epistemological and ontological, as well as strategic, threat to the West, both at present and throughout the West’s long and complicated relationship with the Muslim world.

Chapter Two considers the specific ways in which the Enlightenment foundations of the discourse on political Islam impact, *via* the “modern rationalist” paradigm, the construction of political Islam in academic literature as ontological other, contributing to its Western identity affirming function and laying the foundation for the discourse to take

³⁶ As for the term “master signifier,” Said explains that despite the fact that there are discourses in which Islam is merely one element, amongst many, which can be construed as forming the “structure” of the “chains of signification,” nonetheless, “in a totalized universe of meaning we find a multiplicity of nodal points operating to structure the chains of signification, but among them we find one specific signifier- the master signifier- which functions at the level of the totality (that is, it retroactively constitutes that universe of meaning as a unified totality).” In the “Muslim world,” or those states where a significant majority of the population consider themselves Muslim, that master signifier is Islam. Sayyid, 1997, 45.

³⁷ Maha Azzam, “Islamism revisited,” *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1119-32.

³⁸ Graham E. Fuller, “A World Without Islam,” *Foreign Policy*, January-February 2008.

hold on a broader scale. The “modern rationalist” approach holds that Islamism “is a reflex reaction to certain political or socio-economic circumstances” that generally arise as a result of the impact of globalization, outside intervention, or internal “modernization” processes, and it hence precludes a less deterministic, more contextualized understanding of the phenomenon, which would seek to understand Islamist movements on their own terms.³⁹

In this chapter, I will examine the two principal ways in which this approach impacts analysis of political Islam: 1) through “ideologization of terror” analyses, which view political Islam through the “lens” of the Islamist threat;⁴⁰ and 2) through analyses which view political Islam as an anti-modern reaction to various socioeconomic or political developments. I will argue that, in both types of analyses, political Islam is viewed in orientalist terms, as an irrational, backward phenomenon and therefore undeserving of serious investigation by political scientists. In order to demonstrate the extensive nature of the discourse, I will discuss a broad range of academic literature on the subject, including works from such diverse disciplines as International Relations, Comparative Politics, Security and Terrorism Studies and Sociology.

While studying the role of the other in identity formation is an interesting endeavor in and of itself, this thesis is primarily concerned with its implications for policy making, as dichotomous reasoning can never be neutral, and generally implies a rigid hierarchy that enables or excuses various forms of exploitation. As Devtek contends, “this relation to others must be recognized as a morally and politically loaded relation. The effect is to allocate the other to an inferior moral space, and to arrogate the self to a superior one.”⁴¹ Once this is achieved, “conduct toward the Other becomes more exploitative.”⁴² In this sense, the practice of “othering” is an essential tool for governments that subscribe to a realist worldview in that it enables policy makers to pursue the various components of a

³⁹ Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Fundamentalism and Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 23. The analysis in this thesis is heavily influenced not only by Euben’s definition of the “modern rationalist” term, but by also by her approach to understanding political Islam in general. From this point on, I will use the term without quotation marks.

⁴⁰ Burgat, 2005.

⁴¹ Devtek, 190.

⁴² Shapiro, 102.

realist agenda, including national self-preservation and power maximization, by providing the necessary rhetorical justification to create and maintain a powerful military, as well as to secure the commitment of their citizens to make the ultimate self-sacrifice: to be willing to die in war on behalf of the state. According to Schmitt, the “other” is “the alien, and it is enough that in a very existential sense he is something so different and alien that war with him is possible in the extreme case...The notions friend and enemy are to be understood in their concrete, existential meaning, not as metaphors or symbols.”⁴³

In order to understand how the U.S. government managed to sustain the validity of this self/other distinction, thereby providing the necessary rhetorical justification for waging a relentless and, in many of its practices, illegal “war,” against what is essentially a tactic – terrorism, one first has to understand the history of this other in its various incarnations in relation to U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. With this in mind, Chapter Three of the thesis explores the history of “American Orientalism,” including consideration of the policies that have created and perpetuated U.S. hegemony in the region. This chapter will also discuss the watershed events that have led to major shifts in U.S. relations with the Muslim/Arab world and to the development and consolidation of the Islamist other discourse in the post-World War II period, including the creation of Israel, the OAPEC oil embargo, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the end of the Cold War, the rise of the Christian right and neocons on the U.S. foreign policy making scene, and finally, the attacks of September 11th. This chapter focuses in particular on the power-knowledge nexus and the numerous parallels that exist between the development and consolidation of European Orientalism and its American counterpart.

The two principal foreign policy implications of political Islam’s occupation of the space of other in the United States’ worldview will be considered in the last section of the thesis, which examines the discourse of political Islam in relation to the “war on terror,” focusing specifically on its political, journalistic and think-tank components. First, it creates a false distinction between two “ideal types” of Muslims, what Mahmood

⁴³ Schmitt, quoted in Hans-Karl Pichler, “The Godfathers of ‘Truth’: Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morenthau’s theory of power politics,” *Review of International Studies* 24 (1998): 185-200.

Mamdani refers to as the “good Muslim, bad Muslim” distinction: “[o]ne is radical, uncompromising, and bent on a continuous rejection of the West. The other is Westernized and modern.”⁴⁴ The latter, falling under Todorov’s “epistemic” category, is to be engaged and transformed into an (albeit lesser) version of the West’s self, while the former, subsumed within the “axiological axis” grouping, are to be vanquished. Second, the United States government turns a blind eye to the abuse of power, political repression, and large scale human rights violations carried out by authoritarian regimes that claim to be acting in the name of their own respective “war[s] on terror,” as it did with the actions of right-wing authoritarian regimes across the world throughout the Cold War. In this case, “human rights, elections, and free speech are sacrificed on the altar of saving democracies from nondemocrats.”⁴⁵ As a result, actual democratic impulses initiated or supported by Islamist movements are stifled.

In order to better conceptualize how this discourse is constructed in a way that allows for the distinction to be made between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims” and which inevitably assigns to the United States, and the West more broadly, the old colonial “white man’s burden” of distinguishing between and appropriately addressing the two, I employ Makau Mutau’s “savages-victims-savior metaphor.”⁴⁶ Chapter Four examines the central role played by political Islam, which fulfils the “savage” enemy other component of the metaphor in the “war on terror” discourse, focusing particularly on the genres of political statements, opinion pieces and think-tank reports. In doing so, I demonstrate how this discourse, similar to that concerning the European colonial powers’ *mission civilatrice*, is based on an eurocentric and orientalist vision of history that necessarily views religious movements, and Islamist movements in particular, as parochial, violent, intolerant and inherently counter to progress. As in previous chapters, I argue here that the epistemological roots of the discourse can be traced back to the modern rationalist paradigm.

⁴⁴ Messari, 238.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁶ Makau Mutua, “Savages, Victims and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights.” *Harvard International Law Journal* 42, no. 201 (Winter 2001).

After considering the construction of the “savage” Islamist other in the discourse, Chapter Five examines the nature of the savage’s “victims.” Islamists, despite what the discourse posits as their backwards, violent and irrational nature, cannot be described as a threat in and of themselves. One must first locate the Islamist’s “victims” in order to justify the waging of a “war,” real or metaphorical, against them. In the case of the U.S.-led “war on terror,” the victims of Islamist violence, both actual and prospective, include not only the entire American population and indeed all of “Western civilization,” but also all of those “good Muslims” who too have been victimized by Islamist savagery. The “savior” is Western civilization itself, with “modernization” and “democracy” prescribed as generic cures for all associated ailments. In all cases, the victim’s absolute innocence is assumed, as is the corresponding guilt of the perpetrator: the “savage” other.

By examining the construction of the innocent “victim” and angel “savior” vis-à-vis the “savage” enemy in the context of the “war on terror” discourse, this chapter will demonstrate how a modern rationalist understanding of political Islam, underpinned by a generally patronizing view of non-Western peoples and cultures, and a deep-seated orientalist vision of the Muslim world, has impacted the types of non-military remedies prescribed by the discourse to address the Islamist “threat” in the context of the “war on terror”.

Though opposition has mounted in some corners of American public opinion to the deleterious impact of the “war on terror” on the human rights of those people caught on the wrong side of the “us”/ “them,” “good Muslim”/ “bad Muslim” divide, as well as to the assault on the civil liberties of Americans themselves that associated domestic policies have entailed, recent polls suggest that the discourse of the Islamist “threat” has deeply impacted Americans’ perceptions in ways that could have negative ramifications for decades, if not more, to come.⁴⁷ In this case an orientalist fear of the Islamist other has

⁴⁷ Bernd Debusmann, “Radio Hoax Exposes Anti-Muslim Sentiment in U.S.,” *Reuters Washington* (1 December 2006) A 2006 Gallup poll of more than 1,000 Americans showed that 39 percent were in favor of requiring Muslims in the United States, including American citizens, to carry special identification. Roughly a quarter of those polled said they would not want to live next door to a Muslim and a third thought that Muslims in the United States sympathized with al Qaeda, the extremist group behind the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington. A poll carried out by the Council on

been compounded by a persistent ignorance amongst large portions of the American population of the history and current political, economic, social and religious dynamics of the region, an issue which this thesis also addresses.⁴⁸

The thesis concludes by arguing that the first step for the Western-based scholar seeking to move beyond facile and reductive analyses of Islamist movements, restricted either by orientalist prejudices or modern rationalist over-simplifications, must be a reflective one. This entails a critical assessment of the epistemological and ontological foundations of his/her own theories and methodologies, and an acknowledgment of their analytical limits in understanding the worldview of movements constructed on different foundations. Through the deconstruction of Western political and philosophical foundations, space will be created for a hermeneutic understanding of Islamism, which accepts that Islamist movements may desire to think and act outside the orbit of the West, rather than merely to ape its political and institutional structures. Rather than acceptance of *absolute difference*, distinguishing those (other) political movements whose worldviews exist outside the orbit of a Western-defined “ideal type” of “modernity” from their Western counterparts (self), this process requires acknowledgement of the possibility of *difference*, which cannot be fully comprehended or accommodated if viewed only from a place of judgment and control.

In advocating this approach, I hope to aid in the creation of an alternative theoretical and methodological space in which to understand and engage the worldviews of political movements which ultimately view Islam as “another name for the hope of something better,” a view based on desires and goals that, if viewed from a non-essentialized and

American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), an advocacy group, found that for one in three Americans, the word Islam triggers negative connotations such as “war,” “hatred” and “terrorist.” The war in Iraq has contributed to such perceptions.

⁴⁸ For example, see a recent poll undertaken by the Open Bethlehem Foundation which found that only 15 per cent of Americans know that Bethlehem is a Palestinian city with a mixed Christian-Muslim community, with the majority believing instead that it is an Israeli town inhabited by a mixture of Jews and Muslims, and though the overwhelming majority of the Christians of Bethlehem (78%) blame the exodus of Christians from the town on Israel’s blockade, Americans are more likely (45.9%) to blame it on “Islamic politics” and are reluctant (7.4%) to blame Israel, no doubt a result of the distorted picture of Islamist in Palestine, and the ruling party Hamas in particular, that they are bombarded with by the American press. “Americans Back Bethlehem – But are not Sure Where it Is: Two Nation survey: America vs. Bethlehem.” *Zogby International Press Release*, Thursday 21 December 2006.

comparative perspective, may turn out to be not that other after all.⁴⁹ Only after this space has been created will it be possible to truly end both the theoretical and real oppression of the “Muslim other” and, one hopes, halt the dangerous march of the United States towards the precipice of the proverbial “clash of civilizations” it so vigorously contends it is trying to avoid.

⁴⁹ Sayyid, 160.

Chapter One: Deconstructing the International Relations Meta-Narrative: Creating Space for Theorizing on Political Islam

At bottom, movements such as Hamas seem to challenge our Westphalian certainties. Of course for Islamists recent history carries a different message. The nation state has none of the benevolent associations that we couple to the Enlightenment. For most Arabs the drawing of national boundaries was recent; was imposed- with few benevolent associations and little "enlightenment."

-Alistair Crooke¹

To a certain extent, one can view the advent of the "modern rationalist" paradigm in the western social sciences as a step in the right direction insofar as it appears to provide the perfect antidote to the inherent racism of Orientalism. With its focus on the alleged "temporal" and "ethical," as opposed to "spatial," or civilizational/racial, divide between the West and the "rest," it is certainly less inclined towards essentializing the cultures, societies and polities that comprise the Muslim world.² However, the modern rationalist adherence to a dichotomous understanding of "tradition" versus "modernity" means that it has never been fully capable of escaping the logic of "othering."³ Even for more critical thinkers like Marx and Weber and their contemporary intellectual heirs, alert to the "costs and contradictions of rationalization," there is an underlying belief that "traditional" modes of thought and social interaction serve as obstacles to the achievement of often abstract and contingent notions of economic and social "progress" inevitably defined in terms of specific Western experiences.⁴ In relation to the study of political Islam, the modern rationalist approach is dismissive of the relevance of religious belief as an independent variable capable of explaining certain political and social phenomena, dismissing it instead as "epiphenomenal" and therefore undeserving of serious intellectual consideration.⁵ This approach sees Islam as little more

¹ Alastair Crooke, introduction to Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas Unwritten Chapters* (London: Hurst & Company), xi.

² From hereon in the term "modern rationalist" will appear without quotation marks.

³ As Hansen has noted, often discourses do not involve a construction of the other as completely superior to self; rather, the construction of this distinction is generally a more nuanced enterprise, involving the use of "spatial, temporal and ethical constructions" to distinguish self from other. Hansen, 46-51.

⁴ Euben, 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

than a ruse for political actors who instrumentalize religion as a means of mobilizing support for otherwise political or worldly agendas. In other words, “[t]he role of Islam is strictly secondary and mystifying. Islam is seen as a mere vocabulary through which legitimacy and representation are mediated.”⁶ Although most scholars today would deem it unacceptable to describe Islamist movements or the cultures/civilizations from which they derive as incommensurate with Western political movements, and hence incapable of being grasped through the same analytical tools used to understand and explain Western political phenomena, it is still acceptable to describe these movements temporally, insofar as they are viewed as less politically and socially evolved than their Western, secular counterparts, and ethically, insofar as they reject or qualify Enlightenment-derived notions of dignity, rights and freedom, as distinct and inferior.

Before examining in further detail some of the ways in which the modern rationalist paradigm has impacted certain strains of the discourse on political Islam, as well as the ways in which this discourse interacts with an aggressive U.S. foreign policy *vis-à-vis* political Islam, and specifically in the context of the “war on terror,” it is important to first examine the epistemological roots of this paradigm in Western political thought. The discipline of international relations (IR), like the other disciplines comprising the social sciences, and natural sciences, for that matter, is a product of the world within which it has developed. For this reason one must trace the roots of the discipline, as well as of the concepts on which it is based, in order to fully comprehend the methodologies and subject matter chosen (or not chosen) by academics within the discipline, as well as the effects these may have on the actual practice of international relations, by their impact on the construction and formulation of foreign policy priorities. In an effort to examine the discipline’s “own sociology of knowledge” as it relates to the study of political Islam, I will explore the various narratives, or versions of history, used to describe some of the central concepts from which mainstream IR theory is derived, including “the state,” “sovereignty,” “modernity” and “rationality.” As Cynthia Weber has pointed out, “IR Theory is a site of cultural practice in which conscious and unconscious ideologies are

⁶ Sayyid, 39.

circulated through stories that *appear* to be true.”⁷ By exploring the various narratives/stories that form the basis of IR theory, I hope to expose some of mainstream IR’s central assumptions as they relate to the way in which Islamist movements are viewed (if considered at all) by the discipline. The three IR narratives I will focus on in this chapter are: 1) the narrative of the state, based on the particular historical development of the European state; 2) the narrative of modernity, based on Europe’s economic, political and social development; and 3) the narrative of the Enlightenment, and the various concepts and methodologies associated with it. The uncritical acceptance of its epistemological roots in Eurocentric, rationalist, Enlightenment-based thought has also had an ontological impact on mainstream IR, making it hard for IR scholars to understand and empathize with the worldviews of peoples and movements that adhere to different ontological foundations. As Vendulka Kubálková argues, “it is infeasible to discuss religion in IR without appreciating that the difference in religious and secular thought is ontological, i.e., in what in each of them ‘counts for real.’”⁸

In an effort to avoid accusations of constructing a “red herring” out of a monolithic view of Western political philosophy, I will follow each narrative with a summary of some of the principal critiques of these narratives that one can find in more critical strains of Western scholarship itself. Each of these sections will in turn be followed by a summary of the principal Islamic challenges to the mainstream narratives, pointing out areas of convergence and divergence between the two in an effort to engage these seemingly opposed genres of critical thought. As Euben asserts, the fact that there are so many points of overlap between these critiques “suggests that, in a colonial and postcolonial world in particular, questions that define political theory have ceased to be, if they ever solely were, Western.”⁹ The aim of this chapter thus is not to detract from the very vibrant and plural tradition of critical thought that has developed within the IR discipline over the past 20 years, but rather to add to that tradition by proposing an additional way to challenge these mainstream narratives and their continued hegemonic influence over

⁷ Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2001), 6.

⁸ Vendulka Kubálková, “Towards an international political theology,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 3 (2000): 683.

the study of international relations. As David Campbell has argued, although challenges to various elements of the mainstream IR narratives do “not involve writing the ‘true’ and ‘correct’ historical narrative to replace that which is in error,” they do attempt to “establish the space for a retheorization of foreign policy via the problematization” of them.¹⁰ Through examining the potential challenge of Islam(ism) to some of the discipline’s principle narratives (shared by many other branches of the Western social sciences), I will examine the limits of the modern rationalist approach to explain and understand a variety of historical experiences that exist outside its narrow remit.

This chapter will conclude by arguing that the inability of mainstream IR concepts and the narratives from which they derive to consider the possibility of worldviews that exist outside their own narrow “spatial,” “temporal,” and “ethical” boundaries marginalize or largely misunderstand Islamist movements and their potential to affect and be affected by the international system, within not only the academic but also the wider political and popular discourse. Only once these narratives are deconstructed and contextualized can Islamism in all its complexity be understood, not only in terms of the larger picture — of what Islamic movements share in common with other political movements which have also been impacted by the globally transformative social, economic, and political developments of the last several centuries — but also the ways in which they are different, though not inferior, because of the specific religious, cultural, socio-economic, and political contexts in which they have developed.

1. The Mainstream Narrative of the Sovereign State

While the roots of the modern state system can be found in antiquity (e.g., the Greek city-states, 800 B.C.-168 B.C.), the narrative of the state, as told within IR, is that the modern state system is a European construct that first emerged in the course of the 15th and 16th centuries, achieved maturity in the 17th century, culminating with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which put an end to the religious conflicts of late-16th and 17th

⁹ Euben, 123.

¹⁰ Campbell, 4.

century Europe. For those seeking to trace the birth of the “liberal, constitutional sovereign state” though, the date and event most often evoked are 1789 and the French Revolution, when the notion that a state’s sovereignty could only be achieved with the consent and support of “the people” was first elaborated by the French *philosophes*, who, according to Thomas Paine, “excoriated the Westphalian states for their egotistical power struggles that sustained the domestic rule of the parasitic ‘plundering classes.’”¹¹

Despite minor disagreements over the exact origins and timing of this development, there is a general consensus within IR that several factors played a role in the creation and consolidation of the modern state system, including: the birth of capitalism and changes to the modes of production; modern science and technology (specifically, weapons technology and improvements in ship design); and the emergence of the Protestant religions and the concomitant break-up of the universal church.¹² In his article “Reformulating International Relations Theory: African Insights and Challenges,” Assis Malaquias points out a fourth factor, namely that the “development of the modern European state coincided with tendencies to create unifying cultures around a dominant language.”¹³ According to Karen Armstrong, this explains why the birth of the modern European state entailed a religious cleansing of sorts that would enable the new state to consolidate and justify its power as the sole and legitimate representation of a specifically designated group of people. She traces the first modern European state to the late 15th century Spanish Inquisition and the subsequent Counter-Reformation.¹⁴ Together, these factors combined to fuse the nation and the state into a single political entity: the nation-state. A crucial feature of the newfound European state was its success in inducing the population within its borders to transfer loyalty from the metaphysical nation to the physical state.

¹¹ Christopher J. Bickerton, Phillip Cunliffe and Alexander Gourevitch, eds., *Politics without Sovereignty: A Critique of Contemporary International Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 9.

¹² Chris Brown, *Understanding International relations* (London: Houndsmills, Macmillan, 1997), 70.

¹³ Assis Malaquias, “Reformulating International Relations Theory: African Insights and Challenges,” in Kevin C. Dunn and Timothy M. Shaw, eds. *Africa’s Challenge to International Relations Theory* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 13.

¹⁴ Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb out of Darkness* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

Despite the significant role religion played in creating and consolidating the modern state-system, considering the Treaty of Westphalia was largely concerned with dividing Europe into separate Catholic and Protestant spheres of influence as a means to put an end to the fighting, an important component of the mainstream IR narrative of the development of the modern state is its secular nature, where it is assumed that during this period, the state came “to be constituted by a secularized eschatology in which one form of social organization and identity (the church) completely gives way to another (the state) at a readily identifiable juncture (the Peace of Westphalia).”¹⁵ According to this narrative, it was the elimination of God (and his representatives on earth *via* the institutions of the Church) from the realm of socio-political affairs that cleared the way for a truly sovereign politics, one that “involves both material capacity in its institutionalized forms, such as the public power of the state, *and* the subjective will of every citizen,” as opposed to the “divine power that preceded it.”¹⁶

1.1 Challenges to the Mainstream Narrative of the Sovereign State: Western Social Sciences

Despite its centrality within IR, there is a growing tendency to challenge the mainstream narrative of the state and its concomitant theory of sovereignty. These challenges range from the less confrontational “historical sociological” approaches which “like realism...give prominence to the state” but consider the “context, socio-economic and international, in which it [the state] is located and reproduced,”¹⁷ to the more radical, post-structural and dialectical approaches, which start from the premise that nation-states are “unavoidably paradoxical entities that do not possess prediscursive, stable identities.”¹⁸ As the editors of *Politics Without Sovereignty, A Critique of Contemporary International Relations* have recently pointed out, this criticism includes both empirical studies that claim to prove the increasing irrelevance of the sovereign nation-state as

¹⁵ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: University of Minnesota Press/Manchester University Press, 1998), 40.

¹⁶ Bickerton, Cunliffe and Gourevitch, 10-11.

¹⁷ Halliday, 2005, 35, 43.

¹⁸ Campbell, 12.

conceived by the mainstream narrative and normative ones that advocate an end to state sovereignty as we know it for various “moral and political” reasons.¹⁹

David Campbell, for example, found it necessary to begin his critical study of U.S. foreign policy and the “politics of identity” by first deconstructing the mainstream IR narrative of the modern nation-state. Regarding the post-Westphalian secularization of the state, he points out that historical sociological studies of the origins of the modern Western state have concluded “that there was neither a clean nor a clear break between the social formations of Christendom and subsequent sovereign communities,” a fact that was significant in post-Westphalian state construction and the “ordering of identity difference.”²⁰ Furthermore, he argues against a facile understanding of the history of the modern nation-state according to which the states to emerge from the Peace of Westphalia were uniform in substance or form, as they ranged from the

despotically powerful French monarch, through the infrastructurally more organized English constitutional monarch (albeit consumed by civil war in the period), to the weak confederacy that was the mosaic of German petty states. Each of these forms has to be distinguished among themselves, from others existing earlier (such as the federated cities of the Hanseatic League or the maritime empire of Venice), and in contrast to the considerably more intensive form of the modern state. Moreover, the development of these diverse state forms was a multifaceted process that was neither linear nor progressive.²¹

In addition to critical inquiries into the origins of the narrative of the Western sovereign nation-state, many scholars today, both critical and liberal, have questioned their capacity to explain economic and political relations in the globalized, post-modern world. Most prominent amongst these critiques have been: Susan Strange’s *The Retreat of the State*

¹⁹ Although the editors discuss these trends, they do so disparagingly, as the stated purpose of the book is to “argue that the current movement against state sovereignty participates in the degradation of political agency at both the domestic and international levels. The case against sovereignty is generally cast as a way of opening up our political possibility, and to sever the relationship between the exercise of power and new possibilities for organizing the world. But its substance is to limit our sense of political possibility, and to sever the relationship between the exercise of power and political responsibility.” Bickerton, Cunliffe and Gourevitch, 1.

²⁰ Campbell, 42.

²¹ Ibid., 43.

(1997), which argues that “the rise of global financial networks, multinational corporations, regional trading blocs and expansion of the world economy has rendered the nation-state obsolete”; David Held’s (2003) *Violence, Law and Justice in a Global Age*, in which he similarly predicts the final days of the nation-state, although focusing on the “internationalization of communication and culture”; the liberal Robert Keohane, who believes “that the indivisible and inalienable right of sovereignty has been transformed into something that can be traded away”; and Stephen Krasner, who argues that “sovereignty has always been a kind of ‘organized hypocrisy,’ in which formal sovereign status fails to correspond with actual respect for sovereignty.”²²

Taking a different perspective, Campbell argues with urgency that the present state of affairs is:

more than just a result of interdependence, the proliferation of threats, or the overflowing of domestic issues onto the world stage (the conventional response). This is an irruption of contingencies that renders all established containers problematic. This irruption does not simply involve the movement of problems from one domain to the other, but rather the rendering asunder of those domains and their entailments. It makes little sense to speak of politics occurring in terms of a distinct “inside” or “outside” (such as a “Third World” that is spatially beyond our borders and temporally backward)...²³

For critical IR thinkers like David Campbell, the problem of the narrative of the development of the sovereign nation-state necessarily has normative implications: if not historically accurate, then what purpose does it serve, he asks. For Campbell, the importance of this narrative is to justify the ontological status of the state and normalize the inside/outside distinctions on which it is predicated and which are inherent to the realist understanding of the anarchical nature of the international realm, and hence the type of power politics necessary to secure a state’s survival in it. To challenge this narrative one must therefore be able to demonstrate that the state actually has “no essence, no ontological status that exists prior to and is served by either police or war.

²² Bickerton, Cunliffe and Gourevitch, 4-7.

²³ Campbell, 18.

Instead, 'the state' is 'the mobile effect of a multiple regime of governmentality,' of which the practices of police, war, and foreign policy/Foreign Policy are all a part."²⁴ Other critical/post-modern IR theorists such as Andrew Linklater and Richard Ashley have also questioned the role of the sovereign nation state in maintaining the status quo and have instead argued for "post-national" conceptions of citizenship that seek to overcome not only the types of conflict and suffering inherent in the realist-conceived and constructed international system, but the very (inter-subjective) identities and relationships that make them inevitable.²⁵

Despite these various challenges to the narrative of the state, several assumptions (e.g., that states are the dominant actors in the system, that their sovereignty is derived from the support and will of the "people," that they are "exogenously constituted," that they define security in "self-interested" terms, etc.)²⁶ still dominate mainstream IR analyses. That this is so is a testament to a broad acceptance within IR of the Eurocentric version of the origins of the state from which its generally accepted definition is derived. This definition, which Halliday terms "national-territorial totality," is "replete with legal and value assumptions (i.e., that states are equal, that they control their territory, that they coincide with nations, that they represent their peoples)," all of which render problematic its use as a universal concept capable of explaining all inter- and intra-state relations across the globe.²⁷ Although the limitations of realism, including its "neglect of ideology and belief systems, minimization of factors internal to states and societies, inadequate attention to economics, and...[its] view of inter-state relations marked by timeless, recurrent, patterns," have been widely acknowledged, the theory still holds sway for those lured by its offer of seemingly objective and parsimonious explanations of international relations.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid., 202.

²⁵ Bickerton, Cunliffe and Gourevitch, 4.

²⁶ Alexander Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 71-81. Wendt argues that while "neorealists and neoliberals may disagree about the extent to which states are motivated by relative versus absolute gains...both groups take the self-interested state as the starting point for theory."

²⁷ Halliday, 1994, 78.

²⁸ Kubáľková, 675.

1.2 Challenges to the Mainstream Narrative of the Sovereign State: Islamic/Islamist Perspectives

If adherence to the mainstream narrative of the state may still be justifiable when assessing international relations of states whose development paralleled that of the Westphalian states, its uncritical use in most other instances is problematic. Scholars focused on the international relations of non-Western parts of the world, for example, have argued that the European state differs fundamentally from the post-colonial state in its origins and subsequent development; therefore, they find the mainstream narrative of the Western sovereign state inadequate when it comes to understanding and explaining developments in these regions. As with the critical Western IR tradition discussed above, these analyses also start by problematizing the narrative of the origins of the state, although they tend to focus on its inability to explain the particular development of non-Western states rather than challenging its empirical accuracy in the context of a globalized world. For example, whereas the narrative of the origins of the European state holds that it emerged from a process that included the secularization of politics, the industrial revolution, the development of capitalism, and the molding of national identities through cultural and linguistic homogenization, Malaquias contends that African states “did not emerge as a result of a long period of social, economic, political, scientific, and religious development determined by Africans,” but rather are a result of “colonial imposition created to serve Western, not African, interests.”²⁹

In critiquing the use of the Eurocentric narrative and definition of the sovereign nation-state to explain the post-colonial situation in Africa, many students of the region focus on the arbitrary/illegitimate nature of the territorial African state, and the subsequent persistence of ethnonationalism as a reaction to excessive and unwelcome centralizing and/or homogenizing tendencies of the state.³⁰ Concerns are also raised about the legitimacy of African leaders and the problem this poses for IR theorists interested in utilizing an “objective,” rationalist conception of “national interest” (as, for example,

²⁹ Malaquias, 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

defined by Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations*). John F. Clark, in his essay “Africa’s International Relations in the Post-Cold War Era,” argues that the concept of national interest fails patently in Africa, for at least two reasons. First, African states were largely defined territorially by Europe and are thus comprised of people belonging to different ethnicities (or clans) who do not conceive of themselves as a nation. As a result, the leaders of these states are just as likely to pursue sub-national — or, I would add, transnational (e.g., ethnic or religious) — interests as they are state-wide interests. Second, underlying the notion that leaders will pursue the interests of their populations is the assumption that they understand and feel accountable to these populations. “However, in colonial and post-colonial Africa, many heads of state have felt little or no obligation to their populations, and have shown that they are just as likely to pursue the interests of their foreign sponsors as that of their own citizens.”³¹ Although the same could be said about many non-African states, the colonial history and neo-colonial present render the African state more prone to both a diminished negative and positive sovereignty.

While their colonial history explains some of the overlapping characteristics marking the development of several Muslim states with that of their African counterparts (not to mention that several of these African states are also Muslim), it could be argued that the development of the Muslim state, or those states comprised of peoples formerly belonging to the caliphate system of rule that developed in the aftermath of the Prophet Mohammed’s death, differs from the European state in two additional ways:³² the people of these states have traditionally felt a greater allegiance to the larger, transnational community (*ummah*) delineated by the borders of religion (Islam) rather than by physical borders, language and ethnicity; and Muslim states, because of their unique historical development and epistemological and ontological realities, have not secularized in the same manner and to the same extent as their European counterparts. Both of these factors also affect the Islamic critique of sovereignty, a concept, as discussed above, challenged extensively within Western social sciences as well, albeit from a different perspective.

³¹ Clark, 92.

³² Despite the proliferation of historical accounts dismissive of the role played by the caliphate in unifying the Muslim world throughout Islam’s history, Sayyid argues that one should not ignore the fact that “from

While most Western critiques of the concept of sovereignty associated with the mainstream narrative of the state focus on its inability to accurately describe the current status of the state in a post-modern world where territorial boundaries are increasingly irrelevant, the Islamic critique holds that the state has never actually been a sovereign entity as it is only God who is sovereign, and people merely represent His will on earth. As Bobby Sayyid argues, for this reason “Islamists explicitly reject nationalism, declaring that ‘an Islamic state’ is not a nationalistic state because ultimate allegiance is owed to God and thereby to the community of all believers - the *ummah*. One can never stop at any national frontier and say the nation is absolute, an ultimate end in itself.”³³ According to this argument, citizens of the Muslim world prior to the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate may have formed families, clans, communities, regions, and allegiances which were delineated by physical boundaries, “but their ‘countries’ of origin did not imply their nationality.”³⁴

Even for the mid-19th century “Islamic modernists” who actively sought out innovative means of resisting an increasingly powerful Europe as it encroached upon Islam’s weakening borders, the idea of dividing up the ailing Ottoman empire into separate nation-states was greeted with skepticism. Muhammad ‘Abduh, the most famous of these modernist philosophers who came the closest to advocating acceptance of the nation-state as an organizing principle capable of resisting the numerous threats emanating from Europe, saw the division of the *ummah* into separate nation-states as a last resort, and one that should be mitigated by strict adherence by the newly formed states to the central precepts of Islam. It was for this reason that ‘Abduh referred to the state in terms reminiscent of the Caliphate, e.g., as ‘*al-khliafat al-Islamiyyah*, or *hukumat al-khilafah* (government of the Caliphate) in order to stress what he believed was the necessary continuity between the former and the latter.³⁵ As Enayat pointed out, ‘Abduh

the death of the Prophet until 3 March 1924, there was always a caliph,” and that the caliph ensured the recognition of Islam as a “master signifier” for Muslims. Sayyid, 55-56.

³³ Ibid., 91.

³⁴ Nassib, 2003.

³⁵ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

acknowledged the difficulties the Muslim world would confront in restoring a truly just (in the eyes of Allah) Caliphate, [and] argued that the only alternative was the nearest arrangement to it: the Islamic State. Yet even in recognizing this, 'Abduh argued cogently against the Muslims' adoption of foreign, mainly Western, laws and institutions.³⁶

Although many in the Muslim world came to support the idea of the nation-state as a necessary tool in the effort to resist European imperialism, the recognition of a "basic contradiction between nationalism as a time-bound set of principles related to the qualities of and needs of a particular group of human beings, and Islam as an eternal, universalist message, drawing no distinction between its adherents except on the criterion of their piety" meant this support was tenuous at best and therefore capable of being overturned.³⁷ Furthermore, there remained hope among many advocates of this strategy that it was merely a first phase in the struggle to regain a sovereign, and territorially succinct Muslim *ummah*, and that the "liberation of the respective country or administrative zone was a further step in the direction of one all-embracing Islamic entity."³⁸

Even the leaders of what came to be known as the Arab Revolt, the World War I uprising against the Ottoman Empire fought by British supported Arab tribes who sought to attain territorial independence for their peoples independent of the increasingly defunct Empire, saw their long term and overriding goal as eventually returning to the distinct Islamic system of rule: the Caliphate. In the words of the Nuri al-Said, "comrade-in-arms" of the leader of the Revolt, Hussein ibn Ali of the Hashemite family, who would later serve several terms as prime-minister of mandate Iraq:

All Arabs and particularly those of the Near and Middle East have deep down in their hearts the feeling that they are "members of one another." The "nationalism" springs from the Muslim feeling of brotherhood enjoined on them by the Prophet Muhammad in his last public speech. It differs therefore from a great deal of European nationalism and patriotism. Although Arabs are naturally attached to their native land their

³⁶ Ibid., 78.

³⁷ Ibid., 114.

³⁸ Andrea Nüsse, *Muslim Palestine: The Ideology of Hamas* (London: Routledge, 1998), 50.

nationalism is not confined by boundaries. It is an aspiration to restore the great tolerant civilization of the early Caliphate.³⁹

Although Sayyid also acknowledges that the nation-state came to be seen as both a means (via nationalism) and an end (the liberated state) of the majority of anti-colonial movements in the Muslim world, he argues that this approach was adopted in large part due to the abolition of the Caliphate by the Turkish leader, Mustafa Kemal, in 1924, and the subsequent hegemonic diffusion of his “apologist” discourse.⁴⁰ This discourse sought to situate the Muslim world within the West’s “tradition of progressive history” by adopting Western terminology, concepts and institutions to describe and address political, sociological, and economic developments so as to prove their legitimacy and value to the West.⁴¹ According to Sayyid, Kemal’s historic decision to abolish the Caliphate was made in light of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and subsequent success of the European nations, and his belief that Turkey’s only chance for survival lay in the pursuit of its own national interests, and the consequent rejection of the idea of a universal Muslim state.

The great reforming bureaucrats like Rashid Pasha, Ali Pasah and Midhad Pasha, and the Sultan Abdulhamid II were motivated by a desire to make the Ottoman Empire compete successfully in the predatory international climate of the nineteenth century, where the great European powers hovered above the “sick man of Europe,” waiting for it to fall.⁴²

By abandoning the Caliphate in favour of a modern nation-state, in essence Kemal was abandoning the *ummah* and joining the Westphalian/European nation-state system. With the abolition of the Caliphate and the implementation of a “modernizing”/Westernizing program, the most powerful Muslim state in the world created a path that would be difficult for other leaders of the Muslim world not to follow. Subsequent developments

³⁹ General Nuri al-Said, quoted in Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 130.

⁴⁰ Sayyid avoids criticisms of oversimplifying Kemalism and overstating its importance to the Muslim world with this disclaimer: “I have chosen not to focus on providing a detailed analysis of Kemalism’s actual status in the various historical and political contexts — which I am well aware would demonstrate significant variations — since the purpose here is not to furnish a detailed and exhaustive analysis of Kemalism but to establish Kemalism as a means of reading a wider Muslim political context. Sayyid, 33.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 67.

within the post-colonial regimes of the Muslim world are a testament to the pressure, both internal and external, to conform to the Kemalist/modernist project.⁴³ However, despite the best efforts of the Kemalist leaders to displace Islam as the “master signifier” for citizens of their newly independent nation-states, their acts had the paradoxical effect of politicizing Islam “[b]y removing it from the centre of their constructions of political order ... [and instead] unsettling it and disseminating it into the general culture where it became available for reinscription.”⁴⁴ In this sense, one can see the rise in the 1970s of the counter-hegemonic discourse of Islamism as an attempt to reassert Islam, as opposed to national identity, as the “master signifier” for the Muslim world and, as demonstrated by the discourse and ideology of Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the Islamist revolution in Iran and ideological influence to a significant portion of the Islamist movements that followed, to replace Kemalism with its own set of meta-narratives capable of “restor[ing] the precious symbolic continuity interrupted by the irruption of Western categories.”⁴⁵ One of the central components of this attempt to “decentre the West” was the perceived need for the Muslim world to return to the *ummah* as an organizing principle, both religiously and politically, and as a structural alternative to the imposed nation-state.⁴⁶

Sayyid’s reading of the ideological origins of contemporary Islamist movements is confirmed by the autobiographical stories of former Arab-nationalists-turned-Islamists recounted in Francois Burgat’s *Face to Face with Political Islam*. In this book, Burgat argues that Islam never ceased to serve as a central “reference” point in the worldviews

⁴³ Sayyid argues that the post-colonial Kemalist regimes could be described as implementing one of two strategies: 1) the Pahlavist strategy, in which Islam is “displaced as a master signifier and its displacement reinscribed in terms of its being an ‘alien imperialist ideology’.” The aim of this strategy is to evoke the population’s pre-Islamic history as a means of portraying Islam as an interruption- a distortion of the ‘true’ identity of the society in question. According to Sayyid, this strategy was employed in Iran by Mohammed Reza, in Egypt by Gamal Abdul Nasser, in Iraq by the Baathist regime; and 2) “the quasi-caliph strategy, in which Islam is included in the political order but is articulated with state power, through the institution of what could be called a pseudo-caliphate.” This strategy was practiced by King Hussein of Jordan, King Hassan of Morocco, and the successive Saudi rulers. According to Sayyid these attempts “to reproduce a situation in which Islam is closely tied to the state remains within the discourse of Kemalism, since the nation is still used as the nodal point of the political order.” *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁵ François Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 50. For more on the impact of the Iranian Islamist revolution on budding Islamist movements, see: Fawaz A. Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2007); Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaida’s Road to 9/11* (London: Allen Lane, 2007); as well as Sayyid.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

of the majority of those involved in the anti-colonial/nationalist movements, even if not made explicit by the leaders of these movements. Furthermore, Burgat explains the proliferation of Islamist movements in the period following independence as the result of activists coming to terms with the fact that the version of nationalism their leaders had adopted, e.g., secular and heavily influenced by Western ideas and experiences, failed to adequately reflect their own religious and cultural identities. In the words of one prominent Egyptian intellectual and nationalist-activist-turned Islamist, Tariq al-Bishri, there was no need for explicitly Islamist movements during the anti-colonial struggles because “the nationalism of Mustafa Kamal was expressed in the language of Islam and not the language of secularism.”⁴⁷ After the independence struggles had been won, though, it became clear that the leaders had adopted “Western references” and “values of modernity” disconnected from their religious and cultural contexts. On the other hand, the Islamist movements “invited society to return to the values that had previously dominated it and to Islam as a source of legitimacy and social regulation.”⁴⁸

Jacqueline Kaye and Fouzi Slisli argue similarly that Western liberal accounts of the anti-colonial struggles of the Muslim world often undermined or completely ignored that they were “distinctly Islamic in character,” providing such examples as Emir Abdelkader in Algeria; the Mahdi (Muhammed Ahmad) in Sudan; Islam’s role in India’s liberation struggle; and “various Islamic anti-colonial movements in Ghana and Nigeria.”⁴⁹ Sukant Chandan adds Sheikh Izz al-Din Qassam, “killed by the British in the First Palestinian Intifida,” in...and the Islamists in the National Liberation Front (FLN) who fought against the French colonizers to this list, adding that many of the anti-colonial liberation struggles evoked “Islamic leaders” such as the 12th century Kurdish political and military leader Salahuddin al-Ayoub, who conquered the Crusaders in the twelfth century, to motivate the fighters amongst their ranks.⁵⁰ Furthermore, as Maha Azzam points out, many of the deeply religious individuals who participated in the anti-colonial struggles felt betrayed by what they felt was the encroachment of secularism via post-colonial

⁴⁷ Burgat, 26.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁹ Jacqueline Kaye and Fouzi Slisli, “A liberal logic: reply to Fred Halliday,” *Opendemocracy.com* (8 December 2006).

nationalist regimes. Azzam argues that “for the Islamists, it is secularism, not religion, that is the deviation from the norm. Thus, what is viewed as a ‘return to the fundamentals of religion’ is seen by many as a return to the norm,” a perspective also shared by renowned Professor of Islamic Studies at George Washington University Seyyed Hossein Nasr.⁵¹

According to Sayyid, notions of nation and secularism are Western imports that invaded the Muslim world via Kemal. This belief was shared by many of the second generation of Muslim reformers like Hassan al-Banna’, Navyab Safavi and Sayyid Qutb, who generally opposed all strains of nationalism, whether linguistic, ethnic, or civic, arguing that their predecessors were mistaken in believing that nationalism and the division of the Muslim world into separate, autonomous nation-states was the only means of resisting foreign domination. This new generation of Islamist philosophers and activists believed that “Islam possesses enough ideological and emotional resources to galvanise the masses in the cause of independence,” where independence signifies not freedom from domination of one nation or another, but rather the independence of the “global ‘abode of Islam’ — though this time called, not the traditional term *dar al-Islam* (the ‘abode of Islam’), but the newly-coined *al-watan al-Islami* (the ‘Islamic homeland’).”⁵²

The Tunisian Islamist political activist Sheikh Rachid Ghannouchi argues like Sayyid that the secular state is an ideological Western import. However, in his telling of the story, it has been imposed on predominately Muslim North Africa by native leaders seeking to maintain their privileged relations with the former colonizers, and thus maintain their authority and wealth within the country (again, an argument similar to the one made by post-colonial theorists regarding the unrepresentative nature of the post-colonial state). For Ghannouchi, the secular state in North Africa “has been no more than a tool delegated, as if by design, by the former colonizer to an elite that has been entrusted to take care of the colonizer’s interests and to reproduce its relations and

⁵⁰ Sukant Chandan, “Secularism and Islamism in the Arab World,” *Conflicts Forum* (7 October 2007).

⁵¹ Maha Azzam, “Islamism revisited,” *International Affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1119-32; Nasr, 239.

⁵² Enayat, 115.

values.”⁵³ Murtaza Garia argues along similar lines, that secular nationalism is an ideology propagated in Muslim countries via local elites who “had their training and education in countries which have taken good care that they return home as ‘authentic’ nationalists to operate by proxy for their masters.”⁵⁴ Hossein Nasr concurs with this perspective, pointing out the schism between the post-colonial rulers and the people they ruled as the former “although native, possessed a mental perspective akin to the worldview of the West and distinct from the prevailing beliefs and *Weltanschauung* of the vast majority of those over whom they ruled in the name of independence and nationalism.”⁵⁵

Even academics like Fred Halliday who reject analyses which seek to understand Islamist movements solely through analysis of written or spoken pronouncements of leading clerics and activists and religious texts without regard for context, accept that the Western concept of the nation-state is often seen as alien to the history and religious traditions of the Muslim world. For example, in his book *The Middle East in International Relations*, Halliday points out that rejection of “nationalist categories of fragmentation” has its basis in several Quranic passages, for example: “it states that all believers are brethren (49:10) and attributes sovereignty over land to God not to man (38:65-6).” And even though, according to Halliday, many modern Islamists may have merely instrumentalized the Quran in rhetorical manoeuvres to mobilize the masses, history demonstrates that Islamist groups have, in fact, “acted transnationally: they have inspired each other by ideology and by example, and ‘struggling’ jihadi Muslims have gone from one country to another to participate in the struggle;” many have even been members of organizations that incorporate groups in more than one country. The Muslim Brotherhood, *al-Ikwhan al-Muslimin*, for example, founded in Egypt in 1928, became the ideological and organizational model for successive branches in several Arab countries that persist today, including Palestine and Jordan. The participation of young men from all over the Muslim world in the various conflicts over the years that have entailed a real or perceived Jihad

⁵³ Tamimi, 115.

⁵⁴ Murtaza Garia, “Nationalism in the Light of the Qur’an and the Sunnah,” in *The Impact of Nationalism on the Muslim World*, ed. M. Ghayasuddin (London: Al-Hoda Publishers, 1986), 27.

⁵⁵ Nassr, 238.

against non-Muslim encroachment on Muslim peoples/lands (e.g., the war in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupiers or the conflicts in Bosnia and Chechnya) is further evidence of this trend. “That there is an ‘Islamist transnationalism’ is therefore, unquestionable: it has existed in some form through history, was reconstructed by Schulze’s ‘Islamic public’ in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has found a third form in the era of mass migration and the Internet from the 1980s onwards.”⁵⁶

In her article “Towards an International Political Theology,” Kubáľková argues that mainstream IR analyses view religion as “a private affair of individuals, a domestic issue of states, or it is liminal; in any event, it eludes the territorial boundaries characteristic of state-centric IR studies.”⁵⁷ In the preceding section I explained why this is the case by demonstrating how the narrative of the sovereign state, as told within mainstream IR, precludes consideration of some of the defining elements of states which have developed along non-Western trajectories, in particular Muslim-majority states, and the subsequent effects their specific developmental paths may have on contemporary and future political developments in these states. That this is the case is evidenced by facile statements that continue to be made in regards to Islamist movements that seek to overcome what they see as artificial borders unnecessarily dividing the Muslim *ummah* (as well as in regards to their secular Arab nationalist counterparts who have similarly rejected the arbitrarily drawn borders separating the brothers and sisters of the Arab nation) by lamenting the failure of these movements to just accept “the natural course and develop into modern-day state nationalism” and “get on with it.”⁵⁸

2. The Mainstream Narrative of Modernity

Having discussed how mainstream IR’s state-centric nature and definition of the modern sovereign state limits discussion of the origins and relevance of political Islam in the world today, I hope to have exposed how the narrative of a specific historic event, namely the rise of the Western nation-state, came to assume a universal meaning.

⁵⁶ Halliday, 2005, 241.

⁵⁷ Kubáľková, 676.

Mainstream IR's Eurocentric narrative of the state is very much linked to another widely accepted narrative: that which describes the history of "modernity." As Joe Migdal has pointed out, the state's very existence "was part and parcel of the great transformation bringing modernity..."⁵⁹

Similar to the IR narrative on the origins of the state, the discipline's narrative of "modernity" can be traced to 17th century Europe. And while there is some disagreement on the exact timing and origins of this development, the concept of modernity retains its hold upon scholars because there is at least implicit agreement regarding many of its features, one of which is the development of the modern state. As Richard Falk explains in *Religion and Politics*, this concept is generally associated with:

the ascendancy of reason, science, and statist forms of political organization as they emerged in Europe during the 13th to 17th centuries, culminating in the triumph of industrial capitalism in the 19th century, and, finally, complemented by the October Revolution in Russia that brought state socialism into the world. Implicit in the dynamic of modernism was its globalisation by way of colonialist extension and capitalist expansion.⁶⁰

Taking these historical events into consideration, the "stages of growth" theory that came to form the foundation of much sociological thought in the 19th and 20th centuries combined Weber's polarized conceptualization of the differences separating "traditional" from "modern" societies and Comte's theory of evolution.⁶¹ According to this theory, all societies were alike at the "traditional" stage and eventually would all pass through the same set of changes that led the West to the "modern" stage. The understanding was that all nations, despite their disparate cultures, histories and collective visions for the future, were destined to become modern states, if only they kept to the "right" path. That path consisted specifically of the application of technology to control nature and increase per capita growth, government secularization and democratization, and rational government

⁵⁸ Karsh, 7.

⁵⁹ Joel S. Migdal, "Studying the State," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, eds. Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, 208-236 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 209.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Euben, 22.

⁶¹ Peter F. Klarén and Thomas J. Bossert, *Promise of Development: Theories of Change in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986).

policies to increase capital accumulation and investment and foster entrepreneurship. In essence, the path to modernization included the death of subsistence agriculture, communal living and God (at least on the public scene) and the subsequent birth of technologically advanced industry, monetary wealth and the individual. Societies that did not adhere to this path “were judged deficient because they allegedly lacked many of the features and institutions which modern European societies seemed to possess and which had supposedly enabled Europeans to achieve progress, knowledge, wealth and power.”⁶²

The political orientations of adherents to this narrative of modernization have run the gamut from conservative to progressive, left to right (although for the progressive/left adherents, the process of modernization is not seen as the final “stage” in and of itself, but rather as a prerequisite for arrival at the final stage, which includes some form of communist or social democratic system). Despite the seemingly obvious differences in their “worldviews” or concepts of the good life, political theorists who have subscribed to this theory, either explicitly or implicitly, have accepted an Eurocentric understanding of what it means to be modern. According to Ali Mazrui, this understanding of modernity has its roots in Darwin’s theory of evolution. Drawing the connection between Darwin’s theory of stages of evolution and the stages of growth concept employed by modernization theory, Mazrui writes:

In its earliest forms, social Darwinism had a strong and perhaps biological basis. Differing stages in the evolution of human societies were sometimes attributed to biological distinction among peoples. This was the influence of Charles Darwin on racism in Europe. The ideological repercussions were indeed long-term.⁶³

Darwin’s influence in the realm of politics proved particularly dangerous because of the potential for adherents of the “stages” theory to use positive evolution *a posteriori* to explain why some civilizations are more advanced than others, and subsequently why some are more capable of ruling others. The history of modern Europe is replete with examples of uses of the “survival of the fittest” concept to justify the brutal rule of a fully

⁶² Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 87.

“evolved” society over one composed of less “fit” members. Europe’s imperialist expansion throughout the 19th and 20th centuries and the expansionist agenda of the Third Reich, for example, were justified in this light. Despite its dark history, social Darwinism managed to seep into the mainstream of several disciplines within the social sciences, including IR. Noting the influence of the German right on the discipline in its early stages, and disputing the common belief that IR emerged out of the English speaking world, Halliday argues that “many of the central themes of realism appear as (domesticated) descendents of the militaristic and racist Social Darwinism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”⁶⁴

As already noted, conservatives and fascists were not the only ones to adhere to this version of modernization. As Mazrui points out, Karl Marx was, in fact, an enthusiastic supporter of Darwin’s theories, albeit for different reasons, so much so that the 19th century political philosopher wanted to dedicate the first volume of *Das Kapital* to Charles Darwin (who declined the honor).⁶⁵ The centrality of the belief in the inevitability of the (social) evolution of man to Marx’s conception of historical materialism is a testament to the influence of Darwinism on the 19th century Prussian political philosopher. As with other adherents of modernization theory, both past and present, Marx viewed tradition, including culture and religion, variously as obstacles to a better future and reactions to oppression or uncertainty. In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, for example, Marx argued that the full potential of a revolutionary movement can be limited by the tendency of its participants to hark back to their past for symbolic references. This sentiment is expressed in a somewhat critical passage on the way the 1848 French revolutionaries looked back to the 1789 revolution as a means of understanding and framing their struggle:

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up

⁶³ Mazrui, 70.

⁶⁴ Halliday, 1994, 11.

⁶⁵ Mazrui.

the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of the world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language...a beginner who has learnt a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can freely express himself in it only when he finds his way in it without recalling the old and forgets his native tongue in the use of the new.⁶⁶

According to this narrative, the only path to the next stage of development is the one which leaves the “dead generations” behind and in which the “old” or “native” ways are fully replaced with the “new.” Despite the diversity in ends pursued by the various people/parties that subscribed to the modernization theory, they all shared the belief that religion, tradition and culture are liminal to the understanding or creation of any modern or modernizing society, and that societies for whom religion, tradition and culture still matter are insignificant to understanding the modern world.

This Eurocentric narrative of modernity had a particularly negative effect on the study and understanding of some Muslim societies, whose continuing adherence to religion, communalism, and traditional customs made them appear antithetical to the modern Western mindset which was believed to be vital to the establishment of thriving and dynamic political and economic systems. In looking at the impact of this understanding of modernity on analysis of political systems in the Muslim world by one of the first proponents of the narrative, who also no doubt influenced by contemporary orientalist theories of the “Muslim mind” that were *de rigueur* at the time, Lockman explains how:

Weber used the term “sultanism” to characterize the political systems of these [Muslim] patrimonial states, whose rulers he saw as rapacious and arbitrary despots unencumbered by any effective limits on their power over their subjects. As a result Islamic societies failed to develop institutions and centers of power independent of the state, including a vigorous urban middle class, autonomous cities or a system of rational law (as opposed to the sacred law of Islam), leading to stagnation and social decay.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Karl Marx, *The Karl Marx Library, Volume 1*, ed. Saul K. Padover (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), 245–46.

⁶⁷ Lockman, 87.

Weber's analysis of the roots of what he saw as the backwardness and corrosion at the heart of the Muslim world were, like Marx's views "on Asian societies in general" based on a "powerful tradition in European thought" which included everyone from "Renaissance political thinkers to Montesquieu to Hegel to James Mill and John Stuart Mill and beyond," and which came to tautologically define European superiority in relation to that which it claimed not to be, namely despotic, arbitrary and traditional, the attributes imputed to "Oriental" political systems by these thinkers.⁶⁸ As Lockman points out, "this way of contrasting Islamic societies to an idealized model of European history and society provided a basis for depicting the former as culturally or racially defective."⁶⁹

2.1 Challenges to the Mainstream Narrative of Modernity: Western Social Sciences

While it is not within the scope or intent of this chapter to address all methodological and theoretical social science strains that fall under the broad "postmodern" label, in this section I will summarize some principal components of the postmodern critique of the notion of "modernity," insofar as they offer insight into the theoretical limitations of mainstream IR theory in analyzing religious politics, in general, and political Islam in particular.

Analyzing the work of academics who have described political Islam as a postmodern movement,⁷⁰ Sayyid first elaborates on their common understanding of modernity which critiques the narrative described above. Modernity, Sayyid writes, "can be described as a discourse which formed and consolidated Europe."⁷¹ Sayyid goes on to explain how the postmodern movement saw Europe's consolidation as contingent on its colonial/imperial power, and thus was skeptical of all discourse that might facilitate that consolidation. If modernity, one of the narratives that comprised this discourse, was in part responsible for the physical, intellectual and spiritual oppression of the colonized, postmodernity was the movement which sought to decolonize, or liberate those whose voices had previously

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ The literature discussed by Sayyid in this section will be considered, along with other writers who have viewed political Islam as a postmodern movement, in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

been suppressed. Robert Young, in fact, traces the origins of the post-modern movement to the aftermath of the Algerian war of independence, when a number of French intellectuals, who were either from French Algeria or empathized with the plight of the Algerian people (i.e., Sartre, Althusser, Derrida and Lyotard), sought to understand the anti-colonial struggle in theoretical terms.⁷²

The basis of their critique of Europe's narrative of modernity was its simplistic view of human history as an ongoing process in constant progression towards perfection of the human ideal, a view based on its underlying belief in history as a unilinear process.⁷³ To conceive of history as such requires:

the existence of a centre around which events are gathered and ordered. We think of history as ordered around the year zero of the birth of Christ, and more specifically, as a serial train of events in the life of people from the "centre," the West, the place of civilization, outside of which are the primitives and the developing countries.⁷⁴

For those who subscribe to this narrative of modernity, the West's privileged status as "developed" is necessarily reliant on its antithesis: "underdevelopment." In other words, the West would not be modern if it had no touchstone other against which it could measure its own progress. The West relies on definitions of what it considers not modern, or "primitive," to define itself as modern. According to Gianni Vattimo, the only way to develop an unbiased understanding of history is by first dispelling the myths around which History, as interpreted by a particular group of historians representing the interests and prejudices of the group to which they belonged, has been written. Young described this process as the "de-centering of the West," a process in which the intimate relationship between modernity and the West becomes untangled.⁷⁵ Once this "de-centering" takes place, space is opened up in which different narratives of history and understandings of what it means to be modern can be articulated. For Lyotard this process entails overcoming the "totalizing instincts of the modern, and seeking the

⁷¹ Sayyid, 107.

⁷² Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History in the West* (London: Routledge, 1990).

⁷³ Sayyid, 108.

⁷⁴ Gianni Vattimo, quoted in Sayyid, 108.

dissolution of all grand narratives, particularly those which claim a universal end,” regardless of how noble the purported end, such as “freedom,” might be. In calling for a “war” on modern narratives, “including those of progress, universality and ‘enlightenment’” post-modernists often call for the “embrace of the particular over totality.”⁷⁶

Arnold Toynbee argued along similar lines regarding the need to dispel the illusions on which the modernity narrative is based, in particular in relation to the study of the “East”:

But apart from illusion due to the world-wide success of Western civilisation in the material sphere, the misconception of “the unity of history”—involving the assumption that there is only one river of civilisation, our own, that all others are either tributary to it or else lost in the desert sands—may be traced to three roots: the egocentric illusion, the illusion of the “unchanging East,” and the illusion of progress as a movement that proceeds in a straight line.⁷⁷

For post-modernists like David Campbell who look at the impact of the modernity narrative on the foreign policy practices of Western states, its deconstruction is vital not only to open up space for a more pluralistic account of history, but also for its real world implications, in particular to institute a more peaceful world order. This belief is based on the idea that aggressive foreign policies are often the result of an existential need of states lacking an “ontological” basis for existence to continually construct and reinforce their identities via the discovery of external threats that often do not exist objectively, at least not to the extent portrayed by these governments. According to Campbell, this pathology can be traced back to the proverbial “death of God” in the modern period, when all foundations for human existence and for the particular organization and regulation of society that marked the modern period were eliminated with nothing left to replace them. As a result, this period was marked by anxiety and ambiguity as the need “for external guarantees” persisted while the “ontological preconditions” necessary to sustain them ceased. According to Connolly, “modernity is thus an epoch of secret insistence

⁷⁵ Sayyid, 109.

⁷⁶ Nicholas Gane, *Max Weber and Postmodern Theory* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 84.

jeopardized by its own legacy of truthfulness and honesty: its bearers demand that every hidden faith be exposed, but faith is necessary to ground the superiority of modern life.”⁷⁸ In place of the faith and certainty previously provided by Christendom, the modern Western state “requires discourses of ‘danger’ to provide a new theology of truth about who and what ‘we’ are by highlighting who or what ‘we’ are not, and what ‘we’ have to fear.” For Campbell then the process of deconstructing this narrative of modernity and its role in constructing and maintaining national identity is part and parcel of exposing the insider/outsider, us/them distinctions that underpin the type of aggressive foreign policy that “give rise to a boundary rather than acting as a bridge.”⁷⁹

2.2 Challenges to the Mainstream Narrative of Modernity: Islamic/Islamist Perspectives

Similar to the post-modern critiques of the narrative of modernity based on a Eurocentric and unilinear reading of history, many scholars and activists have chosen deconstruction of the narrative, and subsequent “de-centering” of the West, as a starting point for elaborating an alternative, Islamic worldview. According to Ahmet Davutoglu, “the idea of unilinear historical progress,” which begins with ancient Greece and ends with the Modern Age with no stops in non-European territory along the way, has been used to “identify the history of mankind with the history of Europe,” by excluding the contributions of civilizations that do not fit within the “existing hegemonic paradigm of Western civilization.”⁸⁰ Yet though the Islamic critique of modernity shares methodological tools with its post-modern counterpart, and even some Islamic scholars have recognized the importance of the “spaces” opened up by postmodernism to religion, there is an anxiety amongst proponents of the former regarding what they see as the seemingly opposed ends sought by the respective projects. This uncertainty is expressed by Hossein Nasr:

⁷⁷ Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 1965, 55, quoted in Ahmet Davutoglu, *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 172.

⁷⁸ Connolly, quoted in Campbell, 48.

⁷⁹ Campbell, 51.

⁸⁰ Davutoglu, in Azzam Tamimi, *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 202.

the very relativization of values and cultural norms preached by post-modernism, while seeking to destroy sacred traditions and trivializing them and also superficially accepting certain of their tenets, allows at the same time a certain “space” to be created within which religions, whether they be Judaism, Christianity or Islam or for that matter Hinduism and Buddhism can be practiced to some extent. But of course such “spaces” are not allowed to cover the whole living space of the post-modern world and therefore conflicts are bound to arise in certain domains.⁸¹

Yet still Nasr believes that the Islamic understanding of modernity shares more in common with postmodernism than it does with the mainstream narrative. When it comes to “questions such as the relation of religion to politics, the nature of knowledge, the source of ethics, the relation of private ethics to public life, the rapport between religion and science (including the social and human sciences) and many other issues which are of concern to post-modern philosophers,” Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that there is “every possibility of dialogue and discourse,” between postmodernists and Muslims, some of which he believes has already taken place.⁸²

In addition to challenging the validity of the historical events chosen to comprise the modernity narrative, and its function in creating, maintaining and justifying unequal power relations between the Western and non-western worlds, Muslim critiques often challenge its underlying notion of progress. Whereas adherence to tradition, custom, and zealous belief in religion were often seen as obstacles to progress and as forces inhibiting the development of modern man and society in the West, in Islam, on the contrary, is the belief “that the ethical ideal and perfectibility are reflected in the continuity of the eternal tradition from the past through the present to the future.” The secular notion of progress, on the other hand, “justifies the break between past and present and glorifies the future.”⁸³ Hossein Nasr explains that the roots of this difference lie in the Islamic belief in the perfection of the life of the Prophet Muhammad as a man and believer, a view also extended to his contemporaries. Viewing this era as “the best generation of Muslims” implies that every subsequent generation has moved further from that perfection in its

⁸¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2002), 258.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 257-258.

⁸³ Davutoglu in Tamimi, 197.

societal practices and lifestyle. According to Hossein Nasr, this view, that “the best generation of Muslims are those who are his [the Prophet’s] contemporaries, then the generation after, than the following generation until the end of time, is sufficient to nullify, from the Islamic point of view, the idea of linear evolution of man and progress in human history.”⁸⁴

Samer Akkach concurs with Hossein Nasr’s distinction between the secular Western and Islamic conceptions of progress, arguing that if one were to compare the Arab and Turkish scholars, scientists, and bureaucrats from the second half of the 17th century through the 19th century to their European counterparts, one would find a very different approach towards inherited wisdom of the past. Whereas in the West “the remarkable success achieved in the field of science...in the seventeenth century prompted an unprecedented emphasis on the autonomy of human reason and a rejection of the habitual reliance on religious sources and the authority of tradition,” Muslim intellectuals during this period “dismissed only the unenlightened approaches of their immediate predecessors, while romanticizing the achievements of the earlier periods of the Prophet and the golden era.”⁸⁵ As there was no definitive break with tradition in the Muslim experience, “the intellectual zone separating the modern from the pre-modern has since remained blurred.”⁸⁶

For Davutoglu, the main differences between secular Western and Muslim notions of progress, and, subsequently, what for each of them constitutes modernity, hinge on their distinct “time-consciousnesses.” Western time-consciousness, as described by Johann Galtung, consists of the belief in time where “social processes are unidirectional, with progress from low to high and so forth, but also with crisis to be overcome, possibly ending well, with a positive *Endzustand* (state of end).” In Islam,

time can not be conceived by serial and categorically separated periodisation; rather it can be conceived by the continuity of social

⁸⁴ Hossein Nasr, 213.

⁸⁵ Samer Akkach, *Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2007), 4-5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

processes, which may also have a circular character. There is a constancy related to the basic characteristics of *Haqq* (Truth) and *Batil* (Falsehood), so there is always the possibility of a positive and negative *Endzustand* (state of end) which is the examination of human being in the world. Additionally there should be a positive *Anfangzustand* (state of beginning) as well as the intention of a positive *Endzustand* (state of end).⁸⁷

This fundamental difference in time-consciousness can explain, for example, how a prominent Islamist such as Sayyid Qutb could have compared a country like Egypt in the 1950s, despite its material, technological and scientific advancements, to the pre-Islamic period in Arabia, referred to in the Qur'an as *Jahiliyya*. While Westerners may have considered the increasing secularization, use of advanced technology, changing societal relationships and adoption of Western dress in Egypt during this period as a sign that the country, and possibly the Arab world in general, had finally achieved a certain level of "modernity," and hence progress, for a deeply religious person like Qutb, all of this represented a further step away from the perfection of the period of Muhammad, and hence was no different from the period before the religion had been revealed to the Prophet. For Qutb, "the only civilized community...is the moral one; real freedom is moral freedom, and true justice is Islamic justice."⁸⁸

Despite the growing number of Western academics who question the substance and function of the mainstream narrative of modernity, acknowledging some of the above critiques regarding its Eurocentric nature, the narrative's impact on the social sciences, as well as on the practice of politics across the world, is almost etched in stone. These notions have affected the treatment of religious movements in several ways. Adherence to the modernity narrative has, for example, led academics to either overlook the subject of religion and religious political movements entirely as left-over remnants of a traditional society likely to disappear soon⁸⁹ or to view them within the narrow framework set by the narrative.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Civilisational Transformation and the Muslim World*, (Kuala Lumpur: Mahir Publications, 1994), 65-70.

⁸⁸ Euben, 58.

⁸⁹ An example of the former, now largely outdated and rarely explicitly expressed in any serious study of developing nations, was most succinctly stated by John H. Kautsky, in *The Political Consequences of Modernization* (St. Louis, MO: Wiley and Sons), published in 1972. In this book, he explained that

Another way in which the modernity narrative has influenced the dismissal of religion and religious movements is in structuralist analyses which often utilize “dependency,” “neo-Marxist,” or “underdevelopment” theories/paradigms. In these analyses national economies are seen as structural elements within a global capitalist system characterized by asymmetric, interdependent relationships, in which the international system, rather than the nation, serves as the unit of analysis. The impact of domestic factors, including religion and religious movements, on politics is generally marginalized. As with the narrative of the nation-state, serious analysis of non-Western phenomena is hindered when a Eurocentric understanding of modernity influences the subconscious level of thought, and is thus taken as *the* truth, rather than *a truth* among many.

3. The Mainstream Narrative of the Enlightenment

Intimately connected to the narrative of modernity and notions of progress inherent within it is the narrative of the Enlightenment, whose impact on the social sciences is vast. While neorealists cling to its concept of rationality, critical theorists (at least those influenced by Marx, Kant and Hegel) are enticed by its promise of emancipation.⁹¹ In this section, I will trace the origins of this narrative and the influence of its underlying assumptions — including a very narrow and Eurocentric understanding of rationality, as well as an almost evangelical belief in the power of science to understand and improve all aspects of life — on the study of international relations in general, and political Islam in particular.

although deeply religious sentiment may still exist within developing nations, he is centrally concerned with [political] conflict: “I shall not deal with communal conflicts based on religious, ethnic, or linguistic difference...I ignore them...because they originated before, and to some extent continue to exist apart from, the impact of modernization on politics.” Kautsky quoted by Jeff Haynes, *Religion in Third World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993), 23.

⁹⁰ This is despite the fact that the roots of the narrative itself are located within a religious epistemology-one which the narrative claims to refute. John Gray convincingly argues this point in his book *Al Qaeda and What it Means to be Modern* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003), in which he points out parallels between Marxism and neo-liberalism, most importantly their almost evangelical faith in transformative and totalizing theories based on their respective visions of an ideal society and the inevitability of progress. Gray argues that these ideologies have “inherited from Christianity the belief that history is working to a finale in which all are saved.” Gray, 104.

⁹¹ Chris Brown, *Understanding International Relations* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 58.

As the impact of modernization was felt most strongly across the northwestern corner of Europe, it was there, according to the narrative, that the intellectual response to the phenomenon first developed. According to Ernest Gellner, this response, or what has come to be known as the “Enlightenment”:

strove to understand the economic and social success of the first modern societies, and make possible their emulation, and so proposed a secular version of a salvation religion, a naturalist doctrine of universally valid salvation, in which reason and nature replaced revelation. It did so because it perceived the role of new, secular knowledge in the new social order.⁹²

While religion promised salvation of the soul, the Enlightenment offered salvation of the mind. Through reason, man could free himself from “superstition and the forces of ignorance, and, more directly, from political tyranny, and, perhaps, the tyranny of material necessity.”⁹³

It is in light of this pursuit of the advancement of secular knowledge that the development of “scientific” methodologies should be seen. According to Kubálková, during this period, in which the “celebration of reason unleashed a tremendous range of intellectual activities previously restricted by the medieval acceptance of God’s revelation as the truth,” the fateful separation between science and philosophy, two previously synonymous fields of study, took place.⁹⁴ In response to the growing importance placed on the various fields of “Science”⁹⁵ and the subsequent loss of prestige of philosophy, August Comte, one of the “founding fathers” of positivism, introduced the idea of the “social sciences,” a new field of study which would apply fundamentals of the “natural sciences” to philosophy and the study of politics. John Gray provides a comprehensive description of positivism, pointing out three central tenets of the “catechism”:

First, history is driven by the power of science; growing knowledge and new technology are the ultimate determinants of change in human society. Second, science will enable natural scarcity to be overcome; once that has been achieved, the immemorial evils of poverty and war will be banished

⁹² Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992), 90.

⁹³ Brown, 57.

⁹⁴ Kubálková, 8.

⁹⁵ According to Kubalkova, these disciplines included astronomy, chemistry and physics. *Ibid.*, 8.

forever. Third, progress in science and progress in ethics and politics go together; as scientific knowledge advances and becomes more systematically organised, human values will increasingly converge.⁹⁶

With its universal scope and deterministic nature, positivism promised to replace religion in providing the answers, or at least the methods to find those answers, to humanity's age-old questions about life. Those who employed positivist methods believed in the existence of objective facts, and "above all in the possibility of explaining the said facts by means of an objective and testable theory, not itself essentially linked to any one culture, observer or mood."⁹⁷ According to the Enlightenment narrative, with modernity and the advent of scientific methods of social inquiry, traditional man was transformed into rational man, which meant his knowledge was derived through analytic deduction as opposed to revelation. In its universalism and determinism, positivism repudiated the validity of revelation and sought to "supersede clear fallacies taught by religious authorities..."⁹⁸ Positivism had a great impact on the development of the social sciences throughout the 19th century, influencing scholars as diverse as Marx, Engels, and Durkheim. Its continued influence on the disciplines of the social sciences, in particular IR, can be seen today insofar as academics continue to "search for the same kinds of laws and regularities in the international world as they assume characterize the natural world."⁹⁹

3.1 Challenges to the Mainstream Narrative of the Enlightenment: Western Social Sciences

The narrative of Enlightenment and its positivist methodology have profoundly affected the social sciences in general, and IR in particular, most importantly through an uncritical acceptance of naturalism, the central concept on which positivism is based, a subjective understanding of rationality, based on the Enlightenment experience, and an adherence to

⁹⁶ Gray, 27.

⁹⁷ Gellner, 25.

⁹⁸ Jacob Neusner, Tamara Sonn and Jonathan E. Brockopp, *Judaism and Islam in Practice: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 2000), 219.

⁹⁹ Steve Smith, "Positivism and Beyond," in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, eds. Steve Smith, Ken Booth, Marysia Zaleski, 11-46 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

the belief in the possibility of purely objective scholarship. Before examining the Islamic challenges to this narrative, I will first consider the long and diverse history of intellectual resistance to the Enlightenment narrative in general, and these points specifically, as it has developed over the last several centuries within Western political thought.

Perhaps the most contentious element of the Enlightenment narrative has been its reliance on a reductionist account of the allegedly smooth and complete transition during this period from a religious to a scientific/rational worldview. Crucial to this concept is the belief that the study of the social world is amenable to the same scientific methodologies used to study the natural world, as the two worlds do not fundamentally differ. Implicit in this belief, often referred to as naturalism, is the notion that man, because he can know society as he knows nature, has a certain power over his own destiny. Although this unquestioning reliance on scientific methods as a means of understanding the world was ubiquitous in intellectual quarters in the West by the middle of the eighteenth century, there were, from the beginning, those skeptical of the potential impact of this morally foundationless worldview on future societies. As Rousseau put it in a classic passage that illustrates his anxiety about the destructive individualism he believed would inevitably result from general acceptance of this worldview:

It is reason that engenders vanity, and reflection that reinforces it; it is what turns man back upon himself; it is what separates him from everything that troubles and afflicts him. It is Philosophy that isolates him; it is by means of Philosophy that he secretly says at the sight of a suffering man, perish if you wish, I am safe...nothing is as gentle as [man in his primitive state] when placed by Nature at equal distance from the stupidity of the brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man...The example of the Savages...[confirms] that all subsequent progress has been so many steps in appearance towards the perfection of the individual, and, in effect the decrepitude of the species.¹⁰⁰

While Rousseau's comments on the perils of an Enlightenment-influenced world were based on an idealization of "primitive" man rather than fear of a future devoid of God,

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Euben, 60.

they show that these developments were not always as smooth or widespread as some religious and post-modern critics of the Enlightenment have assumed. Decades earlier, another great although less renowned French thinker, the mathematician Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), expressed a similar malaise regarding the future of an enlightened world where man is left to his own devices to answer the most pressing questions concerning his existence, including “who put him there, what he has to do, [and] what will become of him when he dies.”¹⁰¹ This skepticism of a future where vital metaphysical questions are left unanswered left Pascal feeling “moved to terror, like a man transported in his sleep to some terrifying desert island, who wakes up quite lost with no means of escape.”¹⁰²

According to Gray, even the “catechism” of positivism itself was not as removed as it claimed from the religious cosmology it presumed to replace. For example, this idea that all societies across the globe would converge in a common rejection of tradition and religion and instead adopt “rational, scientific and experimental modes of thought” was not at all a modern conception, but rather had its roots in Christianity and shared with monotheism in general a belief in redemption for all humanity. This shared belief can be traced back to positivism’s inheritance of a Christian perspective of history, according to Gray, although its adherents suppressed “Christianity’s saving insight that human nature is ineradicably flawed - they announced that by the use of technology humanity could make a new world.” He goes on to argue that when adherents to this school of thought “suggested in the third and final stage of history that there would be no politics, only rational administration, they imagined they were being scientific; but the belief that science can enable humanity to transcend its historic conflicts and create a universal civilization is not a product of empirical inquiry. It is a remnant of monotheism.”¹⁰³ Indeed, many adherents of Enlightenment thought were themselves deeply religious individuals. Immanuel Kant, for one, was adamant about grounding the emancipatory talk of the period in religious foundations. In his *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), for example, Kant argued that “moral law was inscribed within each human being, which,

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Armstrong, 74.

¹⁰² Quoted in Armstrong, 74.

¹⁰³ Gray.

like the grandeur of the heavens, filled him with awe and wonder,” and that ultimately it was the potential of an afterlife that led people to act morally.¹⁰⁴

Other liberal thinkers like David Hume and Bertrand Russell were also aware of what they saw as the limits of pure reason, in particular in its ability to understand metaphysical questions, which they believed “exceed[ed] the boundaries of rationality altogether.”¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the most well-known skeptic of the inherent good of rampant rationality was Max Weber, who pondered the impact of a tyrannical science dominating all elements of human life to the peril of ethics and moral values. In the conclusion to one of his most renowned works, the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber questioned the ability of science to unequivocally “engender human ‘progress’ or the qualitative advancement of life. He argued instead that modern culture is characterized by sterility and passionlessness: for of the “last men” of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.”¹⁰⁶ Yet unlike Nietzsche and the post-modernists influenced by him, Weber did not call for “abandonment of the scientific vocation,” which he viewed as an impossible return to the “infancy of thought.” Rather, he called for the continued use of “science to help tackle the practical and technical problems of our day,” tempered by “responsible value-judgments.”¹⁰⁷

Weber’s belief in the limits of instrumental reason to comprehend the intricacies of social life came to influence what is today known as the hermeneutical tradition of the Western social sciences. As outlined in his *Economy and Society*, Weber developed two distinct concepts to differentiate between the positivist methods used in the natural sciences to seek out causal explanations to natural phenomena (*Erklaren*) and the interpretive methods used to understand social behavior based on acknowledgement that this type of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Abdolkarim Soroush, *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam: Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, edited and trans. Mahmoud Sadri and Ahmad Sadri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 136.

¹⁰⁶ Weber, 1992, 182, quoted in Gane, 62.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 62, 154.

behavior is “oriented by and to the behavior of others,” an assertion leading “directly to the central hermeneutic theme that action must always be understood from within.”¹⁰⁸

In advocating a hermeneutic approach, Weber also challenged the notion of rationality underlying the positivist understanding of human action. Instead of defining rationality according to some supposedly objective standards derived from scientific inquiry, Weber argued instead that an actor’s rationality should be defined by his/her ability to choose the most effective means to achieve his/her ends. This understanding of “instrumental rationality” had “nothing to say about either the source or the rationality of the agent’s goal”; as long as the action taken could be shown to further the actor’s ends, it would be “rational.”¹⁰⁹ The job of the social scientist seeking to understand the reasons for an actor’s particular action would therefore be to first examine and understand the operative rules underpinning the context in which the action was taken. Various critical thinkers within IR today, including cognitivists, post-structuralists, standpoint and postmodern feminists, continue to be influenced by Weber’s belief that rational action can only be understood within a “framework of shared meanings -- rules and collective values.”¹¹⁰ As Wendt explains, these varied approaches all “share a concern with the basic ‘sociological’ issue bracketed by rationalists - namely, the issue of identity- and interest-formation.”¹¹¹

Numerous contemporary philosophers share a similar fear of the impending disenchantment of an over-rationalized world as expressed by classical skeptic political philosophers like Weber and Nietzsche, who found the “spectre of domination in the promise of emancipation itself.” Alasdair MacIntyre and Chris Taylor, for example, worry that nihilism is an inevitable result of the West’s loss of moral and philosophical foundations. Echoing Weber’s apprehensions of the tyranny of scientific reason, MacIntyre writes about the rule-obsessed societies that have developed as a means to mitigate the inevitable moral anarchy of a society with no theological or teleological

¹⁰⁸ Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 72.

¹⁰⁹ Hollis and Smith, 74.

¹¹⁰ Wendt, 392.

foundations. Without these foundations, society's leaders can provide no compelling reason for its members to live moral lives, as there are no objective or scientifically quantifiable criteria to define morality. Seemingly arbitrary rules are thus constructed to define limits for individuals with no moral compass to otherwise direct them through life's obstacles. Yet these rules are liable to constant challenge as they are drawn "without appeal to impersonal and unassailable criteria..."¹¹²

For MacIntyre, the fundamental error made by followers of the Enlightenment is their rejection of the Aristotelian moral tradition in which the authority of laws and virtues is grounded "in a conception of the good that is itself meaningful only within the context of specifiable practices and traditions." Like both MacIntyre and the Islamist critique of modernity, Taylor traces many of contemporary Western society's ills to the Enlightenment's "rejection both of the established social hierarchy and of transcendent moral criteria," which he feels has "eclipsed a universally recognizable hierarchy of ends and thus enabled the emergence and eventual dominance of moral subjectivism and an atomistic pursuit of self-realization."¹¹³

In addition to the skepticism, even hostility, expressed towards the Enlightenment narrative's uncritical acceptance of positivism and a supposedly objective understanding of rationality, there has also been a healthy dose of cynicism expressed regarding the narrative's adherence to the notion of objective scholarship, in which "a theory could be articulated, understood, assessed, without any reference to its author and his social identity."¹¹⁴ This belief, referred to by Christopher Lloyd as the theory and observation distinction, allowed academics to conduct research without having to acknowledge their place within the historically specific context in which their research was conducted.¹¹⁵ This weakness of positivism, recognized early on by Weber when he wrote, "No science is absolutely free from presuppositions, and no science can prove its fundamental value to

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Quoted in Euben, 71.

¹¹³ Quoted in Euben, 72.

¹¹⁴ Gellner, 25.

¹¹⁵ This distinction is one of the four main features of logical positivism which Christopher Lloyd summarizes in his book *The Structures of History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 72-3.

the man who rejects these presuppositions” came to form the crux of the post-structuralist critique.¹¹⁶ In particular, post-structuralist/post-modern philosophers drew attention to what they saw as the co-constitutive relationship between power and knowledge, as well as the various interrelations connecting texts and meanings. Poststructuralists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida all shared their rejection of totalizing, essentialist, and foundationalist concepts. In *Orientalism*, a work profoundly influenced by Foucauldian theory and methodology, Said provides a succinct explanation of Foucault’s concept of discourse:

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual...is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge, but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of the given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.¹¹⁷

For Foucault, the notion that human beings are “autonomous and rational and possess our own distinctive ‘self’” was itself a construct derived from the Enlightenment narrative and the discourse it produced, rather than some objective understanding of human existence or history.¹¹⁸

Within IR, the greatest critics of positivism’s belief in objective truth are found within constructivist, critical theory and the “post” movements, all of which have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by Foucault. For example, mainstream constructivists, otherwise known as “soft constructivists,”¹¹⁹ believe there is a “fundamental difference between ‘brute facts’ about the world, which remain true, independent of human action, and ‘social facts’ which depend for their existence on socially established

¹¹⁶ Weber, 153, quoted in Gane, 57.

¹¹⁷ Said, 94.

¹¹⁸ Lockman, 185.

¹¹⁹ In her article “Towards an International Political Theology,” Vendulka Kubálková quotes Steve Smith in arguing that mainstream or “soft” constructivism (i.e., Alexander Wendt, Peter Katzenstein, etc.) has hijacked the agenda of constructivists by assuming “an unthreatening role of an adjunct explanation for those things that the positivist mainstream finds difficult to explain.” Kubálková, 677.

conventions.”¹²⁰ Constructivists are most concerned when the distinction between these two types of facts becomes blurred, because it is then that the social fact’s contingency is forgotten and the fact thus becomes more susceptible to manipulation. Constructivism, though, is often considered one of the least radical of the critical IR theories because of its rejection of the post-structuralist “conception of identity as relationally constituted.”¹²¹ In its belief that states have pre-social identities, constructivism also can be accused of reifying the state, albeit in an attempt to counter the reified logic of anarchy. As Weber explains, “by insisting on the state as the author/decision-maker of all tales — constructivism misses the opportunity to deliver on another of its promises, to restore a focus on process and practice in international politics.”¹²²

Similar to constructivists, critical theorists (both those influenced by Marx, Kant and Gramsci, as well as those belonging to the historical-hermeneutic tradition, such as Gadamer and Wittgenstein) also believe that all knowledge is socially constructed, except they add to the mix the Foucaudian notion of power, by arguing that constructed knowledge is often used as a means of furthering the interests of one person/group at the expense of another. What is commonly referred to as the “emancipatory” element of their agenda relates to this understanding of knowledge and to the belief that human beings are capable of overcoming both political and material oppression by revealing and better comprehending these forms of oppression via the application of reason.

3.2 Critique of the Mainstream Narrative of the Enlightenment: Islamic/Islamist Perspectives

As in the case of mainstream narratives of the state and modernity, in their critiques of the Enlightenment narrative there is much common ground between critical voices within the Western social sciences and Islamic challenges. John Gray has even gone so far as to argue that the “intellectual roots” of the Islamic challenge can be found in the European “Counter-Enlightenment,” as it was in this late 18th/early 19th century movement that

¹²⁰ Brown, 52.

¹²¹ Hansen, 24.

philosophers like J. G. Hamman and Søren Kierkegaard rejected the secular notion of reason and defended religious faith in terms of subjective experience. J. G. Herder, for example, “rejected the Enlightenment ideal of a universal civilisation, believing there are many cultures, each in some ways unique.”¹²³ Although this sequence of events is highly questionable, considering that many of the central issues raised by the Counter-Enlightenment, in particular regarding the nature of the relationship of science and philosophy to divine revelation, had already been debated by Islamic scholars centuries before, for example by prominent 11th and 12th century Islamic philosophers such as al-Ghazali, Ibn Bajjah (Avempace) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), his point regarding the similarities in critiques is nonetheless valid.

Similar to the Western critiques expressed by classical and contemporary philosophers alike, at the heart of the Islamic critique of the Enlightenment narrative is a rejection of the view that the social world can be understood with the same tools used to comprehend the natural world, in other words, naturalism. Like Kant, Hume and Russell, Muslim scholars and activists who expressed anxiety regarding the spectre of tyrannical rationalism have not denied the importance of reason itself, but rather have criticized its unbridled use to answer metaphysical questions beyond its scope. As Sayyid Qutb put it: “‘reason’ isn’t rejected, disregarded or banished from learning through revelation and understanding what it receives; it comprehends what is necessary as well as surrendering to what is beyond its scope.”¹²⁴ In defense of reason, at least when employed within certain boundaries, Qutb even goes so far as to argue that

this development [of our mind] is connected to man’s duty on Earth as Allah’s vice-regent, and [vice-regency] requires that the creation of man’s mind is according to this design because it is the most suitable one for performance of this role. Man will advance in grasping the laws of matter and exploiting them at the same time that he advances in the knowledge of various aspects of “man’s reality,” moving beyond what he had known before.¹²⁵

¹²² Weber, 78.

¹²³ Gray, 25.

¹²⁴ Sayyid Qutb, *The Islamic Conception and its Characteristics*, 20-21, quoted in Euben, 71.

¹²⁵ Euben, 63-64.

Yet even with the material advances this use of his mind is guaranteed to produce, “man” must recognize that some questions regarding “the secret of life and death and of his soul,” will remain “hidden, beyond the scope of his reason.”¹²⁶

Even the earlier Muslim modernists who rejected the simplistic opposition of science and rationality to religion believed that positivist methods simply could not penetrate some realms of human existence. Modernists such as the Egyptian Muhammad ‘Abduh, urged followers to employ their critical faculties whenever possible within the confines of Islamic law; he also cautioned rationalists to recognize the limits of scientific inquiry, specifically in areas governed by the metaphysical and spiritual. ‘Abduh insisted that attempts to penetrate these realms are both futile and perilous:

As for speculation about the essence of the creator, on the one hand, it is an attempt to probe that which is forbidden to human reason; on the other hand, the pursuit of His essence is beyond the grasp of human faculties. These pursuits are foolish and dangerous, foolish because they are a search for that which is unattainable, dangerous because it amounts to a strike against faith in that it is an attempt to define that which cannot be defined, and an attempt to limit that which has no limits.¹²⁷

According to Davutoglu, the centrality of (rule bound) rationality in Islam is the principle factor that distinguishes the development of Islam as an institutionalized religion from its Christian counterpart, in particular in relation to the absence of a clergy within (Sunni) Islam. At the heart of this difference lies the method in which the divine revelation was collected and transformed into text, which entailed “rational epistemological analysis” in the case of Islam.¹²⁸ Explaining why this is the case, Davutoglu writes:

Objective testimonies of the companions of the Prophet were the sole criterion in establishing the canonical text of the divine message. In even more systemised fashion, objective testimony was the basis for the collection and classification of *hadith*, the second legitimate source of religion.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibid., 63-62.

¹²⁷ ‘Abduh, *Theology of Unity*, 1966, 18-32, quoted in Euben, 108.

¹²⁸ Davutoglu, 184.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 184.

Later, the same rational approach needed to collect and transform the divine revelation into text was needed by followers to interpret the meaning of the divine text. The “human, and therefore subjective, dimension of interpretation” itself “prevented the formation of a church organization monopolising judgement.”¹³⁰ The prominent Tunisian Islamist Rachid Ghannouchi has similarly discussed the importance of reason to the religion, proclaiming that:

Islam places no restrictions on the mind, and the Qur’an clearly encourages believers to explore, think and search. Faith itself must be grounded in conviction based on reason; there is no compulsion in religion. Islamic doctrine places no limits on thought, reason or exploration.¹³¹

Many academics argue that it was precisely the privileged status of reason in Islamic thought and culture that enabled the manifold scientific and philosophical advances associated with the region throughout the Middle Ages, and which are often attributed with catalyzing Europe’s colossal transformation during the Renaissance and later Enlightenment periods.¹³² As the reputable physicist Jim al-Khalili put it: “Clearly, the scientific revolution of the Abbasids [8th-13th century Muslim caliphate whose headquarters were in Baghdad] would not have taken place if not for Islam—in contrast to the spread of Christianity over the centuries, which had nothing like the same effect in stimulating and encouraging original scientific thinking.”¹³³ Taking into consideration the prominent role the “Arabic sciences” played in the development of both eastern and western societies during this period, many 19th century Muslim philosophers believed the Muslim world was also ideally-suited for the types of material advancements that came to be associated with the modern period. According to ‘Abduh:

Islam reproaches leaders of religions for simply following in the footsteps of their forebears, and for their adherence to the plans of their ancestors... Thus it liberates the power of reason from its fetters, releasing

¹³⁰ Ibid., 185.

¹³¹ Tamimi, 106.

¹³² See for example Muzaffar Iqbal, *Science and Islam* (Oxford: Greenwood Press, 2007); and Akkach, 2007.

¹³³ Jim Al-Khalili, “It’s time to herald the Arabic Science that prefigured Darwin and Newton,” *The Guardian* (30 January 2008).

it from enslavement to blind imitation of tradition. Islam has restored reason to its kingdom, a kingdom in which it reigns with judiciousness and wisdom, deferring to God alone and conforming to His sacred law. There are no limits to the possible pursuits within its domain, and no end to the extent of the explorations possible under its banner.¹³⁴

Yet similar to the anxiety of contemporary Western political philosophers like MacIntyre and Taylor regarding the inevitable encroachment of nihilism where moral and philosophical foundations have been eroded, the Islamic critique also expresses anxiety towards a world “spiritually damaged” by the “separation of knowledge from the sacred.”¹³⁵ Hossein Nasr sees no “universally accepted” response to the Westernization and secularization of knowledge in the Muslim world, especially now that it feels increasingly threatened by a “politically, economically and militarily superior” region of the world that many feel they can confront only through mimicry. He concludes somewhat optimistically that there will be more convergence in opinion once the extent of the damage caused by the belief that knowledge could be pursued without considering religious limits or implications is fully understood. Most pressing amongst those issues facing the Muslim world are the ethical implications of modern technologies such as those posed by genetic engineering, which he describes as “the intrusion of modern medicine into the very fabric of human life,” as well as the “rapid deterioration of the environment” caused by the “modern,” industrialized world, problems with which he believes the rest of the world is also struggling to come to grips. For Nasr the ultimate solution to the spiritual and material damage caused by this creeping nihilism is to return to the basics of Islam to seek out “an ethics based upon the Islamic religion and not simply a rationalistic philosophy which would create an ethics that would have no efficacy amongst the vast majority of Muslims.”¹³⁶

Although one may find a certain synergy between the Islamic and post-modern responses to the narratives of modernity and the Enlightenment, and the “disenchantment” of the world they have brought about, the fundamental difference in their respective solutions to the perceived problems, one any serious analysis of political Islam must take into

¹³⁴ ‘Abduh, quoted in Euben, 108.

¹³⁵ Hossein Nasr, 52, 241.

consideration, is Islam's ultimate belief in absolute truth and its subsequent rejection of individualistic subjectivism. Using the metaphor of the mosque to explain the implications of this belief, Hossein Nasr writes:

The most central architectural symbol of Islam, the mosque, is a building with a space in which all elements of subjectivism have been eliminated. It is an objective determination of the Truth, a crystal through which radiates the light of the Spirit. The spiritual ideal of Islam itself is to transform the soul of the Muslim, like a mosque, into a crystal reflecting the Divine Light.¹³⁷

Despite the fairly consistent presence in Western philosophy and society of skepticism towards the central tenets of Enlightenment thought and their (in)ability to respond to the metaphysical needs of human beings, one cannot overlook the enduring impact of the theories and methods derived from the Enlightenment on the foundations of contemporary Western political thought. As Hansen points out, in Western social sciences, this impact is manifested in "rationalism," the belief that "social science theories should generate falsifiable hypotheses about the relationship between dependent and independent variables," an approach to scholarship that, by its very nature, excludes consideration of subject matter incapable of being reduced to a tangible variable, such as religious beliefs, which are often reduced in these analyses to more easily explainable material variables.¹³⁸ Halliday also touches on this issue when he laments the use of "inflatedly 'scientific' methodologies," which he believes "have served to preclude other forms of discussions within the discipline, notably on the role of values [and I would add religion], and the linkage between domestic and international politics."¹³⁹ Hence much of the scholarship on political Islam views these movements as using religion to rally support for movements otherwise focused on more worldly issues such as foreign occupation, poverty, or political alienation.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 245.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 216.

¹³⁸ Hansen, 9.

¹³⁹ Halliday, 1994, 21.

Another manifestation of this tendency can be seen in the persistence of rationalist approaches to study political Islam based on a Weberian notion of “instrumental rationality,” which has the paradoxical effect of viewing Islamist movements as rational in the sense that they may use effective means to attain their ends, though irrational to the extent that their religious, political, social and economic agenda is incompatible with Western assumptions of what constitutes legitimate ends. From this perspective, the mainstream analyses of political Islam “portray the Islamic fundamentalist as the paradigmatic irrational rational actor.”¹⁴⁰ Kubálková argues that by treating religious organizations as acting in accordance with rational choice theory, social scientists, in particular those belonging to American IR, have misunderstood the “strength of passion which may imbue religious organization and the various ways in which this passion may compensate for a lack of material capability, the latter being another pillar of the American IR thought.” Pointing out the challenge which belief poses to rational choice theory, Kubálková writes: “At the most fundamental levels of a believer’s existence, it means following the dictates (not choices) of conscience, for conscience has no choice but to follow belief.”¹⁴¹

4. Conclusion

By examining several of the principal narratives and assumptions upon which much of mainstream IR theory is based through the prism of a variety of critical perspectives, I have highlighted in this chapter some of the discipline’s limits vis-à-vis the study of political Islam. In doing so, I intended to contribute to the increasingly vibrant efforts of scholars and activists (both secular and religious) to “de-center” the West, a necessary precursory step to the eventual prying open of a theoretical and methodological space within IR, and the western social sciences in general, in which religious political movements can be seriously considered. Like Foucault, I am convinced of the existence of an intimate relationship between power and knowledge, a relationship that reaches its zenith once a theory loses its contingent status and instead comes to be accepted as

¹⁴⁰ Euben, 24.

¹⁴¹ Kubálková, 685.

“common sense,” as has been the case with the modern rationalist paradigm and associated narratives of the state, modernity and the Enlightenment. When this happens,

theories become incredibly powerful since they delineate not simply what can be known but also what it is sensible to talk about or suggest. Those who swim outside these safe waters risk more than simply the judgement that their theories are wrong; their entire ethical or moral stance may be ridiculed or seen as dangerous just because their theoretical assumptions are deemed unrealistic.¹⁴²

In this sense, the dominant narratives, concepts and assumptions considered in this chapter can be seen in terms of the “power intellectual” component of Said’s definition of discourse, in which he argues that discourse is not merely an example of political power “in the raw,” but rather “is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power,” including “power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment),” and “power moral (as with ideas about what ‘we’ do and what ‘they’ cannot do or understand as ‘we’ do).”¹⁴³ The latter two components of the discourse and their interaction with the former, “power intellectual,” will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

In the next chapter, I will examine in greater detail the principal ways in which these mainstream IR concepts and narratives impact, *via* the modern rationalist approach, the study of political Islam.

¹⁴² Smith, 74.

¹⁴³ Said, 1978, 12.

Chapter Two: The Impact of the “Modern Rationalist” Approach on the Study of Political Islam

In order to preserve in political science the freedom of spirit to which we have become accustomed in mathematics, I have been careful not to ridicule human behaviour, neither to deplore nor condemn, but to understand.

-Benedict de Spinoza¹

Thus far, I have outlined some of the ways in which the principal International Relations concepts and the narratives from which they are derived, when accepted uncritically limit analyses of political Islam to essentialist and oversimplified assumptions of the origins, *raison d’etre* and political, economic, and social agendas of Islamist movements. The state-centric nature of IR, in which the state is assumed to be European/Western in nature (i.e., sovereign, secular, synonymous with nation and endowed with a monopoly on violence), its epistemological roots in positivism and its belief in the universal relevance and applicability of the European developmental model and understandings of modernity and rationality have all helped define what types of research questions, methods and theories have been deemed acceptable within the discipline. For these reasons, despite the increasing salience of alternative theories and methods within IR, too little headway has been made in understanding religious-based political movements and their potential to impact (from a non-security perspective), as well as be impacted by, the international system.

When research into political Islam (as opposed to “terrorism”) is actually carried out, analysis is often skewed by the modern rationalist approach, which, as explained in the previous chapter, is sustained by the mainstream IR/Western social sciences narratives of the central concepts discussed above. In this chapter, I will discuss the two principal ways in which this approach impacts analysis of political Islam: 1) through “ideologization of terror” analyses, which view political Islam through “the lens of the ‘fundamentalist

¹ Quoted in the introduction to Giles Kepel, *The Roots of Radical Islam* (London: Saqi Books 2005).

threat”² and 2) through analyses which view political Islam as an anti-modern reaction to various socioeconomic or political developments. I will argue that, in both types of analyses, political Islam is viewed in orientalist terms, as an irrational, backward phenomenon and therefore undeserving of serious investigation by political scientists. As in Chapter One, and in an attempt to add a dose of necessary nuance to the argument, these sections will be followed by an overview of the various alternative approaches to the study of political Islam that have developed largely over the last decade to correct what has been seen as the biases innate within both the orientalist and modern-rationalist approaches. Most prominent amongst the wide range of alternative methodologies that have been employed in the study of Islamist movements in recent years are multiple modernities theory, social movement theory, post-modernism and hermeneutics. Yet, as with the IR narratives discussed in the previous chapter, it will be argued here that despite the recent proliferation in alternative approaches to the study of political Islam, the mainstream discourse remains largely unchanged, as will be demonstrated later in Chapters Four and Five.

1. “Ideologization of Terror” Analyses

In “ideologization of terror” analyses, which view political Islam through “the lens of the fundamentalist threat,” disparate Islamist movements are often conflated by virtue of the tactics some employ to attain their respective ends.³ By dismissing issues of context (geo-

² Burgat, xvi.

³ See for example: John K. Cooley, *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism* (London: Pluto Press, 2000); Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History: Doctrines and Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Avi Dieter and Daniel L. Byman, “Israel’s Lessons for Fighting Terrorists and their Implications for the United States” *Saban Analysis Paper* no 8 (March 2006); Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002); Dore Gold, *Hatred’s Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003); Yevgeny M. Primakov, *A World Challenged: Fighting Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Benjamin Netanyahu, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987); Boaz Ganor, “Defining Terrorism: Is One Man’s Terrorist Another Man’s Freedom Fighter?” (Washington, DC: International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism 1999); Benjamin Netanyahu, *Fighting Terrorism: How Democracies Can Defeat Terrorist Networks* (Noonday Press, 2001); Natan Sharansky and Ron Dermer, *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); Jessica Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); and Angel Rabasa, *Un governed Territories: Understanding and Reducing Terrorism Risks* (RAND Corporation, 2007).

political, economic, cultural, religious), these analyses fail to comprehend the diverse nature of Islamist groups, both in substance and demands. As they are more interested in the strategies and tactics employed by Islamist movements than with the origins and development of the movements themselves, these analyses are generally written from a security perspective, where the subject that needs to be secured is the “democratic” and “free” world, which must be protected from the object responsible for its lack of security: the fanatical Islamist who will go to any length to destroy its freedom. In this section, I will analyze the three most prominent ways in which the “ideologization of terror” paradigm impacts the discourse of political Islam, providing concrete examples from academic literature on the subject. In subsequent chapters, the discursive impact will be viewed from a wider perspective, focusing on the written and spoken pronouncements on political Islam of American politicians and the pundits and think-tanks that influence them.

1.1 “Ideologization of Terror” Analyses: Dominant Security Focus

The first way in which subscription to the “ideologization of terror” paradigm affects analysis of political Islam is its overwhelming focus on the West’s security. One of the most damaging, though often inconspicuous, ways in which this literature affects the study of political Islam is by setting the parameters of acceptable subject matter in the field of International Relations (IR). With the recent proliferation of journals, departments, conferences and literature dedicated to the study of “terrorism,” analyses of political Islam based outside the security studies paradigm run the risk of being marginalized. Further reflection on this point, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis, as it involves consideration of the separate but related issues of funding, internal politics, and disciplinary “gatekeepers.” From a discursive perspective, viewing political Islam within a “global security” framework is problematic insofar as questions of motivation end up being seen as peripheral to the more important issue of (the West’s) security, which must be achieved at all costs. As one prominent Israeli analyst puts it: “motives are entirely irrelevant to the concept of political terrorism. Most analysts fail to recognize this and, hence, tend to discuss certain motives as logical or necessary aspects of

terrorism. But they are not. At best, they are empirical regularities associated with terrorism. More often they simply confuse analysis.”⁴ Marc Grossman, former U.S. Under-Secretary of State, concurs, urging those who seek to analyze the September 11th attacks on U.S. soil not to consider root causes like the stalled Israeli-Palestinian “peace process.” Issues of motivation, according to Grossman, are “totally irrelevant to the question of pluses or minuses in the Middle East peace process.”⁵ Motivations should be bracketed and removed from consideration; in their place should be an unadulterated focus on “objective” factors, like the tactics and strategies employed by these movements to achieve their desired ends.

Emily Hunt, a fellow at the centre-right think-tank The Washington Institute for Near East Studies, concurs with Ganor’s analysis, arguing that Israel’s policies towards “Islamist terrorism” should serve as an example for the United States, as Israel has been able to demonstrate that such terrorism is “not caused wholly or even mostly by the target nation’s policies.” Although Hunt concedes that “certain actions may stoke the flames of radicalism,” in the end, it is “a flourishing ideology that preaches Muslim supremacy, justifies attacks on civilians, denies the rights of women and non-Muslims and seeks to impose itself in the Middle East and beyond.”⁶ In this analysis, Islamist movements are viewed as backward, violent and misogynistic and therefore beyond rational analysis (i.e., the type that would necessarily entail consideration of the history of the movements, as well as the context in which they act). Karsh is similarly dismissive of the need to take seriously the motives of Islamist movements that use violence as a means to attain their desired ends, and instead relies on an orientalist vision of the Muslim world as essentially unchanging and violent and hence unable to emerge from its age-old “jihad for a universal Islamic empire,”:

Contrary to widespread assumptions, these attacks, and for that matter Arab and Muslim anti-Americanism, have little to do with U.S. international behaviour or its Middle East policy. America’s position as the pre-eminent world power blocks Arab and Islamic imperialist

⁴ Ganor, 6.

⁵ Quoted in Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 55.

⁶ Emily Hunt, “Concessions Will Not Defeat Terrorism,” *New York Newsday*, 24 July 2006.

aspirations. As such, it is a natural target for aggression. Osama bin Laden and other Islamist's war is not against America per se, but is rather the most recent manifestation of the millenarian jihad for a universal Islamic empire (or *umma*).⁷

Analyses like Karsh's are dismissive of the need to consider motives when analyzing the type of terrorism allegedly targeted by the "war on terror". Jackson laments the various "histories," overlooked to promote a particular reading of developments:

the record of American involvement in the politics of the Middle East — its support for Israel, its military bases in the Arabian Peninsula, its alliances with despotic regimes, its murky dealings with the Taliban and the Mujahaddin before them, its oil politics; the history and context of al Qaeda's decade-long struggle against American policy in the region; the global context of state failure and breakdown, arms trading (America being the world's largest dealer of weapons) and increasing levels of violence and disorder...⁸

There is no need to contextualize the Islamist movements' actions, assumed to be based on an irrational worldview, precluding the maintenance of any real grievances, which are the privilege of "rational" actors only: the United States and its "coalition of the willing."

Underlying these ideologization of terror analyses is the assumption that it is pointless to look to the history of Western imperialism in the region or at current Western support for brutal dictators to better comprehend the actions of these movements, as all of this is mere rhetorical justification for an unfounded hatred of the West. Dore Gold's *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* claims to trace the roots of the violent tactics used by transnational and national Islamist movements while completely ignoring the specific religious, social and political contexts in which these movements have developed. It is a perfect example of this tendency. In it, he contends:

People do not just decide spontaneously that they are going to hijack an aircraft, crash it into a building, and commit mass murder (and take their own lives) because of some political grievance or sense of economic deprivation. No, there is another critical component of terrorism that has

⁷ Karsh, 234.

⁸ Jackson, 158.

generally been overlooked in the West: the ideological motivation to slaughter thousands of innocent people.⁹

And what is that ideology? The ideology of “martyrdom and its rewards in the afterlife,” as if this concept can be viewed outside the religious texts (e.g. *Qur’an* and *hadith*) and the long tradition of Islamic teachings and reflections on the subject, or without taking into consideration the socioeconomic and political context in which these movements have developed. Without this context, Islamist movements are seen as having lifted the concepts of “martyrdom” and “jihad” directly from the Quran and instrumentalized them by carrying out suicide missions against the West with the economic, military and “ideological” (read “martyrology”) support of such “forces” as the Wahabbis of Saudi Arabia, or the Iranian “mullahs.” Further, it is often argued that these movements would not have developed at all were it not for the support of these mysterious and perilous forces.¹⁰

In these analyses, it is assumed one should ignore any attempt by “terrorist” groups to justify their actions in terms of material, non-religious motives such as past and contemporary cultural, economic and military imperialism. Peter Bergen argues along similar lines that material motives are often undermined in these essentialist analyses, such as western economic and military support for the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other oppressive client states, or over a century of Western interventions in the region to overthrow popular governments in favor of governments more amenable to U.S. interests .When considered at all, these analyses tend to attribute to al Qaeda solely cultural or religious motives. In a passage in which he derides this type of analysis, Bergen, one of the few scholars to have ever interviewed bin Laden, concludes:

In all the tens of thousands of words that bin Laden has uttered on the public record...[h]e does not rail against the pernicious effects of Hollywood movies, or against Madonna’s midriff, or against the pornography protected by the US constitution...[B]in Laden cares little about such cultural issues. What he condemns the United States for is simple: its policies in the Middle East ...The hijackers who came to

⁹ Gold,6.

¹⁰ Gold; Giles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2004).

America did not attack the headquarters of a major brewery or AOL-Time Warner or Coca-Cola, nor did they attack Las Vegas or Manhattan's West Village or even the Supreme Court. They attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, pre-eminent symbols of the United States' military and economic might.¹¹

In analyses like the ones criticized by Bergen, contextual facts are seen as negligible, or at best “empirical regularities associated with terrorism.” At bottom is the assumption that — even without these pretexts — there is something threatening about this region where “freedom and democracy has skipped” over the decades it was busy spreading around other regions of the world, and a modern West embodies all that it lacks.¹²

Scholars and policymakers who subscribe to this paradigm advertently or inadvertently ignore the fruits of extensive research carried about by academics such as Robert Pape, author of “Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.” In this important work Pape demonstrates from interviews and data collected that 95% of terrorist attacks carried out across the world from 1980 to 2004 were irredentist in nature, meaning they were largely concerned with “redeem[ing] land ruled by non-Muslims or under occupation.”¹³ For example, Pape shows that of the 41 suicide attacks undertaken in Lebanon against French, American and Israeli targets from 1982 to 1986, only 8 were actually perpetrated by “Islamist fundamentalists”; the rest were carried out by leftist political or Christian groups. Pape's study shows that motives are indeed central to understanding and addressing issues of “terrorism,” and that the ideology of political Islam and concepts such as “martyrdom” and “jihad” are often marginal to understanding why the tactic of terrorism is chosen by particular movements at particular junctures in time.¹⁴

¹¹ Quoted in Jackson, 56.

¹² Gold, 246.

¹³ “Understanding Islamism,” *International Crisis Group*, no. 37 (2 March 2005): 3

¹⁴ Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005).

1.2 “Ideologization of Terror” Analyses: Conflation of Islamist Movements

Not only is context and motivation ignored in most analyses, but so too is substance, which explains the second way in which analyses are impacted by the “ideologization of terror” paradigm. Since these movements and organizations are seen solely in terms of the threat they pose to the West, it is deemed unnecessary to attempt to understand their particular histories, paths of development and ideologies on their own terms. So it is that Hamas, an irredentist political Islamist movement with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood, whose *raison d’être* lies in its effort to end the Israeli occupation of Palestine and thus preserve a vital Muslim *waqf*, can be thrown into the same category as the Front Islamique du Salvation (FIS), a domestically-oriented Algerian political Islamist party with roots in the country’s nationalist movement, which sought to create an Islamist state in its own country *via* non-violent means; or al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya (“the Islamic Group”), an Egyptian Jihadi¹⁵ organization influenced by the philosophy of Sayyid Qutb¹⁶ and largely concerned with removing “impious” leaders from power in Egypt; or Al Qaeda, a messianic global¹⁷ network, which combines Salafi¹⁸ and Qutbist elements in its violent struggle against both external and internal enemies. In this context theological differences that distinguish Shi’a and Sunni Islamist movements from one another can be

¹⁵ By Jihadi, I mean “those activists committed to violence because they are engaged in what they conceive to be the military defence (or, in some cases, expansion) of *Dar al-Islam* (the “House of Islam”—that area of the world historically subject to Muslim rule) and the *ummah* against infidel enemies.” “Understanding Islamism,” *International Crisis Group* no. 37 (2 March 2005): 18.

¹⁶ In particular, by his definition of the term *jahiliya*, as developed in his most famous book *Signposts*. In this book he argues that the term, previously understood to describe the pre-Islamic Arabian age of ignorance, marked by unbelief and barbarism, could also be employed to describe the state of contemporary Muslim societies. Qutb used this theory to argue that it was an obligation for all true Muslims to oppose the governments of these corrupt and immoral states. In *Muslim Extremism in Egypt*, trans. Giles Kepel (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications, 1990).

¹⁷ I use the term global here to describe the Jihadi movements that largely developed in the 1990s, under the guidance of Osama bin-Laden and his al-Qaeda group and which are engaged in an “international military struggle against governments and Western representatives and institutions in the Muslim world, and other parts of the world,” and which are “transnational in identity and recruitment; global in ideology, strategy, targets, economic transactions, and network organizations.” John Esposito and Natana DeLong-Bas, “Modern Islam,” in *God’s Rule: The Politics of World Religions*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 252.

¹⁸ By Salafi I mean those groups that are influenced by the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century reform movement led by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, which “emphasized restoration of Islamic doctrines to pure form, adherence to the Quran and Sunnah, rejection of the authority of later interpretations, and maintenance of the unity of *ummah*. Prime objectives were to rid the Muslim *ummah* of the centuries-long mentality of *taqlid* (unquestioning imitation of precedent) and stagnation and to reform the moral, cultural, and political conditions of Muslims.” Esposito and DeLong-Bas, 275.

overlooked.¹⁹ Rather than consider some of the complex ways in which a shared epistemology, as well as similar recent political and economic experiences, in particular *vis-à-vis* the Muslim world's relations with the West, have led to a convergence in several key elements of their respective agendas, these analyses focus on what they consider the principal tie that binds such diverse movements: their adherence to "jihad" as an ideology as well as tactic. Lack of nuance in many of these analyses also accounts for their failure to consider the various debates within and between prominent Islamist movements regarding such central issues as the proper definition and implementation of *jihad*, as well as disparate views on the validity of the nation-state as an organizing principle as opposed to the trans-national Muslim *ummah*.²⁰

This tendency that leads policymakers involved in assessing Islamist movements within a threat paradigm to deem it unnecessary to study the internal dynamics of Islamist movements is illustrated in a shocking report by Jeff Stein, National Security editor at *Congressional Quarterly*. Stein recounts asking various law enforcement officials and members of Congress in prominent roles in overseeing and executing the "war against terror" whether they could identify the characteristics that distinguish Sunni and Shiite elements of the Iraqi insurgency, as well as the theological differences between Islamist movements such as Hizbollah and Hamas. Respondents — including Willie Hulon, chief of the FBI's new National Security Branch, Terry Everett, seven-term Alabama Republican and vice chairman of the House Intelligence Subcommittee on Technical and Tactical Intelligence, and Representative Jo Ann Davis, a Virginia Republican who heads a House intelligence subcommittee charged with overseeing the C.I.A.'s performance in

¹⁹ For a good description of some of these differences, see Bernard Rougier, "The Sunni Islamists' Changing Agendas: The Sunni-Shia Rivalry," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2007.

²⁰ See for example Ian Black's article, "Revisionist message from prison cell shakes al-Qaida colleagues," *The Guardian*, 27 July 2007, in which he describes the work of a prominent Egyptian Islamist Sayid Imam al-Sharif, 57, founder and first emir (commander) of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organisation, whose supporters assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981 and later teamed up with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in the war against the Soviet occupation. According to Black, Sharif is involved in a growing movement to challenge the theological basis for violent jihad through religion. Also, see Jacqueline Kay and Fouzi Slisli, "A liberal logic: reply to Fred Halliday," *Opendemocracy.com*, 8 December 2006, who point out the different stances on 'jihad' taken by groups like Hamas and Hizbollah, as opposed to international *jihadi* organizations like al-Qaida. In regards to the issue of internal challenges to the Islamist belief in the need to reunite the *umma* at the expense of a focus on domestic politics, see Maha Azzam, "Islamism revisited," *International Affairs* 82, no.6 (2006), 1119-1132.

recruiting Islamic spies and analyzing information — were largely clueless and even “dumbfounded” by the questions.²¹ Such ignorance led to similar gaffes amongst prominent politicians such as Rahm Emanuel, chairman of the Democratic Caucus and therefore the fourth-highest ranking Democrat in the United States House of Representatives, who mistakenly referred to the “House of Saud” as a “Shiite government.”²² Even a veteran analyst such as Mathew Levitt, who in his book *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* acknowledges a distinction between the Islamist movements Hamas and Al Qaeda, still evidences the underlying belief that the only method capable of analyzing the various Islamist movements in the Middle East today is that which employs the threat paradigm and hence focuses solely on the movement’s tactical and strategic use of political violence to further its goals, rather than on its political platform, *raison d’etre*, historical development, or the religious, political, social and economic factors behind its recent rise to prominence in Palestine. As Levitt argues, Hamas poses a “multilayered threat” to the West in that it is “founded on deep hatred for American and the West” and hence “directly contributes to the rabid anti-Americanism spreading throughout the region.”²³ As Levitt fails to consider seriously the reasons the Hamas leadership and its supporters have publicly and privately stated for their antipathy towards the United States — most importantly the overwhelming economic, military and political support the Israeli state receives as the United States’ number one recipient of foreign aid — one must assume that he believes the movement is unworthy of the type of in-depth analysis reserved for legitimate political movements, driven by more than irrational hatred and antiquated religious values.

Those engaged in this type of analysis do not need to delve into detail, as they assume that these movements share the common characteristics of being anti-modern (because they combine religious and political agendas) and outside the realm of acceptable politics (because they pose an existential threat to the modern, secular, although not necessarily democratic, states they oppose) and thus do not merit the type of analysis that

²¹ Jeff Stein, “Can You Tell a Sunni From a Shiite?,” *New York Times*, 17 October 2006.

²² Real Time with Bill Maher (<http://www.crooksandliars.com/Media/Play/21930/1/real-time-overtime-092807.wmv>).

²³ Levitt, 7.

“legitimate,” in other words secular, pro-Western, and non-violent, political movements receive. As U.S. Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld put it, “extremists” and “those promoting freedom” conduct themselves differently on the battlefield, which he admits is increasingly asymmetric in military capability. “While our side puts its men and women at great risk by taking care to obey all the laws of warfare, the other side deliberately targets civilians...[W]hile our side is measured by exact standards, the other side is measured by no standards at all and is never held to account.”²⁴ Or as Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet Jewish dissident and Israeli politician whose book *The Case for Democracy* is attributed with greatly influencing the second term Bush administration’s policies towards the Middle East, argues, there is no comparison “between those for whom human life is held in the highest value [“the world of democracy”] and those for whom human life is merely an instrument to reach certain political aims [“the world of terror”].”²⁵ These rhetorical flourishes overlook the fact that the West’s violence *vis-à-vis* the peoples of the Middle East have resulted in far more casualties than actions carried out by “terrorists” against the West.²⁶

By viewing Islamist movements and governments solely within a security paradigm, the various non-violent forms of collaboration that take place among and between these movements/governments are often overlooked. For example, in the Bush administration’s attempts to discredit the Iranian regime’s role in neighboring Iraq, it has focused solely on Iran’s alleged support of various Iraqi Shiite militant groups, which the United States claims have been responsible for “terrorist” attacks on American military forces in Iraq as

²⁴ Donna Miles, “Rumsfeld, Pace Cite Challenges, Progress Against Extremists,” *American Forces Press Service: Washington*, 2 August 2006.

²⁵ Sharansky, 240.

²⁶ For example, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the two most important fronts in the “war on terror,” 3,700-5,000 people a year and 655,000 people overall have been killed respectively, in comparison to the 1,000-7,000 people who die yearly at the hands of “terrorists.” Marc Herold, “A Dossier on Civilian Victims of United States’ Aerial Bombing of Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Accounting” and “A Day-to-Day Chronicle of Afghanistan’s Guerrilla and Civil War, June 2003 – Present” (<http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold/>); and, referring to the study conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health on Iraqi casualties, David Brown, “Study Claims Iraq’s “Excess” Death Toll Has Reached 655,000,” *The Washington Post*, 11 October 2006; Jackson, 92. It must be said that the accuracy of this number has been challenged by other academics and journalists. See, for example, a study by reporters Neil Munro and Carl Cannon, writing for the National Journal, which found that Lancet study was “marred by grave flaws,” including “unsupervised Iraqi survey teams, and survey samples that were too small to be statistically valid. Jeff Jacoby, “Iraqi Casualties: The Lancet’s Overblown Figures,” *International Herald Tribune*, 15 January 2008.

well as its allies, both Iraqi and foreign. Putting aside questions of legitimacy regarding the United States' own presence in Iraq, Vali Nasr, for example, has pointed out that this focus on Iran's alleged support for terrorism in Iraq overlooks the number of ways Iran has peaceably engaged its western neighbor, including the fact that: "[l]ast year, over one million Iranians travelled to Iraq on pilgrimages, and there is more than a billion dollars a year in trading between the two countries. But the Americans act as if every Iranian inside Iraq were there to import weapons."²⁷

For the sake of parsimony in this self-referential analysis it is easier to simply label all these groups "fundamentalists" or just plain "terrorists." In doing so, security-based analyses inevitably overlook the various non-violent ways in which these movements' alternative worldviews constitute and effect social movements, state-society relations, inter-state relations, and are themselves affected by historical/contemporary, oppressive/permissive relationships with other states/nations/peoples.

1.3 "Ideologization of Terror" Analyses: The Use of "Double Standards"

The third way in which these analyses are affected by the "ideologization of terror" framework is the inevitable distortion of facts that results from the polemical nature of the terrorism discourse. These distortions inevitably result in what Noam Chomsky refers to as "double standards," or rhetorical devices employed by those responsible for creating and sustaining the hegemonic discourse of the "war on terror" to distinguish between what they perceive as their own humane, and even moral, strategies and tactics and the "barbarian" ones of their adversaries. As Cyra A. Choudhury argues, this discursive device is used as a means not only to justify particularly grim elements of the "war on terror" that might be difficult for the "civilized" world to countenance otherwise, but also as a way to construct or consolidate U.S. national identity, similar to the way in which the idea of the backward, violent and irrational Oriental other was employed during the imperial era, as discussed in Said's *Orientalism*. In the case of the Iraq war, a central

²⁷ Vali Nasr quoted in Seymour M. Hersh, "Shifting Targets: The Administration's Plan for Iran," *The New Yorker* (8 October 2007).

component of the “war on terror,” this device has been used to “construct the U.S. as ontologically civilized, humane, reasonable, and innocent in opposition to Iraqis who resist the U.S. as terrorists and insurgents — which can be read as barbaric, irrational, uncivilized, and *a priori* culpable.”²⁸ Again we see the use of dichotomous reasoning: to achieve its policy goals, the civilized West, in this case the United States, uses diplomacy, rational discussion and debate, “carrots and sticks,” and, as a last resort, “conventional warfare,” in which (and here the manifold Orwellian constructions are rolled out) “smart bombs,” “precision-guided munitions,” “surgical strikes,” target its enemies, not civilians, although admittedly its actions may incur “collateral damage.”²⁹ The Islamist terrorist, on the other hand, uses “unconventional warfare,” to conduct indiscriminate, barbaric, bloody, violent acts of aggression against civilians to instill fear in the population to attain his political goals. The message is clear: acts carried out by Western governments are humane, moral and within the confines of international law, whereas those carried out by “terrorists” are inhumane, immoral and unlawful. This use of the label “terrorism” to distinguish between “their” and “our” violence, is not a neutral act but one with “serious political and social consequences.” As Jackson points out, because of the history and significance of the term, the “effect of naming” in this instance is particularly powerful “because to ‘call an act of political violence terrorist is not merely to describe it but to judge it’.”³⁰

In a statement demonstrating the double standards often espoused or supported by Western commentators and policy makers, former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a ceremony commemorating the terrorist attack by the militant Zionist organization Irgun on the British-run Hotel King David in Jerusalem 60 years ago, insisted that the attack against the British must be distinguished from similar attacks by Islamist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. Netanyahu tautologically maintained that this distinction should be made because the Israeli actions were carried out by “freedom

²⁸ Cyra A. Choudhury, “Comprehending ‘Our’ Violence: Reflections on the Liberal Universalist Tradition, National Identity and the War on Iraq,” *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 1 (2006), 2.

²⁹ For a good brief history of the distinction made between the West’s “rational” use of force and that employed by the “barbarians” of the world, including contemporary “terrorist” organizations, see Tom Engelhardt, “Collateral damage: The Contemporary Barbarism of Air Power,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 2006.

³⁰ Rubenstein 17, quoted in Jackson, 23.

fighters,” and were therefore “legitimate military action[s],” while the latter were carried out by “terror groups,” and therefore constituted “terror actions.” Netanyahu, like others who employ double standards in their analyses of terrorism, found it unnecessary to explain the criteria used to make these distinctions.³¹ Another example can be found in the widely divergent language used to describe the European Jewish men and women who moved to Israel to help the Jewish state militarily “defend” its homeland, often using means that violate international law and widely accepted ethical values,³² and their Muslim counterparts who opt to join what they view as the legitimate Palestinian “resistance” to the Israeli occupation of their homeland, and which have also employed illegal and unethical means in their efforts.³³ Despite the similarity in motives and outcomes of their respective actions, media treatment of the former often comes from a place of admiration, using terms and phrases such as “solidarity,” “defense,” “love of homeland,” and “morale boost” to describe the actions of these young people who sacrifice comfortable lives in Europe for the Jewish state, whereas in the case of the latter, coverage involves harsh judgment, where prevalent terms and phrases of “jihadi,” “terrorist,” “fugitive,” “murder,” and “Europe’s threat to the West,” describe young men derided alternatively as deranged sociopaths or calculating aggressors, often seen as having betrayed the benevolent Western countries that have provided them and their families with refuge and the potential, if not always reality, of safe and prosperous lives.³⁴

³¹ Ned Parker and Stephen Farrell, “British Anger at Terror Celebration,” *The Times*, 20 July 2006.

³² For example, Israel was accused of violating international law in its armed conflict with Lebanon in the summer of 2006, where its actions resulted in 1,109 Lebanese deaths (the vast majority of whom were civilians), 4,399 injured Lebanese, and an estimated 1 million displaced Lebanese. According to a Human Rights Watch report, the high death toll was due to “Israel’s frequent failure to abide by a fundamental obligation of the laws of war: the duty to distinguish between military targets, which can be legitimately attacked, and civilians, who are not subject to attack. This was compounded by Israel’s failure to take adequate safeguards to prevent civilian casualties.” “Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War,” *Human Rights Watch* 19, no. 5E (September 2007). Jan Egeland, the UN humanitarian chief, criticized Israel’s use of 90% of its cluster munitions in the last three days of the conflict as “shocking and immoral.” Mark Turner, “UN condemns Israeli strategy as ‘immoral,’” *Financial Times*, 30 August 2006.

³³ In particular the targeting of civilians and indiscriminate use of violence in places like Israel, Afghanistan and Iraq.

³⁴ On Jewish volunteers for the Israeli Army see: Jeevan Vasagar, “When it comes to firing the gun, it’s a massive shock. It’s what you don’t see in the movies,” *The Guardian*, 23 November 2006; Stephen Farrell, “British volunteers answer army’s call,” *The Times*, 7 August 2006. Both stories pertain to British Jews who, along with thousands of non-Israeli Jews around the world, joined the Israeli army around the time of the armed conflict between Israel and Lebanon in August 2006; On Muslim volunteers for the Palestinian

For Chomsky, this type of analysis is problematic insofar as it undermines the notion of universality, the “idea that we apply to ourselves the same standards we apply to others,” a concept Chomsky believes is vital to healthy relations between states. In particular, Chomsky is interested in the hypocrisy displayed by Western politicians when it comes to defining and labeling terrorist acts. To substantiate his point, he cites several examples in contemporary political history where the United States refused to label as terrorism those acts that would otherwise fall into that category merely because the perpetrator of the crime in question was either the U.S. government or a close ally or client state. In the 1980s, for example,

the period described by leading academics and journalists in the field as the ‘decade of ‘state terrorism,’ of ‘persistent state involvement,’ or ‘sponsorship’ of terrorism, especially by Libya and Iran, acts committed by the US government [and its allies/clients] which could also have been seen as ‘state terrorism’ or ‘sponsorship’ were overlooked...³⁵

These included: the United States’ role in backing state terror throughout Latin America, which began in the 1960s but reached its zenith in the 1980s during U.S. President Ronald Regan’s “war on terror”; the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which resulted in the deaths of close to 18,000 Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians; and in 1985, “the year many Americans believe to be the ‘worst’ year for terrorism because of the highjacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in October of that year by a Palestinian terrorist group led by Abu Abbas,” the U.S. government was involved in several state-sponsored terrorist acts in the North African/Middle East region, including: Shimon Peres’ bombing of Tunis, killing 75 Palestinians and Tunisians, “expedited by the United States and praised by the U.S. Secretary of State at the time, though unanimously condemned in the UN Security Council as an “act of armed aggression” (the United States abstained); and Peres’ “Iron Fist” operations directed against what

“resistance,” see Sam Knight, “‘Diary of British jihadi’ unearthed in Pakistan,” *The Times*, 8 August 2005; Nick Britten, “What turned two happy teenagers into hate-driven suicide bombers?” *The Telegraph*, 2 May 2003; Sarah Lyall, “What Drove 2 Britons to Bomb a Club in Tel Aviv?” *New York Times*, 12 May 2003; and Daniel Pipes, “Europe’s Threat to the West,” *New York Sun*, 18 May 2004. All of these stories pertain to two British citizens who carried out a suicide attack on a bar in Tel Aviv.

³⁵ Noam Chomsky, “Terror and Just Response,” *Znet*, 2 July 2002.

the Israeli high command alleged were “terrorist villagers” in occupied Lebanon, “total casualties unknown in accord with the usual conventions.”³⁶

All these atrocities, according to Chomsky, fall within the category of state-supported international terrorism, if not the more serious war crime of aggression. The problem with the way the United States and its allies view terrorism is not the definition *per se*, with which Chomsky largely agrees (which, according to the U.S. Army Manual, is the “calculated use of violence or threat of violence to attain goals that are political, religious, or ideological in nature...through intimidation, coercion, or instilling fear”), but rather the blatant double standards involved in applying the definition. As Chomsky argues, when the “wrong agents” are implicated in state-supported international terrorism, “we often discover that terrorist atrocities are not fully effaced, but rather praised.”³⁷

One need only look to the case of Luis Posada Carriles, a Cuban exile accused of involvement in the terrorist attack on Cubana Airlines Flight 455 on Oct. 6, 1976, which resulted in the deaths of all 73 people aboard. The Bush administration has fought extradition attempts by the Venezuelan and Cuban governments who wish to try Carriles, a former C.I.A. operative and U.S. Army officer, for the crime. The Cuban exile, arrested in Miami in 2005 after entering the country illegally, is being held temporarily in a detention centre in Texas on an immigration violation, as the government has been reluctant to press the terrorism charges that could keep him in jail more permanently. In this case, the fact that the terrorist was a former C.I.A. operative and U.S. Army officer whose actions were committed against an “enemy state” meant Carriles was a “wrong agent” and thus subject to a different legal regime than that reserved for individuals involved in terrorist acts whose political agenda is at odds with that of the U.S. government. As Roseanne Nenninger Persaud, sister of one of the victims of the Cuban Airlines attack, put it: “He [Carriles] should be treated like bin Laden. If this were a plane

³⁶ Chomsky, “Terror and Just Response,” 2002.

³⁷ Ibid.

full of Americans it would have been a different story.”³⁸ And, one could add, if Carriles were a Muslim it would have also been “a different story.”

Fred Halliday is also critical what he sees as the West’s myopic understanding of terrorism in the context of the “war on terror,” although he is more interested in uncovering its historical dimensions than exposing contemporary examples of double-standards. In his article, “Terrorism in historical perspective,” Halliday urges Western politicians and analysts not to see the movements, governments and peoples of the Middle East as having a monopoly over modern forms of unlawful, unconventional violence, but rather to acknowledge that “historically, the continent of Europe pioneered political violence on a world scale, developed modern industrial war, and led in developing those particular instruments of modern political action and control: genocide, systematic state torture, and terrorism.”³⁹ As Halliday points out, the term “terrorism” was first employed to refer to the violence of the French state under the leadership of Maximilien Robespierre (Head of the Committee on Public Safety and Revolutionary Tribunal) in the period following the revolution, known as the “Reign of Terror” (1793-1794), when thousands of “enemies of the state” were put on trial and guillotined. The term was used in a similar sense by the Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky in a book published in 1921, ominously entitled *In Defense of Terrorism*.⁴⁰ It was not until 20th century nationalist movements in places like Ireland, Armenia, and Bengal that both the term and the political act came to be associated with non-state actors. According to Richard Jackson, this discursive shift is the result of the “strategic and repetitious usage” of this definition by “government officials, the media and many academics” over the last 40 plus years.⁴¹

In examining the double-standards employed in the “war on terror” discourse, what becomes clear is the lack of quantifiable evidence to substantiate the high level of hysteria regarding the imminent “threat” of Islamist terrorism and the disproportionately

³⁸ Mark Lacey, “Castro Foe with C.I.A. Ties Puts U.S. in an Awkward Spot,” *New York Times*, 8 October 2006.

³⁹ Fred Halliday, “Terrorism in historical perspective,” *Opendemocracy.com* (22 April 2004).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Jackson, 23.

harsh United States/Western policy responses. For example, despite all the rhetoric, a 2007 Europol study on terrorism in the European Union found that of the 498 incidents of terrorism that occurred in the eleven EU countries last year, only one resulted in death (an attack perpetrated by the Basque separatist group ETA, which committed 136 of the terrorist acts during this period), and, most shockingly, that Islamist groups were responsible for only one of the 498 incidents.⁴² Jackson has also criticized the hype surrounding the “threat,” pointing out that “in the last thirty-five years terrorism has resulted in no more than about 7,000 fatalities per year for the entire world, even including the year 2001,” a mere “fraction of the deaths caused by “ordinary” crime (there are 10,000 gun murders per year in America alone), which in turn, is dwarfed by the fatalities attributed to automobile accidents, disease, natural disasters and even suicide.”⁴³ To put it even more bluntly, Jackson says statistically people are more likely to die by chocking on their lunch than in a terrorist attack.

Perhaps underlying the double standards in these analyses, and a point overlooked by most critical studies of the terrorism discourse, is a modern rationalist understanding of what constitutes legitimate politics. As discussed in Chapter One, according to the mainstream Western narrative of the state, the post-Westphalian political consensus regarding acceptable forms of economic, political and military organization were based on a very time-and-space specific understanding of the territorially bound nation-state, whose government, it is assumed, maintains a monopoly over all legitimate forms of power and violence as expressed within and between state boundaries. As we have seen with the Islamic critique, this Westphalian conception of the state has often been derided by Islamists as false and imposed, hence providing these movements with a rationale to reject their respective governments, which have accepted these false constructs, as the sole and legitimate possessors and implementers of violence. For the Enlightenment-oriented world-view of the West, violence is acceptable so long as it is perpetrated by legitimate actors: states. As Crooke points out:

⁴² Kristoffer Larsson, “A Neglected Report from Europol,” *Counterpunch* (21 April 2007).

⁴³ Jackson, 5-6.

It has not been the case that western Governments abhor violence per se: Iraq, Afghanistan and now Lebanon attest to that; but we see that the Westphalian structure of nation states as the only framework for the “legitimate” use of violence. States may practice violence; but when movements use it, it seems to threaten traditional certainties — the same traditional certainties that underpin the Enlightenment. At bottom, movements such as Hamas seem to challenge our Westphalian certainties. Of course for Islamists recent history carries a different message. The nation state has none of the benevolent associations that we couple to the Enlightenment. For most Arabs the drawing of national boundaries was recent; was imposed — with few benevolent associations and little “enlightenment.”⁴⁴

By viewing “terrorism” through the modern rationalist lens based on false distinctions of what “they” are, and what “we” in turn are not, the “ideologization of terror” analyses profoundly distort and misunderstand the Islamist movements they seek to explain.

2. Anti-Modern, Reactive Analyses

The second, and related, way in which the modern rationalist perspective impacts analysis of political Islam is, as described in Chapter One, by assuming that those who join these movements do so in reaction to some radical socioeconomic or political development to which there are few, or no, alternatives.⁴⁵ Similar to the “ideologization of terror” analyses, the modern rationalist analyses also assume that because Islamist movements operate outside the parameters of acceptable politics, there is no need to understand them as political movements with legitimate histories, demands and unique development trajectories. In this section, I will briefly discuss the origins of this type of analysis, reflect on its impact on the contemporary study of political Islam, and, finally, look at alternative approaches to the study of political Islam, many of which are still confined to the margins of the discipline, and hence have had little or no impact on the mainstream discourse, as will become apparent in subsequent chapters.

⁴⁴ Crooke, xi.

⁴⁵ Euben, 23.

Karl Marx was one of the first political theorists to develop a theory of reactive religious activism, as he believed that religion was evoked by members of society on the verge of undergoing significant economic and political change due to revolution. Marx cites several examples to substantiate his argument that during these moments of revolutionary crisis, people “anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service.” Amongst those examples are the French Revolution of 1789 - 1814 which “draped itself alternatively as the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire,” and Martin Luther, who “donned the mask of the Apostle Paul.”⁴⁶ In addition, Marx provided a materialist explanation of the enduring importance of religion to the masses that is so well known it has become cliché; his “opium of the masses” argument has shown no sign of losing its sway over academics interested in explaining religion within a socioeconomic, structuralist framework.

One could also trace the intellectual roots of the theories employed by many contemporary writers on political Islam to the renowned French sociologist Emile Durkheim. As Edmund Burke III explains, writers who employ what he refers to as the “Durkheimian approach” begin with the idea that the “integration of societies rests on a shared consciousness, the disruption of which causes anomie, individual disorientation, and eventual conflict.”⁴⁷ In a sense, anomie was to Durkheim what revolutionary change was to Marx, a state of “normlessness” which exists in times of rapid social change, when existing rules, habits and beliefs no longer hold and alternatives have not yet arisen. Durkheim believed that during such a period, “society is temporarily incapable of exercising its regulative function, and the lack of constraints imposed on human aspiration makes happiness impossible.”⁴⁸

The reactive religious analysis, originally developed by political theorists like Marx and Durkheim, is often employed by contemporary political scientists interested in

⁴⁶ Marx, 1998.

⁴⁷ Edmund Burke III, *Orientalism and World History: Representing Middle Eastern Nationalism and Islamism in the Twentieth Century*, *Center for Global, International and Regional Studies. Reprint Series* (1 August 1998), 20.

⁴⁸ Robert Alun Jones, *Emile Durkheim: An Introduction to Four Major Works* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985), 95.

understanding and explaining more contemporary examples of political Islam. As might be expected of those who view religious movements as reactions to Western modernity, these contemporary writers often view political Islam as an other, one with the potential to threaten the international order in general, and Western civilization in particular, a view whose essence and potential impact would most likely have disturbed the original proponents of this analysis. In seeing Islamist movements as other, these analyses are also heavily influenced by orientalist trends, although they avoid the label because their focus is ostensibly no longer on the anti-modern, irrational, violent Arab/Muslim in general, but only on those Arab/Muslims who have rejected modernization/Westernization and the associated political, economic and social processes. Yet their orientalist roots are often exposed in the “temporal” components of their analyses, which rely on an understanding of “modernity” specific to the West’s historical development, which they use a prototype of progress against which to compare the agenda and actions of Islamist movements. This tendency is best exemplified in Efraim Karsh’s *Islamic Imperialism: A History* in which he admonishes “Islam” for not having followed the West’s lead in “shedding” its adherence to a dangerous combination of “religious universalism” and “political imperialism.”⁴⁹ According to Karsh, “[b]y the eighteenth century the West had lost its religious messianism. Apart from in the Third Reich, it had lost its imperial ambitions by the mid-twentieth century,” whereas “Islam,” in the form of Islamist movements, “has retained its imperialist ambition to this day.”⁵⁰ Furthermore, Karsh asserts that during a period in which other formerly colonized peoples developed distinct notions of nationalism through which independent and sovereign nation-states could be realized, in the Middle East the people “were indoctrinated for most of the twentieth century to consider themselves members of ‘One Arab Nation’ or a universal ‘Islamic umma’ rather than patriots of their specific nation-states,” a recognition that would have presumably made them more “modern,” and hence more like “us.”⁵¹

Like “ideologization of terrorism” analyses, the reactive religious perspective tends to sacrifice substance, context and diversity in the name of theoretical parsimony and

⁴⁹ Karsh, 6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁵¹ Ibid., 6.

ideological consistence. As such, these analyses tend to fall into the “confrontationalist” camp, which, as defined by Gerges, are scholars and politicians who 1) tend to “lump all activist Islamists under the monolithic rubric of “Islamic fundamentalists,” 2) argue that, in practice, Islam and democracy are antithetical,” and 3) argue that “like the Communist totalitarians, ‘Islamic fundamentalists’ are intrinsically anti-democratic and deeply anti-Western, and invariably target the West.”⁵² The list of authors, whose work is considered here, while not exhaustive, is meant to reflect a wide-range of social science disciplines (e.g. Comparative Politics, International Relations, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Economy, and Middle East [area] Studies) and political perspectives. The disciplinary diversity demonstrates the discourse’s ubiquitous nature. And while the academic component of the discourse tends to be more nuanced than that found in political, media and think-tank genres, some of it can be just as essentialist and sensational, as will become clear in Chapters Four and Five. One can view the numerous writers influenced, consciously or not, by reactive religious perspective as falling somewhere along a spectrum from those who view Islamism as antithetical to the central precepts of modernity to those that view Islamism ultimately as a modern phenomenon. Those belonging firmly on the latter side of the spectrum include such scholars as Fred Halliday, John Esposito, and Graham Fuller, whose ideas will be discussed in the section on “Challenges to the Anti-modern, Reactive Analyses,” along with alternative non-reactive approaches, including “new social movement theory,” post-modern and hermeneutic approaches.

Samuel Huntington fits comfortably on the anti-modern side of the spectrum, as he adheres to the perspective that Islamist movements are comprised of young, alienated individuals who have struggled to find a place for themselves in a society radically transformed by the various processes associated with “modernization.” In *Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington makes ominous predictions about the future of world politics as a result of the growth in popularity of movements that have developed in reaction to the effect of modernity on their societies. His argument is centered on the conviction that lack of a Muslim “core” to act as mediator between the other nations comprising the

⁵² Gerges, 21.

Islamic civilization raises the probability of a “fault line” conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim civilisations. This probability increases if aspiring Muslim core states continue to compete to provide assistance to their “besieged coreligionists.”⁵³ Not surprisingly, the most common critique of Huntington is his “essentialist” and “Orientalist” understanding of the cultures and “civilizations” of the world.⁵⁴

Pointing out that most recruits for Islamist organizations in countries like Egypt, Pakistan, Afghanistan (in the 1970s) and Saudi Arabia and Algeria (in the 1990s), were drawn from the universities and often came from middle-class backgrounds, Huntington insists that one of the most important factors in determining the radicalization of these students was the “dramatic” migration of rural habitants to the cities in the 1970s and 1980s. Precisely how the “disproportionately large number of the best-educated and most intelligent young people in their respective populations” was affected by the “crowded and often primitive slum areas” of the urban centers, which grew at “dramatic rates” in the 1970s and 1980s, is left unexplained.⁵⁵ Huntington goes on to list the specific aspects of modernization that he believes have led people in this region to fundamentalism:

Like other manifestations of the global religious revival, the Islamic Resurgence is both a product of and effort to come to grips with modernization. Its underlying causes are those generally responsible for indigenisation trends in non-Western societies: urbanization, social mobilization, higher levels of literacy and education, intensified communication and media consumption, literacy and education, and expanded interaction with Western and other culture.⁵⁶

Beyond this compact list, there is little attempt to elaborate what Huntington views as the principal factors underpinning the causal relationship alluded to in his analysis, which views the various developments associated with “modernization” as responsible for instigating a desire amongst an extremely diverse group of individuals to join “fundamentalist” Islamist movements. In this Durkheimian analysis, such explanation is

⁵³ Huntington, 312.

⁵⁴ See Lavina Rajendram explains in her article “Does the Clash of Civilizations Paradigm Provide a Persuasive Explanation of International Politics after September 11th?,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15, no. 2 (July 2002): 217-232.

⁵⁵ Huntington, 113.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

deemed unnecessary; the notion that religious movements arise in response to some form of traumatic social or economic process is upheld as fact.

In his concluding ruminations on the probability of a “clash of civilizations” in the near future, Huntington again considers the role modernity has played in creating the “sheer chaos” that characterizes many parts of the world today.⁵⁷ Although Huntington believes modernization has generally enhanced the material well-being of all civilizations, he wonders if it has failed to achieve similar success on the moral level. Implicit in his comments on the matter is a belief that the ensuing chaos can be attributed to the decline of Western power since the West is assumed responsible for the spread of human rights and other “moral and cultural dimensions” of modernity that, as evidenced by the proliferation in ethnic and religious violence, failed to take hold to the extent previously anticipated.⁵⁸ As Davutoglu argues, this analysis is based on a stages-of-growth understanding of history that places the West in the position of the furthest evolved of civilizations, hence demonstrating “a Western self-perception based on a subconsciousness of being the *subject* of history: the West has a mission to lead and specify history and therefore has the legitimate right to develop necessary strategies against the Rest [who] are supposed to be the *object* of the specified flow of history.”⁵⁹

Huntington’s conclusion is that the potential “real clash” will, in fact, not be between civilizations (despite the title of his book), but between “Civilization and barbarism.”⁶⁰ Although his definition of barbarism is not made explicit, one must assume it refers to those peoples and movements that have eschewed Western models of development and instead developed in reaction and opposition to the great advances of modernity in its cultural and moral dimensions. Considering his views on the imminence of a “clash”

⁵⁷ Huntington refers in his book to the “sheer chaos paradigm,” in which he includes: “a global breakdown of law and order, failed states and increasing anarchy in many parts of the world, a global crime wave, transnational mafias and drug cartels, increasing drug addiction in many societies, a general weakening of the family, a decline in trust and social solidarity in many countries, ethnic religious, and civilizational violence and rule by the gun prevalent in much of the world.” Huntington, 321.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁵⁹ Davutoglu, in Esposito, 175.

⁶⁰ Huntington, 321.

between Western and Islamic civilizations, and his modern rationalist view of Islamic resurgence, one presumes that Islamist movements and states are central amongst these.

Although the “clash of civilizations” thesis aroused the most controversy when elaborated by Huntington, it was actually the Middle East scholar Bernard Lewis who first introduced the concept in his essay, “The Roots of Muslim Rage.” Here Lewis developed his argument of reactive religion and advised the West on how to address it:

It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations — the perhaps irrational but surely historic reactions of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival.⁶¹

In his warning to the West, Lewis’s assessment of Islamist movements becomes evident: they are irrational, anti-modern and reactive. In addition to their continued engagement in what Lewis describes as an “ancient rivalry” with the West’s Judeo-Christian heritage, the Islamist’s inherent backwardness, as well as Lewis’ adherence to a “stages” reading of history, is made clear by the author’s assertion that the Islamist’s age-old rivalry is now manifested in an opposition to the West’s “secular,” and hence modern, “present.”

Lewis reiterates this argument in his latest work, *The Crisis of Islam*, in which he outlines the origins and development of the relationship between the Western and Muslim worlds and provides his explanation for the birth and growth of anti-Western sentiment in the latter. Contrary to what one might assume from his description of Islamist movements, in this book Lewis asserts that Islam does not necessarily tend towards theocracy as a style of government, and that the emergence of Islamist movements demonstrates the effect of worldly events on the Muslim populations, rather than proving anything inherent within the religion. This understanding may distinguish Lewis’ analysis from the essentialism of

⁶¹ Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, quoted in Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 572.

the “clash” paradigm, although not from the reactive, or modern rationalist one. The crux of Lewis’ argument is that support for Islamist movements in the Muslim world grew over the last several decades as a result of a series of emotive responses to events that changed the international system and the Muslim world’s place in it. First was a sense of “humiliation: the feeling of a community of people accustomed to regard themselves as the sole custodians of God’s truth...who suddenly find themselves dominated and exploited by those same infidels and, even when no longer dominated, still profoundly affected in ways that change their lives, moving them from the true Islamic to other paths.”⁶² Once humiliated, Muslims subsequently felt frustrated, as the numerous remedies they turned to, “most of them imported from the West,” failed to alleviate their predicament. The third emotion Lewis believes the Muslim world experienced was a “new confidence and sense of power,” a result of the 1973 oil crisis which proved to Arab and West alike how powerful a tool control over the price and supply of oil could be. The “resulting wealth, pride, and self-assurance” were accompanied by another emotion: “contempt.” With their newfound wealth, Muslims began travelling more and exploring the Western world. Soon these “visitors” concluded that what they witnessed in Europe and America was the result of “moral degeneracy and consequent weakness of Western civilization,”⁶³ characteristics they loathed.

In addition to attributing these developments in the Muslim world over the past several decades to the rise of Islamist movements, Lewis believes another important factor can be found in Muslims’ reactions to the various effects of modernization on their societies, a hypothesis shared by many students of political Islam who employ a Durkheimian approach. As Edmund Burke observed, these writers believe in the “familiar phrase, modernization causes revolution.”⁶⁴ Altering his original “clash” thesis, Lewis argues instead that Islamist movements pose the greatest threat, not to the West, but to “false and renegade Muslims who rule the countries of the Islamic world and who have imported and imposed infidel ways on Muslim peoples.”⁶⁵ That these infidel ways have made their

⁶² Lewis, 16.

⁶³ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁴ Burke III, 20.

⁶⁵ Lewis, 103.

way to the Muslim world is testament to “excessive modernization” in their countries, which they view as “a betrayal of their authentic Islamic values.”⁶⁶ Still, like Huntington, Lewis fears the potential of these movements to eventually threaten the security of inhabitants of the “free world,” as they persuade a growing number of Muslims to accept their views and leadership. While America may be their first target, Lewis believes other parts of the world will also be vulnerable to their violent tendencies, including Western Europe, now home to a large and rapidly growing Muslim community, and other “neighbours of Islam” such as Russia, China and India, which might prove “less squeamish” than the United States in exerting their power against Muslims.⁶⁷

In his book *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, Fouad Ajami develops the standard Islamism as anti-modern reaction argument, citing the various events to which Muslims have reacted, of which the 1967 Six Day War against Israel figured most prominently. Ajami believes this war, in which Egypt, Jordan and Syria were defeated by the fledgling Middle Eastern super-power, prompted the Arab world to reflect on the declining strength and viability of its governments and the ideologies on which they were based, and to consider possible alternatives. In the decade following the 1967 defeat, Ajami argues, the Muslim world experienced a great sense of disillusionment with the world erected by the “post-World War II nationalists,” a world defined and controlled by pan-Arab doctrines and the ideology of secularism.⁶⁸ In fact, Ajami believes much of the Arab world never really understood the nationalism, pan-Arabism and secularism of the elites, and that “the separation that the Arab intellectual made between Arabism and Islam was not made by the less educated citizen; for the latter, the two were overlapping, almost identical forces.” Whether or not they understood the true nature of their governments, the 1967 defeat was proof to many Arab citizens that the type of government their countries’ elites had opted for had profoundly failed them, so they turned to religion for salvation. “The shock of the military defeat created a deep need for solace and consolation, and Islam provided the needed comfort.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Lewis, 103.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁸ Ajami, 16.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 71.

While the elite's programs for "modernization" may have achieved some degree of popular acceptance prior to the 1967 defeat, as time went on, the "glaring gap between the claims of authenticity and the realities of everyday life" widened and the masses began to question the sincerity of their governments.⁷⁰ What developed in the end were societies with "acute cultural dualism," where elite claims of development were increasingly exposed as hollow. During this period religious movements were able, once again, to stake their ground, as Islam's "comparative advantage" lies in its ability to "assert itself and its uniqueness at a time when technology is seemingly blurring the distinctions between cultures, when models of development tantalize people with promises that in the end they fail to deliver."⁷¹ The fact that Islam was evoked during these trying times was not a testament to the enduring power of religious beliefs in the Arab world, according to Ajami, but rather an example of how prevalent was the desire "to reassure oneself that the ground is solid, that the world is intact."⁷² For Ajami, Islam served as an opium for the masses, which became more addictive the greater the sense of defeat the Arabs experienced, and the more alienated they became from the increasingly modern societies that surrounded, but did not encompass, them.

Martin Kramer argues along similar lines, that the persistent attraction of Islamist movements, despite the best efforts of Arab governments to repress them over the last several decades, can be attributed to their ability to capitalize on feelings of alienation and discontent amongst various sectors of society unable to find their place in a landscape profoundly altered by "modernization" programs. In defiance of the predictions of Western pundits who had sounded the death knells for "fundamentalist Islam" on several occasions over this period, Kramer argues that the appeal of these movements was so strong they were able to outlive both the doubts of Western opinion and the repression of their respective governments. "Its straightforward solution to the complex crisis of state and society spoke directly to the poor and the young, the overqualified and the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 206.

⁷¹ Ibid., 207.

⁷² Ibid., 208.

underemployed, whose numbers were always increasing faster than their opportunities.”⁷³ Citing the case of Iran, and exposing the orientalist roots of his modern rationalist analysis, Kramer argues that the goal of Islamists is not only to reject “the existing order” by turning against all things foreign, but to reject “politics — the pursuit of the possible through compromise” altogether, implying that their innate irrationality and inability to adapt to change (attributes associated with tradition as opposed to modernity) precluded them from engaging in modern (meaning *Western*) politics.⁷⁴ The irony, of course, is that governments contested by Islamist movements during this period, including the Shah of Iran (overthrown in the 1979 Islamic revolution cited in this example), were no more inclined to “compromise” than their Islamist counterparts, a fact that challenges Kramer’s understanding of what constitutes legitimate “politics” and indeed modernity in general.

While many the above authors have employed the Durkheimian approach to describe Islamist movements as reactions to modernity, Akbar S. Ahmed and Hastings Donnan employ a similar approach to describe political Islam as a reaction to postmodernity, although the language and concepts employed in descriptions of the “postmodern” period in many ways parallel those used by the authors cited above to describe “modernity.” In their essay “Islam, globalisation and postmodernity,” the authors explain the difference between a postmodern and traditional society in dichotomous terms. Whereas the former “promotes a culture based on youth, change and consumerism... emphasiz[ing] noise, movement and speed, “ the latter emphasizes “quiet, balance” and discourages change. At the points where these societies meet, conflict is inevitable.⁷⁵ “Islamic fundamentalism” is one response to this conflict; it reflects the fact that people in traditional religions are “concerned about the pace of change and what this will do to the next generation, people genuinely worried that their culture and traditions which have held for a thousand years will now be changed and even be in danger of being wiped out.”⁷⁶ Although the entirety of the Muslim world may not be seduced by Islamist movements, that many will has the effect of polarizing much of the region between those influenced by what Akbar and

⁷³ Martin Kramer, “Fundamentalist Islam at Large: The Drive for Power,” *Middle East Quarterly* (June 1996), 37-49.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁵ Akbar and Donnan, 12-13.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

Donnan refer to in orientalist terms as the “emotions of the bazaar,” which “reduce the Muslim response to anger and passion” and the “more reflective, more sophisticated Muslim scholar and statesman or stateswoman,” in other words, what Mamdani has referred to as the “good Muslims and bad Muslims” distinction.⁷⁷ Unfortunately, according to Akbar and Donnan, the former’s response to globalization (read: reaction) tends to be the one which receives more international attention in the media, which leads to an even greater “disjunction” between the West and Muslim world.⁷⁸

Benjamin Barber argues along similar lines in his *Jihad vs. McWorld*, that in the anarchic world of today, “wild capitalism”⁷⁹ (McWorld) has delivered to most of the world increased productivity alongside greater levels of inequality and “Jihadic fundamentalism spreads its antimodern message, sowing fear and nurturing chaos, hoping to bring both democracy and capitalism to their knees.”⁸⁰ Although in the *Afterword* to the 2003 edition Barber insists that the term “Jihad” is not used to single out Muslims for criticism, but rather as a general label that refers to all “parochial”⁸¹, “irrational”⁸², identity-based ideologies/movements that, together with the forces of McWorld, limit the chances of a democratic future for the world based on freedom and equality, the front-cover picture of a woman wearing a *niqab* and holding a can of Pepsi says otherwise.⁸³ Regardless of whether or not Barber includes developments in Rwanda, Bosnia, and East Timor in his Jihad category, thus altering the meaning generally associated with the term in the West, it is clear that he adheres to the modern rationalist paradigm in viewing Islamist movements as developing in *reaction* to one or another processes of modernity.

⁷⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency,” *London Review of Books*, 8 March 2007.

⁷⁸ Akbar and Donnan, 17.

⁷⁹ “Wild Capitalism” is a situation in which sovereignty is “shifted to the domain of global corporations and the world markets they control” and away from individual and state sovereignty. This situation is characterized by, among other things, monopoly capitalism, corporate manipulation of information, and absence of any real choice. Barber, 296.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, xxiii.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 297.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 299.

In his *Islam, the Middle East, and the New Global Hegemony*, Simon W. Murden also argues from a political economy perspective that the rise of “Islamic revivalism,” like that of other religious “revivalisms” of the past few decades (including Hindu, Christian and Buddhist), has been a reaction to cultural forms of Western imperialism that accompanied late-20th-century globalization. According to Murden, “Islamic revivalism” developed to fill the sociopolitical vacuum created by the lack of a “global-level theory of opposition to the new globalization.”⁸⁴ These movements were often based on religious doctrines that were “backward-looking moral prescriptions about the role of women, the education of youth, the nature of personal responsibility, the punishment of democracy, and the definition of the outsider.” In other words, “religious revivalism was antiliberal.”⁸⁵ And, like many of the other authors surveyed here, Murden ultimately believes that if the Muslim world is to survive in the globalized world, it will have to reject this strain of “antiliberal” religious activism which can “only perpetuate backwardness and failure,” and instead embrace “globalized modernity,” an act which, Murden concedes, entails “Westernization to some extent.”⁸⁶

While the authors discussed thus far view the rise in popularity of political Islam as a dependent variable, capable of being explained by a set of independent variables which individually or in combination are responsible for provoking a set of reactions that inevitably lead to this phenomenon, Aziz al-Azmeh seems at times to dismiss political Islam altogether as a unit of analysis, arguing that all of the academic excitement concerning the rise of political Islam can be attributed to orientalist scholars who overemphasise the importance of the subject.⁸⁷ According to al-Azmeh, rather than “illuminate reality,” these analyses end up “widening the gap between the rich, dominant North and a South defined by particularism, exoticism and barbarity.”

⁸⁴ Murden, 10.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 205.

⁸⁷ While the current discussion of al-Azmeh’s work covers his analysis in the first half of his book, because of the somewhat contradictory stance he adopts in the second half, I will also consider al-Azmeh’s work in the subsequent section on alternatives to anti-modern, reactive analyses. Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1993), 43.

Although al-Azmeh claims to be above the type of discussions engaged in by the misguided or malevolent groups he critiques, I include his work in this section because on occasion he slips into the type of analysis he so criticizes. When he does address this alleged non-issue, it becomes obvious that he actually does hold an opinion, indeed a strong one, on the subject, thereby contradicting his argument and seemingly validating political Islam as a subject worthy of analysis. Al-Azmeh first criticizes the leaders of Islamist groups for manipulating the religion to further their own political interests, then goes on to discuss why so many Muslims have been seduced into following them. While claiming that he does not intend to deal with the “economic and social crises that have led to acute tensions, a broad social mobilization and the development of utopian movements that are called Islamist,” al-Azmeh in fact does just that: deals with them and with political Islam.⁸⁸ In another section the Marxist roots of his epistemology are made apparent, as he again advances the argument that political Islam is a reaction to certain material factors which promises but fails to “assuage hunger, create employment or resolve social crises.” Yet, while the “ordinary Muslim asks for bread,” all the Islamist can offer is faith, which will “not relieve his hunger for long, for it is *the opium* rather than the sustenance, administered, by the state or by sections of society, in a revival of the collapse of public and private values (emphasis added).”⁸⁹

Although their analyses may differ in the precise periods of history they see as having played the most decisive role in affecting the development of contemporary Islamist movements, the authors reviewed in this section all base their analyses on Durkheimian or Marxist theories of reaction. Whether revolution, poverty, colonization, modernity, postmodernity, failure, or defeat, these authors consider some factor most responsible for catalyzing the reaction that results in widespread support for political Islam. They all adhere to modern rationalist discourse and therefore share a belief in direct causal relationship explanations that invariably view contemporary Islamist movements as a reaction to *something*.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 54

⁸⁹ Ibid., 56.

2.1 Challenges to Anti-Modern, Reactive Analyses: Modern Analyses

In his essay “Orientalism and world history: Representing Middle Eastern nationalism and Islamism in the twentieth century,” Edmund Burke III criticizes John Esposito for his explanation of political Islam as a reaction to modernity, rather than viewing it “as a manifestation of an alternate form of modernity.” If the history of Islamism is described as a series of “responses” to various events and developments, these events and the subsequent responses to them become mutually exclusive categories, rather than aspects of the same historical developments, which are, instead, co-constituting. In doing this, Esposito “mislocates the actual historical relationship of Islamism to nationalism and modernisation.”⁹⁰ While acknowledging the debilitating effects of Orientalism on both the colonized and colonizer, Burke argues, contrary to Said, that nationalism as it developed in the Muslim world was not so much an answer to or way of rebuking Orientalism as it was a product of the same sociopolitical and philosophical developments that led to the latter’s development as the hegemonic approach to understanding, describing, and dominating the Arab world in the West. According to Burke, just as Arab nationalists co-opted many of the concepts associated with Orientalism, in particular those related to “modernity” and “progress,” in order to subvert the idea and practice of Orientalism, so too have Islamists adopted several of the central tenets of nationalism in order that they may one day replace it with their own ideology and system of governance. The origins of Islamist movements are therefore to be found in modernity rather than tradition. On this point Burke concurs with Zubaida, who similarly argues that by accepting the nation-state model, constitution, republic and notion of democracy, and using these ideas to engage civil society in a political struggle against what it believes is an unjust and unrepresentative government, Islamism is a form of “populist nationalism with ‘Islam’ as the identifying emblem of the common people

⁹⁰ Burke III, 495.

against the ‘alien’ social spheres in their own country which had excluded and subordinated them.”⁹¹

Despite expressing his belief that Islamic fundamentalism is a “defensive-cultural worldview related to the disruptive effects and dislocations growing from modernization processes,” Bassem Tibi’s analysis in *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* eschews the formative conclusions of reactive religious analysis. The bulk of his argument is concerned with proving the modern origins of Islamist movements in order to substantiate his final plea regarding the need for the creation of “international morality based on a cross-cultural foundation” in which Islamic ethics could have a place.⁹² Tibi refutes the analyses of much of mainstream literature which view “Islamic fundamentalism” as a renaissance of religious belief, explaining instead that his own research has shown that the “fundamentalist” is primarily an “activist and political man, *homo politicus*, not a man of religion or of beliefs, not a *homo religious*.”⁹³ Like al-Azmeh, Tibi sees in these movements not so much a desire to reject modernity and return to a glorified, pre-modern Islamic past, as the hope that they can co-opt certain aspects of modernity as a means of gaining political power. According to this argument, Islamists “view modernity in a way that favors their own purposes, expecting to adopt its techno-scientific achievements while dismissing its ‘corrupt’ worldview.”⁹⁴

S. N. Eisenstadt also believes that one can decipher modern aspects of Islamist (“fundamentalist”) movements, coexisting, often without conflict, alongside “anti-modern” or “anti-liberal” ones. Most prominent among these modern aspects are their Jacobin tendencies, including the belief of many of the fundamentalist movements in the “primacy of politics, albeit in their case, religious politics — or at least of organised action — guided by a totalistic religious vision to reconstruct society, or sectors

⁹¹ Sami Zubaida, *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 33.

⁹² Bassem Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 214.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

thereof.”⁹⁵ In their Jacobin “revolutionary components,” internationalist tendencies, and totalizing theories of societal transformation, Eisenstadt sees many parallels with communism. “The similarity with communist movements lies in the project to establish a new social order, rooted in the revolutionary universalistic ideological tenets, in principle transcending any primordial, national, or ethnic units and new socio-political collectivities.”⁹⁶ In contrast to the essentialist analyses of those writers who describe Islamist movements as inherently opposed to modernity, Eisenstadt believes they have developed out of circumstances

which attest to the continual reinterpretation, reconstruction of the cultural program of modernity of the construction of multiple modernities and of multiple interpretations of modernity; to attempts by various groups and movements to reappropriate modernity and redefine the discourse of modernity in their own new terms; and more crucially, to the de-Westernisation of modernity, to the attempt of depriving the West from monopoly of modernity.⁹⁷

Citing the example of the Iranian revolution to make a similar point, Halliday argues that, like the Islamist leaders of other movements, the Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the Iranian revolution, employed rhetoric “derived from a modern and Western populist and revolutionary vocabulary.”⁹⁸ Like al-Azmeh, Halliday makes known his frustration with postmodernists and essentialists (whom he too believes to be more alike in their assessments of political Islam than either would care to admit) for not believing in the applicability of “universal categories of analysis and ethics to different religious and political communities.”⁹⁹ For Halliday, only through the use of these universal modes of analysis can one properly understand the context in which Islamist movements have developed and necessarily work. Furthermore, while Islamists may speak a great deal about rejecting Western norms and Enlightenment based concepts, in reality they find themselves “grappling with similar problems and use similar instruments, of which the

⁹⁵ Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus* 129, no 1. (Winter 2000): 610.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 600.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 609.

⁹⁸ Fred Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World: September 11th, 2001, Causes and Consequences* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), 131.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, *Two Hours*, 2002, 130.

modern state and the resources of the modern economy are central.”¹⁰⁰ Most obvious amongst these is the colossal gap that exists between rich and poor in most Middle Eastern states. According to Halliday, one of the primary goals of Islamist movements is to address these stark inequalities and, through championing the cause of the dispossessed, carve a space for themselves within the political landscapes of their countries. Yet, the point “post-modernist friends of resistance too easily forget” is that the Islamist movements are not the first in the region to agitate against the inequalities which modernity breeds, as nationalist, socialist, populist and communist movements have long contested Western hegemony in these regions.¹⁰¹

Like Ajami and Esposito, Halliday believes that one can trace the roots of many contemporary Islamist movements to the failure of their nationalist/socialist predecessors. For example, in Egypt, the Islamic revival can be traced to the “trauma of 1967 at the realization of the failure of Nasser’s socialist experiment.”¹⁰² In Algeria similar developments took place over two decades later when the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) — an Islamist party which Halliday claims also gained popularity on a platform that criticized the failures of the nationalist party in power National Liberation Front (FLN) — subsequently won a majority in local and parliamentary elections on this platform. Halliday’s analysis veers from that of his modern rationalist counterparts in his belief that these movements are, in effect, no different in their ideological make-up from that of the nationalist parties they seek to replace. The fact that these movements are so often discussed as if they belong to unique analytical categories, argues Halliday, is a sign of how misguided have been those who study the Middle East in their understanding of nationalism. Halliday believes the culprit of this misguided analysis to be “perennialism,” an ahistorical view of the past which attempts to discover or locate “that fixed point, that definition of identity, or land, or correct speech, or food,” and which overlooks how certain elements of the past are recruited to substantiate and legitimize national identity.¹⁰³ However, if one starts with a “modern” (versus perennial) view of the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., *Two Hours*, 2002, 131.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰² Fred Halliday, *Nation and Religion in the Middle East* (Boulder: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2000), 43.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 54.

nation,¹⁰⁴ skeptical of the existence of any ideal types of nationalism,¹⁰⁵ the shared patterns of development of world nation-states become easier to recognize. For example, in each case there has been “a state-promoted history of nationalism, a concern with official versions of the past and of current identity, a diversity of identities and ethnicities within countries and involving transnational links, and most importantly of all a process of constant change and redefinition.”¹⁰⁶

Once nationalism is understood in these universal terms, one can assume that the same analytical tools employed to understand political developments in one nation can be used to understand those of another. While Halliday acknowledges that real differences do exist between the various regions and “cultural field(s)” of the world, he believes they are nonetheless all affected by modernity, a development which “imposes a common format on states and on the ideologies and movements associated with them.”¹⁰⁷ Thus Halliday argues along similar lines as al-Azmeh, that Islamist movements are by default modern movements because they develop within societies that, whether through force or positive exchange, have been affected by modernity. That this is the case, Halliday argues, can be witnessed in the rhetoric employed and demands made by contemporary Islamist movements who have inherited, or co-opted, the themes which defined their nationalist predecessors: “anti-imperialism, dependency, cultural nationalism, hostility to monopolies, [and] solidarity of the oppressed peoples of the world.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ In contrasting modernism with perennialism, Halliday argues that the former “sees the ways in which over time definitions change, using parts of the past, but selecting according to present needs and combining with elements from other cultures.” *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰⁵ As Halliday points out, even the Western European nation has itself recently been exposed to increased criticism by a range of diverse identities and ethnicities who have generally been excluded from previous definitions of these ideal nationalisms. *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

2.2 Challenges to Anti-Modern, Reactive Analyses: “New Social Movement Theory” Analyses

Like the critiques of the mainstream reactive, anti-modern analysis above, those that employ “new social movement theory” are often critical of “culturalist” and “essentialist” analyses that tend to “explain the societies of the Maghreb and Middle East in reference to an Islam which is eternal and unchanging.”¹⁰⁹ Like Euben, these authors seek to study the movements of the Muslim world within a “transcultural theoretical context,” yet they are more concerned with practical and logistical issues than philosophical. For example, in understanding the context in which Islamist movements develop (the ways in which the context facilitates or hinders their development, and the strategies they employ to mobilize and organize supporters) these studies tend to draw on the work of Sydney Tarrow, Charles Tilly and Eric Hobsbawm (as opposed to Weber, Durkheim, Foucault or Said), neo-Marxist social scientists and historians whose work Edmund Burke III believes has “provided us with a much more complex and richly informed understanding of the behavior of the crowd and of the ideology of social protest.”¹¹⁰

Considering the diverse array of social movements that developed over the past two centuries of modern state building and consolidation in the West, Tarrow elaborates what he believes is a universal approach to the study of contemporary social movements, placing primary importance on political opportunities and constraints. Acknowledging that these two factors alone cannot entirely “explain” social movements, Tarrow argues that “they play the strongest role in triggering general episodes of contention in which elites reveal their vulnerability, new social actors and forms of conflict appear, alliances are struck, and repression becomes sluggish or inconsistent.”¹¹¹ According to Tarrow, one can only predict the final shape these movements assume, as well as their relative

¹⁰⁹ Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule, 35.

¹¹⁰ Burke III, 20.

¹¹¹ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199.

strength, by considering factors such as the “forms of mobilization they employ, their meanings and identities, and the social networks and connective structures on which they build.”¹¹² Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule argue that this type of analysis can, and should, be employed to better comprehend the origins and nature of all contemporary social movements, not merely those that have emerged in the West/North. It is possible, they believe, to make transcultural comparisons because there are no fundamental ontological differences between social movements from various parts of the world. Furthermore, they argue the potential of this approach to correct the deficiencies and bias of orientalist analyses — which generally fail to contextualize Islamist movements and take into consideration the larger picture of oppression and contention that characterizes the Muslim world in which they developed — and thus render them comparable to movements in other parts of the world with similar experiences.¹¹³

Lisa Wedeen similarly criticizes mainstream analyses of political Islam like Huntington’s for essentializing Muslim cultures and societies, and thus denying them any historical context which would acknowledge the ways in which their development has been impacted by various historical processes and power relations. Wedeen also criticizes the “Clash” thesis for its view of Muslim communities as monolithic, hermetically-sealed entities, immune from the normal “cross-fertilization” of ideas and practices which take place between other religious, cultural and political communities of the world. Like the authors discussed in the above section on Modern Analyses, Wedeen also believes Islamist movements share much with other social movements of the world. For example, Wedeen argues that one could trace the origins of the contemporary Islamist movements to the 1970s when Arab governments began implementing neo-liberal economic reforms which required a retraction of the state from the public sphere, leaving large segments of the population feeling unprotected and vulnerable. This context, generally associated with the processes of globalization, is not particular to the Muslim world, and neither were the claims of the movements which developed in this context. Although the form these movements took was religious in nature, they were not

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 200.

¹¹³ Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule, 42.

inherently anti-modern. Wedeen substantiates this argument by listing several modern attributes of these movements, such as their belief in the efficacy of bureaucratic institutions and their commitment to democratic norms and procedures.

Yet where Wedeen's analysis differs from the Modern Analyses is in her rationale for pointing out convergences between Islamist movements and other social movements in the world, based more on her desire to substantiate her argument regarding the universal dynamics of social movements than to prove the extent to which these ideologies, lacking in originality, are actually based on Western Enlightenment-derived ideas and concepts. In particular, Wedeen believes that Islamist movements share two key similarities with other contemporary social movements:

a) they resuscitate, invent or construct an essentialist understanding of political identity based, at least in part, on ascription; and, b) although they have important antecedents, they have emerged as a potent contemporary political force at the same time that international market pressures have weakened the economic sovereignty of states and undermined their role as guarantors of citizens' welfare.¹¹⁴

Despite the materialist undertones of her argument, Wedeen insists her purpose is not to establish a direct causal relationship between economic hardship and a rise in support for Islamist movements, although she acknowledges the two are "intimately connected."¹¹⁵ Echoing the theoretical assertions of Tarrow, that the most successful movements are those which "link inherited understandings to the imperative for activism," Wedeen explains the purpose of her essay: to examine how economic factors, political opportunities, identity formation and transformation, discourse, and mobilization strategies all affect timing, strategies and form adopted by social movements in the Middle East, just as in the rest of the world.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Wedeen, 55.

¹¹⁵ Wedeen argues that although it maybe be difficult to establish a causal relationship between economic suffereng and political Islamist movements, one could still acknowledge "that fundamentalisms are intimately connected with material conditions and disaffection without arguing that such conditions fully explain the appeal of fundamentalist ideas." Ibid., xx.

¹¹⁶ Tarrow, 2001.

In *Jihad: the Expansion and Decline of Islamism*, Gilles Kepel focuses on three principal aspects of new social movement theory to explain the “sudden expansion” of Islamist movements over the last twenty-five years: resource and human mobilization, structure of opportunities, and framing of meanings and identities. For example, while acknowledging the existence of Islamic movements throughout the 20th century, of which he includes the Tablighi Jamaat of India, the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, and the Association of Algerian Ulemas, Kepel contends that it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when petro-dollars from Saudi Arabia began pouring into the countries of the Muslim world, that these movements developed the strength and conviction necessary to attract widespread support.¹¹⁷ As opposed to the modern rationalist analyses, many of which point to the 1967 war as the watershed event in the development and rising popularity of Islamist movements in the region, Kepel regards the 1973 Arab oil embargo as the most influential event for the development of Islamist movements in the region, so much so that he devotes an entire chapter to the chain of events and alliances formed as a result of the embargo.¹¹⁸ According to Kepel, the story really begins in 1973, when the newfound power of the Gulf States, which had profited handsomely from the oil embargo, essentially triggered a shift in the balance of power in the Arab world towards this region. Their economic status, coupled with the decline in ideological power of Arab nationalism in light of the 1967 defeat, left Saudi Arabia in a propitious position. The Wahhabi government promptly took advantage of this position to begin spreading its ascetic version of Islam throughout the region. By funding the Muslim World League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Saudi Arabia was able to influence the political and religious agendas of the Muslim world. Kepel points out that their objective in this regard was “to bring Islam to the forefront of the international scene, to substitute it for the various discredited nationalist movements, and to refine the multitude of voices within the religion down to the single creed of the masters of Mecca.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Kepel cites the case of Pakistan to exemplify the depth of the impact of remittances on the national economies of other Muslim states: “In Pakistan in the single year 1983, the money sent home by gulf emigrants amounted to \$3 billion, compared with a total of \$735 million given to the nation in foreign aid.” Ibid., 71.

¹¹⁸ While Chapter Three, “Building Petro-Islam on the Ruins of Arab Nationalism” is entirely devoted to tracing the Saudi petro-dollars to Islamic movements in the Muslim world, this theme is revisited at several points throughout the book. Ibid..

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 70.

In an analysis that shares much in common with the “ideologization of terror” analyses discussed above, Kepel argues that even more important than its funding of political institutions such as the Muslim World League and the OIC was the Saudi’s role in setting up financial institutions across the Muslim world. This action had a major impact on the development of Islamist movements in the region. One of the most prominent amongst these initiatives was the formation of the Islamic Development Bank in 1973, under the auspices of the Saudi-controlled OIC. The Bank, which became operational in 1975, financed several development projects in the poorest Muslim countries. In addition to their influence over more formal financial institutions like the Development Bank, Saudi Arabia wielded great influence over the Islamic banking and finance system which began to emerge in the 1970s. This influence was achieved through two distinct methods: first *via* direct funding of various lending schemes; and second, and more indirectly, through its influence over those making deposits and investments in the system, many of whom were part of the new middle classes who had earned their money working in the booming Saudi economy and had subsequently come under the influence of the Saudis’ notoriously strict Wahhabi version of Islam. By 1995, with over 144 Islamic financial institutions worldwide, the Islamic banking system had clearly made its mark on the Muslim world. Kepel argues that the significance of this development to the growth and strength of the Islamist movements should not be underestimated. The radical Islamist saw this system as “a golden opportunity to establish a war chest outside the control of the established regimes and use it to finance their overthrow.”¹²⁰ According to Kepel, Saudi-directed funding was particularly important to the development of fundamentalist organizations in Egypt and the Sudan.

In addition to focusing on what Tarrow has described as “dimensions of opportunity” and the mobilization of “external resources,” Kepel develops a case around another new social history concept, namely “cross-border diffusion.” As Tarrow contends in his *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, diffusion is probably the oldest form of transnational politics. Citing the example of the reformation, when

¹²⁰ Ibid., 9.

Calvinist “saints,” Puritan immigrants and exiled Catholic priests carried contentious ideas and practices across the borders of several European countries, Tarrow defines the term as “the communication of movement ideas, forms of organization, or challenges to similar targets from one centre of contention to another.”¹²¹ Kepel utilizes this concept, albeit without reference to Tarrow, to substantiate his argument regarding the effects of the Iranian revolution (1979) on Muslim communities around the world. According to Kepel, like the French and Bolshevik revolutions which preceded it, the Iranian revolution “held out great hopes for those in other countries who sympathized with its goals.”¹²² Among the diverse group of sympathizers which spanned the globe, Kepel includes Iranian students in France, who tried in vain to organize immigrant North African workers to join a “Khomeini-inspired jihad against the ‘satanic’ West”; young militants from Southeast Asia, certain communist countries and Western Europe, inspired to make the pilgrimage to Tehran, and even to convert to the Shiite faith; and young intellectuals in Senegal who had studied in Iran and returned to their native country to “shake up” the traditional Islam of the Senegalese brotherhoods, whose rituals they believed had deviated from the guidelines of the Quran.¹²³

In his book *Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America and International Terrorism*, John K. Cooley develops a similar argument, focusing on the effects of resource mobilization and cross-border diffusion on what he views as the international Islamist terrorist network, personified by Osama bin Laden. Cooley’s argument is based on the concept of “blowback,” or what he refers to as the continuing “shock waves,” of U.S. efforts to mobilize, train and fund Muslim men to fight a “jihad” against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, as proxy to its own interests in the region. Cooley’s argument is essentially that a lack of foresight and bad foreign policy on the part of U.S. governments from Carter to Clinton are largely to blame for the radicalization of movements, both national and international, across the Muslim world which were created by Afghan holy warriors who returned from the Central Asian battlefield to their own countries (or neighboring ones) ready to continue the fight on other fronts. To illustrate the extent of the CIA-

¹²¹ Tarrow, 186.

¹²² Kepel, 132.

¹²³ Ibid., 130.

sponsored training programs for Afghan warriors, much of which was carried out in collaboration with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI), Cooley enumerates the more than 60 skills that were passed on during this period, including "the use of sophisticated fuses, timers and explosives; automatic weapons with armor-piercing ammunition, remote-control devices for triggering mines and bombs (used later in the volunteers' home countries, and against the Israelis in occupied Arab territory such as southern Lebanon)." ¹²⁴

According to Cooley, the guerrilla wars and terrorist actions that took place in Algeria, Egypt, Bosnia, Kosovo, Kashmir and the Philippines in the 1990s were made possible due to this skills training and mobilization of funds made available as a direct result of the United States' proxy war in Afghanistan. In addition to the large sums of money funneled through the CIA's "Black Budget" and investments from rich Arab sheikhs, kings and financiers, much of these funds came from the lucrative sale of a "vast tide of drugs" which began to flow out of Pakistan and Afghanistan to Europe, the Americas and the Far East, in the 1980s, and which, by the 1990's, turned into a steady flow of opium, morphine base and refined heroin. ¹²⁵ While perhaps not the kind of cross-border diffusion or opportunity structures Tarrow had in mind when writing *Power in Movement*, Cooley's well-documented account certainly adds a new dimension to the contentious movement theories of new social historians, especially those focused on transnational movements.

As opposed to the modern analyses discussed in the previous section, those developed by writers who employ new social history/social movement methods are primarily interested in process rather than final outcome. Their works, especially those of Kepel and Cooley, are overflowing with extremely well-researched/documented details, almost to the point of redundancy, in order to prove that the creation and eventual form adopted by these movements was by no means inevitable. Whether they believe globalization, the declining economic independence of Arab/Muslim majority states, Saudi financing, the

¹²⁴ Cooley, 34.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 126.

influence of the Iranian revolution or CIA training and funding — or a mixture of some or all of these elements — explained the rise in Islamist movements during the 20 years that spanned the late 1970s to the 1990s, the works of these authors testify to the belief that Islamist movements are not some type of aberration, unique to the Muslim world, which can only be explained in terms of essentialist notions of religion and history. As students of social movements, they are interested in identifying the “processes through which contention arises in different milieu and how its intersection with different forms of mobilization, identity creation, organization, and opportunities and constraints creates social movements and major cycles of contention.”¹²⁶

All the authors discussed in this section share the view that Islamist movements, even if responding to the effects of certain aspects of modernity on their societies, are not inherently anti-modern. Most make the important distinction between the modern dispositions of these movements and their denunciation of the equating of modernization with Westernization in the various programs instituted by the governments they oppose. Although they may reject certain aspects of these modernization programs, such as the secularization of politics, the majority of Islamist movements, according to these authors, support modern economic systems, modern technology, modern institutions and systems of governance (including the actual structure of the nation-state itself), and most employ modern political rhetoric to define and justify their struggles. Although the narrative of the origins of contemporary Islamist movements, as told by several of these authors, is similar to that of their reactive religious counterparts (e.g., that these movements have developed in reaction to the failures of a variety of what they view as imported ideologies, including socialism and nationalism), they do not believe this fact necessarily renders these movements anti-modern by nature. They are modern because they have developed in a context of globalized modernity, and despite their reliance on religion to explain, justify, or mobilize support for their respective movements, they remain, consciously or subconsciously, within the socioeconomic and political landscape that characterizes the modern world.

¹²⁶ Tarrow, 197.

2.3 Challenges to Anti-Modern, Reactive Analyses: Postmodern Analyses

While the arguments discussed in the previous section have developed in opposition to what have been perceived as essentialist and orientalist elements of reactive analyses of political Islam, the literature in this section tends to be critical of both essentialist analyses which view Islamists movements as backward and anti-modern, as well as those analyses which view Islamist movements solely in terms of a Western-defined modernity. Instead the scholars whose work is included in this section look to postmodernism as “a more friendly environment than modernism” in which to understand and explain both the *raison d’etre* of Islamist movements and their resurgence across the Muslim world in recent years.¹²⁷

Roxanne L. Euben, whose work is discussed in Chapter One, draws on postmodernist and critical theories to challenge mainstream analyses of contemporary political Islam to situate the subject within what she describes as a “transcultural theoretical context.”¹²⁸ To do this, Euben engages the work of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), a highly influential Islamist thinker whose ideas were fundamental to the creation of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, as well as to a great many other Islamist movements, and compares his perspective on subjects at the heart of Enlightenment thought, such as modernity, rationalism, liberty and equality, with those of various Western critical philosophers who, she argues somewhat counterintuitively, share much in common with the Egyptian writer and activist.¹²⁹ In her book, Euben critiques analyses of political Islam derived from what she describes as a “modern rationalist discourse,” in which modernity is defined largely in terms of the advancement of rational systems of organization in economy, politics and society at the expense of “traditional” systems.¹³⁰ While Enlightenment philosophers such as Marx and Weber, whom Euben credits for first developing the “rationalist paradigm,” recognized the “costs and contradictions” of modernization, their work, she argues, has nonetheless “functioned within Western thought to sustain the assumptions

¹²⁷ Martin Forward, *Muhammad: A Short Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 129.

¹²⁸ Euben, 13.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Western political philosophers she includes in this comparison are: Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Robert Bellah, Hannah Arendt, Richard John Neuhaus, and Daniel Bell.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.

that “modern rationalism” is defined in terms of the erosion of religious and traditional models of meaning, identity, and authority, and that the movement from the “traditional” to the “rational” defines not just the advancement of Western history, but the entry of all cultures into the modern world.”¹³¹ According to Euben, this type of analysis limits the extent to which movements working outside the Western-defined trajectory of modernization can be understood on their own terms.

Amongst the analyses Euben criticizes are those developed by authors such as Daniel Lerner, who argues that Islamist movements derive the bulk of their support from the frustrated, overqualified and underemployed sectors of society whose expectations for progress have not been met by governments implementing modernization programs, and Michael Fischer, who employs a Barrington Moore style of class-based sociological analysis to the study of Islamism, which views the phenomenon as a response to the erosion of tradition in Muslim societies. Euben is also unconvinced by those who view Islamism as a last resort for Muslim political activists, filling the political vacuum left in the wake of other tried and failed ideologies such as liberalism, nationalist socialism, and quasi-liberal dictatorship. It is not that she believes these types of analyses have nothing to offer to a deep understanding of political Islam, but rather that their unquestioned / unacknowledged grounding within a very specific, Western mode of thought has limited their ability to ask the types of questions that Euben believes are vital to understanding movements based on a worldview, or “system of ideas,” that fundamentally differ from those adhered to by the Western scholars who develop these analyses. According to Euben, “[t]o recognize the corruption of Middle Eastern elites, the authoritarianism of Middle Eastern regimes, the high national debts and low rates of employment is to say much about political, social, and economic conditions in the Middle East, some about the alienation that can accompany certain structural changes,” although this type of analysis says “substantially less about the particular draw of fundamentalism itself as opposed to any other system of ideas.”¹³²

¹³¹ Ibid., 34.

¹³² Ibid., 31.

Despite their many differences in worldviews and theoretical foundations, Euben is convinced that the critical philosophers whose work she considers in her book share much in common with Islamists: namely, their shared fear of the potential ramifications of the modernity-induced crisis of humanity “due to a rupture with tradition, the dual rejection of theology and teleology inaugurated by Enlightenment rationalism, and the subsequent diminishment of meaning—in authority, morality, and community—that that rejection is said to entail.”¹³³ While Euben tends to agree with modern analyses which argue that “because modernity is global, so is fundamentalism”¹³⁴, she also sees in their movements the postmodern desire to renounce the epistemological foundations on which modernity is based, Enlightenment rationalist epistemology in particular. In a concise summary of her argument, Euben writes:

Given these arguments, it becomes clear that fundamentalist critiques and movements and sensibilities are not premodern, although they certainly draw upon and reinterpret ideals located in a “Golden Past.” Nor are they antimodern, although they cohere around a repudiation of many central epistemological assumptions constitutive of post-Enlightenment modernity. Like postmodernism, fundamentalists’ paradoxical relationship to modernity represents an attempt to move beyond modernity in a way that is simultaneously parasitic upon it.¹³⁵

Yet, despite their similarities, Euben points out that the Islamist’s desire to “re-establish” those “foundational meanings necessary for living and living well” which have been ruptured by modernity renders their sociopolitical agendas ultimately at odds with those of most postmodernists (although not necessarily with critical thinkers like Taylor and MacIntyre, who also share this desire) who maintain a persistent skepticism of foundations.

Bobby Sayyid, too, sees in the relationship between Islamism and modernity an insurmountable paradox, most obviously as exemplified by their dependency on modern technology to disseminate what many consider an anti-modern message. Also, in a way similar to Euben’s and the modern analyses discussed above, Sayyid recognizes Islamists

¹³³ Ibid., 124.

¹³⁴ Bruce Lawrence, *Defenders of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 3, quoted in Euben, 161.

¹³⁵ Euben, 166.

internalization and co-option of several modern political concepts (e.g., in their views on the potential of revolution to make lasting political and economic change, people as political agents, the power of political mobilization and organization) even in their struggle to overcome what they see as the evils of the “modern”/Western political system.¹³⁶ Yet, like Euben, Sayyid’s recognition of this fact does not lead him to conclude that Islamism is simply a modern ideology, no different in substance and intent than, say, nationalism or socialism. Sayyid avoids this conclusion because he feels it would be tantamount to accusing Islamists (who claim to reject some of the principle tenets of Western modernity) of false consciousness, a claim Sayyid emphatically does not want to make. To get around this paradox, Sayyid proposes an alternative way of conceptualizing Islamism which would appreciate their postmodern desire to “decenter” the West, or “disarticulate the West from modernity” by deconstructing the meta-narrative that has equated modernity with the West, while at the same time acknowledging Islamists’ desire to replace this meta-narrative with one of their own making. The Islamist interest in re-establishing foundations, or their own “regimes of truth,” which Sayyid describes as meta-narratives, does not necessarily signify their desire to revert to tradition or reject modernity; instead it proves their “attempt to speak from another centre, outside the orbit of the West.”¹³⁷

In anticipating potential rebuttals from those who argue that the Muslim world could not possibly give birth to postmodern movements when the region has yet to become fully modern, Sayyid contends that Muslim states have in fact undergone processes of modernization, even if they were experienced as imposed. According to the meta-narrative of modernity, modernization could only have begun in the West, because only there were the prerequisite conditions necessary to catalyze the process. Yet, as Sayyid argues, and as described in the previous chapter, in the Muslim world, because of colonialism, imperialism and Western hegemony, states under “Kemalist” systems of governance underwent similar processes of development, albeit imposed rather than organically developed. According to Sayyid, Kemalism reflected a rejection by Muslim

¹³⁶ Sayyid, 106.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

leaders of traditional meta-narratives in favor of Western, or “modern” ones. Islamism, on the other hand, developed in opposition to what it conceived to be an imposed meta-narrative. Sayyid compares this rejection to what Nietzsche describes as the “original” or “ancient” nihilism, which occurred during humanity’s “transition from pre-moral to moral culture.”¹³⁸ As opposed to the more-frequently-referred-to account of European nihilism, “original nihilism” was not so much an “incredulity towards meta-narratives” as the original recognition by humans of their powerlessness in relation to the potential for “political subordination” at the hands of other humans.¹³⁹ Whereas before this recognition man had already witnessed his vulnerability at the hands of nature, only after he had suffered as a result of political subordination did he come to realize the “most desperate embitterment against existence.”¹⁴⁰ According to Sayyid, many postmodernists focus solely on Nietzsche’s description of European nihilism, which explains postmodernity in the West. By considering the experience of colonized Muslims in the context of Nietzsche’s concept of “original nihilism,” Islamists, like their “original nihilist” counterparts, can be seen to express “incredulity towards meta-narratives” not as a result of “self-criticism but as a result of a confrontation with a more powerful meta-narrative which judges the meta-narrative of the ‘natives’ not to be a meta-narrative.”¹⁴¹

In developing a “peripheral account of postmodernity,” Sayyid also seeks to undermine the analyses of political Islam whose only reference to postmodernity is in the context of a reactive argument, in which these movements are seen as incapable of coping with the realities of an increasingly postmodern world. For example, Sayyid criticizes the work of Akbar Ahmed for viewing postmodernity as a state in which the periphery plays no part, except as “spectator.” Similar to other writers on postmodernity (e.g., Giddens, Lyotard, etc.) Ahmed

simply reinstates the conventional duality between the postmodern and Islam, so that while we in the West play with the new possibilities created

¹³⁸ Ibid., 115.

¹³⁹ Jean-Francois Lyotard describes post-modernity, which he compares to Nietzsche’s European nihilism, as “incredulity towards meta-narratives.” Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Post-modern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Oxford: Polity, 1992), quoted in Sayyid, 106.

¹⁴⁰ F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 55, quoted in Sayyid, 115.

¹⁴¹ Sayyid, 116.

by the ending of the old certainties of modernity, Muslims who cannot bear the world without foundations retreat into ‘ancient’ myths — they search for a rock upon which they can base their identity.¹⁴²

This position is shared by Ahmed Achrati who worries about a tendency within postmodern analyses to remain within the safe confines of dichotomous reasoning on Islam. He too feels that postmodernism’s claim to reject “ethicopolitics and ethnocentrism” signifies the possibility of a more hospitable context in which to study Islamist movements.¹⁴³ Achrati’s discussion of Derrida’s work on Arabo-Islamic hospitality is an example of how a postmodern approach can nonetheless lead to a “variation on the very ethnocentrism which deconstruction is supposed to displace.”¹⁴⁴

Despite several points of convergence, particularly in their views of essentialist and orientalist accounts of Islamist movements, the analyses of the authors in this section fundamentally differ from their modernist counterparts in their belief that even if the writings, proclamations and actions of Islamist leaders/movements take place within a modern context, and modern concepts and methods of political mobilization and action are employed, one cannot overlook their underlying message and intent, which entails a rejection of not only certain aspects of modernity such as secularism, but of the entire Enlightenment-derived foundation on which Western notions of “modernity” rest. These writers are more interested in the content of Islamist speech than they are in form or the medium of delivery. For Euben, this view does not signify the impossibility of cross-cultural comparison, although she does believe this comparison must entail like units. In other words, she believes the most fruitful comparisons would be those that consider Islamist thought in relation to strains of Western political thought which also question the political and epistemological hegemony of Enlightenment foundations, and are similarly weary of a future lacking in transcendental morals and values. For Sayyid, it means developing a new paradigm capable of understanding the worldview of another centre which exists completely outside the “orbit of the West.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Ibid., 112.

¹⁴³ Ahmad Achrati, “Deconstruction, Ethics and Islam,” *Arabica* 53, no. 4 (November 2006), 472-510.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Sayyid, 112.

2.4 Challenges to Anti-Modern, Reactive Analyses: Hermeneutic Analyses

Writers whose work could be considered under the “hermeneutic” rubric¹⁴⁶ share much in common with the other approaches considered in the “Challenges to Reactive Islamist Analyses” section. Like the Modern and “New Social Movement Theory” analyses, hermeneutic approaches also reject “essentialist” readings of political Islam based on a dichotomous understanding of the relationship between modernity and tradition, and shaped by a latent Orientalism whose distortions of Muslims and Arabs date back to the colonial period. Similar to postmodern analyses, the hermeneutic approach acknowledges the possibility that even though Islamist movements have developed in the context of certain political, social and economic developments associated with globalization and “Westernization” and experienced by other developing, former colonized states, they may still speak from a legitimately unique and autonomous space, based on an epistemology and worldview entirely distinct from that of the West. Although the specific approach adopted to study political Islam by those influenced by hermeneutics is varied, they share a common faith in the “semiotic approach to culture, an approach that, as Clifford Geertz describes it, takes culture as a context, an “interworked system of construable signs” in terms of which social events may be rendered intelligible.”¹⁴⁷ In order then to develop a “thick” description of Islamist movements, these approaches find it necessary to first decipher the “system” of signs responsible for molding and regulating the environment in which their political agendas, tactics and strategies are devised. As a result, and in opposition to the “Ideologization of Terror,” Reactive and Modern analyses, the scholars whose work are included here tend to base their research on interviews with Islamists, important documents, charters and declarations produced by Islamists organizations, and the religious and philosophical texts which Islamists cite as their principle influences.

Drawing on the work of Martin Heidegger, Hans Georg Gadamer and other hermeneutic philosophers, Euben employs the “dialogic model” to the study of political Islam, which she explains is based on the belief that “understanding emerges from a dialogue in which

¹⁴⁶ including Tamimi, Gerges, 2007, Hroub, Burgat, Euben, Saad-Gharoyeb and Kepel.

¹⁴⁷ Euben, 12-13.

participants attempt to cross divides of meaning by acknowledging and appropriating their own prejudices within language that evolves to accommodate and ultimately transform disparate understandings into mutual intelligible meanings.”¹⁴⁸ As discussed earlier, Euben employs this approach to point out the many points of convergence between Western critical thought and the ideas of the influential Islamist leader and philosopher Sayyid Qutb, particularly on issues of modernity, ethics and morals. By challenging positivist epistemology’s “monopoly of truth,” this method also seeks to overcome theories of incommensurability based on the idea that cultural phenomenon can be “locked away in hermetically sealed boxes of meaning.”¹⁴⁹ Euben is convinced this method will enable her not only to arrive at a more in-depth understanding of the meaning of Islamist thought, but also to understand the increasing appeal of Islamist movements to broad segments of the Muslim world.¹⁵⁰

Azzam Tamimi’s account of the origins, development and agenda of the nationalist Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas is another example of a hermeneutic approach to the study of political Islam. Having focused his research on one case study, Tamimi has an easier time avoiding the pitfalls of “Ideologization of Terror” analyses which tend to conflate disparate Islamist movements with one another. Although the single-case study is not inherently immune to essentialist tendencies (as evidenced by Mathew Levitt’s “confrontationalist” book on Hamas), the fact that Tamimi chooses as the basis of his research mostly first-hand sources (including interviews with prominent Hamas leaders, important Hamas documents, religious and philosophical concepts that Hamas leaders cite as major influences on the movement, and the political and socioeconomic context of the movement) points to a very different type of analysis with different aims. By focusing on the specific, yet rooting the specific in a universal Islamic philosophy that the movement claims to be guided by, Tamimi disputes many of the facile assumptions and conclusions of mainstream analyses of political Islam.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹⁴⁹ Euben, 48.

¹⁵⁰ Euben explains that “‘better’ interpretations do not aim at arriving at the final, objective (in the positivist sense) truth of the matter but rather are those that are at one and the same time aware of their own conditionality and are open to the distortions occasioned by conditions of radical inequality in the post-colonial world.” Ibid., 45.

In one example of his attempt to foreground the specific in the context of the universal, Tamimi compares Hamas to other branches of the *Ikhwan* (brotherhood) movement from which it derived. Although Hamas, like the other *Ikhwan* movements, was originally “concerned principally with the education and training of their members and supporters so as to shield them from what they deemed to be alien and hostile ideologies and socio-political trends,” its focus shifted from a spiritual to a more nationalist agenda as a result of dynamics internal to the Palestinian situation.¹⁵¹ Most important of these internal dynamics was the increasing frustration of the Palestinian population at the inability of their leaders, largely in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to adequately confront the Israeli occupation. As Tamimi puts it, “[t]he population under occupation felt abandoned and under siege, more than ever before.”¹⁵² Ultimately a traffic accident, in which an Israeli military truck crashed into a van, killing 4 Palestinians from the Gazan refugee camp Jabalya, led to a major shift in strategy.

In another challenge to mainstream analyses, Tamimi questions the monolithic understanding of “jihad,” often referred to as “holy war,” in mainstream Western analyses. The problem for Tamimi is not that jihad is an unimportant concept for Islamists, but that it is overemphasized in Western depictions of political Islam. These analyses rely on an essentialist description of jihad that betrays a deep misunderstanding of the central tenets of Islam as a religion and an ignorance of Islam’s socio-historical development. According to Tamimi:

there is nothing whatsoever in the Islamic sources that describes war as holy. The rendering of the word *jihad* into ‘holy war’ has more to do with the history of Christianity in Europe than with the teachings or the history of Islam. The term “holy war” is a European Christian invention dating back to around AD 1096, when Rome began to preach a “Holy Crusade” to free the Holy City of Jerusalem from the clutches of heretics and infidels.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵² Ibid., 51.

¹⁵³ Tamimi, 176.

Defending his analysis of jihad as a largely defensive mechanism within the religion, Tamimi writes: “The earliest appearance of the word *jahada* or *jihad* in the revelation of the Qur’an was associated with the struggle of the nascent Muslim community against oppression. Jihad was a struggle for the freedom for the community to worship according to their monotheistic faith and for the right to invite others to embrace it.” Furthermore, he argues that qualities such as “patience” and “self-restraint” were also considered noble acts worthy of “*jihad*” status, and “for which God promised the highest of rewards in the Hereafter,” a fact often overlooked by authors who seek to create a sense of anxiety and fear in their audience in order to garner their support for their confrontationalist policies.¹⁵⁴ As to the question of “martyrdom” in Islam, although Tamimi explains that most Islamic scholars believe that the sacrifice of one’s life is acceptable when fighting injustice or oppression, he points out the many discrepancies in exegesis of the relevant religious texts on the proper use and form of these “martyrdom operations.” Apart from Palestine, where the principal religious authorities all view these operations as “noble act[s] of sacrifice for the sake of God,” the attitude of scholars and religious institutions has varied.¹⁵⁵ While “no-one denies the existence of the concept of self-sacrifice as it is explicitly defined in the Quran and the hadith,” according to Tamimi:

a number of establishment scholars, representing government-controlled religious institutions in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, have argued that martyrdom operations are illegitimate. Some of these deem such actions to be acts of suicide because of the certainty of death. Others oppose them because they violate the Islamic code of war, through the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians including children.¹⁵⁶

Unlike “Ideologization of Terror,” Reactive and even Modern analyses, Tamimi also seeks to understand the epistemology of the movement by considering its religious, philosophical and historical references on their own terms, not as reactions to or facets of an Enlightenment-derived Western modernity, nor as elements of the Islamists’ arsenal of politically expedient tools to challenge the opposition. For example, rather than coming to the easy conclusion that Hamas’ opposition (shared by a majority of Islamist

¹⁵⁴ Tamimi, 175.

¹⁵⁵ Tamimi, 181.

¹⁵⁶ Tamimi, 183.

movements, Muslim scholars and jurists over the past century) to the existence of the Israeli state is a testament to its inherent anti-semitism or irrational hatred of Israel's American patron, Tamimi explains the importance of the religious concept of *Ummah*:

The movement regards Israel as nothing but a colonial enclave planted in the heart of the Muslim world whose effect is to obstruct the revival of the *Ummah*, the global Muslim community and to perpetuate Western hegemony in the region. Another consideration is that Palestine is an Islamic land that has been invaded and occupied by a foreign power. It would contravene the principles of Hamas's Islamic faith to recognise the legitimacy of the foreign occupation of any Muslim land.¹⁵⁷

He further tempers this position by pointing out that Hamas has never been opposed to the right of Jews to live in Palestine as they had for thousands of years, but rather to their presence there as an occupying power. Bearing this point in mind, Hamas' support for "hudna," or cease-fire agreement, with the Israelis is not an example of how Hamas instrumentalizes religious concepts to avoid an uncomfortable compromise (the position of many observers of the Hamas movement) but rather a negotiating tool delineated by Islamic jurisprudence and used throughout Muslim history to maintain the peace between Muslims and antagonistic parties.

To explain Hamas' use of the language and concept of the *hudnah*, he cites an historical reference shared by most Muslims of the truce agreed upon by Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi (Saladin), twelfth century Kurdish Muslim political and military leader from Tikrit, and the leader of the third crusade, Richard the Lionheart.

The truce, which marked the end of the Third Crusade, lasted for a period of three years and three months. During this period, the Crusaders maintained control of the coast from Jaffa to Acre and were allowed to visit Jerusalem and to conduct commerce with the Muslims. In addition, the reference is also frequently made to the first hudnah ever in the history of Islam. Known as Al-Hudaybiyah, the name of the location on the outskirts of Mecca where it was concluded, this agreement saw the suspension of hostilities between the Muslim community under the Prophet's leadership and the Meccan tribe of Quraysh.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Tamimi, 157.

¹⁵⁸ Tamimi, 159.

Despite the obvious importance of grasping Islamic epistemology to the understanding of Islamist movements, Tamimi also constantly reminds his readers of the vital role played by the specific socioeconomic and political context in which Hamas has developed. For example, when discussing the demands of the Palestinian *Ikhwan* (predecessors to Hamas) in the 1987 *Intifada*, which were “not confined to demands for the end of the occupation. They went further, also demanding the abolition of the state of Israel,” he qualifies what again might be construed as an overly “militant” or “anti-semitic” stance, this time by providing an insight into the backgrounds of the protesters: “[m]ost of the demonstrators had been refugees, and their real homes were not the squalid and wretched UN camps of Gaza or the West Bank but the hundreds of towns and villages that once stood where Israel exists today.”¹⁵⁹ This insight should shed light on the motives of Hamas, an endeavor, as we have seen, the “Ideologization” analyses believe is irrelevant to the study of Islamist movements.

On the issue of the role of Saudi petro-dollars in spreading Islamist sentiment across the Muslim world throughout the 1970s and 1980s, an argument made in exclusively materialist analyses of political Islam, Tamimi points out that this could not be the case; as Saudis and other Gulf leaders claim, Islamism was actually imported into their societies *via* the influential *Ikhwan* movements, rather than *vice versa*. Burgat has similarly criticized these assumptions, arguing that the “vast majority of Islamists supported Riyadh’s Iraqi enemy, conclusively proving the limits of Saudi authority over the Islamists.”¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, Burgat believes one would have to completely overlook the fact that “the corrupt regime of the guardians of the Islamic holy places are on the blacklist of many Islamist movements” in order to convincingly argue that Saudi Arabia is “the ‘conductor’ of the world Islamist ‘orchestra,’ a role that the Saudi princes have probably dreamed of,” but, according to Burgat, “today has no relationship to reality.”¹⁶¹

Like Tamimi, Burgat also believes that the only way to avoid the orientalist stereotypes of the mainstream discourse on political Islam is to approach the subject from what

¹⁵⁹ Tamimi, 53.

¹⁶⁰ Burgat, 23.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

amounts to a hermeneutical approach (although neither author uses that term), which entails a knowledge of the history and cultures of the states and regions in which these movements have developed, of how these particular developments have been affected by international dynamics, including colonialism, globalization and neo-imperialism, and, perhaps most importantly, a knowledge of Arabic so that firsthand sources can be used to provide a more profound understanding of the movements' *raison d'être*. As Burgat puts it: "Islam is, above all, what a majority of Muslims say it is. In reality, it is therefore Islamist individuals who have created Islamism, rather than the other way around."¹⁶² In order to understand then what the majority of Islamists say about Islamism, one has to be able to speak their language, both literally and metaphorically. In other words, he or she must be open to deciphering the system of "construable signs" that shape and regulate the Islamist's worldview. Much of Burgat's own analysis is derived from interviews with prominent Islamists from Egypt and Tunisia, academic and journalistic sources from the region, and literature written by Islamist themselves.

More often than not, according to Burgat, analyses of political Islam are based on conjecture rather than fact, a result of the analyst's over-reliance on secondhand sources, themselves often distorted. If it is true that "[i]n order to communicate with any sort of interlocutor, you do not approach his or her neighbors, and definitely not his or her enemies. It is far more effective to talk in person and preferably to make eye contact," than why, asks Burgat, "is this generally not the case when discussing Islamism?"¹⁶³ Even when analysts do decide to consult Islamists themselves, generally the most radical and inarticulate amongst them are chosen for comment, hence confirming the author's/audience's stereotypes. According to Burgat:

The least repulsive expressions of Islamism are therefore systematically ignored, replaced by people viewed as more 'authentic,' and certainly more in keeping with the unconscious expectations of public opinion...When the television channels claim that they are aware of the essence of the Islamist movement, they often elect to concentrate on its most frustrated fringes — the highly conservative peasants of remote rural areas in Egypt or young people in the suburbs of Algiers who have been

¹⁶² Ibid., 19.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 23.

expelled from university—without locating them in the social and cultural context of which they are the product.¹⁶⁴

Were Burgat's approach followed by other scholars of political Islam, they might come to similar conclusions regarding Islamists' views on vital issues such as modernity, secularism, democracy and the potential for a more peaceful and nuanced relationship with the West. As opposed to Reactive analyses, for example, Burgat believes his approach will enable students of political Islam to see that Islamists are not so much renouncing values of modernity as they are "rewrite[ing]...the terminology of the symbolic system of Islam, a fact which helps to extend the reach of such modernisation rather than to interrupt it or obstruct its progress."¹⁶⁵ Burgat discusses the Islamists' approach to women's rights, often a major cause for concern amongst Western liberals when considering the compatibility of "Islam and democracy." According to Burgat, the rising number of women joining Islamist movements is an indication of how Muslim women are increasingly seeking out alternative ways to articulate their struggle for greater rights in the political and private realms, as opposed to relying on a Western paradigm often seen as manipulative and culturally insensitive.¹⁶⁶ Rather than see the two processes as mutually exclusive, Burgat encourages the perspective that the "dynamics of gender re-empowerment have been pursued from within the process of re-Islamisation itself."¹⁶⁷

Burgat is also critical of reactive and traditionally orientalist analyses whose essentialist views of Islam lead to the belief that Islamists are incapable of change. Burgat believes this view is derived from a perspective that focuses too heavily on the "emblematic slogans" of Islamists rather than their "characteristics," which are actually "extremely diverse and, as a result of development policies, they are affected by a constant dynamic

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., xvi.

¹⁶⁶ On the point of manipulation, Burgat writes: "The blind and unconditional support of Western observers can be compared with the heightened resentment of the Islamist activists who are well aware of the vital role that this group plays in stirring the hostility of the West, which regards them as a guarantee for the all-repressive option. All the regimes that are threatened by the Islamist upsurge have encouraged the emergence and the development of a rash of feminist movements that rarely have any social foundation." Ibid., 146.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 145.

of change.”¹⁶⁸ Tamimi is equally critical of analyses which ignore the drastic changes that have taken place both in the political agenda and strategies adopted by the Islamist movement Hamas. In discussing the movement’s Charter, Tamimi writes:

Hamas’s political discourse on these [position of Hamas regarding Jews, the existence of the state of Israel, as well as appropriate military strategy and tactics for the “resistance”] and other issues has evolved significantly since its Charter was first published in the summer of 1988. The Charter has been both problematic and embarrassing and has been cited more by the critics of the movement than by its spokesmen.¹⁶⁹

Like Tamimi, Burgat also places a good deal of importance on context in understanding the types of strategies and tactics adopted by Islamist movements. In contradistinction to scholars like Gilles Kepel, who, according to Burgat, view all acts of violence carried about Islamist movements within the “paradigm of ‘Islamist violence’,” Burgat believes it is necessary to understand the violence of the regimes these movements are up against. Whereas in the “West, analysis is increasingly replaced by the discourse of embattled regimes,” in actuality in places like Algeria and Egypt, the governments perpetrate most of the violence to which Islamist movements are merely responding.¹⁷⁰ When context is lacking and speculation rife, the types of oversimplifications found in Reactive and even Modern analyses are inevitable. As Burgat puts it:

To see in the process of re-Islamisation only the negative effects of what some regard as an error of political conduct, and others see as an economic crisis, a repressive conjuncture or foreign manipulation (by the Saudis or the Iranians and also, for the less scrupulous, by the United States), is to overlook the essential ingredients (the plurality, the ambivalence, the historicity and the dynamics) of a political movement. All the interpretative keys needed to decipher a complex logic are missing. There is in all this a risk of courting a double impasse: a methodological impasse for those who provide analysis and a political impasse for those who feed decision-making.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁹ Tamimi, 7.

¹⁷⁰ Burgat, 14.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 22.

Were these analytical pitfalls to be avoided, Western academics, journalists, and politicians alike would be able to isolate and address the very real political and economic issues that plague the Middle East and impact state-society relations, many caused by Western governments themselves, and perhaps see in Islamist movements potential partners for a more peaceful future in which a “consensual modernity” is attained, based on mutual respect if not always agreement. To do this would require that

national political actors [become] capable of abstracting themselves from the instinctive membership of their own symbolic universe and accepting the legitimacy of a formula which uses symbolic resonances other than those with which they are familiar; in this way they recognise the commonality of modernity, beyond the specific countries which have expressed its content.¹⁷²

Fawaz Gerges’ book the *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy*, despite being located within the security-focused, “Islamist violence” paradigm, can in some ways be considered representative of a “hermeneutic” approach in that it also takes into consideration first-hand accounts, important philosophical and religious texts, as well as of the historical, political and economic context in which the diverse group of Islamist movements Gerges considers have developed. As a result of listening to the Islamists “in their own words” he develops an analysis that diverges in many ways from the Reactive and even Modern perspective and tends to share more in common with the post-modern analyses, in particular in his implied belief in the possibility that Islamists speak from a centre located completely outside the West. For example, in a passage in which he draws a comparison between the West’s inability to understand the 1979 Islamic revolution and its similar misapprehension of contemporary Islamist movements, Gerges appears to both grasp and take seriously the way in which Iranian Islamists themselves perceived the nature of their struggle with the United States/West:

[u]nlike those from Marxist and socialist critics, the Islamist attack on the United States did not focus only on class division, racism, and injustice. Rather, it rejected the basic idea of what America at its best represents. It was a spiritual critique every bit as profound as Galileo’s conflict with the Inquisition over the position of the sun in the universe. If we do not bring

¹⁷² Ibid., 185.

ourselves to understand the moral and spiritual mission that drives today's jihadists we will remain forever baffled at the "irrationality" of their speech and the "insanity" of their actions.¹⁷³

In accepting the possibility of a genuinely alternative (to the Western) worldview as the basis for Islamist political thought, Gerges' analysis also takes seriously the Islamist claim that material factors alone cannot explain their reasons for pushing for an alternative agenda:

Of the dozens of 70s-era activists I spoke to, nearly all regularly cautioned me against the Western tendency to explain the rise of Islamism in purely socioeconomic and political terms. Such explanations, they felt, distorted and trivialized what their movement was all about: a spiritual and moral quest to halt, *not* merely to moderate, the secularization of society. It could not be understood as "a developmental crisis." "We did not sacrifice the flower of our youth, the best years of our lives, in prisons to get jobs and earthly rewards. Our aim is to please God. The West cannot comprehend our spirituality and religiosity as long as it is blinded by materialism."¹⁷⁴

Gerges concedes that the "[t]he depth of Islamic spirituality, the extent of its reach into daily life, would be hard for even fundamentalist Christians to comprehend," let alone a secularist or atheist for whom religion plays a limited or non-existent role in day-to-day living.

Like the other hermeneutic analyses, Gerges also distinguishes between the wide variety of Islamist movements in existence, including what he calls the "local and global jihadists," the former including the Lebanese Hizbullah, Egyptian Tanzim al-Jihad and al-Jama'a al-Islamiya, the latter al Qaeda and lone jihadists, generally young men galvanized into action by their anger at U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East.¹⁷⁵ To substantiate this position, Gerges references "dozens of interviews, sermons, and lectures" of Hizbollah's spiritual founding father, Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, in which he rejected the al Qaeda claim that the suicide bombings of 9/11 were religiously

¹⁷³ Gerges, 2007, 144.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

sanctioned, concluding later that “[t]he majority of Islamists and jihadists” believe 9/11 “was a catastrophic blunder.”¹⁷⁶ According to Gerges, the majority of Islamist also oppose the use of terror tactics in what they otherwise deem a legitimate resistance against foreign occupation, condemning the killing of civilians in Iraq, including diplomats and government employees.¹⁷⁷ Unlike the “ideologization of terror” analyses, Gerges also acknowledges the role of motives in discussing use of violence as a tactic employed by Islamists, quoting approvingly a member of al-Jama’*a* al Islamiya who defensively argues: “[w]e were not born with a violent gene. We were not inherently violent. Our violence was a product of a political vision, specific conditions, and circumstance.”¹⁷⁸ The equation, according to Gerges, could be changing, though, as an increasingly significant segment of the Muslim population becomes incensed by the United States’ aggressive policies *vis-à-vis* the Middle East, a feeling which could translate into greater levels of violence should the U.S. government decide to continue along the current policy trajectory for the region.

3. Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated the two most prominent ways in which the IR/social science meta-narrative has impacted mainstream analyses of political Islam: through the tendency of scholars to view political Islam within the “ideologization of terror” framework, and through their proclivity to view political Islam as an anti-modern reaction to various socioeconomic or political developments. In both instances, substance is sacrificed in the name of theoretical parsimony, and overused, essentialist, and often racist stereotypes replace reasoned analysis. Another common feature of these approaches is their tendency to say more about the authors’ visions of the West, which is generally their physical and epistemological location, than about the subject they claim to be analysing. In other words, political Islam’s role in the academic discourse discussed here is similar to that of the Oriental other in Edward Said’s seminal work, and is similarly used as a benchmark by which to view the West’s modernity, rationality and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 224.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 257.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 293.

humanity. Despite the variety of alternative approaches to the study of political Islam discussed here, all of which challenge the orientalist assumptions of Reactive analyses, the tendency within non-academic genres of the discourse continues to be to view Islamist movements via the modern rationalist paradigm derived from the mainstream IR/social science narratives of such central theoretical concepts as the “state,” “sovereignty,” “modernity,” “rationality,” etc.

In order to understand the persistence and impact of this new form of Orientalism, which regards political Islam, rather than Islam, the Arab world, or the “Orient” in general, as the West’s perennial other, on U.S. relations with the Muslim world, one must first consider the “power political” component of the discourse. In order to do so the next chapter will explore the history of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East, paying particular attention to the relationship between the development of U.S. power in the region post-World War II and the attendant development of mainstream American orientalist perspectives of the region. The chapters that follow will consider the ways in which this dynamic relationship between “power intellectual” and “power political” have impacted, and been impacted by, the perceptions of policy and opinion makers in the United States with regards to political Islam.

Chapter Three: A Brief History of the Development of “American Orientalism”¹

It is quite common [today] to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar. But this has often happened with the “Orient,” that semi-mythical construct which since Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in the late eighteenth century has been made and remade countless times.

-Edward Said²

Language has always been the companion of empire.

-Antonio de Nebija³

As has been argued thus far in the thesis, the principal components of Orientalism as they relate to the interdependent and pernicious relationship between knowledge and power that defined the European colonial relationships with the Middle East/Muslim world continue to affect the perceptions and actions of the West, and particularly the United States. The persistence of orientalist stereotypes in “modern rationalist” analyses of political Islam, and in “ideologization of terror” and anti-modern, reactive analyses in particular, as described in the previous chapter, is a vivid reminder of the legacy of European colonialism and the impact it has had on Americans’ understanding of, and relations with, the Muslim world. In this chapter I will consider the origins and development of the “power political” component of this unique strand of Orientalism, proving the continued relevance of Said’s seminal book.

Certainly Said was selective in the works he chose to analyze, as his critics have claimed, and no doubt *Orientalism* had the ironic effect of portraying the “West” in the same monolithic light that he sought to dispel when looking at the “East.” Yet it is farfetched to argue that *Orientalism* is “a work of malignant charlatanry in which it is hard to distinguish honest mistakes from wilful misrepresentations”⁴, or that it has restricted the discipline of Middle Eastern Studies by creating an overly “pro-

¹ Borrowed from the title of Douglass Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

² Edward Said, “A Window on the World,” *The Guardian* (2 August 2003).

³ Nebrija was the author of the first published book of grammar of a modern European language. Quoted in Todorov, 123.

⁴ Robert Irwin, quoted in Barnaby Rogerson, “For Lust of Knowing: the Orientalists and their Enemies,” by Robert Irwin, *Unwise Men in the East*, *The Independent*, 2006.

Islamic”⁵ academic environment, limited by the “nationalization” of history, or stifled by a McCarthyite culture of fear in which scholars engage in self-censorship so as to avoid punishment for politically incorrect analysis.⁶ Often lost in these criticisms is the very nuance these authors accuse Said of lacking.

Regardless of the criticisms that could justifiably be leveled at his work, particularly concerning scope, it seems implausible to deny Said’s impact in bringing attention to the intricate ways in which the power/knowledge nexus has impacted the study of the Middle East, as well as to the manifold interactions between the construction, accumulation and consolidation of knowledge on the region and the West’s political, economic and military relations with it. Many of these critiques, by concentrating “on the scholarly high ground of linguistics, philology and history” where Said’s thesis was most vulnerable, tend to ‘throw the baby out with the bath water’ by overlooking the much stronger aspect of his critique concerning “the swamp ground of opinion-makers: all the half-educated journalists, diplomats, administrators, artists, filmmakers and popular historians who have entered the field,” some of whose less-nuanced contributions to the orientalist discourse will be discussed in the last two chapters of this thesis.⁷

Said’s theory of Orientalism is based on “the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature,” but rather a synthetic, Western construct which has served as a consistent benchmark of inferiority against which Europeans have judged their own superiority.⁸ Through the essentialized “description” of the colonized Orient, the anthropologist, sociologist, philologist, or policy maker

could bring the Orient closer to Europe, thereafter to absorb it entirely and — centrally important — to cancel, or at least subdue and reduce, its strangeness and, in the case of Islam, its hostility. For the Islamic Orient would henceforth appear as a category denoting the Orientalists’ power and not the Islamic people as humans nor their history as history.⁹

⁵ Joshua Teitelbaum and Meir Litvak, “Students, Teachers, and Edward Said: Taking Stock of Orientalism,” trans. Keren Ribo, *MERIA Journal* 10, no. 1, Article 2 (March 2006).

⁶ See for example Henry Munson, “Intolerable Tolerance: Western Academia and Islamic Fundamentalism,” *Connection* 5, no. 3 (1993).

⁷ Rogerson.

⁸ Said, 1979, 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

Orientalism has continued to limit the space in which the Muslim other (this time in the guise of “Islamic fundamentalist”) is able to exist as an assertive subject to be understood and engaged, rather than a subservient object to be judged and controlled. As Todorov has argued, the pursuit of knowledge about the other will always be oppressive so long as his/her subjecthood is denied. “[U]nless grasping is accompanied by a full acknowledgement of the other as subject, it risks being used for purposes of exploitation, of “taking”; knowledge will be subordinated to power.”¹⁰ In order to comprehend the persistence of orientalism, albeit in its new guise, one must first understand its origins and development in the “New World” which mirrors, in many ways, its development in the “Old,” a subject Said so eloquently assessed in his book. As M. Shahid Alam contends, “what makes this repackaged Orientalism new are its intentions, its proponents, and the enemy it has targeted for destruction.”¹¹ The various components of this “repackaged Orientalism” will all be examined in the following sections.

1. American Orientalism: Early Years

Although the focus of Said’s seminal book is largely on Orientalism’s development and impact on 18th and 19th century colonial Europe, he concludes the book with a discussion of its insidious spread into the American psyche as U.S. interest in the Arab world has increased. In the section “Orientalism Now,” Said argues that “since World War II, and more noticeably after each of the Arab-Israeli wars, the Arab Muslim has become a figure in American popular culture, even as in the academic world, in the policy planner’s world, and in the world of business very serious attention is being paid to the Arab.” This had largely to do with a shift in the balance of power in world politics, with power moving away from the old European imperial powers — Britain and France — and towards the increasingly economically and militarily dominant United States. As Said writes, “a vast web of interests now linked all parts of the former colonial world to the United States, just as a proliferation of academic subspecialties divided (and yet connected) all the former philological and

¹⁰ Todorov, 132.

¹¹ M. Shahid Alam, “A Repackaged Rationale for Dual Control of the Middle East: Israel, the US and the New Orientalism,” *Counterpunch.org* (14 July 2006).

European based disciplines like Orientalism.”¹² The American Orientalist was more likely to take the guise of an “area specialist” than a philologist or anthropologist, yet his role was largely the same: to put essentialized and distorted knowledge of the region “at the service of government or business or both.”¹³

Yet despite the seeming ease with which the orientalist methodologies and theories were transferred from the “Old” to the “New” World, the process was not always smooth sailing, as Americans’ knowledge (even distorted) of the Middle East was much more limited than that of their European counterparts. What little knowledge the Americans had of the Middle East in 1776 was most likely derived from two seminal books then popular amongst the literate classes at the time: the *King James Bible* and Scheherazade’s *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*. This was hardly surprising, considering the lack of commercial and diplomatic exchange between the United States and the region. This situation began to change towards the middle of the next century though, when the “Middle East began to loom larger on America’s diplomatic and cultural horizon during what Mark Twain called ‘the Gilded Age,’ not only because United States missionaries sought to save more souls, but also because United States merchants sought to expand trade.”¹⁴

By the 1870s, American businessmen were purchasing half of Turkey’s opium crop for resale in China and selling everything from warships to kerosene to the Ottoman Empire. Yet increased commercial ties with the Middle East did not, unfortunately, lead to expanded knowledge. In fact, it seemed the more contact Americans made with the people of the Middle East, the more distorted their view of them became, a fact undoubtedly related to the asymmetric power relations between the United States and regional powers. Remarking on his admiration for British efforts to spread Western “civilization” to the darkest corners of the world, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, who believed the United States must play its part in shouldering “the white man’s burden,” confessed privately in 1907 that “it is impossible to expect moral, intellectual and material well-being where Mohammedanism is supreme.”¹⁵

¹² Said, 1979, 285.

¹³ Said, 1979, 285.

¹⁴ Little, 14.

¹⁵ Little, 15.

The orientalist vision of the Middle East became more entrenched as U.S. involvement in the region expanded towards the end of World War I. In a report commissioned by President Wilson in the summer of 1919, General James Harbord advised that, should the United States decide to increase its involvement in the region in light of the demise of the Ottoman Empire, it must be aware of the nature of the people it would confront, including the “bloodthirsty, unregenerate and revengeful” attitude of the “indolent and pleasure-loving Turk” and the “traditional lawlessness of migrating Kurds and Arabs,” whose desire for “reprisals for past wrongs will be strong for at least a generation.”¹⁶ This prescient report was noteworthy for elaborating the U.S. vision of the Muslim Middle East, a vision that would shape U.S. policy towards the region for decades to come.

The orientalist perception generated and sustained by politicians to explain U.S. exceptionalism and justify certain foreign policy decisions necessitated by its position in the world found a helpful ally in the media. Douglas Little eloquently describes the popular culture version of Orientalism that fed off of, but also fed into, the discourse on the Muslim world being consolidated in policy-making circles:

Grounded in a Social Darwinistic belief in the racial inferiority of Arabs, Kurds, and Turks, sustained by an abiding faith in the superiority of the United States, Orientalism American style became a staple of popular culture during the 1920s through such media as B movies, best-selling books, and mass circulation magazines. Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Sheik* (1921), the *Thief of Baghdad* (1924), and *Beau Geste* (1926) propelled Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks, and Ronald Colman to stardom, while reinforcing popular stereotypes of the Arabs as a culturally backward, sexually depraved, and congenitally violent people.¹⁷

Popular magazines, such as *National Geographic* and works published by the American Oriental Society (founded in 1842) which often carried accounts of travelers to the region, reinforcing this image by featuring stories conveying the notion of a “widening political and cultural gap between Occident and Orient in the Middle East.”¹⁸ In popular culture as in politics, the “Orient’s” backwardness

¹⁶ Little, 17.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸ Ibid., 18-19. An article published in December 1927, titled “East of Suez to the Mount of Decalogue,” discussed the “fatalistic and irresponsible Arabs” who wandered the Sinai Desert as childlike camel jockeys shunning Western technology and embracing Mohammeden superstition.”

fascinated Americans and was a benchmark by which to judge their own progress. As Fuad Sha'ban writes:

There was something about the primitive state of the Oriental, especially the Bedouin society that appealed to American travelers. Perhaps the Arab of the desert was a reminder of the past innocence of America before the advent of political, cultural and industrial maturity. In a sense the Arab provided an outlet, an escape to the world of romance and simplicity ... The desert setting and the simple, primitive life of Muslims, especially the Bedouins, made them particularly attractive to the traveler. In his eyes they were the direct descendants of Ishmael, retaining all the wild nature, purity and simplicity associated with that original prototype.¹⁹

Through such popular films, magazines and orientalist travel accounts of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East did Americans become familiarized with the region.

2. American Orientalism: Post-World War II

It was not until WWII that the U.S. government would quantitatively expand its presence in the Middle East, and with this expansion, develop the need for more extensive information on the region. As Said argues, once:

Cairo, Teheran, and North Africa were important arenas of war, and in that setting, with the exploitation of [Middle Eastern] oil, strategic, and human resources pioneered by Britain and France, the United States prepared for its new post-war imperial role.

Not the least aspect of this role was a “cultural relations policy,” as it was defined by Mortimer Graves in 1950... For what was clearly at stake, Graves argued (to very receptive ears) was the need for “much better American understanding of the forces which are contending with the American idea for acceptance by the Near East. The principal of these are, of course, communism and Islam.”²⁰

Little concurs with Said's assessment of the United States' post-WWII increased projection of power in the Middle East, pointing out in particular the role played by the region's large reserves of “black gold” at a time when United States demand for the vital substance was outpacing domestic supply. “[W]ithin ten years of V-J Day,”

¹⁹ Fuad Sha'ban, *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought* (Durham, NC: Acorn Press, 1991), 185-186.

²⁰ Said, 1979, 295.

“the nature of U.S. interests in the Middle East had come into sharp focus, as had the policies that U.S. officials deemed necessary to promote and protect them.”²¹

As the hot wars of WWII faded into memory and the United States’ attention turned to the emerging “communist threat,” the entire state-system came to be viewed through the prism of the Cold War, neatly divided between allies and enemies. Muslim states and movements, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, were judged according to which side of the dividing line they were perceived to fall into.²² Arab nationalists who challenged the status quo were variously labeled “Marxists,” “fundamentalists,” or “terrorists,” in an effort to undermine the legitimacy of their demands for greater independence for the region *vis-à-vis* the West, as well as to justify periodic intervention in the region to either prop up unpopular pro-Western, anti-leftist regimes, or, if necessary, destabilize or overthrow governments deemed to be in opposition to U.S. interests in the region.

In order to justify this type of intervention in the region, a convincing enemy other had to first be rhetorically constructed, which meant the demeaning dichotomies originally deployed a century or more earlier to justify European colonialism were dragged out of the Western imperial closet and reused. It is within this context that one should view Dwight Eisenhower’s memoirs, in which he questioned, in traditional orientalist style, the rationality and maturity of the Egyptian nationalist movement. In one telling passage, Eisenhower accused Gamal Abdel Nasser of forsaking Britain’s “modern program of independence for countries once under part of the Empire,” in favor of “virulent nationalism and unreasoning prejudice,” in which there was “evidence of Communist meddling.”²³

Arab nationalism was also seen as a threat by many American academics who adopted what they believed was a “pragmatic” stance on the issue, arguing movements like Nasser’s could only be accepted by the West if they became less radical and more amenable to U.S. interests in the region. As one prominent British Orientalist working in the United States at the time put it, the Arab world will not be

²¹ Said, 1979, 308.

²² Robert Springborg, “The Need for a Machiavellian, Not an Idealistic Uncle Sam,” *London Middle East Institute Publication* (August, 2006).

²³ Little, 27.

able to improve its situation until its “nationalism is prepared to come to terms with the West.”²⁴ By the time of Eisenhower’s presidency, the view of Arabs as irrational and naïve, and thus unduly susceptible to outside (communist) control, was already beginning to seep into the collective American psyche. In 1958, two years after Nasser seized the Suez Canal, in an event that seemed to confirm all the nightmare scenarios of U.S. officials, Eisenhower sent U.S. Marines to Lebanon to support a pro-American regime facing opposition from Nasserite dissidents. In a strategy deliberating session, Eisenhower warned the National Security Council that “the underlying Arab thinking” was entrenched in “violence, emotion and ignorance.”²⁵

Although Said thought its roots could be traced to WWII, it was the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war that he believed had the greatest impact on a newly-minted American brand of Orientalism which would later come to shape the way Americans viewed the rise of political Islam in the Middle East.²⁶ After the war,

the Arab appeared everywhere as something more menacing...He is seen as the disrupter of Israel’s and the West’s existence, or in another view of the same thing, as a surmountable obstacle to Israel’s creation in 1948. Insofar as this Arab has any history, it is part of the history given to him (or taken from him: the difference is slight) by the Orientalist tradition, and later, the Zionist tradition.²⁷

And as was typical with its European predecessor, in American Orientalism Arabs were seen as incapable of representing that past, or present for that matter. Said gives the example of the 1973 *New York Times Magazine* series of articles on the 1973 war, in which the two sides of the conflict were presented. The Israeli narrative was represented by an Israeli lawyer, “the Arab side by an American former ambassador to an Arab country who had no formal training in Oriental studies,” an act that calls to mind Marx’s statement regarding peasants in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*: “they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.”²⁸

²⁴ Quoted in Said, 1979, 321.

²⁵ Little, 27.

²⁶ As Said argues, prior to WWII, “The American experience of the Orient ... was limited.” As a result, “there was no deeply invested tradition of Orientalism, and consequently in the United States knowledge of the Orient never passed through the refining and rearticulating and reconstructing process, whose beginning was in philology study, that it went through in Europe.” Said, 1979, 290.

²⁷ Said, 1979, 286.

²⁸ Said, 1979, 293; Karl Mark, *Eighteenth Brumaire* (London: Electric Book Co., 2001).

In a way, the Palestinian struggle for self-determination (and against an occupation originally imposed by the former mandate/colonial system and subsequently supported by the West, and the United States in particular) could be seen as a microcosm of the Arab world's wider political and ideological struggle against Western neo-imperialism. Likewise, Western representations of the individuals and movements involved in this struggle have also been emblematic of the general orientalist narrative of the Arab/Muslim world, which began to firmly take root on American soil during this period. As with the Palestinian, the Arab in general was either a "stupid savage, or a negligible quantity, morally and even existentially."²⁹ Both were backward, fanatical, violent and incapable of change, whereas the Israelis, constructed in the discourse to form the most eastern outpost of Western "civilization," were portrayed as modern, adaptable, intelligent and moderate. The Palestinians were merely obstacles, blocking Israeli attempts to "make the desert bloom"; "they were inconsequential nomads possessing no real claim on the land therefore no cultural or national reality."³⁰

These same stereotypes came to form part of the more general discourse on the Arab/Muslim world beyond Palestine, partially as a result of the Israeli propaganda campaign to convince the West, and the United States in particular, of their shared fate as partners in the same civilizational struggle against a violent and unenlightened Arab/Muslim world. According to Alam,

Once they had succeeded in creating Israel, the Zionists knew that its long-term survival depended on fomenting wars between the West and Islam. Zionism has pursued this goal by its own wars against Arabs and, since 1967, a brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; but equally, it has pulled all the stops to convince the United States to support unconditionally Israel's depredations against Arabs.³¹

The year 1973 heralded a change in the West's perception of the Middle East for another reason: the oil embargo of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), which targeted any state that supported Israel in

²⁹ Ibid., 305.

³⁰ Ibid., 286.

³¹ M. Shahid Alam, "A Repackaged Rationale for Dual Control of the Middle East: Israel, the US and the New Orientalism," *Counterpunch.org* (14 July 2006).

its conflict with its Arab neighbours (i.e., the United States and its Western European allies). At the time OAPC members raised oil prices 70-100%, effectively quadrupling them, and damaging, albeit temporarily, the economies of the targeted states.³² This act led to a preponderance of references to scheming Arab oil sheikhs, with cartoons appearing everywhere depicting them “standing behind gasoline pump[s]...their sharply hooked noses, the evil mustachioed leer on their faces,” an image persisting today in the form of the shady Saudi prince using his excessive amounts of money to pay for, interchangeably, prostitutes or weapons for Islamist extremists.³³ According to Said, this period witnessed a proliferation of orientalist books and articles published on Islam and the Arabs that “represent(ed) absolutely no change over the virulent anti-Islamist polemics of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.”³⁴

The framing of the events of 4 November 1979 by the U.S. media helped to consolidate the discourse of the backwards, irrational and violent Muslim/Arab. It was on this day that enthusiastic student participants in the Iranian revolution occupied the American embassy in Tehran and took 52 Americans hostage, providing over a year’s worth of news fodder for an increasingly sensationalist U.S. media in its portrayal of all issues related to Islam and/or the Middle East. The fear-mongering headlines these events inspired, such as *Time* magazine’s “An Ideology of Martyrdom,” or *Newsweek*’s “Iran’s Martyr Complex,” and typically orientalist editorials such as the *Wall Street Journal*’s on 20 November 1979, lamenting the decline of Western influence in the region and the subsequent “receding civilization” it engendered, would not seem out of place in the post-9/11 media environment.³⁵ For Gerges, the 444 days period in which the hostages were held transformed the way Americans perceived the threat emanating from the ‘Orient’. “It was under the impact of the Iranian revolution, then, that Islamism replaced secular nationalism as a security threat to U.S. interests, and a fear of a clash between Islam and the West crystallized in the minds of Americans.”³⁶

³² Nicolas Sarkis, “OPEC’s Influence,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2006.

³³ Said, 1979, 286.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 286.

³⁵ Said, 1997, 84.

³⁶ Gerges, 43.

Focusing on the revolution's impact on the “‘reality producing’ cultural system” that affects not only the way Americans perceive Iran as a “monolithic, unchangeable, eternally anarchic place,”³⁷ but also the way in which U.S. foreign policy towards the country is created, implemented and justified, Adib-Moghaddam argues that the mainstream narrative of the events of 1979 must be seen within the context of “the epistemology of US representations of the ‘other’, into the cultural apparatus that has been able to take the ‘West’ (embodied by ‘America’) as a starting point for-and *Endziel* of- civilization.”³⁸ For Said, the (re)presentations of the Iranian revolution in the U.S. media were emblematic of the “sustained diet of information” it fed the American public about the Muslim world in general, “about a people, a culture, a religion- really no more than a poorly defined and badly misunderstood abstraction- always, in the case of Iran, represented as militant, dangerous, and anti-America,” and in this sense served a vital role in constructing a threatening other against which the U.S. could define itself as exceptional.³⁹

This era also witnessed the establishment of ties that would prove enduring between academia and the state regarding the study of the Middle East, thus mimicking another facet of European Orientalism. In one of many examples provided to substantiate this development, Said discusses the case of Monroe Berger, professor of sociology and Near Eastern studies at Princeton and then president of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), who wrote a report at the behest of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1967 entitled “Middle Eastern and North African Studies: Developments and Needs.”⁴⁰ Said is especially critical of the praise Berger lavished on the Middle East programs and research centres established with funding allocated by the National Defense Education Act of 1958 (which Said calls “a directly Sputnik-inspired initiative”),

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³⁹ Said, 1997, 83.

⁴⁰ MESA was created in 1966 as a joint initiative between the nongovernmental social science organisations Social Science Research Council (SSRC) and American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), under the leadership of Monroe Berger and with the funding from the Ford Foundation, with the purpose of establishing an umbrella organization for “all those interested in the scholarly study of the Middle East, regardless of their disciplinary affiliations.” Lockman, 128.

which he viewed as a breach of academic freedom and evidence of the instrumentalization of knowledge for power. Said points out what he views as the orientalist assumptions littered throughout Berger's analysis of the state of Middle Eastern studies in the United States, as evidenced in this passage:

The modern Middle East and North Africa is not a centre of great cultural achievement, nor is it likely to become one in the near future. The study of the region and its languages, therefore, does not constitute its own reward so far as *modern* culture is concerned The contemporary Middle East, thus, has only in small degree the kinds of traits that seem to be important in attracting scholarly attention. (emphasis added)⁴¹

Here Berger fails to define the criteria by which he distinguishes “modern culture” from its assumed opposite, “traditional” culture, nor what constitutes a “great cultural achievement”; he does not need to. He assumes everyone reading the report will understand that the Middle East is a culturally backward region, and thus undeserving of any substantial analysis.

Said goes on to argue that Berger's ideas and attitude toward the Middle East were indicative of a larger trend transforming the discipline at the time and evidenced by the preponderance of one-size-fit-all “scientific” approaches, which entailed: “its conversion from a fundamentally philological discipline and a vaguely general apprehension of the Orient into a social science speciality.” This transformation meant that the orientalist need no longer “master the esoteric languages of the Orient; he begins instead as a trained social scientist and 'applies' his science to the Orient, or anywhere else.” This is the specifically American contribution to the history of Orientalism, which came to view the existence of the Oriental other not as a religious or civilizational threat, as it had been viewed for centuries in Europe, but rather as an “administrative issue,” a matter for policy makers. Hence the need for the “social scientist and the new expert, on whose somewhat narrower shoulders was to fall the mantle of Orientalism.”⁴²

⁴¹ Monroe Berger, *The Arab World Today* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1964), 140, quoted in Said, 1979, 288.

⁴² Said, 1979, 290.

Lockman concurs with this assessment of the roots of American Orientalism, and provides further evidence to substantiate the points raised by Said nearly three decades earlier. For example, Lockman points out that federal funding for the study of Middle Eastern languages and cultures rose significantly in the late 1960s and 1970s as the Defense Department became “increasingly alarmed” by developments in the region, including the 1973 Arab-Israeli war and subsequent oil embargo, and the 1979 Islamist revolution in Iran. With increased federal funding came the proliferation of Middle East studies centers at some of the nation’s most prestigious universities, a phenomenon “closely linked to Cold War policy-makers’ heightened need for reliable knowledge about critical regions of the world.”⁴³ In the absence of adequately qualified American scholars capable of leading these new programs, European scholars such as the English Orientalist H.A.R. Gibb and the Viennese Gustave von Grunabaum were recruited to head the Middle East Studies Centers at Harvard and UCLA respectively, bringing with them their European orientalist methodologies and theories.⁴⁴ Many of these European scholars were happy to make the transition from a traditionally academic study of the Middle East to one more policy oriented and aligned with national interests. According to Gibb, the Orient “was now much too important to be left to the Orientalists alone; it had become necessary to have Orientalists and social scientists work together to produce knowledge about the Middle East and Islam that was not only more comprehensive but also of more use to policymakers.”⁴⁵

Although scholars such as Bernard Lewis would continue to carry the torch of European Orientalism in the United States, their essentialist, civilizational-based approaches to the study of the Middle East soon gave way to a new paradigm, *de riguer* at the time for explaining the economic and social “backwardness” of Third World countries: “modernization theory.” As discussed in previous chapters, this approach is premised on the belief that “modernization” is a unilinear process entailing several stages of economic and social developments in which traditional societies, conceived as “essentially rural, agricultural, authoritarian and based on personal and oral modes of communication,” would eventually transform into modern

⁴³Ibid., 129.

⁴⁴Ibid., 126.

⁴⁵Ibid., 129.

societies, conceived as “urban, industrial, literate, participatory and based on communications through various mass media.”⁴⁶ By focusing on contemporary issues relating to what they saw as the economic underdevelopment and political and social stagnancy of the states that comprised the Middle East, adherents to the “modernization” paradigm differed from traditional Orientalists who still tended to view “Islamic civilization during its ‘classical age,’ i.e., before its long decline set in,” as their “primary object of study.”⁴⁷

Despite their divergent descriptions of the inferior other, defined in “temporal” terms in the “modernization” paradigm and “spatial” and “ethical” terms in Orientalism, both approaches shared a dichotomous reading of the Middle East, one which lent itself to the imperialist, and later neo-imperialist, designs of governments seeking to gain control over peoples they deemed less advanced. As in the case of Orientalism, “modernization theory” was used to justify Western intervention in Middle Eastern states in order to facilitate their “modernization,” or what in earlier times would have been referred to as their “civilization.”

It took Middle Eastern scholars more than a decade longer than their colleagues in other regional studies departments to begin to openly question the potentially damaging impact of government, in particular Defense-related funding on the integrity of their work and, even more importantly, on the Middle Eastern peoples and societies at the “receiving end of American global power.”⁴⁸ Even though most U.S. scholars of the Middle East and Islam were no doubt researching issues unrelated to policymaking, or were divergent in their views of U.S. foreign policy, as Lockman points out, “it remains true that in a range of disciplines and fields — perhaps most notably political science and those area studies fields which, like Middle East studies, focused on key arenas of the Cold War — scholarly agendas were often influenced by the needs of the ‘national security state’ to which the Cold War had given birth.”⁴⁹ And even after the discipline caught up with its African, Asian and Latin American regional studies counterparts, by recognizing the pernicious effects of government funding and adopting more critical methodologies in their studies, most Western

⁴⁶ Ibid., 136-137.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 146.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

scholars of the Middle East seemed no closer to understanding the contemporary cultures, social and political systems and worldviews of the peoples of the region than were their orientalist predecessors.

Just as the orientalists and “modernization theory” approaches to the study of the Middle East prohibited an understanding of developments that could disturb the central presuppositions on which their theories/methodologies were based, Marxist and political economy approaches, originally seen as antidotes to mainstream orientalist approaches, were also unable to accommodate regional developments that challenged their rigid ideologies. As a result, some of the major transformative events of the decade, including the rise of political Islam, went undetected by pre-eminent scholars in the field. According to Lockman, this oversight was due to the “teleological vision of historical progress shared by both liberal modernization theory and classical Marxism and traceable back to the Enlightenment era, which posited secularization as the inexorable wave of the future.”⁵⁰

3. American Orientalism: Post-Cold War

As with the development European Orientalism, which occurred in tandem with the increased European colonial power over the region, Said saw the more policy-focused American orientalist discourse in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the United States’ increased political and military hegemony over the Middle East, a point Lockman’s research seems to bear out. A series of Middle East crises — the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars and the 1979 Islamic revolution — led successive U.S. governments to re-evaluate the country’s policies towards the region, a process which necessitated the expertise of Middle East scholars. While the basic framework of U.S. interests (based on oil, Israel and containment of the USSR) remained unchanged from the 1940s through the 1990s, over time U.S. officials came to believe that those interests could no longer be secured through what was seen increasingly as an ineffective policy driven by a combination of “covert action and modernization theory, occasionally punctuated by military intervention.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid., 173.

⁵¹ Little, 309.

With the fall of the Soviet Union the United States increasingly came to see itself as the bearer the mantle of the new world order, a vision that led to a bolder Middle East policy. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait provided the United States with the perfect pretext in which to assert its newfound status. As Stephen Chan points out, although the “[t]he Cold War had been won in the symbolic moment when the Berlin Wall came down,” it was during the first Gulf War that American, and through them Western, “values were deemed to have met their first post-Cold War test, and passed.” In this context, Francis Fukuyama’s reflections on the “end of history” would provide

a *leitmotiv* for the triumphalism that followed the victories of the Cold and Gulf War. Following Hegel, history had ended with its own consummation, and liberal democracy had not only won but had established itself as the best possible government, as the best possible result of political history moving inexorably to this point.⁵²

Yet celebration was subdued as American foreign policy makers and analysts paused to contemplate the actual significance of this “end of history” and with it the emergence of the proverbial “last man” who “inhabited the achievement of liberal history.”⁵³

At this point the seeds of an entirely new foreign policy were planted, in anticipation of what Fukuyama, combining Hegelian and Nietzschean images and concepts, described as the “first man” of a new history. In a book written in 1992, three years after his celebrated article was published in *The National Interest*, Fukuyama argued that the “new ‘first men,’ deprived and uncomfortable in the historically realized world, would not exhibit the historically conditioned and civilized attributes of desire and reason — they would thereby be ‘bestial’...In their desire for recognition the slaves would rise against the masters and restart history.”⁵⁴ In this Durkheimian view of the “anomie” which would result from the definitive end of one era and the emergence of another, it was the Islamist/“fundamentalist” who would rise as the “first man” of this new history, capable of threatening the Western liberal order that had risen from the ashes of the Cold War.

⁵² Steven Chan, *Out of Evil: New International Politics and Old Doctrines of War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 27.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

According to this analysis, although the seeds had been sown for a foreign policy capable of dealing with this new “threat,” it would not be until Bush Jr. was elected to the White House that they would actually be harvested. Yet one should be cautious in attributing the emergence of political Islam as a perceived threat in the eyes of U.S. foreign policy makers, scholars, and media to one specific date or event. As Fawaz Gerges points out, political Islam entered Western government’s threat radar in the 1970s, first with the 1973 Arab-Israeli war (described in the Muslim world in religious terms as the “Ramadan war,” in contrast to the war that preceded it in 1967, which was fought in the name of Arab nationalism), then culminating with the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the ensuing hostage crisis, which “shocked many American officials into viewing Islam as a threat to Western interests.”⁵⁵ It was the latter event that actually led to Islamism replacing secular nationalism as the U.S.’ principal adversary in the region, at least on the rhetorical level. In fact, the hostage event and how it was presented by American politicians and media had such a major impact on the American psyche that it may have altered the outcome of the 1980 presidential elections, as many Americans rejected what they perceived as President Jimmy Carter’s failure to deal effectively with the crisis.

Carter’s successor, Ronald Reagan, made it a point to emphasize his anti-Islamist credentials from the beginning, calling Libyan President Mu’ammar al-Qaddafi a “barbarian,” claiming that “Libyan terrorism was part of a worldwide Islamic fundamentalist movement,” and that “Muslims were reverting to their belief that unless they killed a Christian or a Jew they would not go to heaven.”⁵⁶ Yet despite the rhetoric, the Regan administration’s policy showed that, within policy making circles at least, the world was still seen through Cold War lenses. Throughout much of the Reagan administration, U.S. foreign policy was more concerned with fighting the communist “Evil Empire” than with fighting Islamic “extremism,” as evidenced by Reagan’s support for the Islamist mujahadeen’s war to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.⁵⁷ In addition, the “symbolic import” of the revolution to Muslims was lost on most Western audiences, “namely that the limitations created by the

⁵⁵ Gerges, 1999, 41.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 70.

⁵⁷ George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 227; Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003).

hegemonic pretensions of Western culture over a society to which it was alien could be superseded.”⁵⁸

According to Gerges, Islamists were not seen as representing a “coherent, viable threat to the stability of the international order” until the end of the 1980s, a period in which the world witnessed the demise of the Soviet Union and the concomitant rise of political Islam as a potential challenge to the secular, pro-Western dictatorships that largely characterized the region.⁵⁹ Although succeeding presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton, would come to define U.S. policy towards political Islam in more concrete terms, both were still firmly rooted in the “accommodationist” camp, thus avoiding the “clash of civilizations” paradigm and, at least rhetorically, promoting an “awareness of the fluid, ambiguous, and splintered nature of Islamic revivalism.”⁶⁰

Yet it would be a mistake to see the policies of these presidents towards political Islam as monolithic and unchanging. Both tended to adopt more accommodationist policies only when the circumstances suited U.S. security and strategic interests (e.g., Bush’s support for Afghani *mujahedeen* to overcome the Soviet enemy, Clinton’s initial covert support for the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria when they looked politically ascendant). Likewise, both adopted more confrontationalist policies when they were deemed necessary to promote or protect those same interests (e.g., Bush’s support for the Algerian government’s crackdown on the FIS when it looked like the government was gaining the upper hand, Clinton’s continued blind support for the government of Egypt despite knowledge of its repressive measures to crush the Islamist opposition; Clinton’s labeling the Islamist states of Iran and Sudan “international outlaw,” “terrorist,” and “rogue” states, with all their policy and public opinion implications).

⁵⁸ Burgat, 13.

⁵⁹ Gerges, 1999, 71.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 35. According to Gerges, “confrontationalists” are those that believe that Islamists are comparable to “Communist totalitarians” in that they “are intrinsically antidemocratic and deeply anti-Western, and invariably target the West.” *Ibid.*, 21. Gerges includes within this camp scholars such as Bernard Lewis, Giles Kepel, Samuel Huntington and Daniel Pipes. On the other side of the academic / policy divide are what Gerges refers to as “accommodationists,” or those who “distinguish between the actions of legitimate Islamist political opposition groups and the tiny extremist minority.” Accommodationists reject the political Islam –as- monolith construct and instead see the resurgence of political Islam as a potential opportunity to create more reformist and representative governments in the region, and believe that “dialogue, diplomacy, and reconciliation with Islamists” are ultimately more effective policies than confrontation. *Ibid.*, 59. Scholars such as John Esposito, Graham Fuller and Leon T. Hadar can be included amongst their ranks, according to Gerges.

Perhaps Clinton's most enduring legacy regarding the discourse of and foreign policy towards political Islam, as we shall see later in this chapter, was his administration's attempts to define its policy as based on the "good Muslim/bad Muslim" distinction, where the former consists of governments described as "moderate" and "liberal," euphemisms pro-Western regimes, including such states as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia and the latter is assumed to represent the "most effective threat so far to the regional order."⁶¹ Although the presence of this Islamist "threat" defined Clinton's stance towards both Iran and Iraq throughout his presidency, it was not yet perceived as great enough to transform his administration's Cold War inspired "dual containment" policy into a more aggressive one.⁶²

Yet soon this "Cold War-style focus on containing America's mortal enemies" came to be seen as an "ideological straightjacket" incapable of protecting U.S. interests in the new millennium.⁶³ For Chan, the dramatic shift in United States policy towards the region occurred under the first George W. Bush administration (2000-2004) when the Donald Rumsfeld "neocon hawks" of the Defense Department "ascended" over the Colin Powell moderate conservatives of the State Department to develop and implement a doctrine of "full-spectrum dominance," predicated on the belief "that unanswerable technology, coupled with unanswerable speed (the latter facilitated by technology), would leave any enemy devastated, breathless and unable to keep up."⁶⁴

As Chan points out, this was a new era:

Unlike the post-Dulles Kennedy/Healey/Schmidt era, the doctrine was no longer merely to contain an enemy, to give up on the idea of victory, to have a safe world based on mutual deterrence and, to that extent, mutual respect, but to dominate the world and to impose Western if not United States values upon it. Unlike [Samuel] Huntington's proposed limits — a line drawn to exclude or isolate the Islamic world — Rumsfeld proposed to dominate the Islamic world as well.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 109.

⁶² Little.

⁶³ Ibid., 313.

⁶⁴ Chan, 87.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 87.

In remarks to the American Society of News Editors three weeks into the Iraq war, Vice President Dick Cheney confirmed this perspective, employing orientalist stereotypes to describe the enemy (read: violent, irrational, fanatical and unbound by territorially defined state borders) and justify the shift:

[W]e cannot always rely on old Cold War remedies of containment and deterrence. Containment does not work against a rogue state that possesses weapons of mass destruction and chooses to secretly deliver them to its terrorist allies. Deterrence does not work when we are dealing with terrorists who have no country to defend, who revel in violence, and who are willing to sacrifice their own lives to kill millions of others.⁶⁶

Despite attempts to transform the United States' military strategy to suit the new millennium environment, defense spending looked as if it was trapped in a time warp.

As one commentator put it:

If Rip Van Winkle had fallen asleep in the Pentagon's budgeting office 20 years ago and awoke today, his first reaction would be that nothing had changed... Rip would start scratching his head, however, when he discovered that the Soviet empire and the Soviet Union itself had imploded more than 15 years ago and that Washington now spends almost as much on its military power as the rest of the world combined and five times more than all its potential enemies together.⁶⁷

Noam Chomsky has argued that these policy and strategic shifts may have been more style than substance, as the idea that U.S. leaders have the prerogative to resort to "unilateral use of military power" to ensure "uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources" is one that has been shared by all administrations. Even Madeline Albright, Secretary of State under President Clinton, has acknowledged "every President has a position much like the Bush doctrine in his back pocket, but it is simply foolish to smash people in the face with it and to implement it in a manner that will infuriate even allies."⁶⁸ Perhaps not surprisingly, by the 1990s, Bill Clinton was spending more on defense than had been proposed by his

⁶⁶ "Vice President Cheney Salutes Troops: Remarks by the Vice President to the American Society of News Editors," *Office of the Vice President*, 9 April 2003.

⁶⁷ Richard K. Betts, "A Disciplined Defense: How to Regain Strategic Solvency," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2007).

⁶⁸ Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy* (New York: Henry hold and Company, LLC, 2006), 86.

Republican predecessor.⁶⁹ Upon closer examination of Clinton's record in office, in many ways, his administration's policies *vis-à-vis* the Muslim world were as ruthless as those of the Republicans' counterparts who either preceded or followed him. He did nothing to lift the harsh sanctions targeting Iraq first implemented by George H. W. Bush, responsible, in some estimates, for the deaths of close to one million Iraqis, half of them children, is a perfect, albeit grim, illustration of this point.⁷⁰

One could also look to Clinton's policies towards the Palestine-Israel conflict, which hardly improved on those of his Republican predecessor. As Chomsky points out,

matters proceeded through the 1990s, as Israeli settlement and integration of the territories proceeded steadily, with full United States support. In 2000, the final year of Clinton's term (and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's), settlement reached its highest peak since 1992, striking further blows at the possibility of a resolution of the conflict by peaceful diplomatic means.⁷¹

Clinton's policies *vis-à-vis* Israel in the first year of the 2000 *Intifada* also conformed to the *status quo*. Despite the fact that "according to the IDF accounting, the ratio of Palestinian to Israeli deaths was almost twenty to one in the first month of the *Intifada* (seventy-five Palestinians, four Israelis)," Clinton still decided to go through with "largest deal in a decade for military helicopters; there were no constraints on use, the Pentagon informed journalists."⁷²

Another prominent example is Clinton's missile attack on the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in 1998 on the pretext that the plant was a chemical weapons factory linked directly to Bin Laden, alleged mastermind of the terrorist attacks on United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania two weeks earlier. Described by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark as "crime under international law"⁷³, the attack flattened Sudan's principal pharmaceutical manufacturing plant which produced up to

⁶⁹ Betts.

⁷⁰ The severity of the problem was evidenced by the resignation of Denis Halliday, U.N. administrator of the oil-for-food program in 1998 to protest the ravages the sanctions were continuing to inflict on Iraqis. Halliday complained, "We are in the process of destroying an entire country" and denounced the sanctions as "nothing less than genocide." James Bovard, *Terrorism and Tyranny: Trampling Freedom, Justice and Peace to Rid the World of Evil* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003).

⁷¹ Chomsky, 2003, 180.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 181.

⁷³ "Attack on Sudan political, says former U.S. official," *The Guardian*, 23 September 1998.

90% of the nation's medical products, resulting in the long run in what a representative of one leading international Sudanese humanitarian relief organization described as the suffering and death of "tens of thousands of people — many of them children...from malaria, tuberculosis, and other treatable diseases."⁷⁴

Others, like Paul Rogers, argue that a second, and equally important, structural shift in policy occurred in 2006, during Bush's second term in office, when the president approved the Pentagon's "Long War" defense doctrine, as elaborated in its quadrennial defense review, the third of a series of reviews mandated by Congress during the Clinton era.⁷⁵ This new doctrine, with its proposed astronomical budget of \$439.3 billion, close to 45% more than the budget Bush inherited from Clinton in 2001⁷⁶ and matching peak figures of the mid-1980s Cold War, seemed to combine the more sordid elements of the "full-spectrum dominance" doctrine with those of the Cold War defense doctrines that preceded it. In line with the previous Bush defense doctrine, the primary focus of the "Long War" doctrine remained the "war on terror," with the underlying goal being to maintain United States pre-eminence in world affairs.⁷⁷ Similar to previous defense doctrines promulgated by Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, this doctrine was heavily focused on covert military actions, and on enlisting the support of foreign governments and their militaries to fight some of the war's principle battles. And, similar to Cold War defense thinking in general, the Bush Doctrine was also driven by the overriding need to justify and maintain a colossal military budget whose survival in the post-Cold War environment was looking increasingly tenuous. As Stephen Holmes has argued,

[b]ecause Americans have sunk so much of their national treasure into a military establishment fit to deter and perhaps fight an enemy that

⁷⁴ Jonathan Belke from the Near East Foundation writing in the *Boston Globe*, 22 August 1999.

⁷⁵ The term "Long War" appears to have been first used publicly by President Bush in his 2006 State of the Union speech when he said: "Our own generation is in a long war against a determined enemy." *White House, State of the Union* (31 January 2006) and later in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDRR) of the United States Department of Defense in which it was used in the title of the subsection on the war's long term goals: "Fighting The Long War." It was also used in the Review's preface where it states: "The United States is a nation engaged in what will be a long war." *Defense Department, Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (6 February 2006).

⁷⁶ This figure doesn't include additional resources specifically devoted to the ongoing wars, as such demands are handled mainly through supplementary requests. During 2006, these are expected to total \$120 billion; the Bush administration is currently planning an initial request of \$50 billion for 2007, which is significantly larger than the entire defence budget for the United Kingdom. Paul Rogers, "The World as a Battlefield," *Opendemocracy.com* 9 February 2006.

⁷⁷ Rogers.

has now disappeared, they have an almost irresistible inclination to exaggerate the centrality of rogue states, excellent targets for military destruction, [above] the overall terrorist threat. They overestimate war (which never unfolds as expected) and underestimate diplomacy and persuasion as instruments of American power.⁷⁸

As the attempt⁷⁹ to implement this semantic shift from the “war on terror” label to the more epic sounding “Long War” suggests, this doctrine hopes to emulate that of its Cold War predecessor, particularly by reconstituting the Manichean lens through which the battles of the Cold War were viewed. As Paul Rogers puts it, the doctrine aims to achieve its goals in the context of two core factors:

The first is obvious: the determination of the United States to remain the world leader. This was repeated in Bush's State of the Union address on 31 January, and is very much reflected in the Pentagon's review.

The second is the representation of the new security paradigm as the “long war,” a phrase that has crept into Pentagon-speak over the past two years and is now being used as a pithy successor to the “cold war” as encapsulating the United States defense outlook...The term is hugely convenient in that it simplifies everything into a “them and us” global confrontation, awarding the current adversary the same role that the Soviet Union occupied between 1946 and 1991. The implication is that the United States is again engaged in a major confrontation in which it deserves sustained support, and that it is as unacceptable to be “against” the long war as it once was to be “against” the cold war.⁸⁰

Richard Jackson has similarly discussed the centrality of the Cold War analogy to the “war on terror” discourse, arguing that the principal effect of references to the “good war mythology” has been “to (re)contextualise the events in a military or ‘war’ narrative, which then makes a military-force-based response appear normal.”⁸¹ Although there is a tendency within the IR literature on this new phase in American politics to focus solely on the visible manifestations of the “war on terror,” e.g., the

wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the strategic dimensions of American oil policy; the operation and organization of terrorist cells around the

⁷⁸ Stephen Homes, *The Matador's Cape, America's Reckless Response to Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 71-72.

⁷⁹ It is not yet clear whether this attempt has been successful as the mainstream discourse continues to employ the “war on terror” label more often than not.

⁸⁰ Rogers.

⁸¹ Jackson, 44.

world; international security dimensions of counter-terrorism; new homeland security measures such as law-enforcement cooperation and immigration control; and the Bush administration's 'public diplomacy' initiative in the Middle East,⁸²

Jackson believes it impossible to understand the full significance of these fundamental policy shifts without considering the role of language in fostering an environment of "consent or at least acquiesce" within the American population.⁸³ The "war on terror" has not only been characterized by its tangible components, e.g., new policies (both foreign and domestic), institutions, agencies, etc., created to execute and oversee the "war," but also by the intangible elements, which Jackson refers to as the "set of assumptions, beliefs, forms of knowledge and political and cultural narratives," which have enabled the realization of the tangible elements.⁸⁴ For Jackson, the former "war on terror" would not be possible "without an overarching rationale or set of guiding assumptions" underpinned by the latter.⁸⁵

Regardless of whether one can pinpoint the precise moment in which this policy shift occurred *vis-à-vis* the Middle East, clearly the Middle East in general, and the "threat" of Islamic "fundamentalism" in particular, have come to occupy a central position in U.S. economic, strategic and military/defense policy, both foreign and domestic.⁸⁶ What is less clear, however, is the role played by the intangible elements of the "war on terror," the "overarching rational or set of guiding assumptions" referred to by

⁸² Ibid., 8.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁶ Although this thesis is largely concerned with the foreign policy implications of the discourse of the "Islamist threat," it is important to point out the several domestic policy implications as well. Perhaps most important among them has been the passage of the "Patriot Act" in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks and its renewal in 2006. The Patriot Act dramatically expanded the authority of U.S. law enforcement to fight "terrorist acts" in the United States. According to Amnesty International, "USA Patriot Act threatens the rights protected in the US Constitution and international documents, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination." Most of those arrested in the United States under the Patriot Act have been Arab or Muslim. The United States military prison at Guantánamo Bay has held more than 500 "enemy combatants" from over 40 countries who the government claims are al Qaeda and Taliban operatives, for more than five years. Amnesty International, in addition to several other international human rights organizations and activists, including the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, have called the situation in Guantanamo "a human rights scandal" in a series of reports. "Comission on Human Rights, 60th Session (15 March-23 April 2004): The Human Rights Scandal of Guantanamo Bay," *Amnesty International* (20 April 2004).

Jackson. In other words, what is the role played by the discourse of political Islam (and the “terrorist threat” too often wrongly associated with it) in U.S. policymaking in general, and more specifically, in its attempts to increase its hegemonic position in the Middle East? Is this discourse, the subject of Chapters Four and Five of this thesis, merely a *post-facto* rhetorical device of politicians to justify an interventionist foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the region?

For Said, the relationship between orientalist discourse and colonial rule was more complex:

To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact. ... [S]ince the middle of the eighteenth century there had been two principle elements in the relation between East and West. One was a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination. There is no way of putting this euphemistically.⁸⁷

Just as the 19th and 20th century colonial endeavors of the European empires were enabled by the fruits of orientalist scholarship and discourse, themselves enabled by the (superior) positioning of its creators to the objects of their studies, so too, I would argue, has doctrinal change under the Bush administration been facilitated by American Orientalism, which has served to both distort knowledge of the Muslim other and reinforce potentially destructive elements of American national identity. Yet the seeds of Orientalism, having blown across the Atlantic upon the collapse of the European empires and lodged themselves in U.S. soil, could not have taken root had the ground been infertile. It was the development of the United States as a world superpower in the aftermath of WWII and its discovery of strategic and economic interests in the Middle East fertilized the ground in which the discourse flourished.

⁸⁷ Said, 1979, 40.

4. American Orientalism: September 11th and the Peak of United States Empire

Although Bush's security doctrine found its *raison d'être* in the ruins of the September 11th attacks, it was first conceptualized years earlier by members of a conservative think tank that would soon become synonymous with the "neocon" label: the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). In 1997, several neocon hawks who came to play prominent roles in the current Bush administration, including Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, joined with likeminded pundits and academics to form an organization whose mission was to devise a more aggressive foreign policy to secure the United States' role as the world's sole superpower. In regards to political Islam, the idea was to challenge the cautious approach taken by previous administrations that had led, in their minds, to a situation where Islamist movements, backed by "rogue" regimes like Iran and Sudan, were gaining popularity across the Muslim world, partially as a result of U.S. appeasement.

At the heart of the Project lies the belief that the best way to ensure the United States' continued military, political and economic pre-eminence, on which the well-being of the entire world is predicated, is through the spread of liberal democracy to parts of the world left untouched by the post-Cold War third wave of democratizations. This belief is based on a spin-off of the "democratic peace theory," which holds that because (liberal) democracies do not go to war with one another, democratization should be a policy priority of democratic states as the best way to ensure a peaceful international system. In this sense, "[t]he neo-con argument is concerned not with relations among potentially warring states, but with class or group dynamics within a single state that may spill over and affect others,"⁸⁸ most importantly, Western democracies.

Although on the surface there is nothing radical about their seemingly Wilsonian agenda, at the level of implementation and enforcement the neocons begin to veer away from their less unilateralist predecessors. As the self-professed neocon journalist Irwin Stelzer argues, neo-conservatism differs from Wilsonianism insofar as

⁸⁸ Stephen Holmes, "Futurology," *London Review of Books* 28, no. 19 (5 October 2006).

subscribers to the latter ideology tend to believe that democracy and freedom can spread by “relying on the persuasive powers of the multinational institutions such as the League of Nations,” whereas neocons believe this goal can only be achieved by “deposing dictatorial regimes that threaten American security and world order — using military force if all else fails; they would follow regime change with nation-building; and they would rely on varying ‘coalitions of the willing,’ rather than on the United Nations.”⁸⁹ Although these more militant and unilateralist strains of thinking may have been present in American political thought prior to the rise of the neocons, “[d]uring the Cold War, such ambitions were kept partially in check by Soviet power,” a situation altered by “the emergence of a unipolar world [which] has allowed them to flourish.”⁹⁰

This updated, and somewhat warped version of Roosevelt’s strain of nationalism also includes a strong “moral” component, as two of its subscribers, David Brooks and William Kristol, explained in an article they penned for the *Wall Street Journal*. They described the ideology as a mixture between “a neo-Reaganite foreign policy of national strength and moral assertiveness abroad.”⁹¹ Anatol Lievan describes the neocon foreign policy as a volatile mix of “American idealism and American *Realpolitik*,” combined with a good dose of “messianic American civic nationalism.”⁹² In his book, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, Lievan argues that the form of American nationalism that influenced the country’s post-9/11 foreign policy is more akin to that found in pre-1914 Europe than anything one is likely to encounter in the “developed” world today. To illustrate his point, he cites the examples of: “Germans before 1914 who believed that ‘Germany may heal the world’ with its particular mixture of legal order, technological progress and spirit of organic, rooted ‘culture,’ and ‘community’ (*Gemeinshcaft*)”; Russian universalist nationalism under the tsars, which held that “Russia, was heir to the Christian empire of Rome and Constantinople”; and post-revolutionary France, in which French nationalism embodied the view that the French state represented “the

⁸⁹ Irwin Stelzer, *The Neocon Reader* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 9.

⁹⁰ Betts.

⁹¹ William Kristol, “What Ails Conservatism,” *Wall Street Journal*, 15 September 1997.

⁹² Anatol Lievan, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

heritage of the Enlightenment with regard to liberty, democracy and progress and [therefore had] the right to spread these ideals to other nations.”⁹³

This characteristic has enabled the Bush administration somewhat successfully to present its “imperial plans...on the one hand, as part of a benevolent strategy of spreading American values of democracy and freedom; on the other, as an essential part of the defense not of an American empire, but of the nation itself.”⁹⁴ Yet Lieven is quick to point out that this understanding or rhetorical manipulation of American nationalism is not unique to neoconservatives, but one rooted in the “American Creed” itself. It is this shared belief in America’s uniqueness and almost God-given role to spread freedom and democracy, or “modernity,” throughout the world that, no matter how “imperfectly democracy may be practiced at home and hypocritically preached abroad,” sets the parameters for U.S. foreign policy, rendering the United States’ “indirect empire post-1945 closer to the Dutch in the East Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than the British in India.”⁹⁵ Hence the focus in the “long war” doctrine on the United States’ foreign “partners,” rather than viceroys and the like.

It is not difficult to see how even what appears to be a positive self-identity, based on a seemingly noble heritage of “democratic, legal and individualist beliefs and principles on which the American state and constitution is founded,” at least in the eyes of scholars like Lieven committed to Enlightenment principles, can actually have negative ramifications for the United States in its relations with states deemed to contradict the “American Creed” or “American Thesis” on which this identity is based.⁹⁶ For in order to consider oneself the beacon of modernity and democracy, there must be, lurking in the darkness, the archetypal antithesis: the traditional, autocratic, irrational other that needs to either be assimilated or destroyed. One can see political Islam occupying the space of other in the “American Thesis” today.

For Lieven, this “American Creed” comprises only one, albeit vital, part of American national identity. There is another, less conspicuous and even more potentially

⁹³ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

destructive side to American identity that also plays a defining role in U.S. policy making: the “American Antithesis” that “stems above all from ethnoreligious roots.” The most prominent of the ethnoreligious strains of nationalism to affect U.S. foreign policy today, according to Lieven, are fundamentalist Protestantism, and the Christian Zionist lobby⁹⁷, as well as the pro-Israel lobby which they support, all of whom, incidentally, have members and supporters within the tight-knit group of neocons responsible for setting the PNAC agenda. As Lieven points out, while a vital part of the American Creed “has long been the belief that the United States epitomizes the triumph of modernity in economics, technology and culture as well as in its democratic arrangements,” the United States is also home to by far “the largest and most powerful forces in conservative religion in the developed world.”⁹⁸ As Kevin Phillips put it, this religious element “has embraced cultural antimodernism, war hawkishness, Armageddon prophecy, and in the case of conservative fundamentalists, a demand for governments by literal biblical interpretation.”⁹⁹

The existence of this “radical” religious “antithesis” has led to various paradoxes within U.S. foreign policy, as well as to the perpetuation and fortification of a particular brand of American Orientalism. According to Gerges, “Islam is seen by many Americans as a hostile culture and a threat to their interests and cultural values,” as a result of the state’s “religious origins,” as well as how this component of the “American Antithesis” has come to perceive “the historical conflict between Christians and Muslims, a confrontation that has been transmitted and popularized through generations by history, literature, folklore, media, and academic discourse.”¹⁰⁰

Lieven claims that although only 7-10% of Americans support the Christian Right, comprised of various stripes of evangelical Protestants, its strength is not “so much in numbers but in relatively greater social and political commitment: high rates of voter turnout, willingness to agitate over particular issues, readiness to make personal

⁹⁷ As Walter Russell Mead points out, “American Protestant Zionism is in fact significantly older than the modern Jewish version; in the nineteenth century, evangelicals repeatedly petitioned U.S. officials to establish a refuge in the Holy Land for persecuted Jews from Europe and the Ottoman Empire.” Walter Russell Mead, “God’s Country?” *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2006).

⁹⁸ Mead.

⁹⁹ Phillips, 100.

¹⁰⁰ Gerges, 1999, 8.

sacrifices of time and money, and concentration in politically strategic regions.”¹⁰¹ Furthermore, the power of the fundamentalists, like that of other highly motivated minority groups, has been magnified by the abysmally low voter turnout in U.S. elections.¹⁰² Their impact on the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections is significant. According to Walter Russell Mead, Protestant evangelicals comprised close to 40% of George W. Bush's total vote in 2004. Among white evangelicals, Bush received 68% of the national vote in 2000 and 78% in 2004.¹⁰³ Evangelicals have also played a major role in congressional elections, with the number of self-identified evangelicals in Congress having increased from less than 10% of the membership in both houses in 1970 to more than 25% in 2004.¹⁰⁴ Their high concentration in important governmental institutions such as the Pentagon during the Bush administration have also ensured their disproportionate influence over defense-related foreign policy.¹⁰⁵

As Lieven points out, there are four principal ways in which Christian evangelicals impact U.S. foreign policy, in general, and the Muslim world, in particular:

1) By impacting U.S. policy towards multilateral institutions such as the U.N., which, at the extreme end, are seen to embody the antichrist in millenarian beliefs.¹⁰⁶ Mead argues, though, that American evangelicals, not as hostile to humanitarian and human rights agendas, differ on this issue with their “fundamentalist” counterparts, who view any work of this kind as completely futile.¹⁰⁷ What evangelicals do oppose are any “grand designs and large-scale development efforts” such as those embodied in and pursued by multilateral institutions like the U.N. They generally prefer grass-roots and faith-based initiatives, as these are easier to micromanage according to central religious tenets of the evangelical faith.

¹⁰¹ Lieven.

¹⁰² Lieven, 141.

¹⁰³ As Mead points out, there was a disparity in voting patterns between white and black evangelicals resulting in a majority of African American evangelicals continuing to vote Democratic. Mead.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Michael L. Weinstein and Reza Aslan, “Not So Fast, Christian Soldiers” *The Los Angeles Times*, 22 August 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Millenarian beliefs hold that Christ's return will precede the establishment of the prophesied transformation of the world from a place full of corruption, evil and war, and that all human efforts to build a peaceful world before that time are generally futile.

¹⁰⁷ As Mead explains, fundamentalists see “an absolute gap between those few souls God has chosen to redeem and the many he has predestined to end up in hell,” and see very little manoeuvring space in which mere mortals can change that situation. Mead.

- 2) By influencing development of an “ecology of fear” in the United States that leads to a wider culture of national paranoia and aggression.
- 3) By embedding within the national psyche a Manichean view of the world in which America’s enemy is viewed as “no less than Satan, and Satan can only be defeated if,” in the words of Lieutenant General William Boykin, a Pentacostalist appointed in 2003 as Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, “we come against him in the name of Jesus.”¹⁰⁸
- 4) Along with the Manichean view of the world, where a proverbial line is drawn in the sand separating the United States’ friends from foes, is a corresponding belief that enemies cannot be negotiated with, only vanquished. “Since the enemy is thought of as being totally evil and utterly unappeasable, he must be totally eliminated.”¹⁰⁹ This view is espoused in the Bush security doctrine as “full spectrum dominance.”

Although these factors have played a far greater role in defining the politics of the current Bush administration than in past governments, they were also very much present throughout the Cold War, when the existential enemy confronted by the United States was communism rather than political Islam. As Lieven points out, the Cold War “perpetuated and strengthened the long-standing messianic, paranoid and Manichean strands in American nationalism.”¹¹⁰ Yet, as Chan argues, belief in the polarized dichotomies inherent in this ideology did not necessarily entail the sacrifice of more material, or “worldly” interests. On the contrary, it often served as a rationale for furthering those interests. It was in the context of the Cold War, after all, that the “military-industrial-complex,” which continues today to heavily influence America’s political and security landscape, was largely erected and consolidated, as the “construction of discourse to justify confrontation” with the “Evil Empire” led to the “constant armament and latest generation armament” which would help the United States stay “ahead of an enemy also racing to become more sophisticated and more highly technologized than the United States military.”¹¹¹ And, as the recent book by former senior presidential aide David Kuo contends, the instrumentalization of a

¹⁰⁸ Lieven, 148.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 148-149.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 150.

¹¹¹ Chan, 12.

biblical notion of “enemy” by the Bush administration may also have more to do with realist power politics than the influence of the Christian Right.¹¹²

While Republicans have been most influenced by this Cold War-induced Manichean view of the world, Democrats have proved quite adept at using “scares,” whether of Soviet military might (against the two Eisenhower administrations) or of continuing Russian influence over the countries of the former Soviet Union (under the Clinton administration) to justify maintaining a robust military. Nor have the Democrats proven a desire or will to shake this worldview or the policy tools which come with it in the transformed international environment of the post-Cold War era, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters. In the “war on terror,” Democrats’ political discourse and strategies have lacked a “serious alternative strategy” to the Islamist “threat” paradigm developed by Bush and his neocon supporters.¹¹³

Another central component of ethnoreligious antithesis can be found in the United States’ unbridled support for Israel which, according to Lieven, has largely to do with the rise of the Christian Right and its support for Israel. This claim is supported by other experts on U.S. domestic politics, including Nancy Roman, director of the Council on Foreign Relations’ Washington Program, who argues that the evangelical community in the United States has a “huge influence on foreign policy.” Michelle Goldberg, author of *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism*, concurs that a significant strain of conservative Christianity is working not only to undermine fundamental American rights and freedoms, but, on the foreign policy front, in support of Israeli “irredentist” policies that encourage the proliferation of settlements in occupied territories.¹¹⁴

Although the standard claim made by most U.S. policymakers in defense of their disproportionate support for the state of Israel is that this is a natural alliance

¹¹² In his book *Tempting Faith: an Inside Story of Political Seduction*, Kuo speaks dismissively of the role played by the Christian in Bush’s foreign policy decisions, arguing: “National Christian leaders received hugs and smiles in person and then were dismissed behind their backs and were described as ridiculous, out of control, and just plain goofy.” Quoted in Julian Borger, “Aid says White House mocked evangelicals,” *Guardian*, 14 October 2006.

¹¹³ Chan, 150.

¹¹⁴ Richard Allen Greene, “Evangelical Christians Plead for Israel,” *BBC News, Washington*, 19 July 2006.

considering Israel is the “only democracy in the Middle East,” this line has become increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of markedly undemocratic Israeli actions, in particular, the continuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. One therefore must consider possible alternative explanations for the asymmetric support the United States bestows on the state. Like Said, Lieven believes the underlying reason for their support has less to do with Israel being a “bastion of democracy,” than it does with the more insidious, orientalist view shared by many American politicians that Israel is actually “an island of Western civilization in a sea of savagery.” Indeed, as he points out, the use of “democracy” in this context “sometimes seems more a contemporary version of the nineteenth-century use of the word “civilization” than a reference to actual behavior.”¹¹⁵ As an example, Lieven cites a March 2001 speech given by Oklahoma Republican Senator James Inhofe in which he quoted a passage from Mark Twain regarding his travels through “a desolate Palestine” to prove the point that Israel truly was, as Golda Meir put it, a “land without a people for a people without a land,” and, in taking this desert land to make it bloom, the Israeli people had much in common with the American pioneers who too had no choice but to sacrifice the lives/livelihoods of native inhabitants to make way for this great project in “civilization.”¹¹⁶ Vice President Dick Cheney used more recent events to compare Israel’s civilisational struggle with the Arab/Muslim world with that of the United States’ “war against terror.” In remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) 2006 Policy Conference commending Israel’s “patience,” “moral courage, and decisive action” in the face of Palestinian “terrorism,” Cheney explained that the United States and other “civilized nations” must maintain such qualities to win the “war on terror” against the barbarian enemy.¹¹⁷

There is also the religious aspect of America’s “love affair” with Israel that, according to Lieven, can be traced back to the “Old-Testament-centered religion of the American Protestant tradition” of the early settlers, who viewed America as God’s “chosen nation” similar to Israel’s self-identity.¹¹⁸ From this perspective, evangelical

¹¹⁵ Lieven, 179.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹¹⁷ Richard Cheney, “Vice President’s Remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee 2006 Policy Conference,” *White House News and Policies* (7 March 2006).

¹¹⁸ Although Lieven points out that this “love affair” hasn’t always been this idyllic, and has often “been tempered down the generations though by the “snobbish” tradition of “WASP anti-Semitism

support for the Israeli state is rooted in the belief that the Jewish people have fulfilled biblical prophecies by defying all odds to reclaim their rightful place in Israel. The fact that they have survived periodic persecution, some of biblical proportions, throughout the centuries in order to realize their destiny only reinforces this belief. Melanie Phillips concurs, arguing that one can trace America's view of itself as "God's New Israel" back to the American Revolution, when the nation hailed George Washington "as the American Moses" and King George III of Britain was portrayed as "Pharaoh in his chariot."¹¹⁹ Correspondingly, evangelicals are as enthusiastic in their antipathy towards the Arab world as they are in their support for the Jewish state, as they "see in the weakness, defeats, and poverty of the Arab world ample evidence that God curses those who curse Israel."¹²⁰ As Phillips points out, the metaphor of the biblical Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, his destruction of temples in Jerusalem and the subsequent conquest of Judah, is often deployed by Christian evangelicals to justify a more aggressive U.S. foreign policy towards those movements deemed to be bent on the destruction of Israel or Western civilization.¹²¹

In addition to this deep-seated Orientalist vision of the Arab world, and correspondingly distorted vision of America's own sanctimonious history, there is also an apocalyptic component to the evangelical Christians' unbridled support for Israel. This component is explicitly described in the book by John Hagee, founder of the Christian lobbying group Christians United for Israel, *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World*. In this book Hagee insists that the Bible predicts the invasion of Israel by Russian and Arab armies who will subsequently be destroyed by God. This event will serve as the prelude to an existential struggle over Israel, fought out between China and the West, and led by the Antichrist who will appear in the form of the head of the European Union. The final battle of this struggle will be fought at Armageddon, an actual place in Israel, and will precipitate the second coming of Christ. According to Hagee, 40 million Americans support his views, rendering this movement a lobbying force to be reckoned with in Washington.¹²² Most recently his organization, along with AIPAC, has been lobbying the Bush administration to adopt

(directed mainly against the East European Jewish immigrants who arrived in the United States from the 1880s on, rather than the longer-established Germans and Sephardim)." Lieven, 188.

¹¹⁹ Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (London: Encounter, 2006), 129.

¹²⁰ Mead.

¹²¹ Phillips, 129.

¹²² Greene.

a more hawkish stance on Iran, which it accuses of “pos[ing] a nuclear threat to the state of Israel that promises nothing less than a nuclear Holocaust.”¹²³

Yet the millenarianist Christian right comprise only one, albeit vital, component of the American antithesis, which, combined with unyielding belief in the “American Creed” and its perceived duties and obligations, have proven highly combustible, especially in regards to U.S. foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the Middle East. According to Lieven and several other reputable commentators on U.S. foreign policy, another perhaps equally important component of this antithesis is the pro-Israeli lobby. Although Lieven’s analysis is more concerned with explaining why the lobby has found such ripe ground in the American political landscape than with describing the actual history and dynamics of this relationship, the recent proliferation of scholarship on the issue provides more than enough evidence to substantiate Lieven’s claim that,

as in the case of Serbia and powerful Pan-Slavist sections of pre-1914 Russian public and official opinion, so in the case of Israel important sections of U.S. opinion (by no means only Jewish) have over the past half century come to view the United States and Israel as almost one country, so tightly identified with each other as to transcend America’s own identity and interests.¹²⁴

Although the pro-Israeli lobby claims support from across the political spectrum, it has particularly strong ties with the neocon strain of the Republican Party, especially those associated with the PNAC agenda. In fact, several of the Project’s founders have served on the influential Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs’ (JINSA) board of advisers, including Vice President Dick Cheney, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton, former chair of the Pentagon’s Defense Policy Board Richard Perle (forced to step down in March 2003 although he maintained his membership on the board at the request of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld¹²⁵), and former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz. A central mission of the Institute is to promote the idea amongst American policymakers that Israel’s and the U.S.’ national security interests are one and the same, and that “the only way to assure continued safety and prosperity for both countries is through hegemony in the Middle East — a

¹²³ Bill Berkowitz, “Iran: The Religious Right’s New Bugbear,” *Inter Press Service*, 15 March 2007.

¹²⁴ Lieven, 188.

¹²⁵ Michael Massing, “The Storm Over the Israel Lobby,” *New York Review of Books* 53, no. 10 (8 June 2006).

hegemony achieved with the traditional cold war recipe of feints, force, clientelism and covert action.”¹²⁶

Beyond potential ethno-religious explanations for their support of the state of Israel, much of the rationale behind the prominent Israeli security foreign policy recommendations put forward by both groups can be attributed to a longstanding belief amongst American policymakers: Israel’s strategic location in the heart of the Middle East, its unique historic development, and its tendency to view itself more as belonging politically, socially, and even epistemologically to the West than to the region where it is located renders it the perfect U.S. ally in the region. As the JINSA mission statement puts it: “The inherent instability in the region [Middle East] caused primarily by inter-Arab rivalries and the secular/religious split in many Muslim societies leaves the future of the region in doubt. Israel, with its technological capabilities and shared system of values, has a key role to play as a United States ally in the region.”¹²⁷

One need only look at the composition JINSA’s fifty-six member-board (half are U.S. generals and admirals) to understand how intertwined JINSA’s interests are with those of important elements of the U.S. government.¹²⁸ In addition to openly stated ideological and strategic reasons to justify increased U.S. support for Israel, other, more covert, explanations for JINSA members’ enthusiastic support include material ones. It is no coincidence, for example, that “almost every retired officer who sits on JINSA’s board of advisers or has participated in its Israel trips or signed a JINSA letter works or has worked with military contractors who do business with the Pentagon and Israel.”¹²⁹ From a purely economic standpoint, it makes sense to support a state that spares no expense when it comes to purchasing, developing and marketing

¹²⁶ Jason Vest, “The Men from JINSA and CSP,” *The Nation* (14 August 2002).

¹²⁷ “JINSA Mission Statement: JINSA’s Major Agenda Items,” Available from <http://www.jinsa.org/about/agenda/agenda.html>

¹²⁸ Other members of the JINSA board include Stephen Solarz, a former New York congressman, Eric Cantor, the only Jewish Republican in the House, “who in 2002 was named the chief deputy majority whip—part of the ongoing Republican program to lure pro-Israel dollars from the Democrats,” and Stephen Bryen, a neoconservative who served under Richard Perle in Ronald Reagan’s Pentagon and who is now a defence contractor. Massing.

¹²⁹ Jason Vest, “The Men From JINSA and CSP,” *The Nation* (14 August 2002).

the latest high-tech weapons and military equipment for its perpetual conflict with neighboring states and continued occupation of Palestinian land.¹³⁰

JINSA, along with many PNAC members, also forms part of a large and powerful network of pro-Israeli, neoconservative organizations comprised of individuals with conspicuously “incestuous” links to one another.¹³¹ This issue will be explored later in the discourse on political Islam amongst policy and opinion makers, in which many of these individuals figure prominently.¹³² At the centre of this lobby, which, according to Mearsheimer and Walt, holds a disproportionate and damaging sway over American foreign policy, is The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).¹³³ The Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), a neoconservative think tank created in 1985, has Martin Indyk, AIPAC’s current research director, as its first director. WINEP’s Board of Advisers includes Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, a resident fellow now at the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and Joshua Muravchik, a neocon and adjunct scholar at the WINEP. Also sitting on the Board is Michael Rubin who worked in the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans before becoming a political adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and the editor of *The Middle East Quarterly*, published by the Middle East Forum. The Middle East Forum is “a think tank dedicated to fighting terrorism, countering Islamic extremism, and promoting pro-Israel views on

¹³⁰ For more on the economics of the U.S.-Israel “special relationship,” see Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

¹³¹ Former CIA political analysts Kathleen and Bill Christison describe as “frighteningly insidious” this network of “proliferating boards and think tanks, whose membership lists are more or less identical and totally interchangeable.” “The Bush Neocons and Israel,” *Counterpunch* (6 September 2004).

¹³² John J. Mearsheimer and Stephan M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby*, (New York: Farrar Straus, and Giroux, 2007), 14. Although the authors point out that “other special interest groups have managed to skew foreign policy” before, they stress that “no lobby has managed to divert it as far from what the national interest would suggest.” According to Mearsheimer and Walt, the lobby’s aims are: to weaken or overthrow Israel’s enemies, provide Israel with a “free hand” to deal with the Palestinians, and encourage the US government and military to do “most of the fighting, dying, rebuilding and paying.” Massing.

¹³³ The organization was founded in the 1950s by a Canadian-born former journalist named I. L. Kenen with funding from various Jewish groups. With an annual budget of \$47 million, a staff of 200 lobbyists, and 100,000 grass-roots members, its not hard to see why AIPAC, the leading organization in the pro-Israel lobby (which includes the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations) commands such a captive audience on Capital Hill. One of the most important achievements of the lobby is its ability to secure around \$ 3 billion a year in foreign aid for Israel, more than that received by any other state. Glen Frankel, “A Beautiful Friendship? In search of the truth about the Israel lobby’s influence on Washington,” *Washington Post*, 16 July 2006, W13.

college campuses” founded by Daniel Pipes¹³⁴, “an energetic neoconservative whose views seem extreme even within that world,” who also happens to be an adjunct scholar at the Washington Institute and a regular contributor to *The New York Sun*. The *Sun* is co-owned by Bruce Kovner, chairman of the AEI’s board of trustees, and by the money manager Roger Hertog, a trustee of both AEI and WINEP.¹³⁵

As Rashid Khalidi points out in his book *Resurrecting Empire*, the pro-Israel credentials of the neocon core responsible for developing the Bush administration’s agenda for American Middle East policy can be traced to a report written in 1996 by a study group sponsored by the Israeli think tank, the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, for the newly elected right-wing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and written by many of the same influential actors who would later work on the PNAC agenda. The primary author of the report was Perle, who “has long been the chief guru among the neocon hawks,” and who is closely associated with Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, the former number two and three officials at the Pentagon, as well as I. Lewis Libby¹³⁶, former Chief of Staff to Vice President Cheney.¹³⁷ In addition to Perle, the study group included Feith and David Wurmser, who served as special assistant to John Bolton, then Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and international security, together with other influential figures in the neocon core.¹³⁸

According to Khalidi, the advice this group gave the hawkish Netanyahu was:

robust and muscled, and much of it has since been mirrored in the policies of Ariel Sharon, Netanyahu’s successor as head of the Likud Party: abandon the peace process with the Palestinians (the term peace

¹³⁴ In 2002, Pipes created a Web site called Campus Watch, which “reviews and critiques” Middle East studies programs in North America “with an aim to improving them.” Initially, Campus Watch encouraged students to take notes on lectures by professors critical of Israel, with the goal of “exposing” them on the MEF Web site, but this feature was dropped after it was widely condemned as a form of McCarthyism. MEF’s work on campuses parallels that of AIPAC’s own college advocacy program.

¹³⁵ Massing.

¹³⁶ Libby was forced to resign from his position as Chief of Staff to the Vice President in October 2005 after being indicted by a federal grand jury for his role in the cover-up of the leaking of an undercover CIA agent’s name in revenge for her husband’s criticism of the President’s manipulation of intelligence in the lead-up to the Iraq war.

¹³⁷ “Full Text: United States v. Libby Indictment,” *Washington Post*, 28 October 2005.

¹³⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *Resurrecting Empire: Western Footprints and America’s Perilous Path in the Middle East* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 50.

process was placed in quotes throughout the report); adopt the right of “hot pursuit” against the Palestinians; “roll back” threats; abandon the principle of “land for peace” in favor of “peace for peace”; and adopt the policy of “peace through strength.” Most relevant to the Middle East policies of the United States were the report’s recommendations regarding Iraq, Syria, and Iran that its authors and their likeminded associates later championed in their official positions in Washington.¹³⁹

And in a passage that could have been lifted straight out of President Bush’s 2002 Security Doctrine, although written five years before, “the report says a ‘clean break with the past’ can be achieved by ‘reestablishing the principle of pre-emption, rather than retaliation alone and by ceasing to absorb blows to the nation without response.’”¹⁴⁰

One could see the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush administration’s refusal to enter into direct negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program and overall aversion towards a diplomatic settlement of that crisis, its entire “war on terror,” its unequivocal support of Israel in its economic and military siege of Gaza follow Hamas’ takeover of the Gaza Strip on 15 June 2007,¹⁴¹ and its July 2006 invasion of Lebanon,¹⁴² both of which have entailed numerous violations of international humanitarian law¹⁴³, all within the context of the neocon and pro-Israel lobby agenda to drastically reconfigure the Middle East to make it more amenable to United States and Israeli interests: ideological, strategic and material. In regards to the material interests underpinning the decision to invade and occupy Iraq, former Treasury Secretary Paul O’Neil explained his surprise at realizing plans “were already being discussed to take over Iraq and occupy it—complete with disposition of oil

¹³⁹ Ibid., 50.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹⁴¹ “Aid Agencies: Humanitarian Crisis Looms in Gaza,” *Aljazeera.com*, 18 July 2006; “Economic siege of Gaza Leading to Humanitarian Crisis Report,” *Palestinian Centre for Human Rights*, 2 July 2007. Tim McGirk, “ Hamas Beats Israel’s Gaza Siege,” *Time Magazine*, 23 January 2008.

¹⁴² While Israel defends its actions in Lebanon as defensive operations geared towards eliminating the “terrorist” threat emanating from its northern borders and orchestrated by Hezbollah, which it claims was fighting a proxy war on behalf of Iran and Syria, much evidence has come to light indicating that the Israeli incursion was planned months in advance of the Hezbollah action, and that the Israeli government was merely waiting for a pretext to enter Lebanon and carry out its plan to incapacitate Hezbollah once and for all. See: Seymour Hersh, “Watching Lebanon,” *The New Yorker*, 21 August 2006. Noam Chomsky, “On the US-Israeli Invasion of Lebanon,” *Al Adab*, 19 August 2006.

¹⁴³ These include: excessive use force, indiscriminate bombing, targeting civilians and civilian facilities and collective punishment of entire populations. See the following reports: “ICRC gravely concerned about humanitarian situation in Gaza,” *International Committee of Red Cross Press Release*, 13 August 2006, and “Deliberate destruction or ‘collateral damage’? Israeli attacks against civilian infrastructure,” *Amnesty International Report*, 23 August 2006.

fields, peacekeeping forces, and war crimes tribunal—carrying forward an unspoken doctrine of preemptive war.”¹⁴⁴

Khalidi shares Lieven’s analysis that one of the primary goals of the neocon agenda has been to forge or reinforce the civilisational link between Israel and the United States. He points to the section in the 1996 “clean break” report that promotes:

the perception of a complete identity of Israeli and American interests in the Middle East” by stressing “the importance of a “shared philosophy of peace through strength,” “continuity with Western values,” and Israel cooperating “with the U.S. to counter real threats to the region and the West’s security.” It advises Netanyahu to use language “familiar to the Americans by tapping into themes of American administrations during the Cold War which apply well to Israel.”¹⁴⁵

Gerges shares the belief that Israel’s and the United States’ policies have become increasingly intertwined over the years, although he attributes this development to skilful political maneuvering of Israeli politicians to define the parameters for the “battle against Islamic fundamentalism” and enlist U.S. support in this battle by “portraying it [Islamic fundamentalism] as a larger-than-life enemy.”¹⁴⁶ As an example, he cites the numerous references by former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the “Islamic peril” in an attempt to convince Americans that “Iran is posing the same threat as Moscow in the good old days,” as well as the statement by former Prime Minister Shimon Peres that “[a]fter the fall of Communism, fundamentalism has become the greatest danger of our time.”¹⁴⁷

Although one could argue convincingly along the lines of Gerges in *America and Political Islam* that the influence of Israeli perceptions and needs on U.S. foreign policy decisions *vis-à-vis* the Middle East has been a constant over the past several decades for strategic, material, as well as ideological reasons, it appears that this influence and the subsequent convergence of United States and Israeli foreign policy and discourse regarding the Muslim/Arab world in general, and political Islam

¹⁴⁴ Marjorie Cohn, *Cowboy Republic: Six Ways the Bush Gang Has Defied the Law* (Sausalito, CA: PoliPointPress, 2007).

¹⁴⁵ Khalidi, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Gerges, 1999, 53.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 53.

specifically, has reached its zenith under the George W. Bush administration.¹⁴⁸ That this support emanates not only from the corridors of U.S. political power, but also from the American population at large is demonstrated by recent polls showing that Americans increasingly accept that Israel and the United States share not merely common values, but a common perception of their “enemies” as well.¹⁴⁹

The potential explanations for this development are manifold, but chief among them is the ideological commitment to Israel of principal members of the neoconservative cabal, as described above, that has been at the heart of the Bush administration policy machine. According to Lieven, at this junction the pro-Israeli policies resulting from lobbying efforts of this “powerful mix of the Christian Zionists and the Israeli radical fundamentalists and nationalists and their supporters in the U.S.” meet with the rhetoric of “democratization of the Middle East that the clash between the American thesis and antithesis reaches its greatest, its most enduring, and its most dangerous proportions.”¹⁵⁰ It is at this intersection that a strange group of bedfellows meet: messianic neoconservatives in search of a new post-Cold War *raison d’etre*, millenarianist Christians hoping to accelerate the “second coming,” Zionist Americans willing to sacrifice U.S. interests in an effort to create a militarily unrivalled Israeli state, and old school orientalists taking advantage of the opportunity to gain a new lease on life for their worn-out theories.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the origins and development of American Orientalism, focusing on the post-World War II period in general, and the post-September 11th period in particular. It was argued here that just as European Orientalism reached its nadir at a time when European power projection in the region

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.; Frida Berrigan and William D. Hartung, “U.S. Military Assistance and Arms Transfers to Israel: U.S. Aid, Companies Fuel Israeli Military, A World Policy Institute Issue Brief,” *World Policy Institute* (20 July 2006).

¹⁴⁹ According to the findings of a recent Gallup Poll, “following the election of Hamas as the Palestinian Authority’s ruling party, Americans...[have become] increasingly sympathetic toward the Israelis. Americans believe the United States should not give any financial aid to the Palestinians, and a plurality says the United States should conduct diplomatic relations with the Palestinians only if they recognize Israel as a nation.” Jeffrey Jones, “Expectations of Middle East Peace Drop Following Hamas Victory: Growing Sympathy towards Israelis evident,” *The Gallup Poll* (13 February 2006).

¹⁵⁰ Lieven, 208.

was at its greatest, so too has American Orientalism taken root during an era of increased American hegemony. Though its “intentions,” focused now on controlling the Middle East via proxy rather than direct rule, its “proponents,” the relatively recent, though firmly established pro-Israel, neocon network, and targeted “enemy,” Islamists rather than Arabs and/or Muslims in general, have changed, the overall impact of American Orientalism is essentially the same as that of its earlier European counterpart: to construct and reinforce the U.S. vision of itself as superior and uniquely placed to dominate its enemy. As Mahmoud Mamdani argues, the discourse which sustains such an identity has been characterized by the “demonization of Islam and its equation with terrorism” and, in its orientalist understanding of political Islam, “questions whether a historically grounded modernity is even possible in the postcolonial world.”¹⁵¹

The next two chapters of this thesis will consider the construction and maintenance of this essentialist discourse, keeping in mind its intellectual and political origins.

¹⁵¹ Mamdani, 169.

Chapter Four: Construction of the “Savage” Islamist Other in the “War on Terror” Discourse

*We thrash, curse for air
As our strangler declares, look
How violent the Arab*

- **Haiku for the Head Locked, Zein El-Amine¹**

Perhaps the Project for a New American Century’s neocon agenda would have come to exercise overwhelming influence on the Bush administration even in the absence of a dramatic event to help catalyze the interventionist reaction. But there is no doubt that the September 11th attacks on U.S. soil provided an opportunity for the realization of this agenda, as it provided the proponents of this ideology with their first test case. Yet there was one obstacle that blocked the way to the agenda’s full implementation - the Bush administration’s “full-spectrum dominance” doctrine was devised to deal with the traditionally conceived enemy that was bound within a fixed geo-political space, but the enemy the U.S. was now allegedly confronted with was a nebulous and stateless one that defied all traditional labels. In the end, though, this issue proved to be little more than a temporary stumbling block, for the administration soon found ways to link this “existential threat” to tangible identities and territories that could easily be targeted and, eventually even dominated, chief among them Afghanistan and Iraq, despite the difficulties encountered by the administration in finding any credible evidence linking the latter with the identified enemy.² The ease with which this transition was made was in part due to the great extent to which members of the Bush administration, many with extensive Cold War experience, were able to tap into the Manichean strategic conceptualizations and language from the United States’ drawn out conflict with the “Evil Empire.” As Holmes argues, the Cold War was a major influence on the administration’s “mental alchemy, the ‘reconceiving’ of an impalpable enemy as a palpable enemy.”³

Though Afghanistan, because of the Taliban’s refusal to give in to US demands to deny refuge to Osama bin Laden and his organization Al Qaeda, was the first actual

¹ Rami El-Amine, “Anti-Arab Racism, Islam, and the Left,” *Left Turn* 22 (October/November 2006).

² Rice, 81; For a comprehensive examination of the manipulation of intelligence in the lead up to the Iraq invasion in order to manufacture the appearance of a link between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein as a pretext for the invasion of Iraq, see Cohn, 13-14.

³ Holmes, 106.

target in the United States' declared "war on terror," it was its invasion of Iraq that served as "pilot project" to realize the goals elaborated in the PNAC agenda of unchallengeable US global hegemony in the Middle East.⁴ In the words of Michael Ledeen, the 2003 "resident scholar in the Freedom Chair" at the American Enterprise Institute [AEI] and "long a fixture among right-wing foreign-policy activists"⁵: "Every ten years or so, the United States needs to pick up some small crappy little country and throw it against the wall, just to show the world we mean business."⁶ Unfortunately for the PNAC agenda, Iraq was a country whose past as the world's "cradle of civilization" and contemporary reality at the time of invasion could not possibly have been any further removed from this disdainful description. Nonetheless, it was hoped that once the dust had settled from the "constructive chaos" wrought at the behest of an American-led invasion, a completely transformed, oil rich Iraq, made in the United States' image, only inferior and hence docile, could be used as the new Middle East base from which the world's super power could project its political, military, economic and ideological might and thereby convince the governments of neighboring states, as well as the political movements that challenged them, to abide by the rules set by and for the protection and promotion of U.S. and Israeli interests in the region.⁷ In proclaiming its desire to bring "democracy" and "freedom," in other words western "civilization," to the Iraqi people, the Bush administration implicitly located "Iraq and Arab Muslim society in what McClintock (1995) has referred to as 'anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity'," and at the same time reinforced its own self-identity as a modern, rational, tolerant, progressive, and indeed "exceptional" state.⁸

In this chapter I will look at the construction and maintenance of the discourse on political Islam and the vital role it has played in encouraging the necessary level of acquiescence on the part of the American public and political opposition to enable the Bush administration to execute the various policies associated with the "war on terror," including the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, regardless of the extent to which some of these patently contradict the stated values and principles

⁴ Lockman, 248-249.

⁵ Ibid., 248.

⁶ Ledeen, quoted in Lockman, 248.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Zine, 3.

in the name of which this war has purportedly been fought. As Richard Jackson has pointed out, from its inception, the Bush administration's presentation of the enemy in the "war on terror" as somehow exceptional both in their actions and motivations provided the US government with the necessary justification to employ equally unconventional, and in many cases illegal, methods in its attempts to capture and punish them, even if this meant violating international agreements like the Geneva Conventions, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, as well as domestic legislation such as the U.S. War Crimes Act.⁹ "This discursive construction provides policy-makers with a great deal of flexibility. It allows them to reconstruct the September 11, 2001 attacks as acts of war, but without conferring the commensurate legitimacy or status on the terrorists."¹⁰

Although I will be leading with a discussion of the texts and speeches of prominent policy-makers and opposition leaders, this is not meant to imply their privileged position in a hierarchy of genres, nor their more decisive impact on the "context" when compared to the academic (as discussed in Chapter 2), media or think-tank components. On the contrary, I would argue that the relationship between the various genres of this discourse is interdependent and cyclical, and hence the choice of which genre to lead with is actually quite arbitrary. In addition, though much of the analysis articulated here can be generalized to apply to visual media genres such as popular films, documentaries, and literature, which have no doubt impacted popular perceptions of the Islamist other, as the focus of this book is on the relationship between the discourse and US foreign policy decisions I have instead chosen to focus only on those genres of discourse that have had the most direct and visible impact on the opinions of prominent decision-makers in the government.¹¹ In order to elucidate

⁹ For a detailed explanation of the various ways in which the "war on terror" has violated both domestic (US) and international law, see Cohn.

¹⁰ Jackson, 39.

¹¹ For a good summary of orientalist stereotypes in popular US films and cartoons see the report by the Islamic Human Rights Report, "The British media and Muslim representation: the ideology of demonisation." (<http://www.ihrc.org/>) Also see American Arab Anti-Discrimination League, "Media Monitoring Team" (<http://www.adc.org/index.php?id=143>). There is also Said's "Covering Islam," which is a bit dated in terms of the examples provided, but not in analysis, has analysis of both print and visual news media in regards to orientalist portrayals of Islam/Muslims. Jack Shaheen's *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (Brooklyn, NY: Interlink Publishing Group, 2001) provides a good summary of the persistent and prolonged vilification of Arab peoples in mainstream Western movies and Tim Jon Semerling's *Evil Arabs in American Popular Films: Orientalist Fear* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2006) offers an insightful analysis of the role of orientalist depictions of Muslims and Arabs in popular American films as well as documentary coverage of 9/11.

the intricacies of the discursive tools and processes involved in the construction of this discourse, I will employ Mutua's "savages-victims-saviors" metaphor, which will be described in greater detail in the following section.

1. Understanding the "Savage" Islamist Other Construct in the "War on Terror" Discourse

Although it would be deemed unacceptable to describe the enemy Americans confronted in the post-9/11 period in pre-Enlightenment, Islamophobic terms, a lesson Bush discovered soon after his clumsy use of the term "crusade" to describe the nature of this "war" caused an uproar both at home and abroad, there was an already well-established repertoire of acceptable orientalist language that the president and others involved in the creation and maintenance of the discourse on the Islamist "threat," could tap into to explain a more militant U.S. policy towards the region, in general, and political Islam, in particular.¹² As Little points out, September 11th

marked the culmination of America's uneasy encounter with the Middle East during the preceding 200 years. The image of an alien and barbaric Islam that had been so deeply ingrained in U.S. popular culture from nineteenth-century ballads to Disney's Aladdin came to life in the autumn of 2001 as CNN beamed into America's living rooms video of Al Qaeda guerrillas training for jihad in their Afghan base camps and small but jubilant groups of Palestinians in Gaza cheering news of the carnage at ground zero in lower Manhattan.¹³

And just as had occurred with the discourse of those institutions that propped up, often inadvertently, the European imperial powers from the late eighteenth to twentieth centuries, so too did the American political, intellectual, and media elite converge in their descriptions of the other at a time when U.S. hegemony in the Middle East seemed imminent. In doing so, they managed to "subordinate" the "foreign reality" of that other and render it more amenable to manipulation and control. And, as was the case in imperial times, from these "willful perspectives"

¹² Peter Ford, "Europe Cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 September 2001.

¹³ Little, 314.

various conclusions could be expected to follow, “including that imperialism is a benign and necessary thing.”¹⁴

The numerous reports, articles and speeches produced by the neocon network in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks helped facilitate the administration’s attempts at framing the discourse of the Islamist-terrorist other.¹⁵ Put off by the overt collaboration of academics with government agencies engaged in fighting the communist enemy throughout the Cold War, and disappointed with U.S. foreign policy in general towards the Middle East over the last two decades, many serious scholars of the Middle East/Muslim world, with extensive experience in and knowledge of the region and Islamist politics in particular, greeted with cynicism the hype surrounding this new “war” against an ill-defined enemy whose real threat to the U.S./West was dubious at best.

Into the gap that opened up between the politicians who were engaged in devising policies to address the new “Islamist threat,” and the scholars capable of explaining the complex dynamics of these movements, as well as the elaborate histories of the region that produced them, stepped representatives of the various think-tanks that had become an integral part of the U.S. policymaking landscape since they first began proliferating in the 1970s.¹⁶ These privately funded organizations, which are largely independent of higher education institutions though often maintain close relations with government agencies, churned out the type of easily digestible and oversimplified analysis that suited the Bush administration’s Manichean worldview. Despite the existence of dissenting voices offering a more nuanced analysis of the growing appeal of political Islam and potential explanations for the resentment and rage that had come to characterize large segments of the world’s Muslim population by the time of the September 11th attacks, these tended to be drowned out in the clamor of pro-“clash of civilizations” voices emanating from the think-tanks and columns of popular pundits across the U.S.. As Lockman points out:

¹⁴ Said, *Los Angeles Times*, 20 July 2003.

¹⁵ For example, President George W. Bush has appointed over a dozen people from AEI to senior positions in his administration. AEI claims that this is more than any other research institution. In addition, Vice President Dick Cheney was formerly a member of the Board of Trustees, another link between the Institute and the Bush administration. “Right Wing Watch: Right Wing Organizations,” *People for the American Way*, <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=4456>).

¹⁶ Lockman, 214-242.

It is striking that the great bulk of the “talking heads” who appeared on television to offer their opinions on...issues relating to the Middle East and US policy towards it seemed to come not from academia but from among professional public pundits, from people associated with think tanks or with one of the public policy schools, and from retired military personnel. Whatever their knowledge (or lack thereof) of the languages, politics, histories and cultures of the Middle East, these people spoke the language and shared the mindset of the Washington foreign policy world in a way few university-based scholars did. They were also used to communicating their perspectives in effective sound bites, whereas academics were often put off by the ignorance and political conformism of much (though by no means all) of American mass-media journalism and its tendency to crudely oversimplify complex issues and transform everything (even war) into a form of entertainment.¹⁷

The fact that there was a compliant mainstream media willing, perhaps for its own reasons, including protecting and promoting the financial interests of the corporations that now own a majority of media outlets in the U.S., to provide a public forum to help consolidate the discourse also helped matters.¹⁸ According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, the Bush administration spent close to \$1.6 billion on 343 contracts with public relations firms, advertising agencies, media organizations and individuals between 2003 and the second quarter of 2005, which shows just how vital the media’s contribution to the “war on terror” discourse was to the Bush administration.¹⁹

In addition to its attempts to frame the discourse through public relations blitzes, the Bush administration developed strong ties with several “military analysts”, whose extensive military experience, it was assumed, made them well-suited for the type of objective and in-depth analysis of the status and effectiveness of “war on terror” associated policies that the major news outlets appeared to be seeking. Instead, as a New York Times investigation revealed, the CVs of many of the more than 150 analysts the Bush administration came to rely on for rosy assessments of progress

¹⁷ Ibid., 248-249.

¹⁸ For a good analysis of how corporate interests impact the mass media, see Edward S. Herman & Noam Chomsky’s *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage, 1994). For an analysis more specifically related to corporate media’s coverage of the Middle East in recent years, see: Norman Solomon’s “The Military-Industrial-Media Complex: Why war is covered from the warriors’ perspective,” *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), Extra!* (July/August 2005).

¹⁹ Christopher Lee, “Prepackaged News,” *The Washington Post*, 14 February 2006.

made in the “war on terror” showed that they were seriously lacking in the objectivity department. According to the investigation, these “analysts”, who were tapped for their expert insight on tens of thousands of occasions by mainstream television and radio stations across the United States, were actually lobbyists, senior executives, board members or consultants on some of the United States’ largest defense corporations, many of which are “part of the vast assemblage of contractors scrambling for hundreds of billions in military business generated by the administration’s war on terror.”²⁰ Considering the competitive nature of the defense market, “in which inside information and easy access to senior officials are highly prized,” it comes as no surprise that the investigation’s conclusion remarked on the high probability that the views of many of these “military analysts” were biased as a result of their “vested” interests “in the very war policies they are asked to assess on air.”²¹

As with dissenting voices stemming from the academic and think-tank worlds, unorthodox analyses within mainstream media have tended to be systematically marginalized, censored, or completely ignored. As one journalist put it: “[t]o write with any nuance about Islamists for an American audience is to invite controversy.”²²

With its policy warriors, subservient media and intellectual infrastructure in place, the Bush administration was now confronted with a difficult task: to define a threat terrible enough to justify an all out war on those states, groups and individuals deemed to threaten the stability of the new international order-- in other words the “first men” of the post-Cold War history—and at the same time maintain its image as the world’s beacon of democracy, rationality, human rights and freedom.²³ The Bush administration lost no time in filling the “void of meaning” that emerged in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, constructing a coherent image of the enemy

²⁰ David Barstow, “Behind Military Analysts, the Pentagon’s Hidden Hand,” *The New York Times*, 20 April 2008.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Ken Silverstein, “Parties of God: The Bush Doctrine and the rise of Islamic democracy,” *Harpers Magazine* (March 2007). In this article he recounts the attempts of editors at the *Los Angeles Times*, where he was a staff reporter, to censure sections of a story he had written on the Hezbollah’s history and rising popularity in Israel that portrayed Israeli and U.S. involvement in Lebanon in a negative light.

²³ As discussed in Chapter 3, Fukuyama described the “first men” of the new post-Cold War world order as “deprived and uncomfortable in the historically realized world, [they] would not exhibit the historically conditioned and civilized attributes of desire and reason — they would thereby be ‘bestial’...In their desire for recognition the slaves would rise against the masters and restart history.” Chan, 27.

other that threatened the stability and future of not only the U.S., but western civilization as a whole.²⁴ It then proceeded to argue that the only way to overcome this enemy would be through a war targeting not only those individuals responsible for the crime, but the underlying ideology, culture, and even religion (at least those interpretations of Islam it disapproved of) in which their acts were incubated.

However, as Jackson has argued, this did not have to be the case. The attacks could have been otherwise described as egregious criminal acts or even crimes against humanity, to be dealt with via the institutions and mechanisms of international law, rather than within the narrow confines of what the late international law scholar Joan Fitzpatrick referred to as an “armed conflict paradigm.”²⁵ As was seen in Chapter Two, their human impact was smaller in scale than other destructive events in recent history, either natural or manmade, and which have not received a fraction of the attention accorded to the 9/11 attacks. As for the issue of national security, “terrorism ranks far below state repression, small arms proliferation, organized crime, illegal narcotics, poverty, disease, [and] global warming” when it comes to objective threat assessments.²⁶ Even if the “terrorist threat” were as profound as the Bush administration has claimed, there is nevertheless a growing skepticism amongst prominent defense experts that a conventional military response is the most effective way to confront it. According to Richard Betts,

With rare exceptions, the war against terrorists cannot be fought with army tank battalions, air force wings, or naval fleets -- the large conventional forces that drive the defense budget. The main challenge is not killing the terrorists but finding them, and the capabilities most applicable to this task are intelligence and special operations forces.²⁷

The fact that the Bush administration chose to describe them as “acts of war” was a sign that it was determined to orchestrate a discursive shift- one which would legitimize, if not necessitate the response of all out war.²⁸ And though a new language

²⁴ Jackson, 31.

²⁵ Joan Fitzpatrick, “Speaking Law to Power: The War against Terrorism and Human Rights,” *European Journal of International Law* 4, no. 2 (April 2003).

²⁶ Richard Jackson, “Constructing Enemies: ‘Islamic Terrorism’ in Political and Academic Discourse,” *Government & Opposition* 42, no. 3 (2007): 394-426.

²⁷ Betts.

²⁸ See, for example, the arguments for alternative framing of the attacks put forward by Richard Jackson, 38; and George Soros, “A Self-Defeating War,” *Wall Street Journal*, 14 August 2006.

was constructed to facilitate this shift, it borrowed as much as it added to the tradition of American Orientalism. It is perhaps its deep-seated roots in American, and more generally western, history, that the discourse took on a life of its own so quickly, as it resonated with the worldview of so many Americans, regardless of their political affiliations. It is for this reason that the discourse of Democratic politicians and (neo) liberal influential pundits and think-tanks will also be considered in this chapter.

In order to fully grasp the various contours of the Islamist threat discourse, it is helpful to employ what Makau Mutua has described as the “savages-victims- saviors” (SVS) metaphor, a “three dimensional prism,” which he uses to explain the discursive strategy behind the “universal” human rights regime. Mutua sees this regime as serving as a mechanism of control in the West’s attempts to maintain cultural and political hegemony in the world, akin to the role served by the *mission civilatrice* in the colonial era, and whose purpose is to judge and denigrate, and ultimately transform, the norms and practices of non-European societies by allegedly neutral, though manifestly Eurocentric, standards. Although Mutua’s work is concerned with these issues as they relate to the discourse of the international human rights regime, one can also see the relevance of this metaphor when considering the discourse of political Islam in the West, and in particular as it is manifested in the U.S. post-September 11th. According to Mutua, the human rights corpus that was institutionalized in the aftermath of WWII, “has its theoretical underpinnings” in the Western colonial attitudes of the 19th century- in particular their belief in the necessity of an imperial mission to civilize the other and to convert other societies into inferior versions of the same.²⁹ The underlying assumption of the human rights corpus, and, as I have argued throughout this book, of the social sciences in general, has been the modern rationalist notion of human history, which views “human development...as a linear and vertical progression of the dark or backward races from the “savage” to the civilized, the pre-modern to the modern, from the child to the adult, and the inferior to the superior.”³⁰

The first dimension of the “savages-victims-saviors” (SVS) prism “depicts a “savage” and evokes images of barbarism,” and although the “savage” metaphor is generally

²⁹ Mutua, 205.

³⁰ Ibid., 213.

used to describe a state, Mutua argues the “real savage” implied by the metaphor goes beyond the superficiality of geo-political space to the actual culture that underpins that state and, which is seen to be a “deviation” from various “universal” values.³¹ In the case of the “war on terror,” deployment of the metaphor is somewhat hampered by the fact that the identified barbarian was not clearly associated with one state or another. But, as we have already seen with the rhetorical justification for the various stages of the war, including the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush administration was able to find a way around this minor inconsistency, and eventually was able to identify and describe a tangible enemy-- the Islamist “terrorist” (including, though by no means limited to Al Qaeda, and a dizzyingly long list of other Islamist movements that have been conflated with it)—and “radical” Islam, the religion/ideology/culture alleged to sustain it.

In the process of defining the “savage” (as well as the “victim” and “savior,” as will be demonstrated in the next chapter) various discursive tools are employed. Chief among these is the reductive, modern rationalist approach, which, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, affects the discourse in two important ways. First, through the “ideologization of terror” paradigm, in which political Islam is viewed solely within a security framework, where analysis of a movement’s tactics or strategies, in particular the use of political violence/ “terrorism,” is privileged over a more in-depth understanding of the context in which the tactic (political violence) is chosen. This approach results in what Mamdani calls the “depoliticization of violence,”³² where focus is overwhelmingly placed on the tactics employed by these movements, as opposed to their motivations or desired ends, which often include, contrary to mainstream opinion, very “rational” “cultural demands, in addition to political ones (nationalist, anti-imperialist and even ‘democratic’).”³³ Also lost in these analyses is a nuanced understanding of the various theological and political debates surrounding the proper interpretation and strategic value of the use of indiscriminate violence, and

³¹ Ibid, 203.

³² Mamdani uses this term to describe what he views as the essentialized portrayal of the Darfur conflict by western media, politicians and NGOs, which he describes as a “voyeuristic approach” that “accompanies a moralistic discourse whose effect is both to obscure the politics of the violence and position the reader as a virtuous, not just a concerned observer... Whatever its analytical weaknesses, the depoliticisation of violence has given its proponents distinct political advantages.” Mahmood Mamdani, “The Politics of Naming: Genocide, Civil War, Insurgency,” *London Review of Books* (8 March 2007).

³³ Burgat, xvi.

suicide bombing in particular, as well as of the potentially “rational” reasons this tactic may be privileged over others in attempts to realize a diverse range of political and social goals.³⁴ Secondly, through viewing political Islam solely as “a reflex reaction to certain political or socio-economic circumstances,” this method of analysis starts from the assumption that Islamism is an inherently violent, backward ideology developed in reaction to the West, either its perceived “power” or “weakness,” or to one or another social or economic development associated with western “modernization,” like the retraction of the state or urbanization. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, these reductionist analyses squander the opportunity to develop a more substantive understanding of Islamist movements’ histories, religious and ideological trajectories of development, as well as possible explanations for their sustained wide-spread appeal.

2. U.S. Policy-Makers Construct the “Savage” Islamist Other in the “War on Terror” Discourse

In this section I will examine the role of politicians in constructing the “savage” Islamist other in the context of the “war on terror” discourse. While this section will focus primarily on prominent members of the Bush administration who served as rhetorical and ideological architects on the “war”, it will also examine the discourse of prominent Democrats who played a role in constructing and sustaining the neocon discourse.

2.1 Construction of the “Savage” Islamist Other in the “War on Terror” Discourse: Republican Discourse

In a press conference given four days after the September 11th attacks, in which President Bush urged Americans to be cautious, but otherwise continue with life as normal, the President delineated the exceptional nature of the enemy by describing them as “a group of barbarians,” which “have declared war on the American people.”³⁵ The following day in an interview with MSNBC’s Tim Russert on Meet the Press Vice President Dick Cheney similarly described the enemy, though this time

³⁴ Tamimi.

³⁵ George W. Bush, “President Urges Readiness and Patience: Remarks by the President, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Attorney General John Ashcroft at Camp David, Thurmont, MD,” *White House News and Policies*, 15 September 2001.

broadening the enemy's alleged target to include not only the "American people," but the entire "civilized" (read: western) world, hence laying the foundation for the promotion of a "clash of civilizations" framing of events. When asked whether Cheney believed there were any international laws that might "prohibit us" from tracking down and immobilizing the alleged master-mind of the attacks, Osama bin Laden, Cheney replied in the negative, insisting that the "civilized world" would understand that the U.S. had to do what was necessary to deal with the "group of barbarians" that was "threaten(ing) all of us."³⁶ Later, in response to a journalist's question regarding alleged instances of torture at the U.S. military prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cheney defended the prison and employed a more creative adjective to describe the enemy and justify the exceptional (and illegal) treatment he would receive at the hands of the U.S. military: "The important thing here to understand is that the people that are at Guantánamo are *bad* people."³⁷ Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld similarly attempted to construct the war in terms that would allow for the extraordinary tactics the U.S. government planned to employ: "this conflict, this campaign, this so-called war, [is] notably different from others...this new war will be a conflict 'without battlefields and beachheads,' in short, an unconventional war."³⁸

Then Attorney General John Ashcroft chimed in with statements elaborating the exceptional nature of the enemy, describing it as a threat not only to U.S. national security, but to all of western civilization, again reinforcing the dichotomous "us"/"them" divide. In a speech to Congress in which he presented the Administration's "Mobilization against Terrorism Act" Ashcroft declared: "On one side of this line are freedom's enemies, murderers of innocents in the name of a barbarous cause. On the other side are friends of freedom." He further implored Congress to "act to strengthen our ability to fight this evil wherever it exists, and to ensure that the line between the civil and the "savage," so brightly drawn on September 11, is never crossed again."³⁹ In describing the enemy as "barbarian," a term of classification first used by the ancient Greeks to delineate themselves from all

³⁶ Richard Cheney, "The Vice President appears on Meet the Press with Tim Russet." *White House News and Policies*, 16 September 2001.

³⁷ *Fox News*, 13 June 2005. Emphasis my own.

³⁸ Donald Rumsfeld, 7 October 2001, quoted in Jackson, 39.

³⁹ Ashcroft, 24 September 2001, quoted in Jackson, 49.

necessarily inferior non-Greeks, and demarcating the line between enemy and victim in civilizational terms, Ashcroft and Bush and the rest of the administration, perhaps inadvertently, evoked the European imperial era when this distinction was used to justify control over the “inferior races”. The actual impact of this language was “to create conditions for abuse and torture against terrorist suspects: if they are animals, barbarians and ‘savages’ then they have no ‘human’ qualities and no human rights and can be treated as animals without regret or pity.”⁴⁰

Just as the Bush administration was quick to extrapolate the threat posed by the enemy from one solely concerning the U.S., to one that threatened the entire “civilized world,” so too did it move to broaden its description of the enemy from the one organization that was accused of orchestrating the 9/11 attacks, Al Qaeda, to all Islamist movements deemed to pose a threat to the interests and stability of the “civilized world”. In doing so, the Bush administration resorted to the “ideaologization of terror” discursive tactic. Accordingly, all Islamist movements who have engaged in acts of political violence, regardless of the contexts in which these acts were committed, came to be described as movements whose principal ideology was one which “excuses or even glorifies the deliberate killing of innocents.”⁴¹ To convince the public of the accuracy of this categorization, the administration began to repeat overly-simplistic and inaccurate statements regarding the links between various Islamist movements as a means to convince the public of the importance of confronting this menacing threat, which was at once everywhere, and nowhere- a sort of cancer (employing biological metaphors) that could only be cured through a harsh and sustained military attack against the enemy, followed by a good dose of western-style “modernization” shock therapy to ensure against its future return. It is in this context that Bush argued in his 2002 State of the Union Address:

Most of the 19 men who hijacked planes on September the 11th were trained in Afghanistan’s camps, and so were tens of thousands of others. Thousands of dangerous killers, schooled in the methods of murder, often supported by outlaw regimes, are now spread throughout the world like ticking time bombs, set to go off without warning. [...] A terrorist underworld—including groups like Hamas, Hezbollah,

⁴⁰Ibid., 49.

⁴¹“National Security Council (2006) Strategy for Winning the War on Terror,” *National Security Council*, 2006.

Islamic Jihad, Jaish-i-Mohammed—operates in remote jungles and deserts, and hides in the centers of large cities.⁴²

This tendency to conflate such disparate Islamist movements in the “war on terror” discourse, was demonstrated again in a recent speech by President Bush to the American Legion Convention in which he attempted to win over his audience of (mainly WWII) veterans with the oft-used, and historically inaccurate⁴³ (in terms of the definition of the term elaborated by experts of fascism such as Hannah Arendt, Renzo de Felice, Stanley Payne and Robert Paxton), label: “Islamic fascists,” a term used to evoke memories of the “Great War”—a war which many Americans, and much of the rest of the world, remember as legitimate and just and in which the Americans (again according to subjective memory) played an “indispensable role.”⁴⁴ The purpose of the fascist analogy is not to facilitate a clearer and more in-depth understanding of the true nature of this perceived “threat,” but rather to obfuscate by making a simplistic (and inaccurate) historical parallel which, because of its headline-grabbing nature, actually disguises the lack of detailed and thorough analysis available to substantiate the argument implicit in it. As Jackson points out, the use of this comparison “establish[es] American understanding of the events [“war on terror”] as part of a long and heroic struggle against totalitarian and murderous ideologies such as fascism and communism”⁴⁵

In this same speech Bush also attempts to link together otherwise independent events that have occurred in various places throughout the Middle East over the past three decades, into one coherent chronology that points to the development of a monolithic,

⁴² Bush, 29 January 2002, quoted in Jackson, 110.

⁴³As Durand has argued, none of the Islamist movements that Bush lumped together under the term meet the criteria for fascism as traditionally defined by fascism experts. “It is true that Muslim fundamentalist movements exhibit certain traditional features of fascism: a paramilitary dimension, a feeling of humiliation and a cult of the charismatic leader (although to a relative degree, and scarcely comparable with the cults of the Führer or the Duce). But all the other fundamental ingredients of fascism — the expansionist nationalism, corporatism, bureaucracy and the cult of the body — are generally lacking in Islamism. Stephen Duran “Warlike Policies Based on the Politics of Fear: The lie that is ‘islamofascism’” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2006. For further critiques regarding the historical inaccuracy and motivation behind use of the term by the Bush administration see, Trudy Rubin, “Islamofacism label emotional, misleading” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29 August 2006; Juan Cole, “Rumsfeld Accuses Critics of Appeasement of Fascists” *Informed Comment*, 30 August 2006; David Ignatius “Towards a definition of Islamic fascism,” *Daily Star*, 19 August 2006; Uri Avnery, “Muhammad’s Sword Why did Pope Benedict utter these words in public? And why now?” *Gush Shalom*, 26 September 2006; Fouzi Slisli and Jacqueline Kaye, “A liberal logic: reply to Fred Halliday,” *Opendemocracy.com*, 8 December 2006.

⁴⁴ Jackson, 42.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 57.

violent Islamist movement, whose *raison d'être*, it would appear, is nothing more than to destroy western civilization:

Extremists in Iran seized American hostages. Hezbollah terrorists murdered American troops at the Marine barracks in Beirut and Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. Terrorists set off a truck bomb at the World Trade Center. Al Qaeda blew up two U.S. embassies in East Africa, and bombed the USS Cole. Then came the nightmare of September the 11, 2001, when 19 hijackers killed nearly 3,000 men, women, and children.⁴⁶

For Bush, regardless of their sectarian, theological, ideological, historical and strategic differences these groups are all linked by their “rigid conviction [read backwards- modern convictions are dynamic] that free societies are a threat to their twisted view of Islam.”⁴⁷ Bush’s monolithic view of Islamist movements was further confirmed in a speech made in April 2007, in which he implicitly compares such dissimilar individuals and groups as western-born and raised “global jihadis,” Shiite, Sunni and secular Baathist resistance movements as well as their “irredentist jihadi” counterparts in Iraq, Taliban and other tribal movements in Afghanistan, with a terrorist incident that may or may not (it is difficult to tell as the Algerian government is notorious for its lack of transparency in its investigations of “terrorist” attacks) have been carried out by an “internal jihadi” movement in Algeria (e.g. Armed Islamic Group (GIA) or Salifist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)).⁴⁸ According to Bush, the “enemy”

views the world as a giant battlefield, and will strike wherever they can. The killers who behead captives and order suicide bombings in Iraq are followers of the same radical ideology as those who destroy markets in Afghanistan; or they set off car bombs in Algeria, and blow up subway trains in London. The men who attacked Iraq's parliament last week swear allegiance to the same terrorist network as those who attacked America on September the 11th, 2001.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Bush, 29 January 2002, quoted in Jackson, 110.

⁴⁷ Bush, 31 August 2006.

⁴⁸ Algeria’s military dictatorship has systematically imprisoned, tortured and killed its Islamist opposition ever since the 1992 presidential elections, in which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win. Burgat; Rober Malley, *The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution, and the Turn to Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). For a concise description of the various types of Islamist and Jihadi movements that exist, see International Crisis Group.

⁴⁹ George W. Bush, “President Bush Visits East Grand Rapids, Discusses Global War on Terror,” *White House News and Policies*, 20 April 2007.

Similarly unconcerned with understanding the varied worldviews, theological, philosophical and political agendas of the Islamist movements considered by the Bush administration to pose a threat to the “civilized world,” Rumsfeld argued in an interview with *U.S. News & World Report’s* Linda Robinson that: “The terrorist threat against the United States is now defined as ‘Islamist extremism’—not just al Qaeda. The Pentagon ...identifies the ‘primary enemy’ as ‘extremist Sunni and Shia movements that exploit Islam for political ends’ and that form part of a ‘global web of enemy networks.’”⁵⁰ Again, there is no attempt to explain the precise criteria used by the Pentagon to judge exactly which Sunni and Shia movements “exploit Islam for political ends,” nor the criteria used to distinguish between these movements and those that merely *use* Islam for political ends, which, one would assume from the more provocative verb employed here, would be considered legitimate by the Administration. And finally, it fails to provide the criteria by which movements are judged to belong to this “global web of enemy networks.” This is yet another instance of the use of imprecise language to alarm and obfuscate, rather than explain and enlighten- the presumed purpose of these types of journalistic interviews with government sources.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice employed the same reductionist logic in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, employing as well what Mamdani refers to as the “good Muslim/bad Muslim” rhetorical distinction, in which the former is assumed to be “modern” and westernized, and the latter “radical, uncompromising, and bent on a continuous rejection of the West”⁵¹:

On the one side, you have extremist forces -- Hezbollah, Hamas, Syria and Iran -- in fact, Iran, the state that is most responsible for supporting those extremist forces; and on the other side of the ledger, you have young reformist governments like Lebanon, the Government of Iraq and of course the positive forces in the Palestinian territories like Mahmoud Abbas, but you also of course have states like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan and the Gulf states.⁵²

⁵⁰ Linda Robinson, “Plan of Attack: The Pentagon has a secret new strategy for taking on terrorists—and taking them down,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 1 August 2005.

⁵¹ Mamdani, pp; Mesari, 238.

⁵² Condoleezza Rice, “Iraq: A New Way Forward: Testimony Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee,” *Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice*, 11 January 2007.

In these analyses contextual facts, which may go some way towards explaining the hostility of these movements/states to the U.S. and its clients in the region, such as 60 years of Israeli occupation of Palestine, and with it of the third most holy site in Islam- the Al Aqsa mosque, with overt western (in particular U.S.) political, military and economic support and/or complicity, more than 20 years of Israeli occupation of Lebanon, decades of economic and military support for other oppressive client states in the region, over a century's worth of western interventions to overthrow popular governments in favor of governments more amenable to US interests in the region (e.g. overtly in Egypt, 1882; Iraq, 1920; Syria, 1925; Iran 1953; Afghanistan, 2002; Iraq, 2003 and numerous other covert examples), are seen as negligible, or, at best, according to Boaz Ganor, "empirical regularities associated with terrorism."⁵³

The use of the "good Muslim/bad Muslim" rhetorical distinction as evidenced in Condoleezza Rice's statements, and used throughout the statements and speeches of other members of the Bush administration, serves a similar function to the dual-pronged conceptual approach to the native other adopted by the Spaniards upon their "discovery" and colonization of America as described by Tzvetan Todorov in *The Conquest of America*. As Todorov explains, the native other was seen either in terms of what he shared in common with the Spaniard, and hence as a human being, though only in-so-far as he was capable of complete assimilation, or in terms of his absolute difference, which was "immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority (in this case, obviously, it is the Indians who are inferior)," and which invited conquest. In both instances though, as in the case of the good Muslim/bad Muslim distinction, which is also grounded in an identity-based "egocentrism," "the existence of a human substance truly other, something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself," is denied.⁵⁴ From this example it is clear that the criteria for falling on *our* side in this "war" is unrelated to the level of commitment or respect a state or movement has for the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, or any other of the lofty political and social ideals this administration has oft referred to in its attempts to justify its foreign policy decisions, but rather it is linked to the capacity and desire of the Muslim other to assimilate to *our* way of doing and being.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ganor,

⁵⁴ Todorov, 42.

⁵⁵ See recent *Amnesty/Human Rights Watch Reports* for evidence of this.

This idea is reinforced in President Bush's 2007 State of the Union Address in which he commends the "progress" made in states like Lebanon, where the largely secular, pro-western Cedar Revolution "drove out the Syrian occupiers and chose new leaders in free elections," U.S. occupied Afghanistan, where the general population "defied terrorists and elected a democratic legislature," and even war-torn Iraq, where the "Iraqi people" voted in a transitional government in 2005 which went on to adopt "the most progressive, democratic constitution in the Arab world."⁵⁶ Not only are the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, in which Hamas, a party whose internal politics have been described by a respected think-tank as "democratic centralism with an Islamist twist," came to power through an internationally recognized democratic process, not mentioned as a development that has impacted "progress" in the region, but all of the movements blamed for attempting to break this "democratic wave" happen to be Islamist movements, which, Bush insists, are fighting out of "fierce reaction" to the "desire for liberty" expressed by the majority of good Muslims in the region.⁵⁷ In this context, Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shi'ia Islamist movement, which developed in resistance to Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon from 1982-2000 and to advocate on behalf of Lebanon's historically disenfranchised Shi'ia Muslim community (though it now commands broad support from various segments of Lebanese society), and which pursues a nationalist agenda, is compared to the messianic, global Al Qaeda, "other Sunni extremists" and "Shi'ia death squads" operating in Iraq.⁵⁸ The underlying assumption of such comments is that there is no need to actually elaborate the characteristics these movements share in common, or how they differ - they are all Islamist movements and it is therefore assumed that they are all violent, opposed to democracy and, in general, antithetical to "progress".

In a speech he gave at the National Endowment for Democracy headquarters on "Islamic radicalism," President Bush elaborated on the various differences that delineate a "barbarian" movement from legitimate political parties that have a natural

⁵⁶ George W. Bush, "President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address," *White House News and Policies*, 23 January 2007.

⁵⁷ "After Mecca: Engaging Hamas," *International Crisis Group* (28 February 2007).

⁵⁸ According to Hezbollah leaders, the movement only operates within the borders of Lebanon unless attacked from outside, therefore demonstrating its national agenda, which sets it apart from transnational Islamist movements such as Al-Qaeda. For Nasrallah's statements on this issue, see: Seymour M. Hersh, "Annals of National Security: The Redirection," *The New Yorker*, 5 March 2007.

right to participate in the political system. In another frequently used analogy with historical resonance for the American people, Bush claimed that, like the communists, these “militants” are doomed to failure because of the “inherent contradiction” within their ideology. Bush went on to argue that “by fearing freedom—by distrusting human creativity, and punishing change, and limiting the contributions of half the population—this ideology undermines the very qualities that make human progress possible, and human societies successful.”⁵⁹ In his reliance on dichotomous reasoning, Bush’s statement is predicated on the assumption that Islamist movements cannot be “modern,” at least not according to his understanding of modernity, as they are deemed to be inimical to democracy, freedom and change, regardless of whether or not the facts on the ground contradict this view.⁶⁰ Bush goes on to argue the only “modern” aspect of these movements “is the weapons they want to use against us. The rest of their grim vision is defined by a warped image of the past—a declaration of war on the idea of progress, itself.” Yet the modern people of the world should not despair as “those who despise freedom and progress have condemned themselves to isolation, decline, and collapse. Because free peoples believe in the future, free peoples will own the future. ...”⁶¹

The Bush administration’s description of the enemy and the “war on terror” does not seem to have been affected by tactical and strategic losses on two of the war’s central battlefields: Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite the fact that U.S./coalition forces appear to be losing many aspects of these battles, even judging by their own terms of success (e.g., the number of American/coalition military casualties has remained consistent on average, the failure to locate and bring to justice many of the leading figures of Al

⁵⁹ George W. Bush, “President Discusses War on Terror at National Endowment for Democracy,” *White House News and Policies*, 6 October 2005.

⁶⁰ See for example the reluctance of Western governments and analysts to take seriously changes made in Hamas’ position regarding the possibility of accepting a Palestinian state solely in the West Bank and Gaza, with its capital in East Jerusalem, giving up on earlier hopes as expressed in its founding Charter to regain all of historic Palestine, which would include present day Israel as well. See: Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner’s Guide* (New York: Pluto Books, 2006). There has been a similar reluctance on the part of Western politicians and analysts to recognize the consistently democratic participation of movements like Hezbollah and Muslim Brotherhood in government and civil society activities in Lebanon and Egypt respectively. See: John Walsh, “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood: Understanding Centrist Islam,” *Harvard International Review* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2003); On Hezbollah: Mohammed Ben Jelloun, “Hezbollah’s Democratic Demands,” *Swans Commentary* (15 January 2007) and Lara Deeb, “Hizballah: A Primer,” *Middle East Report Online*, 31 July 2006; Reinoud Leenders, “How UN Pressure on Hizballah Impedes Lebanese Reform,” *Middle East Report Online*, 23 May 2006.

⁶¹ George W. Bush, “President Discusses War on Terror at National Endowment for Democracy,” *White House News and Policies*, 6 October 2005.

Qaeda and the Taliban, including Osama bin Laden and Mullah Omar, the failure to bring security and stability to these countries-even if only for the sake of promoting U.S. economic and strategic interests there, and the failure to definitively replace their own forces with local military and police forces- even if only to placate an increasingly frustrated and war-weary American public and Congress), the Bush administration has remained steadfast in its commitment to the “savage” enemy discourse.⁶² Four years after his “mission accomplished” speech, Bush continued to argue that in order to win the “war on terror” the American people first needed to understand the true “nature of the enemy.” In contrast to the United States, which was founded on “universal” values of “freedom” and the “natural rights of men and women,” the system of governance the enemy would like to establish throughout the Middle East is a tyrannical one, based on oppression and violence. Bush further elaborates on the enemy’s belief system, which is diametrically opposed to “western,” “modern” political ideology, explaining: “They believe you should not be able to worship freely. They believe that young girls should not go to school. They’ve got a perverted sense of justice. They believe in the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Their stated objectives, their stated goals are to spread their totalitarian view throughout the Middle East. That’s what they want to do.”⁶³ Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld took the discourse, and with it, justification for the continued occupation of Iraq, one step further arguing that the enemy’s ultimate goal is to spread this barbaric, totalitarian system not only across the Middle East, but to all those lands that were at one time under Muslim rule, “from Spain to the Philippines.” Following the standard protocol, no evidence was provided to substantiate these claims.⁶⁴

Similar to the academic analyses of Huntington, Lewis and Ajami, the latter two of whom have advised President Bush on Middle East policies,⁶⁵ on the rise of “Islamic fundamentalism” as discussed in Chapter Two, the Bush administration has employed

⁶² Michael T. Klare, “Losing the War on Terrorism: Our Incompetent Commander-in-Chief,” *TomDispatch*, 8 January 2006. For statistics on the conduct and impact of the two wars to date, see Seumas Milne, “The War That Can Bring Neither Peace nor Freedom,” *The Guardian*, 5 February 2008; and “Afghanistan: Decision Point 2008,” *The Senlis Council* (6 February 2008).

⁶³ George W. Bush, “President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror,” *White House News and Policies*, 6 April 2006.

⁶⁴ Editorial, *New York Times*, 4 August 2006.

⁶⁵ Zachary Lockman, “Critique from the Right: Neo-conservative Assault on Middle East Studies,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 5, no. 1 (2005): 63-110,

the modern rationalist approach when arguing that there is no need to understand the specific theological, socio-political, and economic agendas or worldviews of Islamist movements, nor the specific endogenous and exogenous factors that have impacted their development, instead gross generalizations can be employed under the pretext that there is nothing more to understand about these movements apart from the fact that they are headed by backwards, violent fanatics who prey on the poor and alienated of their societies. As a National Security Council document put it: these movements recruit “from populations with no voice in their own government and see no legitimate way to promote change in their own country. Without a stake in the existing order, they are vulnerable to manipulation by those who advocate a perverse political vision based on violence and destruction.” Not only in this patronizing assessment is the agency of adherents to these movements completely denied, but so too are all possible explanations for the political violence that these groups may engage in, apart from their lack of an alternative democratic outlet for their frustration, which is, in any case, later dismissed as a mitigating factor: “The failures the terrorists feel and see are blamed both on others and on perceived injustices from the recent or sometimes distant past. The terrorists’ rhetoric keeps wounds associated with this past fresh and raw, a potent motivation for revenge and terror.” The use of the qualifying adjective “perceived” in this instance is meant to deligitimize both the actual experience of “injustice,” and the “wounds” inflicted by it, often at the hands of the U.S. government or its clients in the region, on the part of Islamists, as well as whatever actions they may take to address these “injustices.”⁶⁶

Anyone looking for a nuanced understanding of the reasons why the Islamist agenda, in contrast to that of the secular political opposition, resonates so strongly with large segments of the Muslim world today would be hard pressed to find what they are looking for in any of the polemical statements or speeches made by the members of the Bush administration or prominent leaders of the mainstream opposition. In addition to compressing all of the diverse Islamist movements of the world, with all of their diverse goals, strategies and tactics into a monolithic whole, the administration has defined this whole only in terms of its tactics, with no attempt to understand or differentiate between long-term goals, worldviews, and strategies. Rather, Islamists are defined as “ideologues,” yet the substance of this ideology is never discussed. The

⁶⁶ “National Strategy for Combating Terrorism,” *National Security Council* (September 2006).

only information the public is given about the Islamist belief-system is that it is fundamentally different and opposed to “our” own. Whereas

“We believe in human rights and human dignity and minority rights and rights for women and rights to worship freely. That’s what we believe. We believe in a lot of rights for people. These killers don’t. They have a narrow view of life. They have taken a great religion and converted it to their own vision. They have goals; they want to drive us out of parts of the world. They want the free world to retreat so they can topple governments. They want to be able to do in parts of the world that which they did in Afghanistan—take over a government; impose their negative, dark vision on people. ... This is—this is their vision, and they would like—they would like to see that vision spread. Make no mistake about it, this is a war against people who profess an ideology, and they use terror as a means to achieve their objectives.”⁶⁷

There is no attempt here to explain exactly what is this “ideology” professed by the “killers.” The audience here is implicitly instructed to believe the only ideology adhered to by these movements is one based on the desire to kill and terrorize westerners. Here we see a rhetorical attempt here to conflate the belief system of this monolithic Islamist whole with the tactics it has adopted to promote its alleged agenda. Employing a manifestly simplistic tautological argument, the audience is told nothing about that agenda, except that it is different from “our” own. This is precisely the “ideologization of terror” that Burgat refers to.

2.2 Construction of the “Savage” Islamist Other in the “War on Terror” Discourse: Democrat Discourse

As tempting as it may be for some to attribute the formulation and maintenance of this discourse solely to the hawkish, neo-conservative, evangelist or pro-Zionist strain of the American Republican party, the contributions and analysis of prominent members of the Democratic Party have proven just as prone to essentialist analysis. Democratic Senator and presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton added to the chorus of politicians lining up to defend “American values” of freedom and democracy against the barbarian enemy, arguing: “These principles that we just so easily talk about - democracy, tolerance, rule of law, individual rights-they are the bedrock that has sustained our societies. It is precisely those values that we share that are under attack from the radical Islamist extremists. Their ideology disdains our liberal democratic

⁶⁷ Bush, 3 August 2005.

values and seeks to destroy all that we hold dear.”⁶⁸ Again we see no attempt to define who “they” are. This monolithic Islamist bloc referred to in the discourse is just as likely to be the “global jihadi” Al Qaeda, fighting to rid the Muslim world of all western influence, as it could be Hamas or Hezbollah, nationally based Islamist political parties that are more concerned with protecting (in the case of Hezbollah) or achieving (in the case of Hamas) the sovereignty of the states in which they are located: Lebanon and Palestine respectively.

This point was reinforced in comments made by Senator Clinton during a keynote address at Yeshiva University in which she stressed the importance of maintaining the “special” relationship between Israel and the U.S.: “If Americans did not understand it before 9-11, it is abundantly clear now that we must stand beside Israel and make it clear we guarantee Israel’s security. . . . In defeating terror, Israel’s cause is our cause. The evil of terrorism, a burden long suffered by Israelis, threatens to rip apart the fabric of the Middle East. And our effort fighting terrorism there is akin to our effort fighting terrorism everywhere.” Implicit in this statement are three points: first, that Israel’s and the United State’s futures are strategically, if not existentially, linked; second, that it is *their* “terrorism” — the terrorism of “Islamist extremists,” that threatens the existence and stability of Israel and the rest of the Middle East (regardless of the fact that, in terms of sheer numbers, hundreds of thousands more Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims in the region have been killed, injured, and displaced over the past several decades by *our* (Israeli and American) violence, than Israelis and Americans have been killed or injured by *their* (Muslim/Arab) violence); and, third, that all of these “extremist” movements are linked by virtue of their shared, and irrational (or anti-semitic) hatred of Israel, and of US/western civilization. Again, there is no need for specifics or context in this type of discourse as it is assumed that the audience knows exactly who the “evil” terrorists that threaten Israeli and U.S. security are. The facts of occupation, cultural, military and economic imperialism are completely peripheral to this construction.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Excerpts from Remarks of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton German Media Prize Dinner,” *Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton Speeches*, 13 February 2005.

⁶⁹ Quoted in Kristen Lombardi, “Hillary Calls Israel a ‘Beacon’ of Democracy: Excerpts from Senator Clinton’s Hanukkah Dinner Speech,” *The Village Voice*, 11 December 2005.

Massachusetts Senator and former presidential candidate John Kerry offers a similar analysis in arguing that: “at the core of this conflict is a fundamental struggle of ideas. Of democracy and tolerance against those who would use any means and attack any target to impose their narrow views in a world no longer safe for diversity.”⁷⁰ And although he goes on to reject the “clash of civilizations” paradigm as a lens through which to view the “conflict,” he insists there is a “clash” nonetheless, though not as much between civilizations as between “ideas,” which, as used in this context, seems inextricably linked to the culture that underpins the movements allegedly guided by them. On the one side, according to Kerry, you have those who hold modern ideas which encompass the “hopes of humanity” against those who hold backwards ideas, based on “dogmatic fears of progress and the future.”

Even though Senator Barak Obama, another leading candidate for the Democratic primaries, has been a vocal critic of the Iraq war and has urged diplomatic rather than military solutions to the various issues troubling the U.S. in the Middle East today, in a speech to the AIPAC’s Chicago/Midwest regional forum Obama showed he was just as capable as his Republican and more mainstream democratic counterparts in perpetuating the discourse on political Islam. Similar to Senator Clinton, Obama’s first rhetorical move was to implicitly justify the United States’ “special relationship” with Israel by implying cultural similarities between the two states. Discussing his trip to Kiryat Shmona, a town situated close to Israel’s border with Lebanon, Obama evokes images of a suburban town to which the average American could relate:

Our helicopter landed in the town of Kiryat Shmona on the border. What struck me first about the village was how familiar it looked. The houses and streets looked like ones you might find in a suburb in America. I could imagine young children riding their bikes down the streets. I could imagine the sounds of their joyful play just like my own daughters. There were cars in the driveway. The shrubs were trimmed. The families were living their lives.⁷¹

He then goes on to contrast this idyllic suburban image with the destruction caused by a Hezbollah Katyusha rocket to one of the homes in the town, hence evoking the

⁷⁰ John Kerry, “UCLA Address Promises More Effective War on Terrorism,” *Ronald W. Burkle Center for International Affairs*, 27 February 2004.

⁷¹ “Prepared text of Barack Obama’s speech for the AIPAC foreign policy forum,” *Sun Times News Group*, 2 March 2007.

civilized/barbarian binary. Nowhere in this discussion of the havoc wreaked on Israeli lives by Hezbollah are mitigating facts presented. There is no mention of the fact that for every Israeli civilian who died in the conflict, over twenty-five Lebanese civilians were killed by indiscriminate Israeli bombing -- over one thousand in total, a third of them children.⁷² Nor is there any mention of the indiscriminate death and destruction caused by Israel's use of cluster bombs in civilian areas, in contravention of international law, and which continue to harm Lebanese lives even half a year after the cessation of hostilities, and which even the Bush administration has criticized.⁷³ It is clear from the description that the issue Obama has with Hezbollah is not the violence it has employed to attain political ends, as it is clear to anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the history of Israel's relations with its Arab neighbors that Israel is no novice when it comes to employing violence to achieve political aims, though with much more far-reaching and devastating consequences as a result of its superior military capabilities, but that Israel was somehow more justified in its use of violence because Israelis, in the typical Israeli-influenced orientalist construction described by Said, are ultimately more like *us*, both in civilisational and ontological terms. Hezbollah is one further example of the irrational and violent nature of that disparate group of Islamist movements seen to be threatening the Western way of life, amongst which he includes al-Qaeda and Hamas as well as Iran.

It is as a result of this dichotomous reasoning, and in it the position of Israel and Islamist movements respectively, that Obama finds nothing wrong in recommending such blatantly double-standards when it come to U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While he insists the U.S. should "never seek to dictate what is best for the Israelis and their security interests," he goes on to argue in favor of an intransigent U.S. policy vis-a-vis Hamas, which, despite having successfully implemented a 16 month cease fire, called off only after the Israeli military's shelling of a Gaza beach resulted in the deaths of 8 civilians, including 3 children,⁷⁴ and having agreed to form a unity government in February 2007 with Fatah, the party they

⁷² "Israel/Lebanon: Deliberate destruction or "collateral damage?" Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure," *Amnesty International* (23 August 2006).

⁷³ "United States: Cut Off Cluster Munition Sales to Israel," *Human Rights Watch* (January 29, 2007).

⁷⁴ "Israel Faces Criticism Over Gaza Beach Shelling," ABC New Online (11 June 2006).

defeated in undisputed legislative elections only one year earlier,⁷⁵ hence demonstrating Hamas' flexibility and capacity to cede to regional and international pressure, should be told that "this is not good enough."⁷⁶ In this dichotomy, the Israelis are viewed as civilized and hence capable of autonomous thought and action whereas the U.S. must "tell" Hamas what to do, because, it is assumed, they are incapable of rational action otherwise. Again, and without substantiation or further explanation, Obama explains the reason for this distinction: Israel is the United States' "stalwart all[y]". As a result, the "conflicts of the Middle East" should not be seen as "rooted primarily in the actions of" Israel, but rather as the result of the "perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam."⁷⁷

The contribution to the discourse on political Islam of prominent Democrats is not surprising when looked at in the context of comments made by Democratic House Representative Silvestro Reyes, who was appointed in December 2006 to the post of Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which highlight the amount (or lack) of time and effort the party deems necessary to invest in developing a more comprehensive understanding of the various Middle Eastern Islamist movements- even those they allegedly find threatening. In an interview with the Congressional Quarterly, Reyes displayed an unabashed lack of knowledge of the numerous theological and political differences that exist between various Islamist movements, including obvious and embarrassing mistakes he made in labeling Al Qaeda a Shi'ia movement and Hezbollah, Sunni.⁷⁸ This seemingly innocuous gaffe committed by the individual selected to head one of the most important congressional committees in relation to the "war on terror," and whose job it is to assess vast quantities of material concerning various Middle Eastern Islamist movements, actually points to a more insidious reality regarding the Democrat's lack of desire to develop of an alternative, and perhaps more nuanced, approach to political Islam.

⁷⁵ Tim Butcher, " Hamas and Fatah Agree Unity Government Deal," *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 February 2007.

⁷⁶ Obama, 2 March 2007.

⁷⁷ Barack Obama, "Transcript: Senator Barack Obama's Speech," *The International Herald Tribune*, 18 March 2008.

⁷⁸ Suzanne Goldenberg in Washington, "Middle East questions stump Democrats' intelligence overseer," *The Guardian*, 13 December 2006.

3. U.S. Journalists Construct the “Savage” Islamist Other in the “War on Terror” Discourse

For a plethora of reasons, including, as discussed above, the financial interests of the major corporate owners of mainstream American media, which are often more concerned about alienating the advertisers they depend on for a substantial portion of their revenue than getting a story right, the shared cultural and political references of the media and political elite, as well as the shared ability of both to be swayed by the lobbying campaigns of powerful interests which could threaten their financial and/or public credibility, the mainstream U.S. media has often played the role of both transmitter and purveyor of orientalist stereotypes throughout the history of U.S. involvement in the Middle East. In this section I will focus specifically on the role of particularly influential pundits who have facilitated the creation and/or perpetuation of the modern rationalist and orientalist discourse on political Islam in the context of the “war on terror”. As Hansen argues, the relationship between politicians and media in constructing and sustaining a discourse is neither unidirectional nor stagnant, which makes it difficult to attribute full responsibility to one party or another. What is certain, however is that “it would...be extremely unlikely- and politically unsavvy- for politicians to articulate foreign policy without any concern for the representations found within the wider public sphere as they attempt to present their policies as legitimate to their constituencies,” which is why it is important to turn our attention now to “representations” of the “savage” enemy in the media.⁷⁹

Although most popular pundits stayed within the framework of acceptable orientalist language in the days following the 9/11 attacks, one notoriously outspoken right wing journalist, Ann Coulter, decided to do away with PC etiquette in favor of vitriolic diatribe. Echoing the sentiments of former Secretary of State Dulles, another well-known American who chose to side-step the formalities of the United States’ infamously politically correct culture in favor of more forthright approach when he declared: “For us [Eisenhower administration] there are two sorts of people in the world: there are those who are Christians and support free enterprise and there are the

⁷⁹ Hansen, 7.

others”⁸⁰, Coulter, in her first post-9/11 column, urged the Bush administration to “invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity.”⁸¹

Pulitzer Prize winning, leading neocon journalist Charles Krauthammer opted to stay within the acceptable limits when he criticized the “moral obtuseness” of those who sought to understand the root causes of the September 11th attacks in an opinion piece written for the *Washington Post*. “This is not a time for agonized relativism,” Krauthammer argued, “or, obscenely, for blaming America first. This is a time for clarity. At a time like this, those who search for shades of evil, for root causes, for extenuations are, to borrow from Lance Morrow, ‘too philosophical for decent company.’”⁸² Robert Kagan and William Kristol, co-founders of PNAC and regular writers for the neoconservative publication the *Weekly Standard*, agreed with the “grand and clear vision for American foreign policy” set forth by the President, and urged policymakers, every time they see evil, to “to call it by its name.”⁸³ And while the Islamist terrorist was the enemy, it was clear to many of these pundits that the “endless tyranny and intolerance” of the Arab world was the real culprit behind the barbarian acts.⁸⁴

In an article written close to a month after the attacks on the World Trade Center, Daniel Pipes, the neocon pundit who founded the McCarthyesque organization “Campus Watch,” which encourages students to spy on and publicly expose professors who they believe exhibit anti-American or anti-Israeli tendencies in the class room, has described events as confirming not a “clash of civilizations,” but rather a “clash between civilization and barbarism.”⁸⁵ In alarmist tones, Pipes argued not only were these “enemies” of civilization to be found in the mountains of Tora

⁸⁰ Related by former French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau in a recorded interview for the Dulles Oral History Project, Princeton University Library; cited in Roger Morgan, *The United States and West Germany, 1945-1973; A Study in Alliance Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 54.

⁸¹ Ann Coulter, “This Is War,” *National Review*, 12 September 2001.

⁸² Charles Krauthammer, “Voices of Moral Obtuseness,” *Washington Post*, 21 September 2001, reprinted in Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, eds., *The Iraq War Reader. History, Documents, Opinions* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 281.

⁸³ Robert Kagan and William Kristol, “Lost in the Wilderness,” *Weekly Standard*, 22 April 2002.

⁸⁴ Charles Krauthammer, “Three Cheers for the Bush Doctrine,” *Time* (7 March 2005).

⁸⁵ Daniel Pipes, “Two Declarations of War,” *Jerusalem Post*, 10 October 2001. Although Pipes started out his career as an academic, having received a PhD from Harvard in 1978 in medieval Islamic history, I have used the ‘pundit’ label to describe him because he has never secured a permanent academic position and he has made more of a name for himself writing polemical articles for a various right-wing newspapers and journals, including the one published by his own think-tank, Middle East Forum, than he ever did in his capacity as an academic. Lockman, 254-257.

Bora and the dark streets alleyways of southern Beirut and Nablus, but also on the United States' own soil. In another article revealing his Islamophobic tendencies, Pipes warns Americans to be vigilant of *all* Muslims, not only self-declared Islamists as, one assumes, it is Islam itself that is antithetical to western civilization:

There is no escaping the unfortunate fact that Muslim government employees in law enforcement, the military, and the diplomatic corps need to be watched for connections to terrorism, as do Muslim chaplains in prisons and the armed forces.

Muslim visitors and immigrants must undergo additional background checks. Mosques require a scrutiny beyond that applied to churches, synagogues and temples. Muslim schools require increased oversight to ascertain what is being taught to children.⁸⁶

Pipes who has “acquired a reputation in Muslim-American circles [and beyond] as “Islamaphobe” and “Muslim basher,” has also demonstrated his predilection for the “ideologization of terror” approach by consistently conflating diverse Islamist movements and denying the necessity, or indeed possibility, of nuanced analysis of the world views, rationales, or agendas of these movements.⁸⁷ In one article in which he attacks those scholars seeking to go beyond static and essentialist analyses of Islamist movements and who instead believe in the importance of assessing each one on its own merits, and who see in these movements the potential for dynamic change and democratic participation, he writes in regards to Hamas and Hezbollah:

These organizations are important elements of the Islamist movement that seeks to create a global totalitarian order along the lines of what has already been created in Iran, Sudan, and in Afghanistan under the Taliban. They see themselves as part of a cosmic clash between Muslims and the West in which the victor dominates the world.⁸⁸

As with all of the “ideologization of terror” and modern rationalist analyses, Pipes sees no need to substantiate his accusations with any messy facts - it is enough to say that both Hezbollah and Hamas are members of this monolithic “Islamist movement” with its “global totalitarian” agenda. It is presumed the reader will understand and

⁸⁶Daniel Pipes, “The War’s Most Agonizing Issue,” *Jerusalem Post*, 22 January 2003.

⁸⁷ Lockman, 255.

⁸⁸ Daniel Pipes, “Can Hezbollah and Hamas Be Democratic?” *New York Sun*, 22 March 2005.

trust the self-proclaimed “expert” on political Islam regardless of the glaring lack of proof to substantiate his argument.

Norman Podhoretz, editor in chief of *Commentary*, the standard-bearer of Jewish “neoconservatism,”⁸⁹ and a “highly influential adventurer in the world of neoconservatism,” described the high stakes at risk in the “war on terror” as being “nothing less than the survival of Western civilization, to the extent that Western civilization still exists, because half of it seems to be committing suicide.”⁹⁰ Echoing the discourse increasingly employed by the political establishment, Podhoretz defended the Bush administration’s doctrine of pre-emption as a necessary “military strategy” that, when combined with its “political strategy of democratization,” could save “Western civilization” from the threat of “Islamofascism.”⁹¹ Despite the fact that many of his fellow neoconservative ideologues have recently reneged their support for the Bush doctrine after witnessing its grave failures in the first phases of its implementation, Podhoretz has remained steadfast in his commitment to it, arguing that it is imperative that the U.S. see this “war” through in the same way, and evoking the WWII and Cold War analogies, it led the worldwide struggles against Nazism and Communism to “to a victorious end.”⁹²

Writing for the *Weekly Standard*, a prominent neoconservative publication, which is supported by a \$3 million annual subsidy from Rupert Murdoch and considered one of the most “successful political magazines”⁹³ in the U.S., Stephen Schwartz, the journalist who has claimed credit for creating the “islamofascism” neologism, has added generously to the modern rationalist discourse on political Islam and to support for the Bush administration’s policies towards Islamist movements/states. Schwartz opens his article “What is ‘Islamofascism’?” with an acknowledgment that “political typologies should make distinctions, rather than confusing them” and that the term

⁸⁹ Lockman, 172.

⁹⁰ Joseph Rago, “Unrepentant Neocon,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12 August 2006.

⁹¹ Norman Podhoretz, “Norman Podhoretz responds to critics of his June 2007 article “The Case for Bombing Iran.” *Commentary* (7 August 2006).

⁹² For example, both Richard Perle and Kenneth Adleman, two leading neo-conservatives, recently attacked the Bush administration’s policies vis-à-vis the Middle East in an article penned by David Rose entitled “Neo Culpa,” *Vanity Fair* (January 2007). Also, Francis Fukuyama, the notorious neocon who wrote the famous book *The End of History* made an about-face in an essay he wrote for the *New York Times Magazine* in 2006 in which he announced the end of the “neoconservative Moment” and argued for the demilitarization of the “war on terror”

⁹³ Scott Mc Connell, “The Weekly Standard’s War: Murdoch’s mag stands athwart history yelling, ‘Attack!’,” *The American Conservative* (21 November 2005).

“islamofascism” should therefore “be employed sparingly and precisely,” yet goes on to do exactly the opposite through the course of his article.⁹⁴ Applying the term liberally to movements and states as varied as: “Saudi-financed Wahhabis, the Pakistani jihadists known as Jama'atis, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood...Hezbollah in Lebanon and the clique around President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran,” Schwartz’s only attempt to justify his use of the term is through tautological and simplistic argument. For example, in explaining the relevance of the term for the groups he has delineated, Schwartz writes: “The indicated movements should be treated as Islamofascist, first, because of their congruence with the defining characteristics of classic fascism, especially in its most historically-significant form--German National Socialism.”⁹⁵ One would assume in the following paragraphs the journalist, in the interest of presenting a coherent and cogent argument, would first elaborate on the various components of “classic fascism” and then go on to provide readers with specific examples that prove some sort of correspondence between the principle characteristics of these movements and fascism. Instead, what we get is a typical modern rationalist assessment of these movements: “Al Qaeda is based in sections of the Saudi, Pakistani, and Egyptian middle classes fearful, in the Saudi case, of losing their unstable hold on prosperity--in Pakistan and Egypt, they are angry at the many obstacles, in state and society, to their ambitions. The constituency of Hezbollah is similar: the growing Lebanese Shia middle class, which believes itself to be the victim of discrimination.”⁹⁶

The reader is meant to be convinced that these disparate Islamist movements can all be classified as fascist based on Shwartz’s belief that they are comprised of members of the middle class who are fearful of their diminishing socio-economic status, unable to realize their ambitions in life, or members of a section of society that has become obsessed by their (irrational) “belief” that they are the victims of institutionalized discrimination. Later in the article, Shwartz adds to the mix the notion that fascism, in its German and Italian manifestations, is “imperialistic” by nature. “Islamofascism has similar ambitions,” he argues. The proof? “The Wahhabis and their Pakistani and Egyptian counterparts seek control over all Sunni Muslims in the world, while

⁹⁴ Stephen Schwartz, “What Is 'Islamofascism'? A history of the word from the first Westerner to use it,” *Weekly Standard*, 17 August 2006.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Hezbollah projects itself as an ally of Syria and Iran in establishing regional dominance.”⁹⁷ Precisely what Wahhabi groups he is referring to, what statements by leaders of these alleged movements have convinced him they are truly seeking “control over all Sunni Muslims,” and what statements/actions of the Hezbollah leadership point to a common agenda with Iran and Syria, to “establish regional dominance” is left to the reader’s imagination.

By lumping all of these movements together and making overly generalized statements about what elements of the various domestic socio-economic or political developments they are reacting to, this article does nothing to further either the reader’s understanding of the worldviews or objectives of these movements, nor of why the term “islamofascism” is apposite. As with the statements made by politicians on this subject, it is assumed that Shwartz’s analysis is correct, regardless of his level of expertise (or lack of), on the subject, because of his location in space and time- e.g. a “modern” West, and the subsequent location of the objects of his analysis- e.g. a backwards East. In other words, these movements are “islamofascist” because Shwartz says they are. We should listen to Shwartz because he is an authority on the issue. He is an authority on the issue because he says he is.

Also implicit in the use of the fascism analogy is the notion that although the West may have produced such violent and totalitarian movements in the past, they were aberrations within an otherwise progressive march towards a system of humane and just governance. Furthermore, it is assumed that by supporting and/or engaging in the struggle to overcome fascism, the majority of westerners demonstrated their rejection of these remnants of a provincial and un-enlightened past. It is in this instance that the “temporal” element of the discourse becomes clear. In employing the fascism analogy the Islamist other is “articulated as an object in a time different from the self...as ‘backward,’ ‘tribal,’ ‘savage,’ ‘barbarian,’ or primitive’- in other words, as less temporally developed.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Hansen, 48.

The temporal element of the discourse is evidenced as well in much of the media discussion around the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons debacle⁹⁹, which saw many “experts” on Islam ridicule what they described as the violent and atavistic reactions of Islamists/Muslims (the two are often used interchangeably with the terms “fanatics” and “extremists” as well), who, as one journalist put it “seem to have not even a sense of irony”- in other words, they are provincial and unsophisticated.¹⁰⁰ As Krauthamer explains, even if much of the west’s history was marked by bloody religious wars, Jews and Christians “*long ago* gave it up. It is a simple and undeniable fact that the violent purveyors of monotheistic religion today are self-proclaimed warriors for Islam who shout “God is great” as they slit the throats of infidels -- such as those of the flight crews on Sept. 11, 2001 -- and are then celebrated as heroes and martyrs.”¹⁰¹ Ignored here of course are examples of the West’s modern forms of violence, even if no longer officially committed in the name of religion (e.g. slavery, colonialism, the Cold War proxy wars, the death and destruction caused in the “war on terror” etc.), and contemporary religious violence perpetrated by non-Muslims and supported by western governments (e.g. the violence perpetrated by the Jewish Israeli state). This perspective is predicated on the stages-of-growth belief that in order to make Islam more compatible with the exigencies of the “modern” world, the religion would first have to undergo a “modern” transformation akin to the Protestant reformation. In other words, what is needed is a ‘paradigm shift’ within Islam.¹⁰² As one prominent author on the subject put it:

It can only help Islamic faith if Islamic scholars begin to tackle the historical problems. This can still be dangerous for a Muslim today, just as a heterodox view was for a Catholic at the height of the Inquisition or for a liberal Protestant in Calvin's Geneva.¹⁰³

⁹ The Muhammad cartoons controversy arose in response to the twelve editorial cartoons, most of which depicted the Muslim prophet Muhammad, were published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005. In response, Danish Muslim organizations held public protests and, several months later, the issue provoked outrage in other Muslim communities across Europe and across the Muslim world.

¹⁰ Charles Krauthammer, “Tolerance: A Two-Way Street,” *Washington Post*, 22 September 2006.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Term originally made popular by Thomas Kuhn, quoted in Malise Ruthven, “Review: How to Understand Islam,” *New York Review of Books* 54, no.17 (8 November 2007).

¹³ Hans Küng, *Islam: Past, Present and Future*, (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 2007), quoted in Ruthven.

Martin Peretz, owner of *The New Republic*, an influential neocon magazine with “muscular, pro-Israel, pro-interventionist US foreign policy” added his thoughts to the cartoon controversy in the true orientalist style that made him one of Edward Said’s primary foes.¹⁰⁴ For Peretz, the sense of outrage experienced by many in the Muslim world who saw this event in the context of the unabated assaults their peoples and lands have been subjected to ever since the region’s natural resources and geo-strategic advantages were recognized as beneficial to western interests, was another example of how a large portion of the Muslim world shares in common with the “Palestinians,” a “fertile Arab imagination of endless humiliation and endless revenge.”¹⁰⁵ Similar to the modern rationalist and Orientalist ruminations of Lewis, Huntington and Ajami, Peretz, in his analysis, has reduced the anger of the Palestinians, and indeed of all Muslims and Arabs across the region to an overactive “imagination” or a tendency to be get overemotional about issues of which they have no rational understanding.

The “liberal hawk” and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist for the New York Times, Thomas Friedman, has been described by Lockman as a “less [than] subtle emulator” of Bernard Lewis for his frequent reliance on cultural essentialisms and “dichotomization of the west and the Arab world.”¹⁰⁶ His proclivity towards patronizing analyses of the region is evidenced in one article in which this American journalist, who has not resided in the region long enough to even learn Arabic, offers tips to President Bush on how to deal with the “Arabs” and “Muslims” whose diversity Friedman, using the same modern rationalist lens employed by academics like Lewis, Huntington and Ajami, reduces to a monolithic whole in order to explain phenomenon like “radical” Islamism using simplistic and authoritative statements to describe the “underestimated emotion” of humiliation experienced by Arabs/Muslims as a result of the creation of Israel.¹⁰⁷ Again we see the attempt to explain all developments in the Middle East as irrational, “emotional” *reactions* (Arabs/Muslims

¹⁰⁴ See Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, in which he quotes a particularly Orientalist statement from a Peretz article in which he wrote: Israel has to deal with Arab countries in which there is no “cultural disposition for scientific and industrial takeoff. Alas, these are societies which cannot make a brick let alone a microchip. ... This widening gap will produce deep, perhaps intractable resentment against Israel.” Said, 1997, xxii.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Peretz, “What Israelis Are Talking About: Frequently Asked Questions,” *The New Republic* (3 January 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Lockman, 218.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Friedman, “Mideast Rules to Live by,” *New York Times*, 20 December 2006.

couldn't possibly be capable of independent *action*) to the realization that their "civilization" is in decline, in particular in relation to the West. In another article, with the dual purpose of proving his extensive knowledge, and hence authority over, the Muslims he describes, Friedman lectures Western leaders to stop feeling guilty about pointing the finger at Islam as being responsible for, to use Mutua's term, the Muslim world's "deviation" from universal (e.g. western) values and norms, when attempting to explain the death and destruction cause by Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere. "Western leaders keep saying after every terrorist attack, 'This is not about Islam.' Sorry, but this is all about Islam. It is about a war within Islam between a jihadist-fascist minority engaged in crimes against humanity in the name of Islam, and a passive Sunni silent majority."¹⁰⁸ Not only does Friedman find it unnecessary to substantiate such a sweeping statement, but in making such a claim he ignores the numerous pronouncements of Muslim leaders, both Sunni and Shi'ite, condemning the sectarian fighting in Iraq, much of which these leaders believe is stoked by the occupation rather than any perennial hostility between sects.¹⁰⁹

Roger Cohen, another liberal columnist with a *New York Times* publication, the *International Herald Tribune*, agrees that westerners have to be less circumspect in defining the real enemy in the "war on terror," which isn't only those movements based on a " 'perversion' of Islam, a latter-day Fascist ideology," but rather with the "deep-rooted movement of Islamization," which, in a typically modern rationalist analysis, he explains as developing in reaction to a whole litany of negative

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Friedman, "Silence and Suicide," *New York Times*, 12 October 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Some examples of prominent Muslim leaders condemning the sectarian fighting include: The Shi'ite Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq, who have called for an end to the sectarian fighting arguing that it "[j]eopardizes the Jihad and the Resistance"; Five prominent Sunni Islamist movements in Iraq that call themselves the "Sunni Resistance Organizations in Iraq," who said it was only legitimate to target "those involved in the occupation"; The Syrian Sunni Islamist Sheikh Abd Al-Mun'im Mustafa Halimah Sheikh Abu Baseer Al-Tartousi, who said that "No Islamic Scholar Has Ever Issued a Fatwa to Kill Shi'ites Merely Because They Are Shi'ites"; the Mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh 'Abd Al-'Aziz Aal Al-Sheikh, who said: "The Sectarian Conflict Fulfils the Goals of our Enemies; and the Iraqi Sheikh Muzahem of Tikrit said the targeting of Shi'ites is a crime intended to undermine Iraqi unity." "Sunni Sheikhs and Organizations Criticize Al-Zarqawi's Declaration of War Against the Shi'ites," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1000, (7 October 2005). Also the July 2005 International Islamic Conference held in Jordan, included scholars from 40 countries and more than 170 religious leaders from the main Shia schools – Ithna Ashari, Ismaili and Zaidi – the four Sunni schools – Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali – as well as the Ibadi and the Zahir. All called to recognize the plurality of Islam and condemn those movements that kill, issuing the statement that "unauthorized religious opinions encouraging violence against Muslims whom they accuse as infidels, and upholding and extolling acts of terrorism, whether directed against Muslims or non-Muslims, as not only illegitimate but an affront to all that Islam stands." "The International Islamic Conference, Amman, Jordan July 2005," *The Institute of Ismaili Studies, New Archive* (July 2005).

developments in the region, including: “Repressive and corrupt one-party regimes, condoned by Washington in countries from Saudi Arabia to Egypt,” and which “left the mosque as the only significant platform for political opposition.”; “humiliation” experienced across the Arab world as result of “Israel’s victories, America’s invasion of Iraq, a history of Western colonization, and the economic and cultural failings chronicled by the United Nations in successive Arab Human Development Reports” In this context, Cohen explains, “jihadists who embrace death over being demeaned are viewed as salvaging some vestige of Arab and Islamic honor.” And finally, an “All-conquering Western modernism... [which] is widely rejected as an identity by young Muslims.”¹¹⁰

Although Friedman has been critical some elements of the strategy adopted by Bush administration in its implementation of the “war on terror” (e.g. its adoption of a unilateral, as opposed to multilateral, approach), in general he has been supportive of the administration’s motives, particularly in Iraq, which he sees as an attempt to “create one good example in the heart of the Arab world of a decent, progressive state, where the politics of fear and tribalism do not reign.”¹¹¹ While Friedman is generally regarded as a supporter of the Democratic Party, he has criticized those members of the party who fail to see the world in the same dichotomized terms as he does. In lamenting the defeat of Senator Joe Lieberman by the upstart antiwar Democrat Ned Lamont in the 2006 Senate elections, Friedman voiced his opinion that too many Democrats failed to see that the biggest threat to “open societies today” is radical Islam.¹¹² From these statements it is clear that Friedman sees political Islam is antithetical to “progressive,” democratic politics, and “open society” in general.

Friedman’s views on political Islam are even more evident in another article on the deleterious effects of oil on the prospect for democracy in the region.¹¹³ In this article he argues that the only reason Islamist movements like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas in Palestine have done so well in recent elections, has to do with the lack of space for truly “progressive secular parties” to develop rather than any

¹¹⁰ Roger Cohen, “10 reasons terror meets silence from Muslims,” *International Herald Tribune*, 26 October 2005.

¹¹¹ Thomas Friedman, “Time for Plan B,” *New York Times*, 4 August 2006.

¹¹² Thomas Friedman, “Big Talk, Little Will,” *New York Times*, 16 August 2006.

¹¹³ Thomas Friedman, “Addicted to Oil,” *New York Times*, 1 February 2006.

inherent appeal of the religious groups themselves.¹¹⁴ Echoing the oft-repeated mantra of politicians, academics and media alike regarding the reasons for the growing appeal of Islamist movements, Friedman argues: “The mosque became an alternative power center because it was the only place the government's iron fist could not fully penetrate. As such, it became a place where people were able to associate freely, incubate local leaders and generate a shared opposition ideology.” Friedman goes on to criticize the case the “liberal independent” presidential candidate, Ayman Nour, who was “thrown in prison as soon as the election was over” in Egypt, while conveniently ignoring the disturbing fact of the thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members that were already languishing in prison at the time Nour was “thrown in,” though that is perhaps an understandable oversight considering the fact that neither the American press, nor American politicians, have accorded the Brotherhood victims of Mubarak’s authoritarian regime a fraction of the attention they have lavished on Mr. Nour.¹¹⁵

4. U.S. Think-tanks Construct the “Savage” Islamist Other in the “War on Terror” Discourse

Although one would expect a more nuanced analysis on political Islam in relation to the “war on terror” from the Washington based “think-tanks,” whose influence on the corridors of power has been well documented, in reality we see more of the same: orientalist stereotypes and essentialist analysis of the type associated with the modern rationalist approach.¹¹⁶ And even in the current climate where skepticism is rife amongst the American population and politicians, especially amongst those members of the Democratic Party elected to Congress in the 2006 midterm elections, in regards to the role of the neocon network in setting the U.S. foreign policy agenda, the think-tanks which comprise this network continue to play an influential role. One need only

¹¹⁴ Friedman is referring here to the 2005 Egyptian parliamentary elections where the Muslim Brotherhood received 20% of the vote and the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative elections where Hamas won a majority of seats.

¹¹⁵ According to Sawasiah, and Egyptian rights group associated with the Brotherhood, 3,245 Brotherhood members were detained in 2007 alone. “Egypt arrests 29 Muslim Brotherhood members, leader calls for protests for Gaza Palestinians,” *International Herald Tribune*, 21 January 2008.

¹¹⁶ For a good analysis of the impact of three prominent, Washington-based think-tanks (American Enterprise Institute, Middle East Forum and Institute for Near East Policy) on the corridors of power, see Brian Whitaker’s article, “US think-tanks give lessons in foreign policy,” *The Guardian*, 19 August 2002. For an assessment of the incestuous relationship between U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, see Joel Beinin’s “Tel Aviv’s Influence on American Institutions: US: the pro-Sharon think-tank,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 2003.

look at the list of invitees asked by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NY) in his new role as Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia to provide “expert” evidence to the Subcommittee’s February 2007 meeting on an important component of U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East, entitled: “Next Steps in Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process” for evidence that this is still the case. All three of these, including David Makovsky of WINEP, Martin Indyk, the former deputy director of research at AIPAC and cofounder of WINEP, and Daniel Pipes, are all core figures in the neocon network.¹¹⁷

One of the earliest contributions to the discourse on political Islam emanating out of the D.C.-based world of think-tanks, was that of Robert Satloff, director of the WINEP. In his article “Terror against America: Assessment and Implications,” Satloff offered a detailed response to the soul-searching question that seemed to be in the minds of every prominent pundit, politician, and think-tank personality in the weeks and months following the attacks: “why do they hate us?” It was clear for Statloff that the Islamist enemy:

hates the United States because of who and what it is -- the magazines, the television, and the music. They hate the American way of life, especially the openness, opportunity, religious tolerance, and sexual equality that are hallmarks of American society...Their rejection of American policies -- the friendship with Israel, the military support of moderate Arab states, the remarkably selfless effort to find a negotiated solution to the region’s territorial and national disputes -- is derivative of their hatred for the United States..¹¹⁸

Again we see the picture of the “savage” come clearly into focus. The enemy cannot be understood through rational analysis, because the enemy is irrational. How can one take seriously the grievances and demands of an enemy that has forsaken the most fundamental “universal” values? According to this narrative, colonialism, the continued post-colonial exploitation of natural resources, the Cold War (and post) interference in regional and national politics, support for the creation of Israel and its continued occupation of Palestine, American troops in Saudi Arabia- home to two of Islam’s holiest cities, the American invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq,

¹¹⁷ Daniel Pipes, “Testimony presented to the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the House Foreign Affairs Committee,” 14 February 2007.

¹¹⁸ Robert Satloff, “Terror against America: Assessment and Implications (Part I),” Policy Watch #557: Special Forum Report *Washington Institute for Near East Policy* (19 September 2001).

American sanctioned double-standards and hypocrisy in enforcing the human rights regime —all of this is mere rhetorical justification for the enemy's true agenda, which is to destroy the U.S., and the West in general, because of its wealth and freedom. It goes without saying that this perspective is also an example of the “ideologization of terror” as the motives, historical context, ideological/political agenda of the organization(s) under discussion are seen as peripheral.

Writing in his capacity as a fellow for the Hudson Institute, Stanley Kurtz argued along similar lines that there was no need to understand the anger in the Muslim world or the true nature and diversity of Islamist movements, but rather that one can draw all the necessary conclusions about the motivations which drive these Islamist movements simply by looking at the “anguish” experienced by Muslim world as a result of its inability to adequately blend “tradition” with elements of “Western-influenced” “modernity.”¹¹⁹ As a result “It’s America itself” that they “envy and hate – our freedom, our power, our prosperity.” Michael Ledeen chimed in with his description of “Islamist extremism,” both Sunni and Shiite, state and non state actors, arguing that they are against the U.S. because “we are the one truly revolutionary country on earth, which is both the reason for which we were attacked in the first place and the reason we will successfully transform the lives of hundreds of millions of people throughout the Middle East.”¹²⁰ WINEP’s David Makovsky added his agreement to the consensus arguing that the origins for these movements and their violence can found in civil-war ridden Lebanon in 1983, when 241 American servicemen were killed in an attack perpetrated by Hezbollah (though no mention of the potential role U.S. participation in that conflict played in inspiring such an act¹²¹). According to Makovsky, “There is a fiery resentment among Islamic radicals of all that America represents as a military, cultural and economic power and its focus on

¹¹⁹ Stanley Kurtz, “Getting to the Root: What’s really behind the terrorism,” *The National Review* (3 October 2001).

¹²⁰ Michael A. Ledeen, “The War on Terror Won’t End in Baghdad,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 4 September 2002.

¹²¹ As Ken Silverstein points out, much of the mainstream analysis on Hezbollah and 1983 attack on the U.S. Marine barracks overlooks potential mitigating factors such as the fact that a majority of Lebanese viewed the Americans as a hostile military force “that had intervened in the civil war on behalf of Israel and its Lebanese Christian allies in the government.” Silverstein points out that “since 1982, some 20,000 people in Lebanon, many of them Shiite civilians, have been killed by Israeli attacks, and Hezbollah’s militia is the only entity in the country that represents any type of credible deterrent force.” Ken Silverstein, “Parties of God: The Bush Doctrine and the Rise of the Islamic Democracy,” *Harpers Magazine* (1 March 2007).

the individual at the center of society. America is viewed by these radicals as a revolutionary power that is disruptive of traditional Islamic society.”¹²²

In a speech by Martin Kramer made to the Weinberg Founders Conference at the Washington Institute, the WINEP Fellow editor of Pipes’ *Middle East Quarterly* argued that in addition to their “hatred for this country,” one should take into consideration the fundamentalist’s “contempt,” which has more to do with U.S. “weakness” than power. Kramer, who worked for fourteen years at the Tel Aviv based Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies,¹²³ argues that the “enemy” is full of contempt for “the fact that America is so naively trusting of foreigners, that it gives everyone the benefit of the doubt, and that it is willing to sell the very training needed to destroy it.”¹²⁴ The enemy the U.S. now faces may be backward, but we must not let that fact blind us from their ability to exploit our weaknesses, the argument goes. They know America well, as many of them have lived in the country for years. In fact, their ideas of “‘women of paradise’ probably owes more to MTV than to anything they saw back in their dusty corner of Saudi Arabia.” It is “their own familiarity with America [that] has bred a deep contempt, far more deadly than impotent rage.”¹²⁵

In an article for the rightwing Heritage Foundation, Kim R. Holmes praises the Bush administration for having made the semantic shift from the too narrowly defined label of “war on terrorism” to the “struggle against global extremism”. Holmes argues that this shift is a positive development in that it takes into consideration “America’s long-range strategic aims.” Although he acknowledges that the change in terminology will not have a major effect on the U.S. tactics or goals, at least not in the short run, he believes it could have an impact on the way Americans think about “the current conflict against radical Islamic terrorist groups.” Holmes expresses particular satisfaction with then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s description of

¹²² David Makovsky, “Mideast Clerics Speak Out,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 30 September 2001.

¹²³ The Dayan Center, which describes itself as “an interdisciplinary research center devoted to the study of the modern history and contemporary affairs in the Middle East,” is, as Zachary Lockman points out, named after the famous general and politician and known for its pro-government agenda as it is a “a key site where senior Israeli military, foreign policy and intelligence officials can interact with academics working on policy-relevant issues.” Lockman, 257-258.

¹²⁴ Martin Kramer, “Regime Strategies in the Middle East: The Role of Islamism, Anti-Americanism, and Terrorism (Part I),” Weinberg Founders Conference (2001), reprint in *War on Terror: The Middle East Dimension*, ed. R.B. Satloff (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2002).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

America's policies as a "global struggle against the enemies of freedom, the enemies of civilization." Still, he is critical of the administration's reluctance to be more direct in its language:

The Administration still appears to be squeamish about naming radical Islam by name. While it is true that America opposes any ideological group that employs terrorism, it also is true that we are, correctly, fixated on radical Islamic groups. We have hesitated emphasizing this fact in some of our official public statements for fear of offending innocent Muslims or alienating potential allies in Muslim countries. Might something be wrong still with our stated policy if we cannot articulate an obvious fact about our strategic aims? It's one thing to be tactically clever and not alienate innocent people or potential allies. But it is another if that reluctance blurs the reality of our objectives and confuses people—particularly Americans—about who our enemy really is and what really is at stake.¹²⁶

John Fonte, a senior fellow with the neoconservative Hudson Institute, is equally unequivocal in his assessment of the enemy that the "democratic world" is confronted by, and is similarly critical of the government's circumspection when it comes to defining the enemy.¹²⁷ According to Fonte, the government should admit that the true enemy is not terrorism, but rather, and more specifically, "Radical Islam or militant jihad." Laurent Marawiec, another senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, agrees with his colleague that this is "not a war "on terror," it is a war on jihad," and confirming Mutua's point that the real enemy referred to in these analyses is not merely the specific state (or non-state, in this case) actor in question, but rather the culture/religion that underpins it, he argues that the underlying enemy is "an Islam that has, for all practical purposes, thrown its lot with the jihadis, or at least never clearly and practically distanced itself from jihad."¹²⁸ The only way to overcome the threat posed by this violent and anachronistic enemy, according to Marawiec, is "to bring the Arab Muslim world into the modern era."¹²⁹ He goes on to compare what is described as this Herculean task to that which the Allied forces in WWII were confronted; not only to defeat the aggressors' armed forces, but to "transform the

¹²⁶ Kim R. Holmes, "What's in a Name? "War on Terror" Out, 'Struggle Against Extremism' In," *The Heritage Foundation* (26 July 2005).

¹²⁷ John Fonte, "Immigration, Assimilation, Liberal Democracy, and the War on Terror" Speech, *UCLA Law School*, 3 March 2006.

¹²⁸ Laurent Murawiec, "The Wisdom of Benedict XVI: 1391 and 2006," *The Hudson Institute* (21 September 2006).

¹²⁹ Laurent Murawiec, "A Post-Saddam Strategy for the War on Terrorism," *The Hudson Institute* (15 July 2003).

vanquished so they would no longer pose a threat to their neighbors and the world at large.” Unlike some of the other examples we have seen where the WWII analogy is used to evoke comparisons to the ultimate “just” war, Marawiec exposes his orientalist roots even further by arguing that the comparison is somewhat inaccurate because the Muslim world is not as economically, culturally or politically advanced as either Germany or Japan at the time as it is neither “endowed with [the] rich institutional, cultural, and practical resources,” of post-WII Germany, nor does it enjoy a culture that is as “highly adaptive, willing and able to absorb innovations from the outside and assimilate them,” as was Japan at the time it too was saved from its own devices by the benevolence of the Allied forces.

Shelby Steele, a research fellow at the Hoover Institute, also explains the limits, and by doing so also exposes his own orientalist roots, of another historical comparison often evoked in the discourse: the Cold War/Communist analogy. Again conflating diverse Islamist movements such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda, Steele argues: “The West is stymied [by these movements]...because it is used to enemies that want to live. In Vietnam, America fought an enemy whose communism was driven by an underlying nationalism, the desire to live free of the West. Whatever one may think of this, here was an enemy who truly wanted to live, who insisted on territory and sovereignty. But Osama bin Laden fights only to achieve a death that will enshrine him as a figure of awe. The gift he wants to leave his people is not freedom or even justice; it is consolation.”¹³⁰ Again we see the frequent themes of the discourse, most importantly the Islamist movement’s irrationality. Rather than state his opinion in frank manner though, Shelby, like many of the other modern rationalists, couches the argument in seemingly neutral terms which do little to mask the dichotomous reasoning they imply. In this case, ideologies with western roots (e.g. communism and nationalism), and based on Enlightenment-derived principles and values such as a politico-geographically defined “territory,” which is linked to the notion of “sovereignty” (as opposed to the Islamist’s notion of sovereignty which is inextricably linked to Allah, as described in Chapter One) fill the “rational” side of the binary pair. On the other side you have the “irrational” Islamist whose ideology is rooted in a cult of death (whereas “rational” political ideology is aimed at improving

¹³⁰ Shelby Steele, “White Guilt and Radical Islam,” *Hoover Digest, Research and Opinion on Public Policy* no. 4 (2006).

and extending life), and which seeks to impart to its followers the “irrational” gift of “consolation” (whereas the rational ideology pursues the lofty, and, according to this analysis, ideologically/culturally neutral and non-contingent, values of “freedom” and “justice”).

In an article penned by Murawiec in which he praises what he views as the moral stance taken by Pope Benedict XVI’s when he quoted a 14th century Byzantine emperor on the inherent violent and inhuman nature of Islam, the Hudson fellow adds to the “ideologization of terrorism” discourse by arguing that it is “the irrational nihilism of modern jihad,” rather than any political or economic factors, which is behind the violence used by some (though from his argument the readers assumes all) Islamist movements, whereas the Pope, “in promoting a culture of life, of faith and reason,” represents the rationality and peacefulness of the western half of this binary equation.¹³¹ David Frum, a resident fellow at the neoconservative American Enterprise Institute as well as contributing editor to the *National Review*, has expressed similar sentiments in regards to Islamist movements (and states) arguing that Iran, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda “all share beliefs that hark[ed] back to European fascism: Disdain for free inquiry and rational thought, a celebration of death and murder, and obsessive anti-Semitism.”¹³²

In an article supporting the U.S. invasion of Iraq and prophesizing on the positive impact it will have on Islamist movements as diverse as Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which, one is led assume from the argument, are all subsumed in the same category as they will be identically impacted by this stage of the U.S. “war against terrorism,” Martin Indyk argues that the removal of Saddam Hussein will shift “the balance of power in the Arab world...decisively in favor of the more moderate [e.g. “good Muslim”] states of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia” and hence away from that nebulous network of states that supports what Indyk sees as a monolithic, violent Islamist movement. And, as with all modern rationalist, not to mention patronizing orientalist, analyses, Indyk offers his advice to the Muslim world of what steps should be taken to develop “a more tolerant model of Islam, one more reconciled to modernity.” With a similar air of (unwarranted) authority, Indyk goes on

¹³¹ Murawiec, 2006.

¹³² David Frum, “How Bush Arrived at His Denunciation of Iraq and Co.,” *American Enterprise Institute* (22 January 2003).

to urge Muslim leaders to put a halt to the “hatred and xenophobia now propagated through school and mosque,” though he provides no examples to substantiate such a broad allegation, and, finally, to “undertak[e] economic reforms that can provide meaningful employment and the hope of a better future for their young people,” who, it is assumed, would otherwise join Islamist groups opposed to modernity and reform.

In yet another example of the disdainful, and often patently inaccurate, statements made by American analysts of political Islam, Joshua Muravchik, also a resident scholar at AEI, also compares groups as disparate as Hamas, Hezbollah and Al Qaeda in an article where he argues against describing these movements as “nationalist” because both their origins and goals are actually transnational in nature.¹³³ If Muravchik had gone on to consider some of their theological and ideological characteristics that render the “nationalist” term inadequate in describing the worldviews and goals of these movements, some of which I myself have described in Chapter One of this book, the argument might have been compelling. Instead, the author goes on to rehash old stereotypes about Islamic movements, monolithically perceived, which does more to expose his lack of basic background knowledge of these movements than to convince anyone of the legitimacy of his argument. For example, one would be hard pressed to find evidence in any of the scholarly or serious journalistic literature written on Hamas or Hezbollah that either group “see themselves as part of a global movement of jihad,” or that these groups take “pride in being the brothers and comrades-in-arms of the terrorists who attacked New York and Washington, London and Madrid, Beslan, Bombay, and Bali.” And it would be news to the leadership of both movements that they are want to partake in constructing a “caliphate to rule over all of the lands of the Muslim empires of the past—from Morocco and Spain in the west to the Philippines in the east, taking in the southern half of Europe, the northern half of Africa, and most of Asia.”¹³⁴

¹³³ Joshua Muravchik, “Disproportionate’ Criticism: Israel Will Not Back Down, and Europe Owes its Thanks,” *American Enterprise Institute* (31 July 2006).

¹³⁴ To see more on Hamas’ stance on these issues see Ian Mather, “Al-Qaeda on defensive as bombs begin to backfire,” *Scotland on Sunday*, 13 November 2005; Hroub; Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000). For more on Hezbollah’s position, see: Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hezbollah: Politics and Religion*. (London: Pluto Press, 2001); Seymour M. Hersh, “Annals of National Security: The Redirection,” *The New Yorker* (5 March 2007); Deeb; Reinoud Leenders, “How UN Pressure on Hizbullah Impedes Lebanese Reform,” *Middle East Report Online* (May 23, 2006).

Kramer also conflates divergent Islamist movements in an article in which he assesses the dominant arguments that influence current western counterterrorism debates.¹³⁵ Though he praises the French scholar Gilles Kepel for his immense reservoir of knowledge on political Islam, facilitated by his fluency in Arabic, as well as for his savvy “media presence” which Kramer describes as “prolific, provocative, and photogenic” in the end he appears to have been won over by the non-academic analyses of people such as Roland Jacquard, president of the Paris-based International Observatory on Terrorism, who belong what Kramer describes as the “the gray genre of the intelligence compendium.” The latter’s analysis differs from the former in that they believe Islamist movements are not on the wane as a result of their failure to mobilize sustained support from the “the devout bourgeoisie” and “the masses of the urban poor,” but rather are continuously conniving and thinking of ways “to outdo the murderous performance of September 11,” hence the United States is “left with no choice but to wage continuous war against every last redoubt of extreme Islamism.” In this analysis, Islamist movements such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad will continue to succeed in their respective “jihads” as long as they remain “proxies of regimes in a common struggle against Israel.” According to Kramer, these movements are in the same category as Al Qaeda insofar as they desire to turn their “national causes into full-blown holy wars.”

As in the case of the journalists and politicians who have been discussed in this chapter, amongst think-tanks one also finds “liberal” institutions participating just as fully in the construction and maintenance of the discourse on political Islam as exemplified in a 2006 article on U.S. foreign policy vis-à-vis the Middle East written by Kenneth M Pollack, Director of the Research at the liberal Brookings Institution’s notoriously pro-Israel Saban Center for Middle East Policy.¹³⁶ In it he employed the

¹³⁵ Martin Kramer, “Islamist Bubbles: Beware the light at the end of the Islamist tunnel,” *National Interest* (Summer 2002).

¹³⁶ Kenneth M. Pollack, “Grand Strategy: Why America Should Promote a New Liberal Order in the Middle East,” *Blueprint Magazine* (22 July 2006). Haim Saban, former half-owner of the Fox Family Worldwide, emigrated from Israel to the US in 1966. Famously quoted by the *New York Times* on 5 September 2004 for saying “I’m a one-issue guy and my issue is Israel,” Saban has played a prominent role in the pro-Israel lobby in the US, mostly through his work for the Democratic Party. Saban was apparently instrumental in the appointment of former AIPAC lobbyist Martin Indyk’s appointment as US Ambassador to Israel in 1995. In 2002 Saban donated \$13 million to start the new “Saban Center for Middle East Policy” at the Brookings Institution directed by Martin Indyk. Brookings was influential in setting the parameters of the debate in the lead up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which it supported, garnering roughly double the number of news citations and “expert” quotes over

modern rationalist approach, describing Islamist movements as developing in reaction to various negative developments in the Arab world:

The Arab states' economies are stagnant. Many have failed to diversify beyond oil and now suffer from crippling unemployment and underemployment. Many of their citizens have retreated into religious revival, often of particularly noxious new hues. Arab educational systems, meanwhile, produce graduates qualified to do little of value to society. The problem is not just the predominance of Islamic learning in their curricula, but a teaching method that reveres rote memorization and smothers creative thinking, interdisciplinary learning, and other entrepreneurial skills. Politically, the Arab autocracies have largely ossified into massive bureaucracies that provide virtually no services to their people, no outlets for them to express their grievances, and no hope for political action to address their many difficulties.¹³⁷

As with the academic modern rationalist approaches discussed in Chapter Two, in seeing political Islam as a reaction to various socio-economic and political developments, analyses like Pollack's tend to minimize the importance of additional, and perhaps more complex, reasons people might actively (as opposed to reactively) join an Islamist movement, including theological, political, cultural and social factors.

5. Challenges to the Construction of the "Savage" Islamist Other in the "War on Terror" Discourse

While the examples provided in this chapter are representative of the norm in regards to the construction of the "savage" other in the "war on terror" discourse, alternative approaches, which take into consideration some of the more complex reasons individuals join or support Islamist movements, the numerous differences that distinguish prominent movements from one another, and the equally complex and diverse reasons some Islamist movements choose to employ violence to attain certain political or even religious ends, exist in all of the genres discussed in this chapter. For example, the Washington Editor for Haper's Magazine, Ken Silverstein, has gone further than most in his attempts to develop a nuanced understanding of the manifold difference that distinguish Middle Eastern Islamist movements from one another. In one article he writes:

competitors such as Council on Foreign Relations, Heritage Foundation, and American Enterprise Institute. Grant Smith, "Israel Lobby Initiates Hispanic Strategy: 'Invadimos a Iran,'" *Institute for Research: Middle East Policy* (10 April 2006).

¹³⁷ Pollack.

Today, there are dozens of active Islamic political parties, both Shiite and Sunni, with diverse political and ideological agendas. Their leaders are certainly not liberal democrats, and some, like Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, maintain armed wings. But it is not entirely accurate to describe them, as is frequently done in the United States, as fundamentalist or backward or even necessarily conservative. The new Islamic movements are popularly based and endorse free elections, the rotation of power, freedom of speech, and other concepts that are scorned by the regimes that currently hold power.¹³⁸

Likewise, the Pulitzer Prize winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh eschews the “ideologization of terror” paradigm as well by distinguishing between disparate Islamist movements and their varied political agendas and by actually interviewing prominent leaders of the Islamist movements that are the subjects of his research, such as Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah. In one article he points out how the tension between the various Sunni Jihadi movements in Lebanon and their powerful patrons within and outside of the country, and the Shiite Islamo-nationalist movement Hezbollah, threaten to ignite sectarian strife yet again in a state that is less than two decades removed from bloody civil war. In one passage in which the award winning journalist describes a conversation he had with the Hezbollah leader, Hersh writes: “Nasrallah’s aides told me that they believe he is a prime target of fellow-Arabs, primarily Jordanian intelligence operatives, as well as Sunni jihadists who they believe are affiliated with Al Qaeda.”¹³⁹ Hersh also challenges the mainstream discourse by pointing out the significance of history, in particular that of US intervention and “clandestine operations,” many with Cold War “echoes,” to understanding the development, motives and tactics of various Islamist movements.¹⁴⁰

The think-tank Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has similarly produced more nuanced reports on political Islam, which avoid the monolithic and polarized analyses prevalent in the mainstream “war on terror” discourse. For example in an August 2005 report, Senior Associate Amr Hamzaway urges US and Western policy makers to recognize the great diversity that exists amongst Islamist movements as

¹³⁸Ken Silverstein, “Parties of God: The Bush Doctrine and the Rise of Islamic democracy,” *Harpers Magazine* (March 2007).

¹³⁹Seymour M. Hersh, “Annals of National Security: The Redirection,” *New Yorker* (5 March 2007).

¹⁴⁰Hersh.

varied as Egyptian Jihad, the Moroccan Justice and Development Party and the Palestinian Hamas, and advocates the development of unique policies to deal with each movement accordingly. By imputing violent motives to all Islamist groups, and marginalizing them in any attempts to promote democracy and human rights in the region, Hamzaway believes that Western governments risk alienating potential allies and squandering the opportunity to engage and strengthen those movements that share similar political values and aims. Instead, Hamzaway urges policy makers to recognize the “diversity of the Islamist spectrum,” and pay more attention specifically to those elements that are committed to “nonviolence, pragmatism, and democratic procedures.”¹⁴¹

The International Crisis Group, though not a U.S.-based think-tank, has produced some of the most thorough and coherent analyses of Islamist movements, with similarly cogent policy prescriptions for the U.S. and western governments involved in the “war on terror”. Like Hamzaway, the ICG’s “Executive Summary” on political Islam also argues against the “sledge-hammer approach which refuses to differentiate between” divergent Islamist movements, whose differences the ICG report goes to great lengths to elaborate. Pointing out not only the differences between Sunni and Shiite Islamist movements, the authors of this report go on to explain the diverse manifestations of Sunni Islamism, including “political,” “missionary” and “Jihadi” movements, providing brief histories as well as several contemporary examples of each. The ICG report is also critical of those analyses that employ the dichotomous “good Muslim/bad Muslim,” “moderate”/ “extremist” distinctions in place of more thorough analysis, arguing that:

[t]he principle weakness of this analytical distinction is that it fails to notice that the most important factor differentiating varieties of Islamic activism is not so much the relative militancy or moderation with which they express their convictions, but rather the nature of the convictions they hold. These include different diagnoses of the problems faced by Muslim societies, different views of Islamic law, and different conceptions both of the appropriate spheres (political, religious, military) in which to act, of the kinds of action that are

¹⁴¹ Amr Hamzawy, “The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists,” *Policy Brief: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* no. 40 (August 2005).

legitimate and appropriate, and accordingly entail divergent and often competing purposes.¹⁴²

Despite encouraging signs of the development of a counter-discourse capable of challenging the construction of political Islam as other in the “war on terror” discourse, as with the modern, post-modern and hermeneutic academic approaches discussed in Chapter Two, these perspectives have yet to gather enough force to actually trigger a “paradigm shift”.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the central role played by political Islam, the United States’/West’s current “savage” enemy other, in the U.S. discourse on the “war on terror,” focusing on the genres of political statements, opinion pieces and think-tank reports in particular. In doing so I have demonstrated how this discourse, similar to that concerning the European colonial powers’ *mission civilatrice*, is based on an eurocentric and orientalist vision of history that necessarily views religious movements, and Islamist movements in particular, as parochial, violent, intolerant and counter to progress. As argued in previous chapters, the epistemological roots can be traced back to the modern rationalist paradigm. In examining the details of this discourse, through the lens of the first component of Mutua’s “savages-victims-saviors metaphor,” I have shown how this discourse forms part of the “power political” facet of Said’s definition of discourse. In the next chapter I will demonstrate how both the “victim” and “savior” components are constructed in the discourse on political Islam in the context of the “war on terror,” thus completing the “power political” element of the discourse analysis.

¹⁴² International Crisis Group.

Chapter Five: Construction of the Innocent “Victim” and Angel “Savior” in the “War on Terror” Discourse

Oh ye Egyptians, they may say to you that I have not made an expedition hither for any other object than that of abolishing your religion...but tell the slanderers that I have not come to you except for the purpose of restoring your rights from the hands of the oppressors.

- Napoleon Bonaparte, 2 July 1798¹

Once the “savage” Islamist other was firmly established in the discourse, the next stage for the proponents of the “war on terror” framing of events was to elaborate the nature of the savage’s “victims.” Islamists, despite what the discourse deems as their anachronistic nature, cannot be described as a threat in and of themselves. One must first be able to locate the Islamist’s “victims” in order to justify the waging of a “war,” real or metaphorical, against them. In addition to the relatively (in terms of numbers used to justify military action against an enemy in the past) small number of individuals who perished in the enemy’s attacks abroad, as discussed in previous chapters, there are the hundreds of millions of “victims” of Islamist oppression and violence in the Muslim world itself. These are “human being(s) whose ‘dignity and worth’ have been violated by the savage,” and are therefore “powerless, helpless innocent[s] whose naturalist attributes have been negated by the primitive and offensive actions” of the savage.² It is up to the Western democracies, conceived of as beacons of light, to save the “native” “victims” from the darkness into which the savage has plunged them. The “savior or redeemer” is the “good angel who protects, vindicates, civilizes, restrains and safeguards. The “savior” is the victim’s bulwark against tyranny.”³

In the case of the U.S.-led “war on terror,” the “victims” of Islamist violence, both actual and prospective, include not only the entire American population and indeed all of “Western civilization,” but also all of those “good Muslims” who too have been

¹ Quoted in Khalidi, 37.

² Mutua, 203.

³ Ibid., 204.

victimized by Islamist savagery. The “savior” is Western civilization itself, seen in this construct as “ontologically civilized, humane, reasonable, and innocent”; it is the natural “savior,”⁴ with “modernization” and “democracy” prescribed as generic cures for all associated ailments. In all cases, the “victim’s” absolute innocence is assumed, as is the corresponding guilt of the perpetrator: the “savage” other. In this “discourse,” there are no innocent “victims” of the violence perpetrated by the leaders of the “war on terror,” since this ostensibly benign violence is committed with the sole purpose of avenging crimes committed against past innocent “victims,” or ensuring the future safety of all potential “victims.” All casualties that occur in the course of this benevolent war are referred to by the sterile, military euphemism: “collateral damage.” As Richard Jackson has argued, “in effect, there is here a veiled attempt to deny the quality of ‘innocence’ to the “victims” of United States military actions because this would obscure the clear distinctions that the United States government wishes to maintain between the ‘guilty’ under attack and the ‘innocent’ Americans attacking them.”⁵

In this chapter I will examine the construction of the innocent “victim” and angel “savior” vis-à-vis the “savage” enemy and in the context of the “war on terror” discourse.

1. Understanding the Innocent “Victim” and Angel “Savior” Constructs in the “War on Terror” Discourse

In order to better grasp the nature of the “victim-savior” construct and its relationship to the more general discourse of political Islam in the context of the “war on terror,” I will consider again its hegemonic nature, focusing on its intertextuality and looking at its manifestation in various genres, including the writings/speeches of prominent policy makers, think-tanks and pundits. As with the “savage” component, I will consider the ways in which the “victim”/ “savior” constructions rely upon a foundation of Enlightenment-derived notions of what constitutes “modernity” and hence legitimate political thought/systems, as well as orientalist stereotypes claiming to describe the “true”

⁴ Cyra Akila Choudhury, “Comprehending Our Violence: Reflections on the Liberal Universalist Tradition, National Identity and the War on Iraq,” *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 1 (2006).

⁵ Jackson, 83.

nature of Muslims/Arabs. I will conclude by arguing that this discourse has had the effect of reinforcing the U.S. identity as “ontologically civilized” and “innocent,” as opposed to the “savage” Islamist other, constructed “as barbaric, irrational, uncivilized, and *a priori* culpable.”⁶ In order to do this, it has also relied upon a dual conceptualization of the other: the “good Muslim,” seen as capable of complete assimilation, and the “bad Muslim,” seen in terms of his absolute difference, hence necessitating his subjugation. As discussed in Chapter Four, in neither instance is “the existence of a human substance truly other, something capable of being not merely an imperfect state of oneself, a possible alternative.”⁷

*1.1 The “Good Muslim” as Innocent “Victim”*⁸

As with attempts to define the savage other, discursive attempts to delineate the (native) “victim” from the savage perpetrator often employ the moderate/“good Muslim” vs. extremist/“bad Muslim” rhetorical distinction. As Fawaz Gerges argues, when distinguishing between various Islamists movements, the American foreign policy establishment views “the good Islamists” as “apolitical” and “moderate,” although he attributes this to realpolitick decisions rather than issues of identity and perceptions of ontological difference.⁹ The Clinton administration, well before 9/11, as Gerges pointed out, adopted a policy of aversion towards Islamist movements, not because of their alleged violence, but rather because they were deemed to threaten the status quo that serves U.S. ideological and strategic interests in the region:

Like their predecessors, Clinton administration officials have vehemently criticized the use of violence and terrorism by certain Islamist groups. Yet they have not dared censure some of America’s Middle Eastern allies, who habitually practice violence against their own population. In U.S. eyes, the good Islamists appear to be the ones who are apolitical; moderate and liberal Islam is also equated with the pro-Western regimes of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan, and Malaysia. The administration’s unwillingness to engage moderate Islamist elements seriously lies in the

⁶ Choudhury, 1-2.

⁷ Todorov, 42.

⁸ A combination of terms from Mahmood Mamdani’s *Good Muslim Bad Muslim*, and Mutua’s article.

⁹ Gerges, 1999, 4.

fact that the latter represent the most effective threat so far to the regional order.¹⁰

In the context of U.S. “democratization” programs in the region, the “good Muslim”/“bad Muslim” or moderate/extremist dichotomies are problematic for numerous reasons. Most importantly, they are based on a faulty understanding of the principle tenets of Islam. As pointed out in the International Crisis Group’s rigorous report “Understanding Islam,” Islam, a religion of law, is “inherently concerned with governance and so [is] political in tendency.”¹¹ Furthermore, as Islam provides believers with “blueprint[s]” for social interaction, complete with “legal prescriptions as well as moral injunctions,” even apolitical, “moderate” Muslims may be drawn to movements that seek a greater role for their religion in the management of everyday political, economic and social affairs. According to Kamal el-Said Habib, a former leader of the Egyptian Islamist movement al Jama’a al-Islamiya,

Islam is a complete way of life. It encompasses all personal, social, and political aspects. There is an organic link between *Qur’anic* law, *shariah* and political authority. Although, on the whole, Muslim societies live by *Qur’anic* law, political power applies secular rules. There will be no security as long as political authority is not based on God’s sovereignty. There will be no peace.¹²

The inaccurate moderate/extremist dichotomy also masks the consistent role Islam has played in political developments throughout the history of the Muslim world, such as the anti-colonial struggles of the early and mid-20th century generally depicted in the West as secular-nationalist in nature, even though often fought in the name of Islam (hence the label *mujahid*, or holy warriors, for those who died, or were “martyred” in these struggles).¹³ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Western understanding of Islamists — those seeking to reinforce Islam’s role in the public as opposed to solely private space — tend to rely on orientalist stereotypes, characterizing the Islamist as backward and violent. Ultimately, the greatest weakness of this type of dichotomous reasoning is in

¹⁰ Ibid., 109.

¹¹ International Crisis Group.

¹² Quoted in Fawaz A. Gerges, *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy* (New York: Harcourt, 2007), 48.

¹³ Hourani; Burgat.

overlooking more important, and often more complex factors that distinguish Islamist movements:

different diagnoses of the problems faced by Muslim societies, different views of Islamic law, and different conceptions both of the appropriate spheres (political, religious, military) in which to act and of the kinds of action that are legitimate and appropriate, and accordingly entail divergent and often competing purposes.¹⁴

The second rhetorical device used to distinguish the (native) “victim” from the Islamist aggressor is the ubiquitous reference to the oppression of Muslim women. Expressing a sentiment prevalent throughout the discourse on political Islam, and particularly in the context of the “war on terror,” one journalist betrayed her essentialized view of Islam in an article on “honor killings” which she described as part of the “inventory of brutality” perpetrated by men against women in the “Muslim world,” and condemned “the savage fundamentalist Muslim oppression of women.”¹⁵ As is the norm in these types of analyses, this journalist chose not to provide any context to qualify this harsh generalization. According to the authors of a recent report by a New York-based international women’s organization which collaborates with grassroots women’s organizations in Iraq, such analyses do more harm than good for oppressed women in the region, as they overlook other non-religious factors often more important in creating and perpetuating women’s oppression.¹⁶ In their report on gender-based violence in post-U.S. invasion Iraq, the authors found that such assertions: “deflect attention from factors (such as politics, economics, and militarism) that influence the prevalence of gender-based violence, and obscure the ways that United States actions have exacerbated conditions that give rise to violence against women.” Rather than a religious issue, the authors argue that violence against women in Iraq should be examined within the framework of gender, “a system of power relations whose number-one enforcement mechanism is the threat of violence against women,” over which no nationality or religion has a monopoly.¹⁷

¹⁴ International Crisis Group.

¹⁵ Kay Hymowitz, “Why Feminism is AWOL on Islam,” *City Journal* (Winter, 2003).

¹⁶ “Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy: Gender-Based Violence and the US War on Iraq,” *MADRE report* (6 March 2007): 1-40.

¹⁷ “Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy,” 18.

Furthermore, the orientalist construct of the Muslim woman as “victim” inevitably discounts the possibility of the potentially emancipatory elements of Islam, which could “offer powerful spaces of resistance to injustice and provide avenues for critical contestation and political engagement.”¹⁸ Instead, a simplistic dichotomous analysis sees posits secular/Western forms of political engagement as modern and inherently good, while religiously inspired engagements is seen as backward and hence an impediment to “development” and “progress.” For some women Islamist activists, though, Islam itself enabled them to overcome cultural obstacles and participate more fully in “modern” political activities such as grassroots campaigning, elections, and governance. As Jamila Shanti, one of Hamas’ elected female members of the Palestinian Legislative Council explained, “[t]here are traditions here that say that a woman should take a secondary role -- that she should be at the back...But that is not Islam.”¹⁹ According to Shanti, Hamas would “scrap many of these traditions. You will find women going out and participating.”²⁰ Because of the static vision of political Islam of the “modern rationalist” paradigm, these analyses cannot see how Islamist movements are themselves transformed by the participation of Muslim women, through their influence on political, social and economic agendas.²¹

Like the representations of oppressed Muslim women in the rhetorical justifications for 19th century European colonialism, in the contemporary discourse on political Islam generally, and the “war on terror” specifically, “there is no subject....[Westerners] have thought more important than the condition of Muslim women.”²² Perhaps to avoid the contradictions of the colonial discourse, which switched schizophrenically between portrayals of Muslim women as oppressed and infantile or as exotic sexual temptresses in laughably inaccurate descriptions of “harems,” the contemporary discourse uniformly relies on the former depiction to call for a Western “savior.” Playing the same identity

¹⁸ “Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy,” 18.

¹⁹ Alan Johnston, “Women ponder future under Hamas,” *BBC News*, 3 March 2006.

²⁰ Johnston.

²¹ See Islah Jad, “Between Religion and Secularism: Islamist Women of Hamas,” in *On Shifting Ground: Muslim Women in the Global Era*, ed. Fereshteh Nouria-Simone (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005).

²² Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), 36, quoted in Lockman, 70.

constructing and affirming function in the discourse on political Islam as did her 18th and 19th century counterparts, the “archetypal image of the deprived and debased Muslim woman [has been] resurrected to perform her duty as a signifier of the abject difference of Muslims, the barbarity and anti-modernism of Islam and its essential repression of women and most importantly as a camouflage for U.S. military interventions.”²³

1.2 American Democracy as “Good Angel”

In order to protect both the external/Western and internal/”good Muslim” from the savage other enemy, the “savior” must be constructed so as to justify both its status as “good angel” (capable of managing the task at hand) and its policies addressing the savage threat (inextricably linked to, and confirming of, the savior’s self-identity). In addition to the various militant or “hard” power policies associated with the “war on terror” discussed in previous chapters, and in line with the United States self-identity as a beacon of “democracy,” “progress” and “modernity,” the Bush administration’s “soft” power policy prescription was the spread of “modernization” and “democracy” throughout the Middle East. A November, 2003 address to the National Endowment for Democracy which many commentators credit with launching the democracy component of the “Bush Doctrine” aimed rhetorically to shift U.S. policy away from appeasing non-democratic allies in the Middle East towards holding these states to account. Bush explained the thinking behind the new policy:

Western nations excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the Middle East did nothing to make us safe — because in the long run, stability cannot be purchased at the expense of liberty...As long as the Middle East remains a place where freedom does not flourish, it will remain a place of stagnation, resentment, and violence ready for export.²⁴

Bush’s democratization agenda was presented a year earlier in the September 2002 National Security Strategy document that attributed lack of security in the United States

²³ Zine, 8.

²⁴ Quoted in Ken Silverstein, “Parties of God: The Bush Doctrine and the Rise of Islamic Democracy,” *Harpers Magazine* (March 2007).

to the “internal conditions of other states—particularly the lack of democracy.”²⁵ This theme has been reiterated throughout the course of the two G.W. Bush administrations and was reaffirmed by Condoleezza Rice in her confirmation hearings as Secretary of State on 26 January 2005. Here she insisted that the Bush administration had “broken with six decades of excusing and accommodating the lack of freedom in the hope of purchasing stability at the price of liberty.” Further, she argued that “[a]s long as the broader Middle East remains a region of tyranny and despair and anger, it will produce extremists and movements that threaten the safety of Americans and our friends.”²⁶

Now that the enemy had been defined as the anti-modern, violent Islamist movement that despises freedom, democracy, and “modernity” itself, the obvious remedy is to transform the political and economic structures that incubate such movements and promote political contexts, social policies and cultural values better suited for the “modern” world. Chief among the initiatives developed to achieve this end were: 1) the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI),²⁷ structured around four thematic “pillars”: political reform, economic reform, education, and women’s empowerment; 2) the “Microfinance Initiative to help over two million entrepreneurs escape poverty through microfinance loans over the next 5 years”; 3) the “Literacy Initiative to assist the region’s efforts to halve the illiteracy rate over the next decade”; 4) “Business and Entrepreneurship Training Initiative to help as many as 250,000 young entrepreneurs, especially women, expand their employment opportunities”; and 5) a “Task Force on Investment to assist the region’s efforts to improve the business climate.”²⁸ To supplement and reinforce the ideological component of these programs, the administration also developed what Secretary of State Rice describes as “transformational diplomacy,” meant to “inculcate public diplomacy into

²⁵ Angel Rabasa, Cheryl Bernard, Lowell H. Schwartz and Peter Sickle, “Building Moderate Muslim Networks,” *RAND Corporation* (2007).

²⁶ Quoted in Jim Lobe, “Bush Democracy Doctrine, 2003(?)–2006, R.I.P.,” *Inter-Press Service*, 24 May 2006.

²⁷ The U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was established by then-Secretary Powell on 12 December 2002 “to create educational opportunity at a grassroots level, promote economic opportunity and help foster private sector development, and to strengthen civil society and the rule of law throughout the region.” “The Middle East Partnership Initiative,” *State Department*.

both policy design and implementation,” through programs such as Radio Sawa and the United States Middle East Television Network (Al Hurra).²⁹

Yet like European colonial powers a century earlier, the American “saviors” found themselves struggling to justify their endeavors in terms that concealed the contradictions underlying their policies and actions. In particular, the central paradox at the heart of the democratization agenda has proven difficult to overcome: on the one hand, the United States’ rhetorical justification for interventionist policies has been to facilitate transformation of Muslim/Arab states into “modern,” “democratic,” or Westernized states; yet on the other hand is the implicit belief in the United States’ / West’s superiority, inextricably linked to the belief that U.S. interests are best safeguarded by protecting the status quo and leaving client governments in place to continue to dictate vital policies in the region. This paradox, as pointed out by Albert Hourani, was one their colonial European predecessors were confronted with as well:

For the settler communities, and for the European governments, the use of their power to defend their own interests was paramount, but power is not comfortable unless it can turn itself into legitimate authority, and the idea that they were there in order to carry out a civilizing mission was strong among Europeans who ruled or conducted their business in Arab countries, whether it expressed itself as the idea of a superior civilization bringing justice, order and prosperity, or the communication of a language and the culture expressed in it. Such ideas, of which the logical conclusion was the ultimate absorption of Arabs on a level of equality into a new, unified world, were crossed by others: a sense of unbridgeable difference, of an innate superiority which conferred the right to rule.³⁰

Grasping this central paradox — an inevitable response to the lack of correspondence between a discourse that claims to promote “freedom” and “progress” for targeted people and the actual impact of those policies on the people — is vital to understanding what otherwise look like policy blunders, inconsistencies and unintentional failure.³¹

²⁹ Rabasa et al., xx.

³⁰ Hourani, 324.

³¹ In the context of this paradox one can understand how an administration that proclaims to be committed to democracy promotion in the Middle East can so cavalierly turn a blind eye to the voices of the “people” themselves when claims are inconsistent with U.S. interests in the region (e.g., by ignoring the fact that the majority of Iraqis have expressed their opposition to the U.S. occupation, or by boycotting a democratically-elected Hamas government in Palestine for its failure to abide by rules set in place during

One need only look at the spending patterns of the principal democratization programs initiated by the Bush administration as part of the “soft” power component of its “war on terror” to find evidence of the glaring contradiction at the heart of this agenda. In addition to MEPI, which has received more than \$293 million since its establishment, the administration’s Governing Justly and Democratically (GJ&D) programs associated with the Transformational Diplomacy policy³² received \$225,385 million for fiscal year (FY) 2006³³ and is requesting \$407,340 million for its Middle East initiatives in 2008 (an increase of 81% over actual 2006 spending levels). Notably, administration funding for the latter program has been criticized by the prominent democracy promotion think-tank Freedom House for its failure to adequately fund associated civil society and human rights programs, and for the disproportionate funding earmarked for Middle Eastern countries at the expense of countries “within the East Asia and the Pacific and Central Asian regions, and for particular countries of concern, including Russia and Zimbabwe.”³⁴

The top two recipient countries of the GJ&D program — Iraq and Afghanistan, neither

various stages of the official “peace process,” while turning a blind eye to Israeli parties in the government which have similarly shown contempt for these processes, through official statements or actions. Sean Rayment, “Secret MoD poll: Iraqis support attacks on British troops,” *The Telegraph*, 23 October 2005; Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Soldiers Speak. Will President Bush Listen?” *New York Times*, 28 February 2006; and John Hari, “Ethnic cleansing returns to Israel’s agenda,” *The Independent of London*, 13 November 2006.

³² The Just and Democratic Governance project is one of the key elements of the Transformational Diplomacy policy. The stated aim of this policy is to work “with International Organizations to offer help to countries that seek to reinforce rights and freedoms.” For further information see: “Governing Justly & Democratically: Diplomacy that Serves Human Rights, Freedom and Democracy,” *Office of Undersecretary of Political Affairs, State Department*, (2007); For further information see: Larry Nowels and Connie Veillette, “CRS Report for Congress: Restructuring U.S. Foreign Aid: The Role of the Director of Foreign Assistance,” *Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division* (8 September 2006); “Fact Sheet: Transformational Diplomacy,” *Under-Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs* (18 January 2006). A related development is the creation of a new State Department position: Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA), who serves concurrently as Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which is charged with coordinating U.S. assistance programs. The DFA will have authority over most State Department and USAID programs, and will provide “guidance” to other agencies with foreign aid programs. Nowels and Veillette.

³³ The Freedom House report looks at fiscal year 2006, as opposed to 2007, “as a point of reference because FY2006 is completed, and because the current year FY2007 is an atypical and distorted year, given the Continuing Resolutions and the belated obligation of funds for foreign operations.” “Supporting Freedom’s Advocates? An Analysis of the Bush Administration FY2008 Budget Request for Democracy and Human Rights,” *Freedom House* (April 2007).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

with anything approaching a functioning government, let alone one ripe for democratization — are scheduled to receive \$171,800 and \$202 million respectively. Furthermore, when the Iraqi parliament attempts to exercise its democratic rights, its efforts have been hindered by the Bush administration. For example, recent efforts to thwart the U.N. Security Council's rubber-stamping of the U.S.-led multinational force mandate in Iraq without parliament's approval have been ignored by the Bush administration, despite polls showing that most Iraqis (70-80%) support the parliament's position.³⁵ As one commentator put it, "Washington — apparently unconcerned about democracy in Iraq — is determined to keep troops there, run the show, and to press forward with another U.N. mandate, irrespective of the parliament's wishes."³⁶ In the Middle East (broadly defined), after Iraq and Afghanistan, the next largest recipient of GJ&D funds for FY 2008 will be the United States' archenemy Iran, where \$75 million has been spent developing Farsi-language radio and television programming similar to the Cold War Radio Free Europe and Voice of America.³⁷

From this information two conclusions can be drawn. First, democracy funding has had little or no impact on actual democratization in the region over the past several years, as countries receiving the greatest levels of funding have shown little, if any, appreciable movement towards democracy. Second, apportionment of democratization funds is decided on something other than a needs-basis, since many states with the most severe authoritarian problems, often located outside of the Middle East (e.g., Burma and Uzbekistan), receive little or no funding,³⁸ while those whose most intractable problems are unrelated to democracy-related issues (e.g., Afghanistan and Iraq, whose primary issues are security and foreign occupation) receive disproportionately large amounts of funding.³⁹ In addition, when the total projected U.S. government spending for its

³⁵ Thalif Deen, "Iraqi MPs Challenge Coalition Mandate," *Inter-Press Service*, 13 November 2007.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ "U.S. must promote Iranian's right to democracy: Rice," *Agence France Presse*, 4 April 2006.

³⁸ According to Freedom House, Burma is "ruled by one of the most repressive regimes in the world" and is described as "*Not Free*." Despite this, funding for Burma in the "Governing Justly and Democratically" category was cut from \$4.17 million to \$550,000; and for Uzbekistan, described as among the "Worst of the Worst" in Freedom House rankings, U.S. assistance for democracy programming has been cut in half. "Supporting Freedom's Advocates?" 17-18.

³⁹ Gerges points out the importance of "security," a "*sine qua non*" in the project of "nation building" in Lebanon during the time of the civil war. A similar argument can be made of the importance of security to

numerous democratization and human rights programs, an estimated \$845,680 million for FY2008, is compared to the total projected spending for the “hard” power component of the “war on terror,” an estimated \$647 billion,⁴⁰ the sincerity of this approach is further called into question.⁴¹

In addition to issues associated with the allocation of democratization funds, two additional reasons may have predicated the failure of the Bush administration’s democratization policies. The first involves the double standards inherent in the approach of the Bush administration in deciding which states/political parties to target, which to ignore, and, perhaps most importantly, which to undermine in its democratization campaign. For example, in the cases of Lebanon and Palestine, recent U.S. intervention on behalf of particular political factions, rather than more general support for vital institutions or civil society, have actually diminished prospects for democracy. In particular, through policies aimed at marginalizing Islamo-nationalist movements Hezbollah (in Lebanon) and Hamas (in Palestine), Saad-Ghorayeb has argued that the Bush administration’s “war on terror”-associated democracy promotion programs have actually been “promoting *failed states* rather than encouraging *state-building*.”⁴² According to Saad-Ghorayeb, measures employed by the United States include “undermining their national unity, infringing on their sovereignty, refusing to recognize

Afghanistan and Iraq prior to the construction of a functioning democracy. As he argues, “Civil society and social and sectarian harmony cannot survive without stability and security.” Gerges, 2007, 81.

⁴⁰ This budget, according to one United States defense policy expert, “more than 25 percent larger, in real terms, than the one for 1968, at the height of combat in Vietnam.” Betts.

⁴¹ Steven M. Kosiak, “The Global War on Terror (GWOT): Costs, Cost Growth and Estimating Funding Requirements: Testimony Before the United States Senate Budget Committee,” *Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments*, 6 February 2007.

⁴² Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, “Washington in Lebanon and Palestine: Fatal Manipulation,” *Conflicts Forum* (14 August 2007). To substantiate this point in regards to Palestine, Saad-Ghorayeb provides the example of how the U.S. government, “in its campaign to oust the Hamas government in 2006-07, designated \$86.4 million for Abbas’s Force 17 presidential-guard units and the preventive security services (PSS), led by Fatah strongman Mohammed Dahlan.” In the case of Lebanon, she explains how, after the 2006 summer war between Israel and Hezbollah, the Bush administration intervened on behalf of Fuad Siniora’s government and to the detriment of the opposition, including Hizbullah and Michel Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement. In order to “strengthen” the Lebanese army, the Bush administration increased its funding from an annual average of \$2-3 million to \$220 million in “training, light weapons, ammunition and Humvees. The declared purpose of such funding is not to enable the army to defend Lebanon from Israeli incursions and attacks, but to transform the army into a force capable of ‘extending state sovereignty’ across the country by ‘enforcing [UN] Resolution 1701’ - in other words, into a force capable of confronting the resistance.”

the popular will, and attempting to mask their government's loss of popular and constitutional legitimacy.”⁴³

In other words, the Bush administration cannot win over the “hearts and minds” of the citizens of the Middle East and convince them of the sincerity of democratization policies which appear so unevenly applied, and for economically/geopolitically expedient reasons with little to do with promoting “freedom” and “liberty” in the region. How, for example, would the government justify maintaining or strengthening relations with states known for systematic violations of democratic norms both in relation to their own citizens (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco)⁴⁴ and their treatment of non-citizens under their internationally sanctioned jurisdiction (e.g., Israel,⁴⁵ for both its Palestinian citizens and Palestinians in the Occupied Territories), while boycotting Islamist states (e.g., Iran) or democratically elected Islamist governments (e.g., Hamas) for alleged lack of “democracy” or violence. As Thomas Carothers, director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP) argues: “You add up all the pieces, and the message to the world is, ‘We have a lot of other business than just democracy in this region...and that business means friendly relations with all sorts of autocrats.’”⁴⁶

Of course the use of democratization programs for politically expedient ends is nothing new for the U.S. government. Throughout the last decade of the Cold War, the tactical and strategic model for the Bush administration's “war on terror,” the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), was used to expand ideological hegemony over states that fell outside the United States' sphere of influence. As a 1996 report to Congress for

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ For in-depth descriptions of the authoritarian nature of these regimes, see Marsha Posusney and Michele Penner Angrist, eds., *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

⁴⁵ For more information on the undemocratic nature of the Israeli government in its treatment of its Palestinian citizens and subjects in the Occupied Territories, see “Israel/Occupied Palestinian Territories: 70th Session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 19 February to 9 March 2007: Update to Comments by Amnesty International on Israel's compliance with its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD),” *Amnesty International* (1 February 2007); and “Israel and the Occupied Territories: Road to Nowhere,” *Amnesty International* (1 December 2006).

⁴⁶ Lobe.

increased NED spending explained, the organization is an “effective instrument of foreign policy at a time when American interests and values are under sustained ideological attack from a wide variety of anti-democratic forces around the world...”⁴⁷

Although ostensibly a not-for-profit organization promoting human rights and democracy, the NED has often been indistinguishable from other covert government activities. As Allen Weinstein, its first President, confessed in a 1991 *Washington Post* interview: “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.”⁴⁸ Although the United States’ ideological enemy is no longer communism, the NED’s original *raison d’être* — to spread human rights and democracy in the world by establishing free market principles — still helps define new missions, especially in the context of the “war on terror”. As President Bush put it in his January 2004 State of the Union address, the NED budget needed to be doubled so it could “focus its new work on the development of free elections, and free markets, free press, and free labor unions in the Middle East.”⁴⁹

The second reason this policy was doomed to failure is the problematic nature of the notion that democracy can be achieved through outside intervention as opposed to the organic development of the necessary institutions and consciousness on the part of a state’s citizens and rulers, a notion invalidated by the experience of Western foreign policy in the region over the past century. As Rashid Khalidi points out, “[t]here are solid historical and political reasons for suggesting that war, external intervention, and foreign occupation are far from being ideal recipes for the introduction of democracy in the Middle East.”⁵⁰ The history of the Middle East is replete with examples of the deleterious effects of outside intervention on budding democratic movements, including Britain’s occupation of Egypt in 1882, which “short-circuit[ed] a nationalist movement that, among other things, aimed to limit the autocracy of the khedive and to move towards parliamentary democracy”;⁵¹ early 20th century British intervention in Iran, which turned

⁴⁷ Hernando Calvo Ospina, “The CIA’s Successors and Collaborators, United States: Overt and Covert Destabilisation,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August 2007.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Khalidi, 55.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

the clock back on advancements made in that country's 1906 constitutional revolution,; and from the early 1920s until the late-1950s in Syria, Jordan and Iraq, where early experiments in democracy were largely reversed by unpopular French and British military occupations under UN mandate.⁵²

According to Khalidi,

[b]y the time they had disappeared from the Arab world, with the sole exception of Lebanon, these deeply flawed parliamentary democracies had become largely discredited. This was in part because of their manipulation by entrenched elites, endemic corruption, and widespread failure to address deep domestic problems, but also because of their inability to end a foreign occupation and to resist Western powers' interventions in these states' domestic affairs.⁵³

In his article "How Not to Promote Democracy and Human Rights," Aryeh Neier discusses another way United States military intervention in the region undermines democracy and human rights: by undermining the perceived legitimacy of movements receiving funds from, or in any way associated with, the United States government or its policies. As Neier puts it,

The willingness to use American force to try to impose democracy and human rights has aroused great antagonism in the Middle East, as well as in other parts of the world, particularly parts of Asia. It has resulted in what President Mubarak of Egypt has termed a level of anti-Americanism that is unprecedented worldwide. One of the consequences of this is that proponents of democracy and human rights in the Middle East, but also in various parts of Asia, have found themselves on the defensive because they are seen as promoting the American cause. It is increasingly difficult for them to articulate concern with democracy and human rights.⁵⁴

Considering the inability of democratization to qualitatively improve the lives of Muslim innocent "victims" and its inefficient conceptualization and implementation, one must

⁵² Ibid., 256.

⁵³ Ibid., 56.

⁵⁴ Aryeh Neier in Richard Ashby Wilson, *Human Rights in the "War on Terror,"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 138-139.

question its policy function and look to other explanations for the robust development of this component of the Administration's overall "war on terror": its discursive function.

2. United States Policy Makers Construct the "Victim" and "Savior" in the "War on Terror" Discourse

Similar to the role they played in constructing the image of the "savage" other in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks, American politicians were central in defining the nature of the "victims" of Islamist violence, of which the Twin Towers attacks were but one manifestation, as well as the characteristics of the angel "savior" whose prompt action was necessary to eliminate this enemy and protect the innocent from further victimization. In this section I will consider the contributions of prominent politicians, both Republican and Democrat, to the construction of the Islamist other in the "war on terror" discourse.

2.1 Construction of the Innocent "Victim"

In a speech to Congress on September 20, 2001, Bush made clear the administration's belief that "[t]he terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics — a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam."⁵⁵ The President went on to assure the Muslim world that the United States was not at war with it: "We are not at war with Muslims. We don't have a beef with Muslims. We want to be friends with Muslims and Muslim children." He then explained the purpose of the first component of the United States declared "war on terror," the invasion of Afghanistan, to protect the United States from future attacks on its homeland and to save the "good Muslims" of Afghanistan from their evil counterparts:

Afghanistan's people have been brutalized — many are starving and many have fled. Women are not allowed to attend school. You can be jailed for owning a television. Religion can be practiced only as their leaders dictate. A man can be jailed in Afghanistan if his beard is not long enough.

⁵⁵ George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," *White House News and Policies*, 20 September 2001.

The United States respects the people of Afghanistan — after all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid — but we condemn the Taliban regime.⁵⁶

In this example, the “victims” of Islamist violence are primarily Afghani women, and the civil/human rights of all non-Taliban Afghanis (e.g. freedom of religion and freedom of expression). The culprit is the religious extremism of the Taliban regime; the assumption is that, without the oppressive religious regime, women would be free and considered equal to their male counterparts and all Afghanis would have access to education, would be protected by liberal institutions that guarantee their civil/human rights, and would live in relative security. This assertion was made despite the non-Islamist regimes in the region, many United States allies, which also fall short of the liberal democracy label, particularly in their failure to guarantee their citizens’ basic civil/human rights, including women’s rights. That this decontextualized statement can be made with such authority is testament to the power of discourse to distort and disguise facts. The United States government, in particular throughout the Bush administration, has maintained close relationships with countries like Uzbekistan, where, according to former British Ambassador Craig Murray, United States policy is focused not on “democracy or freedom,” but rather on “oil, gas and hegemony,”⁵⁷ Turkmenistan, described by Human Rights Watch as “one of the most repressive countries in the world,”⁵⁸ and oil-rich Kazakhstan, where Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice went so far as implementing a waiver to allow the continuation of military aid on national security grounds even after a State Department report pointed out that “numerous steps backward” had been taken by the government in regards to human rights.⁵⁹ These facts exemplify the administration’s lack of concern for the human rights of the people in the region. The purpose of President Bush’s statement, therefore, must be seen as purely rhetorical, to point out the inherent

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Craig Murray, *Guardian*, 16 May 2005, quoted in Chomsky, 2006, 141. Chomsky points out that even though the Bush administration made public its desire to distance itself from the Karimov regime in 2005 as a result of the Uzbekistan leader’s growing relationship with the Kremlin, during this period, and according to David Wall of the Royal Institute of International Affairs whom he quotes, Washington increased its funding for the Uzbek government and, according to “independent observers,” “United States presence in the country is up to twice as large as Washington is willing to admit.”

⁵⁸ “Turkmenistan: No Deals Without Rights Reform: International Community Should Not Reward Sham Election,” *Human Rights Watch* (8 February 2007).

⁵⁹ Chomsky, 2006, 141; “US Pursues Ties to Oil-Rich Kazakhstan,” *Associated Press*, 25 September 2006.

goodness of *our* ways (read: democratic, secular and modern), and the concomitant evil of *theirs* (read: traditional, religious, violent).

As with the discourse defining the savage “enemy,” in the innocent “victim” discourse we see attempts to distinguish between the “good” and “bad Muslim,” where the “good Muslim” is not only the “moderate” other capable of assimilation, but also a legitimate “victim” of the backwardness, repression and violence of the enemy. The “good” Muslim’s “victim” status is evidenced in a speech given by then-Secretary of State Colin Power one month after the September 11th attacks:

To understand the true faith of al-Qaida and the Taliban, all we have to do is look at the way they hijacked Afghanistan. The Taliban squeezed the life out of Afghanistan — no music, no soccer, no education or jobs for women, nothing — nothing but total support to Usama bin Laden and his gang of al-Qaida murderers. Now, in recent days, as the curtain has been lifted, we have seen on television the joyous pictures of liberated Afghans, of women throwing off their burqas, children happily flying kites.⁶⁰

In this passage, the innocent “victims” of Islamist oppression are not only the helpless women, subjugated by their male counterparts and forced to hide themselves behind burqas (the most significant symbol for Western audiences of the Muslim woman’s oppression), but also the innocent children, who must have been imprisoned in their homes during the Taliban regime, forbidden to participate in various “normal” children’s pastimes, as well as the young men kept from such simple pleasures as sports. Rather than attempting to understand and engage a different ontological system, the discourse solely judges and condemns, and hence eliminates all possibility of a hermeneutical understanding or the meaningful dialogue it could produce. In doing so, this aggressive discourse leaves little space for multiple voices within that system that may seek to challenge its parameters, those that endeavor to, as one self-defined “faith-centered Muslim feminist” put it, “create alternative readings of religious texts that build a discursive and spiritual basis for more equitable gender-based structures, systems, and

⁶⁰ Colin Powell, “Remarks at the McConnell Center for Political Leadership, University of Louisville, KY,” The Avalon Project 19 November 2001.

practices.”⁶¹ Although Powell’s statements were directed towards the Taliban, as demonstrated in the last chapter, the discourse on the “war on terror” came to encompass all Islamist movements that refused to “moderate” their language or agendas to Western dictates.

Another prevalent trend in the discourse on political Islam, especially in the context of the “war on terror,” is the tendency to see women’s status in the Muslim world from an ahistorical perspective, with no reference to their position prior to foreign invasions and occupations. This is evidenced in Bush’s 29 June 2001 State of the Union address when he declared: “The American flag flies again over our embassy in Kabul. The mothers and daughters of Afghanistan were captives in their own homes. Today women are free.” The effect of this rhetoric is to ultimately link Afghani (or Iraqi, Palestinian, Iranian, etc.) women’s freedom with Western presence. Writes Zine:

The history of Afghan women before foreign military occupations and conquests is obliterated through this statement. They are invested with freedom and agency only by the grace of the American military complex. As a result, their agency and ontological presence are erased from history prior to the “libratory” conquest made by the U.S. led “coalition of the willing.”⁶²

Leaders of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), an independent political/social organization of Afghan women fighting for human rights and social justice, largely agree with Zine’s assessment, arguing that the United States occupation on the whole has done more harm than good in promoting women’s rights in the country.⁶³

In remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) 2006 Policy Conference, United States Vice President Dick Cheney discussed the severity of the

⁶¹ Hossein Nasr, 247; Zine’s article provides a good overview of the types of discussions taking place in regards to the status and rights of Muslim women today, in particular in the context of the conflict between Islamic “fundamentalism” and Western intervention, and involving Muslim women from all political and epistemological backgrounds, including secular feminists, religious feminists, Muslim women living in the West and those living in the Muslim world.

⁶² Zine, 8-9.

⁶³ “On the Situation of Afghan Women,” *Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)*.

threat faced by the United States, Israel and “all civilized nations” devoted “to the ideals of liberty, equality, and the dignity of every person.”⁶⁴ In this speech Cheney described the innocent “victim” in terms similar to Powell’s, although the oppressive enemy here is the ideology that underpins all Islamist movements:

This enemy has a set of beliefs — and we saw the expression of those beliefs in the rule of the Taliban...This ideology rejects tolerance, denies freedom of conscience, and demands that women be pushed to the margins of society. Such beliefs can be imposed only through force and intimidation, so those who refuse to bow to the tyrants will be brutalized or killed — and no person or group is exempt.⁶⁵

Again we see the individual liberties of Western democracy contrasted with the constraints and oppression of the Islamists, where women, denied any agency, are seen as helpless “victims” in need of saving. Underpinning this depiction of oppressed women, children, and individual freedom-seekers is a patronizing tone, which asserts the authoritative knowledge of the author in regards to the object being described. This attitude is also seen in a speech by Donald Rumsfeld in which, speaking about a “true” Islam that has been distorted by the Islamists, he says of the innocent “victims”:

I think people in the Moslem world who think about it carefully ... understand that their religion’s being hijacked and...they’re going to have to take back their religion and not allow people to pervert it the way the Al Qaeda leadership is perverting it. They’ve got to worry also that the people in their countries start believing this twisted approach to the world.⁶⁶

Underlying Rumsfeld’s critique of the way Islamists have “perverted” Islam is the assumption that he understands “true” Islam better than the Muslims themselves. This assumption of knowledge and, through it, authority, allows Rumsfeld and other contributors to this discourse to assert their superiority to both Muslims and their approach to economic, political and social policies, and even their own religion.

⁶⁴ Richard Cheney, “Vice President's Remarks to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee 2006 Policy Conference,” *White House News and Policies*, 7 March 2006.

⁶⁵ Cheney, 7 March 2006.

⁶⁶ Donald Rumsfeld, “Interview with USA Today,” 24 October, 2001, quoted in Jackson, 65.

2.2 Construction of the Angel “Savior”: Republican Discourse

In the introduction to the first post-September 11th National Security Strategy, Bush described in lofty terms the goals of the “soft” policy component of the “war on terror,” which was meant to signify a clean break with the policies of appeasement of Middle Eastern dictatorships that dated back to the Nixon doctrine. In this strategy document the president alluded to what would later become one of the primary pretexts for the Administration’s policy of regime change vis-à-vis Afghanistan and Iraq: the notion that lack of “freedom” and “democracy” in the Middle East (at least those states that were not pro-West) were to blame for the rise of religious “fanaticism.”⁶⁷ If religious governance and democracy are incompatible, as argued by adherents of the modern rationalist paradigm, and democracy is capable of overcoming the destructive forces of “tyranny” and terrorism and promoting liberal ideals regarding freedom and human rights, it follows that democracy is the antidote for the problems caused by the “savage” Islamist enemy. To save the innocent Muslims from the repressive and backward Islamists who either already rule (in pre-2003 Afghanistan, or Iran and Palestine today) or threaten to take over (Egypt, Lebanon and Algeria) and in turn, save the West from the violence and barbarity bound to infect the “civilized world,” drastic measures must be taken to transform these countries into Westernized, secular democracies. Argues President Bush: “One thing we cannot do is give up on the hundreds of millions of ordinary moms and dads across the Middle East who want the hope and opportunity for their children that the terrorists and extremists seek to deny them, and that’s a peaceful existence.”⁶⁸

Two-and-a-half years after President Bush declared his “war on terror,” Condoleezza Rice explained how successful the administration had been in its benevolent efforts. In a speech on the “war” in her capacity as National Security Advisor, Rice assured audience members that although some important Islamist terrorists were still at large, the United States military has nonetheless succeeded in “*delivering* freedom to more than 50 million

⁶⁷ “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” (2002), 4.

⁶⁸ George W. Bush, “Press Conference by the President, Indian Treaty Room,” *White House news and Policies*, 20 December 2006.

people in the space of two-and-a-half years.”⁶⁹ As for the people of Iraq, heirs of one of the oldest civilizations in the world, Rice had one simple and clear message: “We are giving the Iraqi people an opportunity for a free Iraq.”⁷⁰ The ball was now in their court. What would they choose: modernity or barbarism; moderation or radicalism; freedom or tyranny?

The Afghans, according to Bush, had been oppressed by the former. As a result of the American invasion in the aftermath of September 11th, the “barbaric regime” of the Taliban was gone, and in its place is a liberal democracy. “And the people of Afghanistan are better off for it...We love the fact that people in Afghanistan are now free,” he proclaimed in a speech made to the New Mexico Military Institute. Whereas “prior to our arrival, the Taliban wouldn’t even let girls go to school,” today, “the people of Afghanistan have written a constitution which is—guarantees free election, freedom, full participation in government by women.” All of this, the audience members should conclude, would not have been possible were a radical Islamist government in power instead of the moderate, secular, pro-American Hamid Karzai, elected as a result of the United States invasion. The self-righteous and polemical nature of the discourse aside, the Bush administration has yet to address the fact that women’s rights, one of the main battlefields in the war of words over the invasion, have improved only marginally in some areas, and in others, as a result of lack of personal and economic security, have even deteriorated.⁷¹

To remind the American public that their financial and physical sacrifices in the context of the “war on terror” were made not only in the name of the innocent (native) Muslim “victims,” but also for their present and future security and prosperity, Bush insists:

⁶⁹ Emphasis added.

⁷⁰ Condoleezza Rice, “National Security Advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice Discusses War on Terror at Reagan Library and Museum, Simi Valley, California,” *White House News and Policies*, 28 February 2004.

⁷¹ “Lessons in Terror: Attacks on Education in Afghanistan,” *Human Rights Watch* (July 2006); Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghan Women’s Quiet Revolution Hangs by a Thread,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 January 2007; and Christina Lamb, “Women Back Under Wraps With Taliban Vice Squad,” *Sunday Times, Australia*, 24 July 2006.

I know you know I feel this strongly, but I see this — we're in the beginning of a conflict between competing ideologies — a conflict that will determine whether or not your children can live in peace. A failure in the Middle East, for example, or failure in Iraq, or isolationism, will condemn a generation of young Americans to permanent threat from overseas...It is in our interest that we combine security with a political process that frees people, that liberates people, that gives people a chance to determine their own futures. I believe most people in the Middle East want just that. They want to be in a position where they can chart their own futures, and it's in our interest that we help them do so.⁷²

Here we see the neoconservative version of the “democratic peace theory” at the heart of the Project for the New American Century, as described in Chapter Three. It is based on the notion that the only way to ensure world peace, and more importantly, the United States' pre-eminent role in constructing, maintaining and managing this peace for its own benefit, is through spreading Western style democracy and the economic and political institutions and systems that underpin it. This component of the discourse provides rhetorical justification for policies intended to transform Middle Eastern states into secular, quasi- democracies capable of better serving U.S. interests the region. It draws attention away from internal contradictions within the Bush administration's democratization policy, such as the U.S. supporting alleged democratic processes in Iraq and Afghanistan, while at the same time turning a blind eye to blatantly undemocratic processes in states like Turkey or Egypt when Islamists stand to lose the most from these processes.⁷³ It also reaffirms the United States' identity as the beacon of democracy in the world, capable of actually executing the ambitious task of not only delivering security to the “victims” of Islamist extremists but at the same time “freeing” and “liberating”

⁷² George W. Bush, “Press Conference by the President,” *Office of the Press Secretary*, 20 December 2006.

⁷³ For example, in the April 2007 Turkish parliamentary elections to confirm the ruling party's (AKP) selection for Turkey's next president, the Islamist Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, the minority secularist parliamentarians boycotted the poll leaving the Constitutional Court, which is powerfully influenced Turkey's military, to invalidate the parliament's vote for Gul on the rarely-used technical grounds that it lacked a two-thirds quorum. Five days later, Gul withdrew his candidacy. In the aftermath of the standoff between secularists and the AKP there were massive demonstrations in Istanbul and Ankara, most likely opening the way for early general elections, in which the AKP is expected to emerge as the largest party. Andrew Finkel, “Turkey: Torn between God and State,” *Le Monde Diplomatique* (May 2007); Dilip Hiro, and Tom Engelhardt, “Unholy Alliance,” *TomDispatch*, 10 May 2007. Another example is Egypt, where the U.S. has remained noticeably silent on issues relating to the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood, which won close to one fifth of parliamentary seats in the 2005 elections. One recent incident involved the controversial trial of 40 members of the Brotherhood, including Khairat el-Shatir, third-in-command of the group, on what many believe are trumped up charges of terrorism and money-laundering. “Military to try Brotherhood members,” *Al Jazeera*, 14 May 2007.

them and giving them “a chance to determine their own future.” This is precisely the volatile mixture of “American idealism and American Realpolitik,” combined with an inflammatory dose of “messianic American civic nationalism,”⁷⁴ that Anatol Lieven refers to in *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*.

In a speech to AIPAC on the United States’ continued commitment to the “war on terror,” Vice President Cheney similarly extolled the virtues of Western democracy and ruminated on the positive impact he believes it could have in countries where violent and oppressive movements hinder the potential of “good Muslims.” Although in this speech he does not mention the Islamist movements by name, the specific “terrorist” acts referred to (i.e., the bombings of the United States Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 and “terrorist” attacks in Iraq, Bali, the United States and Jerusalem) clearly reference the same divergent group of movements regularly conflated in the “ideologization of terror” approach:

It is not hard to see why the terrorists oppose and rage against the rise of democracy in Iraq. They know that as liberty advances, as men and women are given a say in the affairs of their country, they turn their creative gifts to the pursuits of peace. People who live in freedom are able to choose their own destiny, and this gives them real hope for material progress in their own lives, and a better future for their children. As democracy advances, ideologies that stir anger and hostility lose their appeal, and terrorists lose recruits, safe havens, and sources of funding.⁷⁵

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has proven equally optimistic about the potential of imposed Western-style democracy to overcome the anachronisms of Islamic and Arab culture that the Islamists are intent on preserving:

The success of freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq will give strength and hope to reformers throughout the region, and accelerate the pace of reforms already underway. From Morocco to Jordan to Bahrain, we are seeing elections and new protections for women and minorities, and the beginnings of political pluralism. Political, civil, and business leaders have issued stirring calls for political, economic and social change.

⁷⁴ Lieven.

⁷⁵ Cheney, 7 March 2006.

Increasingly, the people are speaking, and their message is clear: the future of the region is to live in liberty.⁷⁶

As is the norm with the discourse on political Islam, that element which prescribes democracy as an antidote to the rise of political Islam tends to be ahistorical. Although the Muslim world under the various caliphates that ruled since the Prophet Muhammad's death were often tolerant of religious minorities, even welcoming "refugees and outcasts from a much less tolerant Christian Empire," the discourse tends to attribute religious intolerance, deemed anathema to Western democracy, to those movements advocating the restoration of an Islamic caliphate. It does so without providing specific examples to justify the denial of this historical precedent in favor of a retrograde vision of Islamists, which, in a typically strained dichotomous construct, opposes a notion of liberal democracy that promotes "freedom" and "liberty" with oppressive Islamist rule. As Bush put it in a discussion of the "war on terror" at the National Endowment for Democracy, "This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision: the establishment, by terrorism, subversion and insurgency, of a totalitarian empire that denies all political and religious freedom."⁷⁷ The idea that political Islam and democracy are mutually exclusive is reinforced again in a statement made by President Bush in response to a question posed in a town hall meeting regarding the lack of separation between "church and state" in the Middle East: "It's going to be the spread of democracy itself that shows folks the importance of separation of church and state." He then cited Iraq's new constitution, which says Islam is "a basic source of legislation" but guarantees rights to the country's non-Islamic and non-Arab citizens to exemplify his point.⁷⁸ Implicit in this statement is the notion that democracy and secularism are intrinsically linked.

The opinions of United States policy makers regarding the potential of their government to "bring democracy" to the Middle East reflects their essentialist views on Middle

⁷⁶ Condoleezza Rice, "Opening Remarks by Secretary of State-Designate Dr. Condoleezza Rice," *Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice*, 18 January 2005.

⁷⁷ George W. Bush, "President Discusses War on Terror at National Endowment for Democracy," *White House News and Policies*, 6 October 2005.

⁷⁸ Warren P. Strobel, "Islamists gain ground from American push for Mideast democracy," *Knight Ridder Newspapers*, 16 January 2006.

Eastern cultures and histories, and on the supremacy and transferability of Western styles of governance, views also expressed by their European orientalist counterparts a century earlier. In particular, one finds echoes of the prominent British politician and colonialist Arthur James Balfour who, in his lecture to the House of Commons on 13 June 1910, spoke of a similar need to assume the “white man’s burden” by “delivering” rational governance to the people of this region/religion. In an effort to persuade British MPs of the importance of maintaining a British presence in Egypt in the face of enhanced Egyptian nationalist efforts to remove them, Balfour argued:

First of all, look at the facts of the case. Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show the beginnings of those capacities for self-government...having merits of their own...You may look through the whole history of the Orientals in what is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-government. All their great centuries—and they have been great—have been made under that form of government. Conqueror has succeeded conqueror; one domination has followed another; but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government. That is the fact. It is not a question of superiority or inferiority. I suppose a true Eastern sage would say that the working government which we have taken upon ourselves in Egypt and elsewhere is not a work worthy of a philosopher—that it is the dirty work, the inferior work, of carrying out necessary labor.⁷⁹

Similar to Lord Balfour’s claim that the British government must first destroy the Egyptian nationalist movement in order to lay the groundwork for “self-government,” so too did the Bush administration see no contradiction in the desire to “bring” democracy to the Middle East *via* war (the “dirty work” of nation building), and thereby destroy those very elements that most students of democracy/democratization deem as prerequisites for the creation of a stable democracy (i.e., universal education system, infrastructure, middle class, civil society).⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Quoted in Said, 1978, 32-33.

⁸⁰ Posusney and Angrist.

2.3 Construction of the Angel “Savior”: Democrat Discourse

Similar to their role in the construction and maintenance of the “savage” other discourse, prominent members of the Democratic Party have also contributed generously to the innocent “victim” and angel “savior” discourse, as evidenced in an address to the London School of Economics in 2005 by United States Senator and presidential hopeful John Edwards. In it, Edwards evoked the “white man’s burden” sentiment when delineating the role he would like to see the United States government play in the soft power component of the “war on terror.” Recalling the words of General John Abizaid, former head of United States military forces in the Middle East, Edwards argued that the “war against terrorism is ‘a battle of ideas as much as it is a military battle’,” and that it was hence incumbent on the United States government to “convince” the “ordinary men and women from Egypt to Morocco to Indonesia... that democracy and liberty are the pathway to possibilities.”⁸¹ If given the chance, Edwards pleaded, the innocent and “good Muslim” men and women of the Middle East would respond in a way that “so many in the past have done”:

They could pull down the great books from the shelves in libraries. They could exchange ideas with others from different countries. And they could begin to move their country out of that fog of hate. This is the power of liberty and democracy. If given the chance, it stirs the soul and makes all people long for that fundamental human right to be free.⁸²

Considering the context in which these statements were uttered, underpinned by a dichotomous understanding of progress and stagnancy, tradition and freedom, the “so many in the past” Edwards refers to must be Westerners and non-Westerners who have responded “correctly” to the stages of modernization, e.g., through liberalization of their economies, separation of church and state, and adoption of democratic principles as defined by the West.

In a speech on foreign policy delivered at Georgetown University, Massachusetts Senator and former presidential candidate John Kerry expressed a similar desire to help the

⁸¹ John Edwards, “Towards a New Partnership: America, Europe and the New World,” *London School of Economics & Policy Network Lecture*, 25 May 2005.

⁸² Edwards.

innocent Muslims of the Arab world, in particular by pushing the United States to enable the region to emerge from its self-imposed, marginal status:

We must embark on a major initiative of public diplomacy to bridge the divide between Islam and the rest of the world. We must make avoidance of the clash of civilizations the work of our generation: Engaging in a new effort to bring to the table a new face of the Arab world — Muslim clerics, mullahs, imams and secular leaders — demonstrating for the entire world a peaceful religion which can play an enormous role in isolating and rebutting those practitioners who would pervert Islam's true message.⁸³

In this passage another common trait of the discourse becomes evident: the assumed authority of the speaker in regards to the interpretation of Islam, as evidenced in Kerry's reference to "Islam's true message." The sentiment expressed here is not far off from that expressed by one of the first proponents of public diplomacy as a means to win the "hearts and minds" of the Muslim world: Napoleon. On one of the three ships commandeered by the diminutive French leader on his mission to colonize Egypt was an Arabic printing press meant to produce leaflets for distribution upon arrival, including one that read: "You will be told that I have come to destroy your religion; do not believe it! Reply that I have come to restore your rights, to punish the usurpers, and that more than the Mamluks, I respect God, his Prophet, and the Qur'an."⁸⁴

Also stressing the importance of the "soft" or diplomatic component of the "war on terror," another Democratic senator and presidential hopeful, Hillary Clinton, evoked the lessons learned from the Cold War in a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations. She called on young Americans to fulfill their patriotic duty by learning the languages and cultures of the Middle East, not because it might help the United States enter into real dialogue with those who felt wronged by longstanding United States policies in the region, but because these societies are "where our biggest threats are incubating."⁸⁵ Extolling the United States' preordained role as purveyor of democracy and modernity to

⁸³ John Kerry, "Kerry speech on national security—Georgetown University," *Office of Senator Kerry*, 23 January 2003.

⁸⁴ Martin Kramer, "De'ja Vu: The ABCs of Public Diplomacy in the Middle East," in *A Practical Guide to Winning the War on Terrorism*, ed. Adam Garfinkle (Stanford, CA: Hoover Press, 2004), 134.

⁸⁵ Hilary Rodham Clinton, "Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton's Remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 31 October 2006.

the world, she praised the Bush administration's invocation of democratic principles to fight Islamist extremism, while criticizing it for not going far enough: "We've done a good job talking about democracy but we sure haven't done a comparable good job in promoting the long-term efforts that actually build institutions after the elections are over and the international monitors have gone home." This type of support, along with her "global education" program, would provide an alternative to the "incubators of religiously-fuelled extremism," so that innocent and "good Muslims" could be on the side of "dignity and progress."⁸⁶

3. United States Journalists Construct the "Victim" and "Savior" in the "War on Terror" Discourse

As is the case in the construction of the "savage" Islamist other, the mainstream U.S. media has at times performed the dual roles of source and conveyor of orientalist stereotypes and the modern rationalist paradigm in relation to the construction of the innocent "victim" and angel "savior" in the context of the "war on terror" discourse. In this section I will focus on the role of particularly influential pundits who have facilitated the creation and/or perpetuation of this discourse.

3.1 Construction of the Innocent "Victim"

In the weeks following the 9/11 attacks, Fareed Zakaria, the influential "liberal hawk"⁸⁷ editor of *Newsweek*, echoed the views of the Bush administration, both in his description of the native "victims" and his plans for saving them, in the article, "The Politics of Rage: Why Do They Hate Us?" later a book.⁸⁸ Zakaria fears the growing influence of religious "fanaticism," which he believes, in a statement affirming Mutua's point on the culpability of the underpinning culture of the savage other, "come out of a culture that reinforces

⁸⁶ Rodham Clinton, 31 October 2006.

⁸⁷ Tom Regan, "White House's 'rush to war was reckless'," *Christian Science Monitor*, 14 January 2004; Farid Zakaria came to *Newsweek* magazine from *Foreign Affairs*, the influential journal of international politics and economics, where he was managing editor. In 1999 *Esquire* magazine described Zakaria as "the most influential foreign policy adviser of his generation," and named him "one of the 21 most important people of the 21st Century." Bruce Ledewitz, "The Promise of Democracy," *Capital University Law Review* 32, no. 2 (2003).

⁸⁸ Farid Zakaria, "Why do they hate us?" *Newsweek* (15 October 2001).

their hostility, distrust and hatred of the West--and of America in particular.” He is certain of a “moderate majority” whose complacency he worries will lead to the ascendance of the Islamists, or “a small poisonous element who advocate cruel attitudes toward” the following putative and actual “victims”: “women, education, the economy and modern life in general.”⁸⁹ Zakaria adds “people of other faiths and creeds” to this list, “victims” who will presumably be aided once Muslims accept the West’s message that, once secularized, Islam is “compatible with modern society.”⁹⁰

For Nicholas Kristof, another liberal pundit who writes for the *New York Times*, despite his original opposition to the American-led invasion of Iraq, there is hope for Afghanistan and Iraq because President Bush’s “team include[s] conservative idealists who want to leave the Middle East more democratic than ever before.”⁹¹ Although not questioning the “honorable” nature of their intentions, Kristof nonetheless urges caution so that the mistakes he believes were made in Kuwait during the first Gulf War can be avoided in Iraq. Overlooking all other possible explanatory factors for that war, including various geostrategic factors (e.g. challenging Saddam Hussein’s political and military hegemony in the region, and greater access to the country’s vast oil reserves),⁹² Kristof urges the Bush administration to avoid the same mistakes that led “Americans to lo[se] their lives to liberate Kuwait” and yet end up with the current situation in Kuwait, where “women still don’t have the vote.”⁹³ Contented with the rationales provided by the Bush administration for the most recent invasion and occupation of Iraq, Kristof argues in favor of a policy geared towards establishing a liberal and secular democracy in Iraq, so that Americans would not feel “annoyed” that they sacrificed so many lives, at such great expense, to finally see the “benefits of freedom flowing to enemies of our values...” To illustrate his point, the *Times* journalist recounts an anecdote from the Kuwaiti experience where, despite the United States’ benevolent intervention on the side of women’s freedom, their repression is evident everywhere, even in grocery shops:

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Nicholas Kristof, “Running for the Exits,” *New York Times*, 18 April 2003.

⁹² Chomsky, 2003; Tariq Ali.

⁹³ Kristof, 2003.

Special K is sold in Kuwait, but every box has a piece of white paper pasted over an image of a young woman exercising. It's not a sexy image, unless you've spent a month in the desert alone with a herd of camels, but it's still considered too explosive for Kuwaitis to handle.⁹⁴

Continued American attention to the “democratization” in Iraq is therefore necessary, lest a similar fate await its innocent female “victims,” should “Shiite clerics who favor an Islamic republic and want to cover up cereal boxes” come to power. Kristof makes a similar argument on behalf of continued efforts in Afghanistan, where he points out “the war may be ending, but the effort to *bring* opportunities to Afghan women should be just beginning.”⁹⁵ (emphasis added) To refute potential criticism of what some might consider a patronizing attitude, Kristof argues in another article that “encouraging more opportunity for Afghan women is not cultural imperialism, any more than are our efforts to bring Afghanistan a central bank, modern roads or free elections. These are all simply elements of nation-building,” presumably the burden of the more advanced and knowledgeable United States and its Western allies.⁹⁶

The contribution of neocon writer Daniel Pipes to the discourse is similar to that of the administration he has advised, arguing that the principle “victims” of Islamism in many parts of the world are Muslims themselves.

Islamism is a global affliction whose victims count peoples of all religions. Non-Muslims are losing their lives to it in such countries as Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, and the Philippines. Muslims are the main casualties in Algeria, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan.⁹⁷

In another article further elaborating on the native “victims” of Islamism, Pipes makes explicit his understanding of the distinction between “good” and “bad Muslims,” arguing: “Islamism threatens the West in a way that the traditional faith does not...[although] traditional Muslims, who are often the first “victims” of Islamism, express contempt for the ideology.”⁹⁸ And though he provides no substantiation that “Islamism is perhaps the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Kristof, “The Veiled Resource,” *New York Times*, 11 December 2001.

⁹⁷ Daniel Pipes, “Daniel Pipes Explains Islamism,” *The Minaret* (September 2000).

⁹⁸ Daniel Pipes, “Islam and Islamism — Faith and Ideology,” *National Interest* (Spring 2000).

most vibrant and coherent ideological movement in the world today; it threatens us all,” he is certain the United States government is capable of overcoming this scourge with the help of its innocent “victims,” Muslim and non-Muslim alike (especially Jews and Christians of the world, toward whom Islamists “espouse deep antagonism”),⁹⁹ just as they managed to do with the evil that confronted the “civilized” world in the years leading to World War II.¹⁰⁰

In an article that asks “Is Islam the problem?,” Jonah Goldberg, writing for the influential pro-Israel *Jewish World Review*, also attempted to distinguish between “good” and “bad Muslims,” arguing: “There are over 1 billion Muslims in the world and some 6 million in the United States alone. It would be morally absurd to claim that all of these people subscribe to an evil religion.”¹⁰¹ Yet the message of the Islamists comes across to Westerners the loudest, as they espouse a “world view at odds with what we in the West consider morally acceptable: the beating of Afghani women who teach girls to read; the imprisonment and occasional execution of religious dissidents, etc.” Despite Goldberg’s best attempts to employ politically correct language, he goes on to betray the orientalist foundations of his beliefs, which assumes the “savage” enemy other can really only be understood by looking at the underpinning culture. For Goldberg, this type of culture is clear: “Much of Muslim world simply lives in a different time than the West. Oh sure, some of the big cities, with their cars and satellite dishes, may look modern. But their culture is horribly behind the times.”¹⁰²

3.2 Construction of the Angel “Savior”

In “How to Save the Arab World,” the title itself revealing his patronizing attitude, Fareed Zakaria argues for a break with past appeasements, or “the Fear of the Alternative (FOTA)” policies, which he attributes with facilitating the rise in popularity of Islamist movements.¹⁰³ Following modern rationalist thought, Zakaria argues that the cultural impact of globalization, half-hearted attempts at modernization and lack of reform by

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Jonah Goldberg, “Is Islam the Problem?” *Jewish World Review* (24 October 2001).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Fareed Zakaria, “How to Save the Arab World,” *Newsweek* (24 December 2001).

Arab regimes have led to malaise and alienation as the norm and Islamism as the only answer. “The greatest potency Islamic fundamentalism holds is that it is an alternative — a mystical, utopian alternative — to the wretched reality that most people live under in the Middle East.”¹⁰⁴ Yet, despite their rhetoric and promises, once in power, Zakaria argues, the Islamists are incapable of delivering. “The mullahs can preach, but they cannot rule.” As the problem Zakaria has identified is caused by reaction to an uneven and unfinished process of modernization, the solution is to complete the process. Zakaria emphasizes that this will take time, and can only come once “radical political Islam” is first militarily “defeated.” Then, it can be “deligitimated” as an ideology by the consolidation of modernity and the implementation of Western democracy. Yet democratization cannot occur immediately:

We do not seek democracy in the Middle East — at least not yet. We seek first what might be called the preconditions for democracy, or what I have called “constitutional liberalism”—the rule of law, individual rights, private property, independent courts, the separation of church and state. In the Western world these two ideas have fused together — hence “liberal democracy” — but they are analytically and historically distinct.¹⁰⁵

To encourage implementation of these stages, Washington must be prepared to use its economic and political influence to “insist on genuine reform — new legal codes, new regulations, privatization.”¹⁰⁶ In Middle Eastern/Muslim states like Afghanistan, already beyond repair, a more forceful American intervention may be necessary:

First, we have to help moderate Arab states, but on the condition that they embrace moderation. We can fund moderate Muslim groups and scholars and broadcast fresh thinking across the Arab world, all aimed at breaking the power of the fundamentalists... Obviously we will have to help construct a new political order in Afghanistan after we have deposed the Taliban regime... For those who argue that we should not engage in nation-building, I would say foreign policy is not theology. ... In this case, stable political development is the key to reducing our single greatest security threat. We have no option but to get back into the nation-building business.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

Like Zakaria, Thomas Friedman, another “liberal hawk” journalist, also believes that democratization by “revolution, invasion or election” is a necessary process for the region. Friedman shares his colleague’s view that democratization is only one step in the larger transformation the Muslim world must undergo if truly interested joining the “civilized world.” In addition to free elections, the region’s leaders will need to permit development of “real political parties, institutions, free press, competitive free markets and proper education — a civil society...”¹⁰⁸ Another article linking the rise of Islamism in the region to democracy, penned by Friedman days after the Madrid bombings, urged the people of Spain not to rashly pull their troops out of Iraq in reaction to the bombings, and thus “appease” the terrorists, but rather to continue to support “the first democracy-building project ever in the Arab world.” Like other journalists, analysts and policy makers involved in developing and maintaining the discourse on political Islam, Friedman identifies the “savage” enemy, “victim” and prescription for “savior”. “We are up against a terrible nihilistic enemy,” Friedman writes. The “Islamist terrorist” seek to “kill as many people in Iraq and elsewhere...so even a glimmer of democracy never takes roots in the Arab world and so America is weakened.”¹⁰⁹ Friedman further argues that the only way democracy will prevail in Iraq, and indeed in the Middle East, is if President Bush “dispenses with his discredited argument for the war — W.M.D.” and instead declares the true, and no less noble, intent of the war: “to depose the genocidal Saddam regime in order to partner with the Iraqi people to build a decent government in the heart of the Arab-Muslim world — because it is the pathologies and humiliations produced by Arab misgovernance that are the root causes of terrorism and Muslim extremism.”¹¹⁰

Norman Podherotz, a founding father of the neoconservative movement,¹¹¹ agrees with his liberal counterparts on the need for the Bush Doctrine *vis-à-vis* democratization and the rise of Islamism in the Middle East, although he is less circumspect in his praise for what it has actually accomplished thus far. In an article for the neoconservative *Commentary*, Podherotz poses the question: “Is the Bush Doctrine dead?,” to which he

¹⁰⁸ Friedman, “Addicted to Oil,” 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Friedman, “Axis of Appeasement,” *New York Times*, 18 March 2004.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Tom Regan, “Has the Bush Doctrine Failed?” *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 August 2006.

responds with a resounding “no.”¹¹² Citing examples of success such as the liberation of Iraq, the “successful” elections held there and in Afghanistan, and the fact that “forces opposed to democratization are fighting back with all their might,” Podherotz refutes the challenges to democratization, mostly in regards to its implementation, by traditional conservative pundits and politicians like George Will, Brent Scowcroft, Patrick Buchanan and Philip Gordon who have given up on the notion that democratization in the Middle East is possible, or even desirable. He urges conservative, liberal interventionist and neoconservative supporters who have lost faith in the doctrine to remember that the “shallow roots” of modern nation states were originally planted in the region by the French and British colonial powers, and therefore it is not “utopian” to believe that a “third Western power” could plant roots for “a better political system [that] could be put in their place.”¹¹³

Evoking the Cold War analogy, Podherotz compares those who have lost faith in Bush to the people who criticized Truman in 1947, when he spoke of the need to address the new threat faced by the United States in the form of an “aggressive totalitarian” Soviet Union, which eventually led to the Truman Doctrine, a strategy that came to be known as containment. “Consider the similarities with Bush,” Podherotz urged. “Even after 9/11, many pooh-poohed the threat of Islamofascism and, seeing its terrorist weaponry as merely a police matter, denied (and continue to deny) that we were even really at war, much less in a new world war.” According to Podherotz, just as Truman’s clear “understanding” of the post-World War II threat to Western democracy led to the Truman Doctrine, so too would Bush’s ability to read the challenges and threats of the post Cold War international system lead to the promulgation of a new and equally important doctrine.¹¹⁴

One neocon journalist who has not jumped ship is Mark Steyn, who has written prolifically for a varied range of publications, including the *Jerusalem Post* in Israel, the *Chicago Sun Times* and the “Happy Warrior” column for *National Review*. In one column

¹¹² Norman Podhoretz, “Is the Bush Doctrine Dead?” *Commentary* (September 2006).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

revealingly entitled “Imperialism is the answer,” Steyn urged the United States to proudly embrace the “white man’s burden” view of the world with as much enthusiasm as its 18th and 19th century European counterparts, although without irony pointing out that the terminology may need to be “modified in the age of Colin Powell and Condi Rice.” Pre-empting realist arguments regarding costs and benefits of such a large scale “democratization” project, Steyn argued: “Given the billions of dollars of damage done to the world economy by Sept. 11, massive engagement in the region will be cheaper than the alternative”¹¹⁵

Another leading neocon who has not lost faith in the Bush Doctrine is Charles Krauthammer, who has argued in support of what he calls “democratic globalism” while urging that the ideology and practice should be tempered by more realist concerns. In a speech before the American Enterprise Institute, he criticized the naivety of isolationists, the idealism of liberal internationalists and the lack of vision of realists. Krauthammer explained why he believed “democratic realism” was the only way forward for the United States in the new unipolar world order.¹¹⁶ Krauthammer argues that the desire to spread democracy in the Middle East is an idea whose “inspiration comes from the Truman Doctrine of 1947, the Kennedy inaugural of 1961, and Reagan’s ‘evil empire’ speech of 1983.” Like Bush, these past American leaders “all sought to recast a struggle for power between two geopolitical titans into a struggle between freedom and unfreedom, and yes, good and evil.” They too were criticized by influential realists of the time, like Hans Morgenthau and George Kennan, of “ideologizing the Cold War by injecting a moral overlay.”¹¹⁷ For Krauthammer a vision like that of Bush’s predecessors is needed today to overcome “the new existential enemy, the Arab-Islamic totalitarianism.” Yet recalling the United States’ Cold War experiences, Krauthammer cautions against simplistic comparisons to the communist adversary, since “this time the enemy knows no reason.” Nevertheless, Krauthammer is certain victory in the “Islamic crescent stretching from North Africa to Afghanistan” can still be attained:

¹¹⁵ Mark Steyn, “Imperialism is the Answer,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 14 October 2001.

¹¹⁶ Charles Krauthammer, “Democratic Realism: An American Foreign Policy for a Unipolar World,” *American Enterprise Institute* (10 February 2004).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a second difference between now and then: the uniqueness of our power, unrivalled, not just today but ever. That evens the odds. The rationality of the enemy is something beyond our control. But the use of our power is within our control. And if that power is used wisely, constrained not by illusions and fictions but only by the limits of our mission — which is to bring a modicum of freedom as an antidote to nihilism — we can prevail.¹¹⁸

Typical of the “modern rationalist” analysis, Krauthammer speaks with an authority of the “Islamic crescent” that presumably only a Westerner could possess. In lieu of detailed scholarly analysis, orientalist stereotypes and simplistic dichotomies assert the West’s superiority and privileged place in history. Martin Peretz, owner of the influential neocon *New Republic*, speaks with similar authority about the democratization antidote to the growing popularity of Islamist movements in the region, or what he describes as “removing the effect [rise of Islamism] means removing the cause [Arab dictatorships].”¹¹⁹ He goes on to “give George W. Bush his due on democracy” by arguing that that “democracy did not begin even to breathe until the small coalition of Western nations led by the United States destroyed the most ruthless dictatorship in the area.”¹²⁰

According to Max Boot, “award-winning author, United States military historian, and self-described neocon,”¹²¹ the question on the “war on terror” is not whether the Bush Doctrine was correct in its (rhetorical) belief in the power of democracy to transform the Middle East and minimize the allure of political Islam, but rather why the Bush administration has not taken this project further. According to Boot’s “modern rationalist” assessment, “the witches’ brew of repression, stagnation and governmental incompetence found in many Middle Eastern countries leaves the mosque as the only place where dissent can be aired and social services delivered.” According to this reductionist argument, the only way to address the issue of radical Islamism, inherently viewed as an existential threat to the West, is by addressing the democracy deficit. Despite having originally acknowledged this and made democratization the centerpiece

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Martin Peretz, “Giving George W. Bush his Due on Democracy: The Politics of Churlishness,” *New Republic* (31 March 2005).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Max Boot, “Q&A: Neocon power examined,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 2004.

of his “war on terror” policies, Bush’s subsequent response, according to Boot, “has been oddly passive,” as “much-ballyhooed programs such as the Greater Middle East Initiative seem to have fallen by the wayside.” David Frum, former speech writer for George W. Bush and one of the architects of the administration’s “war on terror,”¹²² now a columnist for the *National Review Online*, praises both Bush’s democratization policies and American exceptionalism in general. According to Frum, “Americans are fundamentally a generous and optimistic people,” and Bush’s policies *vis-à-vis* the Muslim world have basically just “extend[ed] the universal principles that Americans espouse to that vast and challenging stretch of earth from Morocco to Malaysia.”¹²³

4. United States Think-Tanks Construct the Innocent “Victim” and Angel “Savior” in the “War on Terror” Discourse

Similar to the construction of the innocent “victim” in the discourse of American policy makers and pundits, one also finds ubiquitous references by think-tanks to the native “victims” of the backward, intolerant and violent Islamist enemy other in the “war on terror” context. As is the norm in this discourse, dichotomous reasoning is often employed to make artificial distinctions between “good” and “bad Muslims,” and reference is frequently made to the oppression of women and other “vulnerable” groups at the hands of tyrannical and intolerant Islamists.

4.1 Construction of the Innocent “Victim”

One finds evidence of all the above trends in the recent RAND Corporation report on Building Moderate Muslim Networks.¹²⁴ In the report, staff members for RAND, a now independent think-tank initially established in 1945 by the United States Air Force to conduct scientific and technological research and development for military purposes, employ the Cold War analogy to advocate that the United States government take a network-building approach to organize and strengthen “liberal and moderate Muslim”

¹²² Danny Postel, “Fukuyama’s moment: a neocon schism opens,” *Opendemocracy.com* (28 October 2004).

¹²³ David Frum, “I know Bush He’s Your Best Chance for Peace,” *Sunday Telegraph*, 23 November 2003.

¹²⁴ Rabasa et al., 2007.

elements, similar to that developed during the Cold War to “foster networks of people committed to free and democratic ideas” in regions already under, or susceptible to, the Soviet sphere of power.¹²⁵ Employing the modern rationalist paradigm, they argue that the only way to counter the strength of Islamist movements, whose appeal is in their ability to effectively employ violence, mobilize funds and develop networks through religious institutions, is by strengthening the networking and mobilizing capacities of their “moderate” counterparts.

At the heart of the RAND report’s argument is the belief that this task should be relatively easy, as the majority of Muslims need little convincing to realize that they will be victimized in one way or another should the Islamist movements assume power and subsequently impose *shar’ia* law. Those who have “the most to lose” should Islamists gain power, and hence are the West’s most logical partners in the struggle against “religious extremism” are “women and religious minorities.”¹²⁶ In some countries, the authors point out, “women are already beginning to organize to protect their rights from the rising tide of fundamentalism and are becoming an increasingly important constituency of reformist movements.”¹²⁷ Typical of the innocent “victim” discourse, this statement is made without any historical or contemporary context of women’s rights in the region, in-depth examples substantiating their argument, and without any apparent consultation with Muslim women who support or are members of these Islamist movements. The authors of the report recommend that United States democracy-networking programs reach out to other natural allies such as “liberal and secular Muslim academics and intellectuals” and “moderate journalists and writers.” From the examples provided, including writers and scholars such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Salman Rushdie, and Irshad Manji (considered orientalist or even anti-Islam by many Muslims and a significant number of non-Muslims around the world), clearly the criteria used by RAND to choose appropriate partners and distinguish between “moderates and radicals” is “not commitment to democratic values and practices, but proximity to Islam.”¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid., xiii.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 84.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Louay Safi, “Myopic Builders and Elusive Moderates,” *The Milli Gazette*, 20 April 2007.

Recalling with approval President Bush's speech to graduates at the United States Air Force Academy that "we must keep in mind the nature of the enemy," Joseph Loconte, William E. Simon Fellow in Religion and a Free Society at the conservative Heritage Foundation, described the "victims" of Islamic "barbarism" as "citizens not only of the United States," but also many from the Muslim world, including "politicians, police, factory employees, doctors, relief workers — anyone supporting a decent [read: Westernized] civil society. They include not only Christians and Jews, but dissenting Muslims." He goes on to explain that the enemy ideology is one "that reviles anyone who upholds the moral norms of civilized states."¹²⁹ Ariel Cohen, also of the Heritage Foundation, believes that movements as disparate as Hamas, Al Qaeda, Hizbollah, and the Muslim Brotherhood are all guilty of adherence to this backward ideology. Included amongst the innocent "victims" of these "totalitarian organizations" are all "'infidels,' especially the United States, and other 'non-believers,'...Christians and Jews, who are subject to discriminatory practices, such as the imposition of a special head tax, *jaziyah*,...women [who are] subjugate[ed],...children as young as five" [who are] exploited [and] brainwash[ed]... into becoming suicide bombers." Even their own supporters are "victims," as they are denied "basic civil rights."¹³⁰ Again, no specific examples are provided to substantiate the argument.

Mark Blitz from the neoconservative Hudson Institute agrees that the casualties of Islamic "extremism," such as "rights for women" and the "free exercise of religions," cannot be addressed adequately unless the system that underpins these repressive practices (in other words Islam itself) is confronted. As Blitz authoritatively puts it, "theocracy and natural rights are incompatible."¹³¹ Paul Marshall, also from the Hudson Institute, agrees that the numerous native "victims" of Islamic extremism — including "women accused of adultery" stoned to death for their crime and ordinary Muslims killed for criticizing their government and other forms of "apostasy and blasphemy" — are the result of Islamist adherence to a "reactionary version of Islamic *sharia*" as opposed to "democracy and 'man-made' law," assumed, although without qualification from

¹²⁹ Joseph Loconte, "Barbarism Then and Now," *Heritage Foundation* (12 August 2004).

¹³⁰ Ariel Cohen, "State of the Union 2006: Democracy in the Middle East," *Heritage Foundation* (1 February 2006).

¹³¹ Mark Blitz, "Taking Public Diplomacy Serious," *Hudson Institute* (1 May 2005).

Marshall, as inherently more conducive to a more humane and equal society. Therefore, Marshall argues, these innocent “victims” (in other words, the “good Muslims”) are the West’s “natural allies” in the fight against “Islamist totalitarianism.”¹³²

Writing for the Democratic Leadership Council’s *Blueprint Magazine*, Will Marshall, president of the neoliberal Progressive Policy Institute, echoes the assumptions of his (neo) conservative counterparts that the “majority” of Muslims are “moderates” who are actual or potential “victims” of the excesses of “extremist” Islamist movements. Recommending a “Helsinki-type process,” and hence evoking the Cold War analogy, Marshall urges the West to “make common cause” with these actual or potential “victims”/allies, including “human rights activists, liberal reformers, and independent civic groups in the Muslim world,” who, one assumes from the argument, are naturally secular and pro-Western.¹³³

4.2 Construction of the Angel “Savior”

Prior to the 6 May 2007 political crisis that broke out in Turkey between the Islamist government and its supporters and the secular opposition (including the military), sparked by the latter’s refusal to accept the Islamists’ choice of president,¹³⁴ James Wilson of the American Enterprise Institute praised Tayyip Recep Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP), for their “enlightened moderation,” which he contrasted with the “radicalism” of leaders such as the Ayatollah Khomeini and the exiled Tunisian Islamist, Rachid Ghannouchi. Wilson argued that these “radicals” have failed to learn the “historical lesson of the liberal West” that “freedom triumphs absolute values.”¹³⁵ Of

¹³² Paul Marshall, “Commentary: To Engage Moderate Muslims, We Must Understand Radical Islam,” *Hudson Institute* (23 May 2005).

¹³³ Will Marshall, “Confronting Jihad,” *Blueprint Magazine* (22 July 2006).

¹³⁴ This change in position is likely considering the recent report by his AEI colleague, Michael Rubin, in which he expressed his hope that the “democratic process,” including “civil pressure—and the very real threat of street violence” might force Prime Minister Erdoğan to accede to early elections and give up on his hopes for the pro-Europe presidential candidate Abdullah Gül and prospects of an “Islamist president and a first lady who wears a Saudi-style headscarf” which would help Erdoğan further “erode secularism and redefine state and society.” Michael Rubin, “Will Turkey Have an Islamist President?” *American Enterprise Institute* (2 February 2007).

¹³⁵ James Wilson, “Why Freedom Can Be a Lot More Important Than Democracy,” *American Enterprise Institute* (3 May 2004).

course “freedom” like its binary opposite “tyranny” is never actually defined. While his definition of freedom lacks clarity, his prescription for achieving it in the Middle East is clear. Like Bush and Rice, Wilson believes the Iraqi people, and indeed the entire Middle East, can achieve freedom only if Americans maintain their resolve: “In order for freedom to have a chance... we must be patient and strong.” Although Iraqis lack the essential elements that have helped other Muslim nations (e.g., Turkey, Indonesia and Morocco) to modernize, including a “strong central government” (despite Great Britain’s efforts to “bring” it to them twice), “a strong army devoted to secular rule, and an absence of ethnic conflict,” there is still room for optimism, if Americans are willing to “stay there as long as we are needed,” in other words: as long as it takes to defeat the radicals and ensure the victory of the “enlightened” moderates.¹³⁶ Yet, the quest for democracy in all Muslim states is an ongoing and upwards struggle, as Wilson believes that “wherever the Islamic religion is powerful, there is little opportunity for a liberal regime.”¹³⁷

In an article entitled “To Bolster Muslim Moderates, Add Democracy and Stir,” Vance Serchuk, also writing for the AEI, similarly assumes the good of such “universal” notions as democracy, secularism, and “moderation,” a concept never defined. Also employing the Turkish example, Serchuk argues the only way to avoid tyrannical Islamist rule and instead “foster” moderation in Arab states is through “democratic institutions.”¹³⁸ Serchuk praises the moderate AKP for avoiding “getting bogged down in emotionally charged, but largely symbolic, arguments over secularism,” as did their predecessors under the short-lived government of the more radical Islamist, Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. Instead, the Islamist government voted into power in 2002 “has received high marks for concentrating” on less “emotional” (and thus more “rational”) issues, such as “recovering the Turkish economy and other issues of good governance.”¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Ibid..

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Vance Serchuk, “To Bolster Muslim Moderates, Add Democracy and Stir,” *American Enterprise Institute* (8 July 2005).

¹³⁹ Ibid.

For those subscribing to the modern rationalist paradigm, the promotion of democracy and “moderate” regimes in the Middle East should form the centerpiece of the United States’ diplomatic component of the “war on terror,” although many do not see the diplomatic and military components as mutually exclusive. According to Lorne Craner, president of the International Republican Institute (IRI) and former Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (2001-2004), too often United States democratization policy is misconstrued as militarily focused, despite the fact that in only five of the eighty countries that have become democracies over the past quarter century—Grenada, Panama, Serbia, Afghanistan, and Iraq—did United States military intervention play a role.¹⁴⁰ “Washington’s primary commitment to Middle East democratization support remains in the realm of coordinated diplomacy and international programs,” and opines Craner, George W. Bush’s foreign policy reverses that of his predecessors willing to accept the Middle Eastern “democratic exception” so long as United States interests in the region continued to be served. Craner compares the “war on terror” to the Cold War and argues in favor of a Reaganite foreign policy which recognizes that “U.S. success [in the Cold War] was in part due not only to stating what America stood against — communism — but also in enunciating a counter vision of democracy and freedom.”¹⁴¹ In analyses like these that depend upon an essentialized view of Islamist movements, creation of Westernized, liberal democracies in the region is assumed to naturally diminish the political gains of Islamists (“bad Muslims”), who benefit from a closed system that eliminates liberal opposition (“good Muslims”) but spares their Islamist counterparts who have an easier time organizing clandestinely through religious networks. This theory is generally presented as a logical fact not needing substantiation, even though, in reality, Islamist movements have often suffered the most from repressive policies of Middle Eastern countries like Egypt and Algeria, and have benefited the most from democratic change.¹⁴² Although future elections across the Middle East may lead to

¹⁴⁰ Lorne Craner, “Will U.S. Democratization Policy Work? Democracy in the Middle East,” *Middle East Quarterly* (Summer 2006).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Anna Badkhen, “Political Islam rises on Bush’s doctrine,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 February 2006; “Democracy’s Consequences,” *Washington Post*, 4 February 2006; and David Ignatius, “Muslim Radicals in Power,” *Washington Post*, 3 February 2006.

greater Islamist representation in governments, Craner insists, “Greater U.S. engagement...could mitigate the outcome.”¹⁴³

Kim Holmes, Director of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies at The Heritage Foundation agrees that democracy is the best cure for “radical Islamism.” Holmes agrees with President Bush that it is not enough to merely “denounce radical Islamism,” and goes on to praise the President for insisting on an “ideological component to the war,” namely his “assertion that America should actively support the spread of freedom and democracy around the world.”¹⁴⁴ This component of the policy, which includes “political and economic reforms,” will “empower” “good Muslims” to “denounce” the radical Islamist ideology that Holmes, in typical orientalist, authoritative fashion, denounces for “distort[ing] and exploit[ing] Islam for destructive ends.” Highlighting the identity-affirming role of the discourse, Holmes argues that one of the principal benefits of this policy is its ability to “lay claim to the high moral ground” *vis-à-vis* the United States’ Islamist enemies.¹⁴⁵ Laurent Marawiec, Senior Fellow with the Hudson Institute, argues similarly that the “despotic regimes and backward economies” have served as incubators for the “religion-clad totalitarianism of militant Islam” that today threatens the West.¹⁴⁶ Given that this is the case, policies that support economic and political “reform” in the Arab world must be prescribed to counteract the actual and potential damage caused by these militant Islamists. According to Marawiec, the overthrow of Saddam Hussien’s regime was merely a first, although necessary, step to achieving these policy goals; in executing this component of the “war on terror,” the United States and its allies must

also commit themselves to supporting the Arab Muslim world’s transition to modernity, non-despotic government, and economic growth. This must be seen and undertaken not as a U.S. desire for self-aggrandizement or empire-building, but as a matter of long-term survival.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Craner.

¹⁴⁴ Holmes.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Laurent Marawiec, “A Post-Saddam Strategy,” 2003.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Included amongst Marawiec's policy proposals are "strong American financial and propagandistic help, and public diplomacy" to support the "good Muslims" [of Iran] "pushing for liberalization" in the face of oppressive "reactionary clerics;" "American employment of Arabic-language media... throughout the region," to "target the weaknesses of the Arab Middle East: the archaism of the societies, the autocratic nature of the regimes, and the absence of pluralistic debate, and challenge them by promoting the reverse values, attitudes and practices;" "financial help, media exposure, and diplomatic and public assistance" as well as support for these backward Muslims "with help in rewriting schoolbooks, establishing objective media, and creating political parties and civil-society organizations." Through these policies the Muslim world "will be brought into the West."¹⁴⁸

In his January 2002 *Foreign Affairs* article "Back to the Bazaar," Martin Indyk, Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, argued in favor of a policy overhaul of United States relations with the Arab world. Expressing a view that, as described earlier in the chapter, came to be adopted rhetorically by the Bush administration in regards to appeasement of authoritarian regimes by past administrations, Indyk argues the United States government must "confront the dilemma of political change in the Arab world" if it is serious about "dry[ing] up the swamp" that has generated Islamist radicalism. Employing the typical authoritative tone, Indyk argues that states like Saudi Arabia and Egypt should "be encouraged to develop a more tolerant model of Islam, one more reconciled to modernity, as an alternative to the hatred and xenophobia now propagated through school and mosque. And they should also be prodded into undertaking economic reforms."¹⁴⁹ Kenneth Pollack, Director of Research at the Saban Center, similarly criticizes Cold War policies *vis-à-vis* the Middle East that he blames for having "produced Islamic terrorists seeking to harm the United States and its allies and desperately unhappy populations increasingly willing to challenge illegitimate and insecure regimes."¹⁵⁰ Employing a typical modern rationalist analysis, Pollack argues that, like all "traditional societies confronted by modernity," the Muslim world needs

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Indyk.

¹⁵⁰ Kenneth Pollack, "Grand Strategy: Why America Should Promote a New Liberal Order in the Middle East," *Blueprint Magazine* (22 July 2006). Pollack is Director of Research at the Saban Center.

“transformative reform of virtually every sector of life,” including “economic reform in accordance with free-market principles,” “educational reform to produce graduates who can compete in the global economy,” and “social reform that adapts traditional values to modern necessities.”¹⁵¹ Naturally, these transformed indigenous values, institutions and societal relations will be more like their Western, “modern” counterparts.

In an article for the Democratic Leadership Council’s *Blueprint Magazine*, Will Marshall, president of the neoliberal Progressive Policy Institute and Jeremy Rosner, senior vice president at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner, a political polling and strategy firm, similarly argue in favor of the angel “savior” of Western democracy to save innocent Muslims and the West from the evils of “jihadist ideology,” which, as in all “ideologization of terror” analyses, goes completely unexplained.¹⁵² What is, however, explained in great detail are the duo’s policy recommendations for a “remedy to the pathologies that afflict the greater Middle East” that inevitably result in radical Islamism. They claim their approach is “different from the military-centric approach [of] the Bush administration.” However, their proposals to “launch a sweeping program of economic, political, and social reform in the region [of] trade and financial investment, aid tied to open governance and modern education systems, and consistent backing for human rights and pro-democracy reformers,” are virtually identical to those proposed as part of the “soft” power components of the Bush “war on terror”.¹⁵³ Similar ideas are expounded by other Brookings Institution colleagues, such as Peter Singer, who argues along the lines of the UN’s 2002 Arab Human Development Report that “human development concerns” are vital “to both the problem and any solution” to “the rise of political Islam.”¹⁵⁴ Likewise, Tamara Wittes advocates on behalf of “American engagement to push reform in the direction of liberal democracy” to “help reduce the risk that the current and coming upheavals in Arab politics might provide Binladenist ideas strong new footholds in major countries.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Pollack.

¹⁵² Will Marshall and Jeremy Rosner, “Fighting Smarter: A five-part progressive plan to defend liberal democracy,” *Blueprint Magazine* (17 May 2006).

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Peter Warren Singer, “America, Islam and the 9-11 War,” *Current History* (December 2006).

¹⁵⁵ Tamara Wittes, “Promoting Reform in the Arab World: A Sustainable Strategy,” *Saban Center for Middle East Policy* (28 April 2005).

Even those wary about the prospects of democratization programs to deliver secular, pro-Western, “democracies” in the region, who worry that past experiences in which Islamist movements have benefited most from democratic reforms may repeat themselves, still believe that a Western-style liberalization program is necessary to counteract the forces of Islamism. The principal difference between these analyses and their democratization counterparts is that they believe that the process involves several stages. As Judith Miller put it in a 1993 article for *Foreign Affairs*, “the promotion of free elections immediately is likely to lead to the triumph of Islamic groups that have no commitment to democracy in any recognizable, meaningful form.”¹⁵⁶ Quoting the quintessential orientalist Bernard Lewis, Miller argues, “‘The pressure for premature democratization can fatally weaken existing regimes, with all their flaws,’ and lead to their overthrow, not by democratic opposition, but by other forces that then proceed determined dictatorship.” To avoid this scenario, the United States government should instead

promote elections tomorrow and civil society today—increased participation in public life by a growing number of individuals, groups and associations who genuinely crave liberal democracy—so that the concepts and traditions upon which democracy depends have time to take hold, and so that countries that have known little else but one-party authoritarian rule will stand a better chance of developing truly democratic governments.¹⁵⁷

Ariel Cohen of The Heritage Foundation contributes to this strain of the discourse, arguing in favor of United States government support for democracy in the Middle East in the long-term, but urging that it weigh this support against other United States interests “when election outcomes jeopardize such vital American interests.”¹⁵⁸ To stop such a situation from arising, rather than principally focusing on elections, the United States government should press for the development of “civil society, rule of law, protection of minority rights, freedom of speech and worship, and other individual rights,” which once achieved will presumably produce the type of pro-Western and secular democracy where

¹⁵⁶ Judith Miller, “The Challenge of Radical Islam,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 2 (Spring 1993).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Ariel Cohen, “State of the Union 2006: Democracy in the Middle East: the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies,” *Heritage Foundation* (1 February 2006).

Islamists are marginalized.¹⁵⁹ Victor Hanson, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institute qualifies his support for the Bush administration's democratization, or "soft" power, policies by pointing out the concurrent need to maintain "hard" power policies.¹⁶⁰ For example, "democratic reform in the Middle East" would have been "impossible" with the "sinister presence of an oil rich and genocidal Saddam Hussein, given his history of attacking four of his neighbours," which is why military intervention in Iraq was necessary before the United States could *deliver* democracy. For Hanson though, now that the West has "an exegesis of the dangers of radical Islam — why it hates Western freedom and how it thrives on the oil, misery, and dictatorship of the Middle East," it requires not only "our democratic values," but "resilience" to overcome this "nihilis[ti]c" enemy.¹⁶¹

5. Challenges to the Construction of the Innocent "Victim" and Angel "Savior" in the "War on Terror" Discourse

Although the prominent policy makers, journalists and think-tank members discussed in this chapter are representative of mainstream trends in the "war on terror" discourse in relation to the construction of the Islamist other, there is an emerging counter-discourse that challenges the innocent "victim" and angel "savior" constructs, and which parallels the challenges to the "savage" enemy as demonstrated in Chapter Four.

For example, despite his worldview being firmly rooted in Enlightenment thought, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Senior Associate Amr Hamzaway acknowledges his subjective standpoint, rather than cloaking it in the language of neutrality and objectivity, and explains nonetheless why Westerners must grasp the importance of Islamist movements to the future stability and democratic development of the region.¹⁶² He frankly asserts that "it would be nice if liberal democrats among the Arab intelligentsia could be the vanguard of political reform," but acknowledges that "democracy cannot come to Arab societies without the participation of movements that

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Victor Hanson, "When Cynicism Meets Fanaticism," *Hoover Institute* (31 March 2006).

¹⁶¹ Hansen.

¹⁶² Hamzawy.

command huge popular support,” a fact even secular opposition parties in the Muslim world are now coming to acknowledge.¹⁶³ “In Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt, differences between liberals and Islamists remain relevant, but the degree of convergence of liberals and Islamists over national priorities is systematically growing.”¹⁶⁴

Thomas Carothers, Vice President for Studies–International Politics and Governance at the Carnegie Endowment, goes further in defying the mainstream discourse by directly questioning the validity of the United States’ “savior” role in the “war on terror”. According to Carothers, the United States’ long history of intervening in the region for typically realist, geo-strategic objectives has damaged its credibility as an objective third party with benevolent interests.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Bush administration’s apparent disregard for international law and human rights norms in implementing various policies associated with its “war on terror” leads Carothers to believe that the United States can have no real impact on the development of stable, democratic governments in the Muslim world until it addresses and ameliorates the rampant inconsistencies in its democratization agenda. In order to accomplish this, the Bush administration and successive governments must first “decontaminate” United States’ democracy promotion agenda by “improving U.S. compliance with the rule of law in the war on terrorism, ending the close association of democracy promotion with military intervention and regime change, and reducing the inconsistency of U.S. democracy policy by exerting real pressure for change on some key autocratic partners, such as Pakistan and Egypt.”¹⁶⁶ Although Carothers’ perspective is rooted in the “modern rationalist” paradigm, as is apparent from his reductionist account of the rise of Islamism in the Muslim world, which he attributes solely to socioeconomic or political factors, he nonetheless rejects the “ideologization of terror” tendency to discount the influence of past experience and context on the decision-making processes of Islamist movements, in particular in regards to whether to employ violence. To overlook such motivational causes as “anger over U.S. policies in the region, from the war in Iraq to the special U.S. relationship with Israel,”

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Carothers, “U.S. Democracy Promotion During and After,” *Carnegie Endowment* (Fall 2007).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

and instead focus solely on the issue of (lack of) democracy as the primary independent variable capable of explaining Islamist violence, is “analytically misguided.”¹⁶⁷

The International Crisis Group’s report on the Bush administration’s Middle East democracy initiative is equally critical, arguing against the orientalist assumptions implicit in the mainstream discourse. Rather than cast the United States in the role of angel “savior,” the ICG report instead cuts the Bush administration (and West in general) down to size, urging it to first “educate itself better about the tremendous diversity of Middle Eastern political and religious thinking,” and secondly, to adopt the more modest agenda of working towards peace and stability in a region marked by chaos and violence, in no small part due to past and present U.S. policies, so the people of the region can figure out for themselves what constitutes “good governance.”¹⁶⁸ As the report claims,

democratization and reform require a generation of constant effort, and 90 per cent of their prospects for success or failure rest in indigenous hands. The responsibility of the Americans and Europeans — as a practical matter, in the first instance, especially for the former — is to take political actions that might produce the calmer regional environment in which indigenous efforts would have the necessary twenty or so years to operate and Western help on the remaining 10 per cent would be welcomed.¹⁶⁹

Although these challenges to the construction and function of the innocent “victim” and angel “savior” in the discourse on political Islam in relation to the “war on terror” are welcome, as with the modern, post-modern and hermeneutic academic challenges, as well as the budding counter-discourse on the “savage” enemy other as discussed in the previous chapter, these perspectives have yet to fully penetrate mainstream, non-academic discussions on political Islam.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the various ways in which a modern rationalist understanding of political Islam, underpinned by a generally patronizing view of non-

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ “The Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative: Imperilled at Birth,” *International Crisis Group* (June 2004).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Western peoples and cultures, and a deep-seated orientalist vision of the Muslim world, has impacted the types of non-military remedies prescribed by the discourse to address the Islamist “threat” in the context of the “war on terror”. As is the case in the construction of the “savage” enemy other, the discourse on the innocent “victim” and angel “savior” is based on an oversimplistic, biased, and often erroneous understanding of Islam as a religion, seamlessly carried over to analyses of Islamist political movements. These analyses are generally based on the assumption that one need not attempt to understand the origins, development, or demands of Islamist groups, because they are completely beyond the scope of legitimate politics, and hence incompatible with Western notions of democracy. Seen through the orientalist lens, Islamist movements/governments are necessarily backward, violent, illiberal and oppressive of women and religious minorities. Accordingly, it is assumed the most effective way to ensure the triumph of liberal, secular, pro-Western political parties/movements in the Muslim world is to fully “modernize,” or more specifically *Westernize*, the societies and polities of states where Islamist movements thrive, creating an environment more conducive to the emergence of liberal, pro-Western movements and political parties. This analysis, and the discourse it spawns, deny the possibility that Islamist movements could also thrive in such an environment, as they are ideologically committed to the notion that Islamist movements are relics from the past, doomed to “melt into air” in a globalized and modern (or postmodern) world.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ Marx uses this expression in *The Communist Manifesto* where he discusses the inevitable reaction of oppressed workers in the face of the brutally transformative changes wrought on society by unhindered capitalism. One can see a similarly deterministic vision of transformation in the discourse on political Islam, although in relation to the inevitable secularization of society, rather than the communist transformation predicated by Marx’s dialectical materialism. Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 1998).

Conclusion

Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality

-Ian McEwan, 15 September 2001¹

The belief that an “enlightened” and “developed” United States/West has the natural right and unique ability to mould and control the course of the political, economic, and social development of non-Western states, or that there exists an “ideal form” of modernity, namely the type achieved by the West, to which all the manifold peoples and states of the world, despite their disparate cultures, religions, histories and collective visions for the future, must aspire, are notions that have been widely challenged by academics, politicians, and activists across the world over the last two decades. Nevertheless, according to the discourse on political Islam, in particular in relation to the “war on terror,” it is clear that a political movement/government must be secular and capitalist in order to be democratic and “modern,” and therefore amenable to a stable and “peaceful” (in a liberal, Western understanding of the term) Westphalian international system.² This is despite the longstanding existence of cogent critiques from the Muslim world regarding the narrow criteria for “good governance” set by American bureaucrats and politicians who often have very little background knowledge of the regions at the receiving ends of their policy prescriptions. As the prominent Islamist activist Rachid Ghannouchi has argued, “[w]hile secularism is incompatible with Islamic values, Muslims require ‘genuine’ modernity no less than anyone else...However, we need to enter modernity in our own way.”³ More often than not, these protests for genuine sovereignty and freedom from outside manipulation and aggression are cast aside as irrelevant or stubborn obstacles to American attempts to consolidate material and ideological hegemony in the Middle East.

¹ Ian McEwan, “Only Love and Then Oblivion,” *The Guardian*, 15 September 2001.

² As Oliver Richmond explains, the mainstream, uncritical Western view is one in which “peace is a liberal ideal made possible by correct forms of governance and institutionalisation, and are a product of the practices and discourses of the post-Enlightenment development of the international community.” Oliver P. Richmond, *The Transformation of Peace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 9.

³ Tamimi, 106.

In this sense, the discourse and associated policies of the “war on terror” have served a multi-pronged agenda. They at once have allowed the United States to guide the development of the non-Western world in terms that suit its own economic and political interests, while at the same time reinforcing U.S. identity as an exceptional beacon of “progress,” ensuring that the non-Western world is kept in the position of “perpetual consumer of modernity,” or a “mere extension of Western power.”⁴ As a result of U.S. hegemony in the Middle East, many of the central assumptions of this discourse have gone unchallenged, at least in the popular domain. Most prominent among these has been “the stages of growth” theory, which came to form the foundation of modernization theory in the mid-twentieth century, and holds that all societies are alike at the “traditional” stage and eventually would pass through the same sets of transformations that led the West to the “modern” stage, if they but adhere to the “right” path.⁵ In their dichotomous understandings of the world, modernization theory and Orientalism share much in common. As Lockman has pointed out, “both approaches can be seen as premised upon the drawing of sharp distinctions between ‘us’ (Westerners living as modern people in modern societies) and ‘them’ (non-Westerners, especially Muslims, traditional people living in tradition-bound societies).”⁶

Through the othering of political Islam, the academics, politicians, think-tanks, and pundits whose contributions to the discourse of political Islam I have examined in this thesis have succeeded in constructing an enemy so extraordinary and so distinctively lacking in human attributes that exceptionally brutal and illegal actions could be taken to subdue him, with very little enduring damage done to the “democratic” and “human rights” credentials of the perpetrators. In doing so, the discourse has cast the United States in the role of the true heir to Europe’s ontological and physical supremacy over the “lesser peoples” of the world, and with it, their benevolent “burden” to save these peoples from their own destructive devices. However, the sad irony marking the “war on terror” has been lost on most of its progenitors: almost every component of the “war” has resulted in outcomes that are the absolute inverse of its (stated) goals, most important of which has been to make the world a generally more peaceful and safe

⁴ Euben, 151.

⁵ Klarén.

⁶ Lockman, 139.

place for its nearly 7 billion inhabitants. Several recent reports and expert statements have shown that the world is actually more vulnerable to terrorist attacks today than it was prior to September 11th;⁷ that there have been more American casualties in Iraq than from the World Trade Centre bombings;⁸ that Islamist movements have been the first to benefit from democratic reforms in Muslim countries;⁹ that women, whose liberation was to form the centrepiece of both “soft” and “hard” components of the “war on terror,” are actually worse off today in at least two of its principal battlefields;¹⁰ that there are now millions more innocent (native) victims as a result of the violence wrought by the “war on terror,” than at its inception;¹¹ and that other, possibly more severe threats to United States, Western, and indeed, world security have been overlooked as the result of the U.S. government’s obsessive focus on the “terrorism” threat (e.g., climate change, growing inequality in the world, poverty and global militarization)¹². In other words, even by its own standards, the “war on terror” has been an abject failure.

It is the opinion of this author that this colossal failure is due neither to conceptual nor implementational faults of any of the specific policies related to the Bush Doctrine and the “war on terror.” Rather, it is due to the Eurocentric epistemological foundations of the ideology that underpins it. As first elaborated in Chapter One and demonstrated through examples in the subsequent chapters, these foundations influence how political Islam is conceived by social scientists, politicians, and the public as generally lacking in those characteristics deemed necessary for what they

⁷ Kim Sengupta and Patrick Cockburn, “How the War on Terror Made the World a More Terrifying Place,” *The Independent UK*, 28 February 2007; Marx Mazzetti, “Spy Agencies Say Iraq War Worsens Terror Threat,” *The New York Times*, 24 September 2006; Warren P. Strobel and Jonathan S. Landay, “Terror Attacks Up Nearly 30 Percent, Report Says,” *McClatchy Newspapers*, 27 April 2007.

⁸ “US Deaths in Iraq, War on Terror Surpass 9/11 Toll,” *CNN*, 3 September 2006.

⁹ Rabasa et al., 2007.

¹⁰ Haifa Zangan, “The Iraqi resistance only exists to end the occupation,” *Guardian*, 12 April 2007; Nadjie Sadig al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Kavita N. Ramdas, “Iraqi Women’s Bodies Are Battlefields for War Vendettas,” *Global Fund for Women*, 19 December 2006; Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghan Women’s Quiet Revolution Hangs by a Thread,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 January 2007; Christina Lamb, “Women Back Under Wraps With Taliban Vice Squad,” *Sunday Times, Australia*, 24 July 2006.

¹¹ David Brown, “Study Claims Iraq’s ‘Excess’ Death Toll Has Reached 655,000,” *Washington Post*, 11 October 2006; “Afghanistan: US Should Investigate Civilian Deaths,” *Human Rights Watch* (6 March 2007); James Palmer, “1 in 8 Iraqis Dies Before Fifth Birthday,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 May 2007. In addition to deaths and injuries, one must consider also the plight of Iraqi refugees, both internal and external, who are some of the greatest victims, in socioeconomic and psychological terms, of the war. “Doors closing on Iraqi displaced,” *BBC*, 10 October 2007.

¹² Chris Abbott, Paul Rogers and John Sloboda, “Beyond Terror: The Truth About the Real Threats to Our World,” *Oxford Research Group* (April 2007).

regard as legitimate politics, in particular in relation to Islamic conceptions of the state, sovereignty, modernity and rationality.

Despite the hegemonic nature of this discourse, there are increasing attempts to subvert it through a deconstruction of its central paradigms and the development of a counter-discourse in its place. Most mainstream among these has been analyses critical of the discourse's narrow understanding of modernity which instead argue for a perspective which accepts the possibility that Islamist movements, by virtue of their incubation within a context of globalized modernity, have advertently or inadvertently adopted the central ideological and material demands of their "modern" nationalist and socialist counterparts, including, according to Halliday, resistance to cultural/political imperialism and rampant individualism, as well as a Third Worldist "solidarity [with] the oppressed people of the world," although they have instrumentalized the language of Islam in order to attain greater legitimacy for their agendas.¹³

Postmodern analysts go even further in challenging the mainstream discourse, pointing out the dialectical relationship that exists between the West's epistemological, ontological and physical hegemony over the Muslim world and the Muslim world's status as other in Western identity construction. By deconstructing the various facets of the West's "regime of power," post-modern analysts have been able to create space for a hermeneutic understanding of Islamism.¹⁴ In doing so, they have discovered the desire of many Islamist movements to think and act outside the orbit of the West, rather than merely to ape its political and institutional structures, by employing specific religious and cultural references that lend them an air of authenticity. Furthermore, post-modern analyses recognize the Islamist desire to be "disruptive, not only of a geopolitical order, but also of an episteme which has been dominant for the last three hundred years."¹⁵ Whereas for Sayyid this challenge is a uniquely Islamist endeavour, in which Muslims have invested their hopes for a "better" future, Euben sees the Islamist challenge as only one part of a global expression of general malaise, one which crosses nations and religions, which has

¹³ Halliday, *Two Hours*, 2002, 148.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

¹⁵ Sayyid, 160.

developed in “resistance to a world of radical doubt,” and seeks to reintroduce meaning and significance into modern existence.¹⁶ What unites these postmodern writers is their shared belief in the existence of a growing political and social trend, whether transcultural or solely emanating from the Muslim world, that expresses unease with the limits of modern rationalism and instead feels a commitment to the “conviction that we ‘may still need to see ourselves as part of a larger order that can make claims on us’.”¹⁷

As I have argued in this thesis, such counter-hegemonic challenges to the mainstream discourse on political Islam have yet to activate a full “paradigm shift,” though they increasingly call into question the essentialist vision of the Muslim world peddled by proponents of the “clash thesis” who saw in the chaos and confusion following the 9/11 attacks an opportunity in which to execute their post Cold War “end of history” visions of a liberal world peace, which would reflect and benefit its primary implementer and enforcer: the United States. This vision of obtaining a self-interested “peace” *via* the indiscriminate violence of war was not unique to the neocons and their supporters, but was rather preceded by two “waves” of intervention by European states: the Crusades and later conquest of the Americas in the name of Christianity, and the nineteenth and twentieth century imperialism on behalf of “European civilisation.”¹⁸ The speed with which this group was able to establish discursive hegemony and implement associated policies was no doubt in part due to these earlier precedents and a reservoir of Eurocentric and Orientalist language and concepts on which to build.

In order to alleviate the detrimental effects of the “war on terror” and ensure that self-interested wars for “peace” will be avoided by the United States/West in the future, one must first engage in the type of critical re-evaluation of these foundations that I have provided in this thesis. As Jackson points out, “if a campaign of violence like the ‘war on terrorism’ can be socially and politically constructed, it can also be deconstructed.”¹⁹ Most importantly, this critical process has demonstrated the intimate

¹⁶ Euben, 167.

¹⁷ Here Euben quotes Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 89.

¹⁸ Richmond, 11-12.

¹⁹ Jackson, 188.

relationship between the discursive/ideological and material components of Western hegemony in the Middle East, and the role played by the “savage” enemy other in consolidating this relationship and thereby reinforcing the United States’ constructed vision of itself as the ultimate “angel saviour” in the world against which it is contrasted. As Said poignantly argued regarding the role of the “other” in national identity construction:

The construction of identity...while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction - involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us.” Each age and society re-creates its “Others.” Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of “other” is [a] much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies.²⁰

Once the United States’ self-identity as an ontologically exceptional state is deconstructed and repositioned within the realm of the ordinary, albeit with some extraordinary elements, a “space for alternatives” is automatically “pry[ed]” open for the development of a counter-discourse on political Islam based on alternative methodological approaches such as the ones discussed in this thesis.²¹ Most effective amongst these are the post-modern and hermeneutic approaches that, in their attempt to engage the ideas of the subjects of their research on their own terms, are inherently subversive of the “regimes of truth” established on the foundations of deliberately fictitious or distorted analyses which the discourse seeks to enforce. Although it may be impossible, as Euben has argued, for the analyst “whose position is exterior to the worldview of the subject[s]” studied to develop a completely unadulterated, or “objective” understanding of their perspective of the world, it may be possible, nonetheless, for this approach at the minimum to allow for the subjects’ “conceptual world” to be grasped. Such a grasp could enable the possibility of a dialogue, as opposed to monologue or lecture which casts the Islamist/Muslim world on the receiving end of authoritative knowledge it has no choice but to accept if it wishes to avoid violent intervention.²² Initiating such a conversation would have two tangible

²⁰ Said, 1978, 7.

²¹ Campbell, 227.

²² Euben, 13.

benefits for the people of the United States and other Western states that have similarly bought in to the “war on terror” and the dichotomous vision of the world on which it is based. First, it would force the government to reassess its threat assessment mechanisms and readjust spending priorities away from a fundamentally flawed “war” that has done more harm than good for national security, and towards long neglected non-military components of “human security,” such as increased spending on health, education, (non-military) foreign aid to states on the basis of need, and the economy. In the United States, the government’s astronomical spending on the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, totalling anywhere from \$1.6 trillion, according to Democrats on the Joint Economic Committee, or nearly \$ 3 trillion, according to Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz, has left the U.S. economy with a budget deficit of \$55.6 billion, up 12.6 percent in the 2007 fiscal year, despite tax revenues hitting an all-time high during that same period.²³ Stiglitz even partially attributes the United States’ subprime housing crisis, a principal contributing factor to the country’s current economic woes, to the excessive costs of the wars.²⁴ With the Administration’s 2009 military budget expected to reach more than \$515 billion, annual military spending, when adjusted for inflation, will reach its highest level since World War II.²⁵

The second tangible benefit would be to open up the possibility for Americans/Westerners to re-connect with a world from which they have been alienated for centuries as a result of their perceived exceptional status. As Todorov has argued in relation to the Spanish victory over the “Indians” in Latin America, “[b]y winning on one side, the Europeans lost on the other; by imposing their superiority upon the entire country, they destroyed their own capacity to integrate themselves into the world.”²⁶ Although this may seem too abstract to be considered a “tangible” benefit, recent polls have shown that Americans are increasingly aware of and disturbed by the plunging levels of respect their state commands across the world, largely as a result of the way in which the “war on terror” has been conducted. Even

²³ “Democrats Forecast \$3.5 Trillion in War Costs,” *Reuters*, 13 November 2007; “David Nitkin, Bush Vetoes Health, Education Measure,” *The Baltimore Sun*, 16 November 2007; Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (Essex: Allen Lane Publishers, 2008).

²⁴ Mary Kane, “Debate Heats Up About Whether Hidden Iraq Costs Are Damaging the Economy,” *The Washington Independent* (14 March 2008).

²⁵ Thom Shanker, “Pentagon Seeks Record Level in 2009 Budget,” *The New York Times* (3 February 2008).

²⁶ Todorov, 97.

Americans are capable of recognizing the drawbacks of the “go-it-alone” approach to international relations.²⁷ This re-connection with the world at large, and with the Muslim world in particular, is more vital today than even before as the world faces seemingly insurmountable, apocalyptic threats, such as those posed by nuclear weapons, climate change and mammoth levels of inequality. According to Hossein Nasr, should it be willing to listen, Islam has much to offer to the rest of the world in this regard because of its antipathy towards rampant individualism and nihilism, and its belief in the necessity of an “equilibrium between man and his natural environment.”²⁸ A more humble West would be willing to acknowledge past wrongs committed against the Muslim world (including colonialism, neo-imperialism, and habitual political and military interventions in the politics and economies of the region over the past two centuries). It would consider the positive contributions Islamist movements could offer the world in solving inequality, conflict, environmental degradation and other “catastrophic impasses” caused by blind faith in the power of science and technology.²⁹ This humbled West would be better placed to tackle the very real issue of Middle Eastern violence, more often suffered by the people of the region themselves than by Westerners. And it ultimately would be in a better position to share its understanding of democracy, economic development, and human rights, derived from its own unique historical path of development, with other peoples of the world hitherto reluctant to take advice from a region they have viewed as marred by hubris and imperial aims.

²⁷ A survey of 1,000 voters conducted for BDA by Zogby International found that 76% of Americans are concerned about their country’s reputation, 74% believe the U.S. is viewed negatively by people in other countries and 66% say U.S. relations with the rest of the world are on the wrong track. “Americans Alarmed About Declining U.S. Global Reputation, Study Shows,” *PRNewswire-USNewswire*, 3 May 2007.

²⁸ Hossein Nasr, 223.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 225.

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