Militarization, Globalization, and Islamist Social Movements

How Today's Ideology of Islamophobia Fuels Militant Islam

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Abstract: Today the world faces the prospect of an endless war and intensifying global polarization. While extremist forms of Islam have gotten great attention, the media and academic scholarship have been much slower in addressing the varieties and vibrancy of Islamic mobilization that are leading to a global Islamist resurgence. How does one explain the paradox represented by the simultaneous duality of the efflorescence of U.S.-led neoliberal globalization and militarization and Islamist mobilization on a global scale? Exploring this central question, the author concludes that until the present day selective discourse on Islamophobia is replaced with a nuanced understanding of Islam and the sources of Muslim rage and resentment, based on the best understanding and social scientific evidence—thereby hopefully helping to force real changes in U.S., Israeli and Western policy—the likelihood is that the so-called global war on terrorism will escalate, providing a new generation of recruits for militant Islam and leading to an ever escalating cycle of revenge from which few may escape unscathed. Islamophobia and a lack of understanding of Muslim majority countries and why there is substantial antipathy towards the U.S., Israel and allied states, provides a strong undercurrent of public support for aggressive U.S. policies towards the Muslim world. Thus, it is urgent for scholars and activists to expose Islamophobic illusions and lies and reveal instead the realities of the historical and contemporary relationship between Islamic and Western religions, civilizations, states and social groups, as part of offering and pushing for new paths towards more equitable, peaceful, socially just and sustainable futures.

At the dawn of the 21st century, the September 11th terrorist attacks and U.S. embrace of a so-called global war on terrorism shattered illusions of the universal spread of liberal cosmopolitan globalization promoted by theorists of the end of history after the collapse of the Soviet empire and break-up of the Soviet Union (Fukuyama, 1992). Yet,

rather than revising such teleology, radical Islam quickly took the place of communism as the newest obstacle to achieving peace, prosperity and liberal capitalist democracy; one that called for an aggressive military response (cf. Fukuyama, 2001/2002; cf. Huntington, 2001/2002; Reifer, 2006a, b, c). Rather than ushering in the dawn of a new era of democracy, peace and prosperity, though, reliance on crude military power has revealed instead the growing contradictions of U.S. power in an age of neoliberal globalization and militarization.[1]

Today the world faces the prospect of an endless war and intensifying global polarization. U.S. military expenditures are slated to rise to $622 billion for fiscal year 2008, including $140 billion in war-related expenses, making it "the highest level of spending since the height of the Korean War," according to Steven Kosiak of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments.[2] While extremist forms of Islam have gotten great attention, the media and academic scholarship have been much slower in addressing the varieties and vibrancy of Islamic mobilization that are leading to a global Islamist resurgence. How does one explain this paradox represented by the simultaneous duality of the efflorescence of U.S.-led neoliberal globalization and militarization and Islamist mobilization on a global scale?

Crucial to answering this question is a recognition that, while global integration originated as early as the 15th century as a long term historical process, it is never linear and is always conflicted, for its impact is always mediated by specific, historically situated local institutions. Thus globalization reflexively suggests *localization* of the global or translocalization (cf. Benedict, 1999: 113-115). Nor is globalization continuous: rather

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[1] For more on the question of neoliberal militarization and globalization, see Reifer, 2006d.
[2] Kosiak is quoted in David S. Cloud, "Record $622 Billion Budget Requested for the Pentagon," *New York Times*, February 3, 2007, p. A11.

it is characterized by rapid spurts of growth, followed by tension, resistance and stagnation. Indeed, like the relative decline and subsequent efflorescence of British hegemony during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, globalization in our own time is characterized by what Karl Polanyi (2001) called the simultaneous rise of the self-regulating market and movements for the self-protection society against the unregulated market mechanism.

The current phase of neoliberal globalization and militarization began in earnest in the late 1960s and early 1970s and has been intimately related to the contradictions and changing fortunes of U.S. hegemony during this period. Contemporary globalization is simultaneously characterized by ruthless processes of global integration—of finance, production and trade—and marginalization, disrupting traditional livelihoods and leading to a resurgence of what Immanuel Wallerstein (1983, 1999) calls ethno-national (and what we might call ethno-transnational-religious) movements. These movements are today in the vanguard of anti-systemic struggles against Western intrusion, having largely supplanted formerly secular anti-imperialist struggles.

Globalization is characterized by what theorists call space-time compression, shrinking the globe and effectively creating a new culture of simultaneity, where networked interaction transcending national boundaries across the globe becomes ever present. From the communications-satellite-telecommunications revolution to long-distance air travel and internet communication and media, most recently with Al Jazeera broadcasting satellite television pictures of the U.S. and Israeli invasions of Iraq and Lebanon across the Middle East, we are increasingly living in one world (see Khadar, et al., 2003). While somewhat daunting for social movement theorists, many of these processes of contemporary globalization were foreseen by Enlightenment social theorists, from Marx and Engels to Max Weber

(see Lubeck and Reifer, 2004). Social theorists associated these processes with secularization, which did gain ground, to be sure, however unevenly in the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet clearly the late 20th and early 21st centuries have seen the resurgence, rather than the decline, in global religiosity and religious inspired mobilization, from Islamism to Pentacostalism to evangelical Christianity as a whole, including liberation theology (Davis, 2004).

Today Islam is at the forefront of these trends, being the fastest growing religion, with a quarter of the globe's population and with somewhere between roughly 1.3 to 1.5 billion Muslims, second only to global Christianity and with a pronounced concentration among some of the poorest regions of the world, such as South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa (see Haq, 1998; see UNDP). Moreover, with the contemporary demography of immigration and pro-creation, Islam is rapidly growing in the cities of North America and Europe.

The emergence of Islamic radicalism across the world and its displacement of traditionally secular anti-imperialist movements can be traced back to a variety of socio-structural transformations, related cultural changes and watershed events (see Lubeck and Reifer, 2004). Amongst the most important of the watershed events here in radicalizing a generation of Islamist militants was Israel's defeat of rival Arab armies in the 1967 war and its takeover of the sacred site of Jerusalem and the Islamic shrines, as well as other Palestinian lands. This was a huge blow to claims of Muslim majority states that they were successfully modernizing and thus it helped lead to a widespread turn to radical Islam throughout the Muslim world (Gerges, 2006: 32).

Other factors contributing to the Islamist resurgence include the repression of the secular left by U.S. supported authoritarian regimes and the failures of post-colonial and Muslim majority states in the area of modernization and development, as registered in the 1967 defeat of the combined Arab armies and later in the Islamic revolution in Iran. Also important in the Islamist resurgence was the worldwide networks of aid given to Islamic movements by oil rich Muslim countries and the U.S.-sponsored global jihad against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which some U.S. officials, notably Zbigniew Brzezinski, claim to have helped provoke (see Cooley, 2001; see also Mamdani, 2005). Indeed, not only the U.S. but Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria and numerous other states fostered Islamist groups to counter secular nationalist or leftist movements, only to later be haunted by the rage of the same Islamic terrorists who transformed the jetliner into an offensive missile, thus using the global infrastructure to extend their struggle (jihad) to New York and Washington (see Cooley, 2001).

GLOBALIZATION, MILITARIZATION AND ISLAMIST MOBILIZATION

The modern day telecommunications-satellite networked computer integrated world, linked via the internet, was one of the most critical factors in creating the conditions for the globalization of contemporary Islam and the jihadist movement, including both the hierarchically organized and decentralized forms of terrorism we see today (see Bunt, 2003; see http://www.virtuallyislamic.com/; see Khadar, et al., 2003; see also Cruickshank & Ali, 2007; see also NYT, 2007d). Equally important in the context of the new media was the Shiite Islamic revolution in Iran and the global jihad organized by the U.S. to fight the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, replete with the supply of huge amounts of arms to the jihadis. This jihad was seen useful by the U.S. not only in fighting the Soviet Union, but also in allowing the U.S. to mobilize the numerical majority of Sunnis in the Islamic world (roughly a billion), some 85 to 90%, relative to the Shiites roughly 10 to 15%

(roughly 200 million), thereby countering the Shia brand of revolutionary Islam.[3] Unintentionally, this U.S.-led jihad ended up being a major contributor to Islamist militancy directed against the U.S. and its allies and was in fact instrumental in the formation of Al Qaeda (Gunaratna, 2002).

In fact, U.S. policy played a crucial role in the globalization of jihad from Afghanistan to suicide bombing on a world scale. The U.S. stationing of a half a million troops in Saudi Arabia in 1990-1991 during the first Gulf War, some of which stayed thereafter for over a decade, the 1998 U.S. bombings of the Sudan and the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq all fueled the jihadist movement (see Gerges, 2006: 111-119, 176-177; see also Burke, 2004, 2006a, b). And Afghanistan, of course, was where bin Laden and his brethren realized that a superpower could be defeated (see Lawrence, 2005). Yet even if one takes for example what perhaps is the least known of these incidents, the U.S. bombing of the Sudan, much is revealed about the relationship of U.S. policy to the growth of Islamist militancy throughout the Muslim world.

The U.S. bombing with cruise missiles of the al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan in 1998—which the U.S. incorrectly claimed was producing chemical weapons and was tied to Al Qaeda—was ostensibly a response to the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya weeks before (see IPA, 1999). In addition to killing tens of thousands of people who were dependent on supplies from the pharmaceutical plant (Belke, 1999; cited in Chomsky, 2001), "Clinton's bombing put Al Qaeda on the map,

virtually created bin Laden as a charismatic leader and symbol of the new jihadism, forged close relations between him and the Taliban, and led to a sharp increase in recruitment, financing, and general sympathy and support for networks of the Al Qaeda variety" (Chomsky, 2006a: xii).[4]

THE RISE OF THE 'ISLAMISTS'

The Islamist resurgence is complex and it is important to remember that there are a wide variety of Islamist social movements, the overwhelming majority of which are non-violent and engaged in social service delivery. Thus it is important to make distinctions between 1) their more extreme forms, exemplified in Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network, who advocate violence and terrorism; 2) the popular reservoir of support these groups mobilize in response to anger at U.S. and Western military and economic policies; and 3) the host of other Islamist movements protesting U.S.-led processes of globalization and militarization, while mobilizing against their own authoritarian elites. Obviously, these movements intersect in important ways (Gunaratna, 2002; Pape, 2006). Islamists often have their roots in the lower and upper-middle class, including the educated professional sections, with the irony being that Western-oriented universities are often bastions of militant Islam. Many recruits into the more radical organizations are secular nationalists disappointed by the failures of the post-colonial state and attracted to the mobilizing potential of a pan-Arab Islamic nationalism. Here, of course, the oil petro-boom of the 1970s played a major role, not only through the disruptions caused by the boom and bust cycle in petro-states, but also with the largesse distributed by the petro-states to support their brand of Islam, notably Saudi Arabia. According to Fawaz A. Gerges (2005: 26), from the 1970s to the early 1990s the main program of Islamist activists was

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[3] These are very rough estimates of population figures of Sunni and Shia, just to give the reader the range of what we are talking about demographically. Getting reliable estimates in the numbers is quite difficult, so there is a wide margin of error. There are numerous sources on the Shia-Sunni divide. See NPR's five part series in February 2007 for a sampling of views and related readings http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7332087

to overthrow what they saw as corrupt and repressive states, often overly dependent on the West, with many of them indeed client regimes.

Despite some spectacular successes, no-

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[4] Furthermore, Chomsky (2001) notes that according to Mark Huband of the *Financial Times* (September 8, 1998), the bombing "appears to have shattered the slowly evolving move towards compromise between Sudan's warring sides" and terminated promising steps towards a peace agreement to end the civil war that had left 1.5 million dead since 1981, which might have also led to "peace in Uganda and the entire Nile Basin." The attack apparently "shattered…the expected benefits of a political shift at the heart of Sudan's Islamist government" towards a "pragmatic engagement with the outside world," along with efforts to address Sudan's domestic crises," to end support for terrorism, and to reduce the influence of radical Islamists. On how the bombing of the Sudan increased the popularity of Osama bin Laden, see Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 2004, p. 412.

In much the same way, the recent U.S. air strikes in Somalia, earlier CIA support for the Somali warlords, and U.S. support for the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia are bound to generate a widespread Islamic reaction and pave the way for future conflicts in Africa. See Salim Lone, former spokesperson for the U.N. Mission in Iraq in 2003, "In Somalia, A Reckless U.S. Proxy War," *International Herald Tribune*, December 26, 2006, who notes: "As with Iraq in 2003, the United States has cast this as a war to curtail terrorism, but its real goal is to obtain a direct foothold in a highly strategic region by establishing a client regime there. The Horn of Africa is newly oil-rich, and lies just miles from Saudi Arabia, overlooking the daily passage of large numbers of oil tankers and warships through the Red Sea. General John Abizaid, the current U.S. military chief of the Iraq war, was in Ethiopia this month, and President Hu Jintao of China visited Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia earlier this year to pursue oil and trade agreements. The U.S. instigation of war between Ethiopia and Somalia, two of world's poorest countries already struggling with massive humanitarian disasters, is reckless in the extreme."

On Islam and the growing U.S. role in Africa, see Paul Lubeck, Michael J. Watts and Ronnie Lipschultz, "Convergent Interests: U.S. Energy Interests and the "Securing" of Nigerian Democracy," *International Policy Report,* February 2007. This issue has been featured lately on CNN, "Rebels, Oil, Poverty Mix in Nigeria," 2007 http://www.cnn.com/video/player/player.html?url=/video/world/2007/02/10/cooper.nigeria.cnn&wm=9 as well as in *Vanity Fair* (see Junger, 2007).

tably the Islamic inspired Iranian revolution of 1979 which had a momentous impact on the development of a global Islamic consciousness, by the mid-90s these efforts at overthrowing local regimes had been largely defeated, often brutally. Moreover, Islamists were divided, with some such as bin Laden determined to bring the war to the far enemy, while another faction sought to impose Islamic societies closer to home. Here, the stationing of hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia—home to the holy sites of Mecca and Medina—as part of the first Gulf War played an important role in leading Osama bin Laden to attack not only the Saudi royals at home but also the far enemy abroad.

Important here too was the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, spearheaded as it was by a network of jihadi militants—some 20,000 of which were Saudis (Frontline, 2005). As veterans of a global holy war, these militant fighters would take their struggle home to their national communities and abroad in search of greater global goals. Yet as Farwaz A. Gerges (2005: 228) reveals, "the dominant response by jihadis to September 11 is an explicit rejection of Al Qaeda and total opposition to the internationalization of jihad." Only the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq really gave Al Qaeda its second life, forging a "new consensus among Islamists and jihadists of all colors that the United States has become the implacable enemy" (Gerges, 2006: 239, 229-277).

The reality of ethno-national-religious and pan-Islamist movements was something which originated both out of Islamic civilization's long lasting legacy, as well in reaction to Western socio-economic and military intrusion. Also important in fueling Muslim rage is U.S. support for Israel, including the recurrent U.S. supported Israeli invasions of Lebanon, most recently in 2006 which seems to have been motivated at least in part to take out Hezbollah's rocket capacity, seen as a deterrent to an Israeli or U.S. strike against Iran. The Israelis also ap-

peared to hope that their bombing would turn the population against Hezbollah, though it predictably enough seems to have had exactly the opposite effect, making people rally to Hezbollah, increasingly seen as the vanguard of resistance to Western aggression not only in Lebanon but across the Arab and Muslim worlds as a whole (Achar & Warschawski, 2007).[5] Earlier of course, Israel's occupation of Palestine and Lebanon generated these indigenous resistance movements of an Islamist ethno-religious nationalist variety, notably the Palestinians' Sunni Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement—which recently swept parliamentary elections—and Hezbollah, the Party of God, formed by the Shia in Lebanon, with sponsorship from Iran (see Chehab, 2007b; see Noe, 2007).

Today's Islamist resurgence reveals the end of the belief across many parts of the globe in the promissory note of development and modernization, a phenomenon also expressed in the rise of liberation theology. Here, religious based movements took up the banner of anti-imperialist nationalism, combining ethnic and religious identities with that of more traditional national liberation movements. In terms of the Muslim community, according to Bryan Turner, "historically, in the broadest sense, individuals could claim and benefit from a global identity as members of a universalistic community of observant believers---the *umma*---a trans-ethnic identity that neither privileges ethnicity or nation among Muslims. Over the long historical *durée*, the networks of the global *umma* are renewed annually by the pilgrimage to Mecca and, in the contemporary era, by participation in the infrastructure both of global capitalism, as well as by interstate geopolitical rivalry… Membership in a universalistic, global community of observant believers---the *umma*---is the

broadest possible boundary of the Muslim national identity…" (1994: 86). Bryan Turner, a theorist of global civil society and social citizenship, correctly perceives the relationship between globalization and Muslim self-conception of communication within the global *umma*:

> It is the availability in modern times of effective global communications systems which makes possible for the first time a globalization of Islam… While Islam had always claimed universalistic status, it was, prior to the emergence of contemporary communications systems, actually unable to impose this type of uniformity and universalism. The paradox of modern systems of communication is that it makes Islam simultaneously exposed to Western consumerism and provides the mechanism for the distribution of a global Islamic message." (Lubeck and Reifer, 2004: 168-169)

THE REASONS FOR THE GLOBAL ISLAMIST RESURGENCE: ISLAMOPHOBIC ILLUSIONS AND CONTEMPORARY REALITIES

It is important to remember that before the Iranian revolution ushered the world of revolutionary Islamic ethno-religious nationalism onto the world stage, the topic languished both in the U.S. academy and popular culture. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, of course, the growing cottage industry on the subject became vastly enlarged. Here it is important to go into the question of the Islamic revival and its root and imagined causes, as popular illusions about Islam, democracy and development have played a major part in the discourse of Islamophobia. Specifically, at the turn of the millennium we have witnessed the reemer-

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[5] On the U.S., Israel, the Palestinians, as well as the Middle East more generally, see Chomsky, 2004, 2007; Finklestein, 2003; Reinhart, 2006.

gence of modernization theory, this time not applied so much to national units, but in terms of the rise, decline, and clash of civilizations discourse (Huntington, 1996; Lewis, 2003).

In responding to September 11, 2001, Westerners and policy makers, influenced above all by the work of Bernard Lewis (2003)—awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George Bush for his role as an intellectual architect of the invasion and occupation of Iraq—have focused, on *What Went Wrong?* in the Islamic world. Instead of looking at the impact of colonization in the subordination of much of the Muslim world in the global system, Lewis instead paints a picture of a modernist West, spreading the benefits of modernity through colonialism, democracy and development, and a stagnant East, once a great center of civilization but now unable to realize the benefits of modernity due to internal stagnation.

Subsequently, of course, this discourse on bringing democracy to the Middle East was used to provide retrospective justification for the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, after the failure to find any weapons of mass destruction or links with Al Qaeda. Indeed, President Bush, in his second inaugural address of 2005, promised to ally with democratic reform movements across the world, arguing that an undemocratic Middle East and Islamic world more generally was a National Security threat to the U.S. and larger global community. This promissory note, to ally with freedom, remains of course unfulfilled, as the U.S. not only continues to ally with brutally repressive states in the Middle East and across the globe but is also increasingly violating fundamental human rights more directly, notably in its widespread imprisonment and torture of Muslims, in violation of domestic and international law and treaties (*New York Times*, 2007a; Reifer, 2007a). Moreover, a quick investigation of the underlying causes of Islamist militancy shows that it is U.S.-led

processes of neoliberal militarization and globalization that are among the prime causes of the contemporary Islamist resurgence (see Lubeck & Reifer, 2004; Walton & Seddon, 1994; and Reifer, 2006d).

And, of course, the failure of "development" across the Islamic world, from the Middle East to Africa and Asia, are rooted in the legacy of Western colonialism and related processes of underdevelopment and intervention, including after formal independence. These processes, of course, go back to the very beginnings of the modern world-system (see Reifer, 2006, a, b, c). Yet by positing Islam as the obstacle to progress, now replacing traditionalism and communism in the modernization paradigm, the newly invigorated discourse of Islamophobia has provided the structural opportunity for an increasingly militarized and aggressive Western foreign policy, culminating in the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq and the U.S. supported Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006 (see Gerges, 2006: 4-5).[6] These policies, combined with the ongoing support for the political repression and exclusion of Islamists, have largely backfired, providing as it does an important basis for grievances which Islamist social movements can mobilize against (see Hafez, 2003). Indeed, as Ken Silverstein (2007) has pointed out, if democracy actually spread throughout the Islamic world, Islamists—thanks in part to U.S. policies that have increased support for these groups, including by refusing to engage with them—would control substantial blocs if not majorities of the electorate in nearly every Muslim majority state in the Middle East.

Since the utility of the *political process model* (PPM)—formulated by Doug McAd-

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[6] Of course, it was Edward Said (1979), in his justly famous *Orientalism* and later works, that radically transformed our understanding of Western views of the Eastern, Arab and the Islamic worlds, and which thus provides crucial background reading for any understanding of Islamaphobia.

am (1999; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001) and others (Smith, 1991)—in the analysis of social movements has been explicated elsewhere (Lubeck and Reifer, 2004), and concretely applied to phenomena as diverse as Islamist social movements, liberation theology, and the civil rights movement, it shall not be dwelt on here (see Wiktorowicz, 2003; see Wickham, 2002; see Hafez, 2003). Suffice it to say that the discourse of Islamophobia takes attention away from the real causes of Islamist social movements as revealed by the PPM. Yet in discussing Islamophobia, it is critically important to remember that it continues to be highly selective discourse, initially focusing primarily on the Iranian Revolution against a U.S.-installed client regime (see Bill, 1988; see Gasiorowski, 1991). Even today, though, the demonization of Islam focuses primarily on official enemies such as Al Qaeda, the Taliban and increasingly Iran, while neglecting the support given to the former two groups or their predecessors by the Pakistani, Saudi and U.S. intelligence services. And in the run up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Bush persisted in claiming that when it came to the war on terror, one could not distinguish between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, despite the seemingly obvious fact that Al Qaeda attacked the U.S. on 9/11 while Iraq did not (see Hiro, 2004).

Similarly enough, when President Bush highlighted the danger of a nexus between rogue regimes armed with nuclear weapons and terrorist networks after September 11th, 2001, instead of focusing on the Bush administration's nominal ally in the "war on terror," Pakistan—a nuclear weapons state which under A.Q. Kahn served as a virtual nuclear Wal-Mart—it instead focused on Iraq, though Iraq had no nuclear weapons and was a sworn enemy of Al Qaeda (see Corera, 2006). Pakistan, in contrast, is a nuclear power that has long been widely regarded among experts as the epicenter of radical Islamist networks and recently essentially conceded the regions near the Af-

ghan border to tribal leaders, the Taliban and their allies in Al Qaeda (see Abou Zahab & Roy, 2004; and NYT, 2007d). Pakistani intelligence, the ISI, is reported to be still aiding Taliban insurgency today. Moreover, the September 2006 deal between Pakistan and "tribal elders of North Waziristan and local mujahideen, Taliban, and *ulama* [Islamic clergy]," [was] an implicit endorsement of the notion that the fight against the U.S. and NATO presence in Kabaul is a jihad" (Rubin, 2007: 71).

As for the Islamic revolution in Iran, not only did it radically shape U.S. views on the Islamist threat, it exercised a profound effect on Muslim consciousness and action across the world. Here was an authentic Islamic revolutionary transformation, yet one that survived the opposition of the global hegemon. Moreover, together with Saudi Arabia and other patrimonially governed Gulf states, the U.S. helped finance and supported not only the jihad in Afghanistan but also Iraq's attack on the Islamic Republican government of Iran, the long war that followed and Iraq's brutal repression at home, including its use of chemical weapons. U.S., Western and allied governmental support for Iraq thus became central in creating another threat to U.S. domination of the region, in this instance Iraq's growing regional ambitions (Friedman, 1993; Pythian, 1997; Mantius, 1995). After Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saddam Hussein quickly became an official enemy and of course was eventually listed as part of President Bush's "Axis of Evil," along with Iran and North Korea, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Despite the demonization of Islam in the U.S. media, it is crucial to remember that the U.S. and other allied states, notably Saudi Arabia, but also many other Muslim majority countries, willingly sponsored a Sunni-led global anti-Soviet jihad to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This dramatically fueled the development of global Islamist networks (i.e. the so-called Afghan Arabs, the Taliban and other resurgent tran-

snational Islamist groups) that now haunt the U.S. and allied states across the globe (Cooley, 2001; see also Abou Zahab & Roy, 2006; see also Sageman, 2004; see also Coll, 2004). Also, concurrent with the institutionalization of the Iranian Revolution, yet much more important for stoking the flames of Sunni Islamic movements, were the petro-dollar surpluses distributed by conservative, royalist Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE).

Patronage distributions from the Saudis throughout Islamdom shifted discursive power away from the urban modernist thinkers living in secular states and ostensibly toward very conservative interpretations of Sunni Islam favored by the Saudis, i.e. the royalist, Wahhabi-Hanbali interpretations, with Osama bin Laden in particular practicing the brand of Sunni fundamentalism called Salafism (see Gold, 2004; cf. Rodenbeck, 2004; cf. Delong-Bas, 2004; cf. Pape, 2006; see also Gerges, 2005, 2006).[7] Here, in the words of Gilles Kepel (2002), "Petro-Islam" was built on the "ruins of Arab nationalism."[8]

Here, too, groups such as the Taliban arose, many of whom emanated from Pakistan refugee camps and were supported by the Pakistani intelligence services and educated in Saudi funded and Pakistani supported *madrassas* there, which often served as military training camps, first for the anti-Soviet struggle (Rashid, 2002). Recruits for the Afghan jihad from Pakistan also came from other state and private schools as well (Abou Zahab & Roy, 2006). Subsequently, the veterans of these battles went on to pursue a global jihad against the U.S. and allied Western and Muslim states (Gunaratna,

2002; Waseem, 2000: 66-70; Cooley, 2001: 233-235). Also of crucial importance here in rising Muslim militancy were neoliberal structural adjustment programs, which hollowed out the state in many Muslim majority countries, creating a vacuum into which stepped Islamist social movements, who provided social service aid heretofore provided by Muslim states (Lubeck and Reifer, 2004).

President Bush has famously argued that the U.S. was attacked on 9/11 because they [the Islamists] hate our freedoms, leading some civil libertarians to joke that this explains Bush's present strategy: "he's going to eliminate our freedoms so they won't hate us anymore." Of course, as has been pointed out by experts and revealed in public opinion polls, what is fueling Muslim rage is U.S., Israeli and Western policy, not the benefits of democracy (Esposito, 2002, 2006a, b; Scheuer, 2004, 2006). Yet, drawing on such rhetoric, soon after 9/11, the Bush administration conjured up the supposed nexus of rogue regimes and Islamist terrorist groups, arguing that we couldn't let the world's most dangerous weapons—most especially nuclear weapons—get into the hands of the most dangerous regimes (notably, former U.S. supported dictator Saddam Hussein).

And of course, the Bush administration tried to paint a link between Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, and Iraq, even though no such link existed. Yet the propaganda campaign was effective, with polls indicating that significant majorities of the U.S. public still think, incorrectly, that Iraq was involved in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 or has at least been aiding Al Qaeda (Kull, 2003: 4-6).[9] Subsequently, the invasion of Iraq turned up no weapons of mass destruction and the supposed link between the terrorist attacks of

[7] As Delong-Bas (2004: 288-289, 247-290) shows, though, bin Laden is really more influenced by the medieval Islamist Ibn Taymiyya and "his contemporary interpreter, Sayyid Qutb, than…the writings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab."

[8] See also the other books by Kepel (2003a, b, 2004, 2005), a supporter of the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

[9] On the question of the uses of intelligence, see my numerous entries in the *Encyclopedia of Intelligence & Counterintelligence* (M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

9/11 and Iraq was totally disproved. Yet even though this fact was eventually explicitly admitted by at least most Bush administration officials, the mistaken beliefs among the public persist, most especially among Republicans (WPO, 2006a, c). The Anglo-American invaders then found a retrospective justification for the invasion, occupation and ongoing war, now arguing that they were on a mission to spread freedom, modernity and progress throughout the Middle East and Islamic world, despite having historically supported tyranny and repression, which of course they continue to do, as in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Kuwait.

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, as mentioned above, gave Al Qaeda and Muslim radicalism a new lease on life, helping to recruit an entirely new generation of terrorists, many of them becoming involved in the jihad for the first time (see Chomsky, 2006b: 18-24). The war also allowed Al Qaeda to develop roots in Iraq for the first time, notably in al-Anbar province, where they are now the dominant force, making it possible for Al Qaeda to claim that they are the vanguard of the resistance to the U.S. invaders (see U.S. Marines, 2006; *Washington Post,* 2006b). That being said, Iraqis as a whole have a strongly unfavorable view of Al Qaeda (WPO, 2006d). Yet even though polls from across the Islamic world show that most Muslims reject terrorism and state they have no confidence in Osama bin Laden, U.S. policy has dramatically increased support for militant Islam among large sections of the Muslim world and given Al Qaeda and other radical Islamist groups a second life (WPO, 2007b; see Gerges, 2005, 2006). And of course, negative views of the U.S. in the Muslim world and beyond are increasing (see WPO, 2007b).

The creation of terrorist networks in Iraq where none existed before now allows the Bush administration to claim that Iraq is now the central front in the global war on terrorism—albeit a front the U.S. of course created—and to paint the war in Iraq as being connected to the larger war against militant Islam, true enough now that U.S. invasion and occupation has fueled the growth of Islamic militancy across the world, including in Iraq. Indeed, Iraq is now serving to fuel the global jihad in ways similar to the role of Afghanistan in the 1980s (see Chomsky, 2006b: 18-24). Indeed, according to a new study, "The Iraq Effect," terrorist attacks "increased dramatically after the invasion of Iraq. Globally there was a 607% rise in the average yearly incidence of attacks (28.3 attacks per year before and 199.8 after) and a 237 percent rise in the fatality rate (from 510 to 1,689 deaths per year)."[10]

And in by far the most comprehensive study of suicide bombing to date from 1980, Robert Pape (2006) shows that Iraq had no instances of suicide bombings before the U.S. invasion. After the invasion, however, suicide bombings in Iraq have more than doubled each year. Moreover, Pape (2005, 2006) shows that over 95% of all suicide bombings in the world since 1980 have virtually nothing to do with anyone hating "our freedoms" and everything to do with the policies of the U.S. and its allies. Suicide bombers seek to force foreign forces to withdraw from territory they consider important or their homeland, and this includes September 11, 2001, as U.S. forces were then stationed in Saudi Arabia, home to some of Islam's most sacred sites, Mecca and Medina (see Scheuer, 2004, 2006).

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq the remaining U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia were withdrawn, but by then the U.S. invasion and occupation of oil rich Iraq had conjured a new generation of jihadist militants into being (Chomsky, 2006b: 18-38).[11] According

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[10] Peter Bergen & Paul Cruickshank, "The Iraq Effect: War Has Increased Terrorism Worldwide Sevenfold," *Mother Jones*, March 1, 2007 http://www.motherjones.com/news/featurex/2007/03/iraq_effect_1.html

[11] On the reasons behind the invasion, see Reifer, 2007b, and Chomsky, 2007 http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=15&ItemID=12169

to Pape (2005, 2006), there is every reason to expect that the end of the U.S. occupation could end or at least reduce the steady campaign of suicide bombing in Iraq, and elsewhere, as has been the case in past examples where occupations generated suicide bombing, yet the Bush administration and its allies continue to argue that we have to fight the terrorists abroad in Iraq lest they follow us home.[12]

Of course, the Bush administration's illusory Islamophobic arguments distract people from the real factors driving Islamist militancy, such as U.S. policy and related socio-structural factors. What we are seeing here are nationalist movements, many of them in pan-Islamic and pan-Arab guises, fighting national liberation wars so as to compel the U.S. and allied troops to withdraw from Muslim territory and to stop propping up repressive regimes (Pape, 2006). In this instance, though, the territory occupied is often more broadly defined as Muslim lands as a whole rather than individual Muslim majority states. The Bush administration's actions towards the Muslim world, notably its invasion and occupation of Iraq and support for Israel, have undoubtedly contributed to converting national liberation movements into more pan-Islamic ethno-religious transnational social movements against Western imperialism and its local manifestations (see Caryl, 2005; see Khosrokhavar, 2005). The U.S. invasion of Iraq and the torture revealed at Abu Ghraib and thereafter, scandals that flowed from decision-making at the highest levels of the U.S. government, was a godsend here for Osama bin Laden and militant Islam as a whole in terms of their ability to recruit new members (see Reifer, 2007a; see also Gerges, 2006: 57-58).[13]

As shown in Pape's detailed study, the most comprehensive of its kind, the primary dimension of suicide bombing campaigns is nationalist resistance against foreign occupation. Religious difference between the occupied and occupier is secondary to the occupation itself, though still critically important in generating suicide bombing campaigns. Mobilization then, against the

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[12] I stress the word could, as obviously the sectarian violence has today arguably taken on a life of its own, and could spiral increasingly out of control as it now appears to be doing, even if the U.S. withdraws. Nevertheless, the possibility that the withdrawal of U.S. forces and a neutral peace force as proposed by George McGovern & William Polk (2006) could reduce the violence has much greater merit than the notion that more U.S. troops could do so, as additional U.S. troops are much more likely instead to increase resistance to the U.S. occupation and related sectarian violence.

[13] The role of torture in fomenting Muslim outrage and militancy has long been central, as the examples of Iran, Egypt and Palestine illustrate. As one Islamist militant leader associated with Egypt's Al-Jihad ("armed struggle"), Kamal el-Said Habib, a very influential leader in the Muslim world, noted (Gerges, 2006: 57-58): "Listen…we did not fire the first round in this battle. The rulers had closed all avenues for a peaceful transfer of power. We had no choice but to take up arms to raise Islam's banner. The fight was imposed upon us." No matter how cool and analytical Kamal tried to be when articulating the struggles of his generation, he remained haunted by the prison years. The first time the subject was broached, it all came pouring out—a rush of memories and feelings: "It is true that we began our ideological revisions while in prisons in the 1980s…The torture left deep physical and psychological scars on jihadists and fueled their thirst for vengeance. Look at my hands—still spotted with the scars from cigarette burns nineteen years later. For days on end we were brutalized—our faces bloodied, our bodies broken with electrical shocks and other devices…I spent sleepless nights listening to the screams of young men echoing from the torture chambers. A degrading, dehumanizing experience. I cannot convey to you the rage felt by al-shabab [youth] who were tortured…Some left the prisons and the country determined to extract revenge on their tormentors and torturers. The authorities' brutal methods nourished fanaticism and sowed the seeds for more violence and bloodshed."

As Gerges (2006: 21) notes, tens of thousands of Islamist militants have been killed and jailed in Muslim majority countries such as Egypt in Algeria from the 1970s through the present.

The best film on Abu Ghraib and the U.S. policy of torture more generally is *The Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, which premiered February 22, 2007 on HBO.

presence of foreign troops and the propping up of U.S. client regimes, as in Saudi Arabia, or today in Iraq, is based on opposition to what Al Qaeda calls real or "veiled colonialism," or what Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo have called the coloniality of power, referring to the continuing colonial-like relations even in the absence of formal colonial rule (see also Pape, 2006: 117-119). The U.S., by attacking and invading Muslim majority countries, has here been instrumental in globalizing modern jihad and adding an ever-more important transnational dimension to its ideology of pan-Islamist rhetoric.

Yet these crucial findings from social science have not worked their way into popular consciousness in the U.S., where popular discourse continues to be dominated by Islamophobia. As Farwaz Gerges (2006: 71-72) notes: the "demonization of Muslims, which began in the 1970s, has reached new heights in the West. A sampling of recent book titles provides evidence enough: *The Age of Sacred Terror; Islam and Terrorism; The Blood of the Moon; Sword of Islam; Extreme Islam;* and *Religion of Peace or Refuge for Terror*? These books lump Islam, Muslims, Islamists, and jihadists together as a monolith, constituting a threat not merely to Western nations but to Western civilization itself. Muslims have become the New Barbarians."

Such views would seem to have been given great support recently too by the recent statement of Roman Catholic Pope Benedict, who in September 2006, quoting Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaiologos in 1391, said: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Nowhere in this same speech, dealing as it does with the subject of religiously inspired violence, does the Pope mention the Holy Crusades, the more general Western conquest of the Islamic world and the globe as a whole via both formal and informal empire, replete with attempts at forced conversion, or the U.S. invasion of

Iraq and widespread torture of Muslims in U.S. custody (see also Wallerstein, 2006).[14]

Yet the reality is that it is these aggressive U.S. policies and that of its client state Israel, including the widespread torture of Muslims, in the context of the failures of the secular state, secular nationalist movements and development that have been a boon to Muslim insurgents everywhere (see also Wallerstein, 2001).[15] Just witness the way in which Israel's U.S. supported 2006 invasion of Lebanon turned Hezbollah, the Party of God, and their leader Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah into the leading symbol of resistance in the Islamic world—for both Sunni and Shia—just as the U.S. response to 9/11 increased support across the globe for radical Islamism (see Bazzi, 2006; see Noe; see Hersh, 2007; see also ICG, 2006; see Pape, 2006).

Islamophobia has played an important role fueling militant Islam, as it helped provide critical public and elite support in the U.S. for the invasion of Iraq and for the expansion and escalation of this war today, as the U.S. sends up to 48,000 additional troops to that country (CBO, 2007).[16] And in a leaked Republican letter of February 13, 2007, "Iraq Resolution Debate: Their Terms or Ours?"—discussing what should be the Republican strategy on the debate in Con-

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[14] See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XVI_Islam_controversy

[15] On torture and related issues, see Thomas Ehrlich Reifer, "An Open Letter on the Question of Torture: Reflections on the John Yoo-Michael Ramsey "Debate," 2007a http://home.sandiego.edu/~reifer/. A colleague of mine asked me, since torture often doesn't give you information and what information it does give you is wrong, and since it creates people who for the rest of their life are now dedicated to trying to wipe you off the face of the earth, why do our leaders still persist in using it?; the question was too cogent for me to form a reply too, but it has sat in my head like a Zen koan. There does appear to be a delusion in intelligence circles, however, that torture is essential in providing the intelligence to defeat insurgents, despite the fact that it only seems to serve as a mass recruiting tool for additional insurgents.

[16] Thanks to Noam Chomsky for this reference.

gress as to whether or not to support the surge of tens of thousands of additional U.S. forces to Iraq—Republican leaders said the following:

> We are writing to urge you not to debate the Democratic Iraq resolution on their terms, but rather on ours.

> Democrats want to force us to focus on defending the surge, making the case that it will work and explaining why the President's new Iraq policy is different from prior efforts and therefore justified.

> We urge you instead to broaden the debate to the threat posed to Americans, the world, and all "unbelievers" by radical Islamists. We would further urge you to join us in educating the American people about the views of radical Islamists and the consequences of not defeating radical Islam in Iraq.

> The debate should not be about the surge or its details. This debate should not even be about the Iraq war to date, mistakes that have been made, or whether we can, or cannot, win militarily. If we let Democrats force us into a debate on the surge or the current situation in Iraq, we lose.

> Rather the debate must be about the global threat of the radical Islamist movement…Robert Kagan recently wrote a piece for the *Washington Post* entitled "Grand Delusion" noting many politicians' desire to wish the war away. He noted that those who call for an end to the war don't want to talk about the fact that the war in Iraq and in the region will not end, but will only grow more dangerous if and when we walk away…Join

> us in asking our Democratic colleagues the essential question: If we do not defeat radical Islam in Iraq, then where will we do so?

> …We will send further information in the coming days. However, should your staff require further details, please…get these insightful books: "Knowing the Enemy" by Mark Habeck and "America Alone" by Mark Steyn.

What this letter avoids dealing with is the reality documented by Robert Pape (2006) and others, and stated bluntly in the revealing comment of President Bush's outgoing senior commander of all U.S. forces in the Middle East, General John Abizaid, "foreign troops are a toxin bound to be rejected by Iraqi's."[17] The logical extension of the arguments of Pape and Abizaid is that it is the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq that is fueling the Iraqi insurgency as well as Islamic extremism and suicide terrorism across the globe (see Chehab, 2005; see also Napoleoni, 2005). Sending additional U.S. troops to Iraq and escalating the war there and beyond to Iran is certain to increase Islamist radicalism all the more.[18] Those Congressmen associated with the letter are also prime culprits in the ideology of Islamophobia that seeks to extend the war beyond Iraq's borders to Iran. One of the authors of the letter is Congressman Pete Hoekstra, formerly Republican Chair of the House Intelligence Committee. In this role, Hoekstra put out a report filled with dire unsubstantiated claims

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[17] The description of Abizaid's argument comes from the *New York Times*, Thom Shanker, "General Opposes Adding to U.S. Forces in Iraq, Emphasizing International Solutions for Region," Wednesday, December 20, 2006, A12.

[18] Of course, this is not to neglect the larger socio-structural reasons behind the resurgence of radical Islam, as explored in Lubeck and Reifer, 2004. On the larger question of the Iraq war, Iran and reversing the current trajectory of U.S. policy, see my "Changing U.S. Policy Towards Iraq: A Strategy Proposal and Scenario for Congressional Hearings," forthcoming, 2007b.

about the threat posed by Iran, disputed by the IAEA and other intelligence experts, as well as a controversial report about Al Qaeda (see U.S. House of Representatives, 2006a, b; see IAEA, 2006; Washington Post, 2006a).

Inflammatory claims about Iran are today being repeated of course by the Bush administration, which has been long preparing to attack Iran, including with the possible use of nuclear weapons against Iran's underground nuclear facilities, as Seymour Hersh has reported in the *New Yorker* (see also Ellsberg, 2006). Such an attack would have catastrophic consequences that would likely dwarf even the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which has already led to over 655,000 Iraqi deaths, created over two million Iraqi refugees, and led to the deaths of thousands of U.S. soldiers, not to mention those wounded or suffering from complex post-traumatic stress disorder (*New York Times*, 2007b, c; see PSR, 2006; Burnham, Laffta, Doocy, Roberts, 2006; Herman, 1997).

Senator Jay Rockefeller, head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, recently stated that he fears the Bush administration's use of intelligence to garner support for a more aggressive policy towards Iran is a replay of what transpired in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Yet, when his office was asked if Senator Rockefeller intended to hold hearings on the Bush administration's use of intelligence to garner support for the Iraq war, they said no. When asked why, staffers replied that the Senator wants to look towards the future, not towards the past, the same reply given by House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi. Yet as former State and Pentagon official Daniel Ellsberg noted, Iraq is our future, as we face the prospect of a U.S. attack on Iran and the manipulation of intelligence to justify such an attack.[19]

According to retired Air Force Colonel Sam Gardiner, by the end of February 2007,

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[19] Daniel Ellsberg, personal communication, 2006.

"The U.S. will have enough forces in the Gulf to mount an assault on Iran" (Unger, 2007: 309; see also Gardiner, 2006; see also Hirsch, 2007). Many believe that the decision to go to war with Iran has already been made and that the target is not merely Iran's nuclear facilities but regime change, as in Iraq.[20] Recently, Seymour Hersh (2007) reported that a special planning group has been set up by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, formulating contingency bombing plans against Iran ready to go with only 24 hours notice upon President Bush's orders.

The Bush administration and House Re-

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[20] In an article entitled "The Next Act: Is a damaged Administration less likely to attack Iran, or more?" in the November 27, 2006 issue of the *New Yorker*, Hersh notes that in contemplating a Democratic victory in the mid-term Congressional elections of 2006, "The White House's concern was not that the Democrats could cut off funds for the war in Iraq but that future legislation would prohibit it from financing operations targeted at overthrowing or destabilizing the Iranian government, to keep it from getting the bomb."

Fearing legislation akin to the Boland amendment, which cut off funds for aid to the Nicaraguan contras, Hersh reported that in the face of such an eventuality, Vice President Cheney was reported to be determined to find away around this, as President Reagan did by using sales of U.S. arms to Iran to fund the contras, which resulted in the Iran-Contra scandal. Thus, another critical agenda item for legislative activists to consider, especially in light of President Bush's threatening statements on Iran and Syria in his recent Presidential address, would be to get the new Congress to pass legislation cutting off funds for any future offensive military operations against Iran, most especially nuclear weapons. On the 20th of June, such a proposed bill got 158 votes in favor, not garnering more votes apparently because many members of Congress did not realize that the bill wouldn't have prevented the President from responding in the unlikely event of an attack by Iran on the U.S. Most recently, it has been reported that some Democrats will attempt to insert a rider to the current bill for supplemental funds for the Iraq war, expected to be voted on in March 2007, stating that the President cannot attack Iran without coming back to Congress to approve such a request.

See also Daniel Ellsberg, "The Next War," *Harper's*, October 2006 http://harpers.org/TheNextWar.html.

publicans seem to be clearly exaggerating the certainty of intelligence on Iran's nuclear program and Iran's links to attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq in order to increase support for air strikes against Iran, just as they lied about intelligence regarding Iraq's non-existent links with Al Qaeda and Iraq's non-existent weapons of mass destruction to garner U.S. support for the invasion and occupation of Iraq (see Reifer, 2007b). And today, the new excuse for staying and increasing forces in Iraq is to deal with the threat of Iran and Islamic radicalism in the Middle East as a whole, especially of the Shia variety. Yet if Hoekstra and others were to really to read the book they recommend, they might realize that "By lumping Muslims into one undifferentiated mass it threatens to radicalize the more than billion believers" (Habeck, 2006: 3).[21] Yet pundits, public officials and the popular Fox television show *24*, "depicts the fight against Islamist extremism pretty much as the Bush Administration has defined it: as an all-consuming struggle that demands the toughest tactics," including of course, torture, ostensibly to stop "ticking bombs" (Mayer, 2007" 68).[22]

For his part, former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his February 1, 2007, testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had this to say about the dangers:

The war in Iraq is a historic, strategic, and moral calamity…If the United States continues to be bogged down in a protracted bloody involvement in Iraq, the final destination on this downhill track is likely to be a head-on conflict with Iran and with much of the world of Islam at large. A plausible scenario for a military collision with Iran involves Iraqi failure to meet the benchmarks; followed by accusations of Iranian responsibility for the failure; then by some provocation in Iraq or a terrorist act

in the U.S. blamed on Iran; culminating in a "defensive" U.S. military action against Iran that plunges a lonely America into a spreading and deepening quagmire eventually ranging across Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

A mythical historical narrative to justify the case for such a protracted and potentially expanding war is already being articulated. Initially justified by false claims about WMDs in Iraq, the war is now being redefined as the "decisive ideo-

[21] The rest of the Habeck's book, while occasionally valuable, problematically minimizes the role of occupation, militarization and Western intrusion in the growth of Muslim radicalism, as emphasized by Lubeck and Reifer (2004) and others, focusing instead on the importance of their supposed hatred of democracy, liberalism and human rights. At the same time, Habeck totally neglects Pape's focus on the centrality of the occupation of Islamist lands by foreign troops, or the role of Western suppression of human rights in Muslim lands and related neoliberal economic policies in the growth of militant Islam (see for example, Habeck, 2006: 162). As Jason Burke (2006a) points out in a review essay, astonishingly, Iraq is not even mentioned in Habeck's book at all, despite the voluminous evidence about the importance of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in fueling militant Islam and indeed giving it a second wind. Apparently, Habeck has at least some ideological affinity with the present Bush administration, having applied for a position on the Bush National Security Council (*Yale Herald*, 2004). In an otherwise laudatory review in *Asia Times* (2006), Sreeram Chaulia notes that in her book Habeck (2006: 176-177) "labels democratization of Muslim countries a long-term solution to the jihadist threat…Her projection that a jihad-cleansed Islamic democracy can evolve runs against facts and is a leaf taken straight out of the daft neo-con blueprint of the George W Bush administration,. Chaulia's disagreement here seems to come out of an essentialist argument against the possibility of democratization in the Islamic world, one which of course sidesteps the central role the U.S. played in imposing repressive dictatorships in these societies, for example with the overthrow of secular governments in Muslim majority countries, notably Iran and Indonesia in 1953 and 1965, respectively (see Bill, 1988; see Roosa, 2006).

NPR, 20007). Yet in addition to conscious lies and exaggeration of the threat of a united Muslim extremism underscored by the Bush administration and their allies, ignorance also plays a role in the presentation of a monolithic Muslim enemy. The role of ignorance in the misperception of a unified threat is indicated in the response by the incoming Democratic Chair of the House Intelligence Committee, Congressman Reyes, to questions from *Congressional Quarterly* National Security editor Jeff Stein (2006) (see also Curtis, 2004).

> The dialogue went like this: "Al Qaeda is what, I asked, Sunni or Shia? "Al Qaeda, they have both," Reyes said. "You're talking about predominately?" "Sure," I said, not knowing what else to say. "Predominantly probably Shiite," he ventured. He couldn't have been more wrong. Al Qaeda is *profoundly* Sunni. If a Shiite showed up at an al Qaeda club house, they'd slice off his head and use it for a soccer ball.

> That's because the extremist

Sunnis who make up al Qaeda consider all Shiites to be heretics. Al Qaeda's Sunni roots account for its very existence. Osama bin Laden and his followers believe the Saudi Royal family besmirched the true faith through their corruption and alliance with the United States, particularly allowing U.S. troops on Saudi soil…And Hezbollah? I asked him. What are they? "Hezbollah. Uh, Hezbollah…" He laughed again, shifting in his seat," unable to answer correctly.

Until the present day selective discourse on Islamophobia is replaced with a nuanced understanding of Islam and the sources of Muslim rage and resentment, based on the best understanding and social scientific evidence—thereby hopefully helping to force real changes in U.S., Israeli and Western policy—the likelihood is that the so-called global war on terrorism will escalate, providing a new generation of recruits for militant Islam and leading to an ever escalating cycle of revenge from which few may escape unscathed. Islamophobia and a lack of understanding of Muslim majority countries and why there is substantial antipathy towards the U.S., Israel and allied states, provides a strong undercurrent of public support for aggressive U.S. policies towards the Muslim world. Thus, it is urgent for scholars and activists to expose Islamophobic illusions and lies and reveal instead the realities of the historical and contemporary relationship between Islamic and Western religions, civilizations, states and social groups, as part of offering and pushing for new paths towards more equitable, peaceful, socially just and sustainable futures (see Halevi, 1987; Lapidus, 2002).

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[23] The concept of the Shia crescent is a controversial one and ill defined, with some militant Sunni groups characterizing Bahrain, where a Sunni minority rules over a large Shia majority, as the outer edge of the crescent that could conceivably come under Iranian influence, while one Jordanian intelligence official quipped: "Forget the crescent…Before long, we may be looking at a full moon" (quoted in Koppel, 2006). At the same time, though the Syrian regime is Shia (ruling over a Sunni majority) and aligned with Iran and Hezbollah, it is part of the Alawite sect of Shia Islam seen as heretical by many Shia, and subscribes to a sort of pan-Arab nationalism (Chebab, 2007a). Among some Shia, though, for example in Lebanon, there is substantial sympathy for Syria aligned as it is with Hezbollah, which has strong popular support (see Fisk, 2005). Obviously the concept of a Shia crescent has been used currently by some who want to fan the flames regarding the threat from Iran and the Shia, so much so that some argue that the concept is merely a fantasy in the minds of those who want to present Iran as a threat to the Arab and Western worlds (Beehner, 2006).

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