BRILL

Islam and the White House

American Presidential Discourse on Establishing Official Islam, 1993–2013[*]

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Abstract

A reified Islam has been used to delineate the creed, the politics and the culture of about a fifth of the world population. While defining what 'Islam' is and is not, before and after the events of September 11, may be a necessary first step to understanding certain 'facts' about the theology, law and history of the world's second largest religion, the semantics of official US government discourse about 'Islam' and terrorism have proved to be problematic. The purpose of this article is to provide an analytical survey of the thematics of American presidential public diplomacy. It also analyzes the construction of ideology in the context of the global war on terror, as it relates to Islam as a religion, the variants of political Islam and more broadly on the question of terrorism and the 'Muslim world'. I begin with the Clinton presidency and continue to George Bush and end with Obama's first term. This period of American political and public diplomatic history was selected because it clearly illustrates American presidential rhetoric on 'Islam' before and after al-Qaʿida's second attacks on the World Trade Center and before the events of the 'Arab Spring' in late 2010.

Keywords

Islam – Muslim world – jihad – Sharia – Salafism – caliphate – al-Qaʿida – 9/11 – Iraq –
ideology – clash of civilizations – public diplomacy – Clinton – Bush – Obama

Islam and the White House

American presidential discourse has used a reified understanding of Islam to
delineate the creed, politics and culture of about a fifth of the world's popula-
tion.[1] Defining what Islam is and is not may have been necessary before and
especially after the events of September 11, 2001 (hereinafter 9/11) and doing so
was perhaps a first step toward understanding certain 'facts' about the theology,
law and history of the world's second largest religion.[2] The semantics of offi-
cial US government discourse or public diplomacy about Islam and terrorism
has, however, proved to be largely ineffective in its stated goals of improving
America's image in the 'Islamic world' and 'ending' Islamist forms of terror-
ism.[3] This article provides a critical survey of the themes of American presi-
dential public diplomacy on Islam and political Islam,[4] largely in the broader
global context of the US war on terrorism. Because this period of presiden-
tial discourse on religion is unprecedented in American history in terms of its
attempt to define the particular creed of a world religion which is associated
with the actions of terrorist or revolutionaries who act in its name, I begin with
the presidency of William J. Clinton (1993–2001), continue with that of George
W. Bush (2001–2009), and end with Barack H. Obama's first term in office (2009–
2013). I focus on this period of American public diplomatic history because it

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1 On the literary history of the conceptions of Islam and the Near East in the West (the latter
   itself also a reified concept), see Said (1978; repr. 1992); Hourani (1992: 7–61, 90–115); al-Azmeh
   (2007); and on the history of western perceptions of Islam and the reception of Said's critique
   of Orientalism, see Lockman (2010: 8–99, 183–273, respectively).
2 On the critical concept of 'Islam-as-fact', viz., the state appropriation and definition of reli-
   gion, see Arkoun (1998: 176–182; and 1995: 28–70).
3 See, e.g., U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing on 'American Public Diplomacy
   and Islam' (2003).
4 On the development of American public diplomacy, see Hart (2010: 195–223; and 2013); for a
   conspectus of the literature and methods of studying presidential discourse in communica-
   tion studies, see Medhurst (2008: 3–45); and for a broader historical record of western and
   later American diplomacy in Middle East, see Hurewitz (1956; repr. 1987); Grabill (1971); Alli-
   son (1995: 3–60); and Hayes (2004: 247–261).

clearly illustrates presidential rhetoric on Islam from a period before al-Qaʿida's September 11, 2011 attacks until just prior to the events of the 'Arab Spring' in early 2011; and I critically analyze the rhetoric of US presidential discourse to define an official 'moderate' Islam in contrast to a political and militant Islam in its public diplomacy with Muslim and non-Muslim audiences throughout the world.[5]

The problem of official government communications and policies attempting to define what Islam—or for that matter any other religious tradition—is and is not may be all too obvious to scholars of Islam and critical readers of Muslim history and politics. Nevertheless, the public role of religion as the source of morality in American society and politics appears to motivate many American politicians and officials to engage in this form of essentialized discourse.[6] The power of the use of religion in certain varieties of evangelical Protestant Christianity pervades much of the public discourse, for example, on morality and the politics of morality in American public life.[7] Religion and the morality associated with religiosity are often central to defining the identity and posture of many American politicians, both on the left and the right, and the sociopolitical themes and policies of their campaigns for office. Thus, this religio-political discourse, largely associated with the political movements of Christian evangelicalism, is evinced in the realm of public diplomacy and policy-making regarding Islam and the 'Islamic world'.

Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that after the September 11 attacks many politicians, foremost among them President Bush, engaged in judging the 'morality' or 'immorality' of Islam, including the Qur'an, the Sharia, and jihad, particularly with regard to whether they promote 'peace' or a perpetual state of 'war'. Before this watershed date, Americans, and more broadly the world, were not accustomed to hearing public officials—from the president and his cabinet to members of Congress—discussing the essence of a religion (i.e., announcing that, for example, Judaism, Catholicism, Buddhism, or Hinduism is x). It was still less common, or even constitutionally accepted, for US government policies—foreign and domestic—and public diplomacy to be directed at a par-

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5   On US government attempts to define an official Islam in domestic 'counter-radicalization' policy, see Rascoff (2102); and on Middle Eastern governments establishing an official Islam, see Böttcher (2002); and Khatib (2011: 109 ff.).

6   On the politics of religion from presidents Ronald W. Reagan to George W. Bush, see Coe and Domke (2008); and Balmer (2008); and on the shift to 'religious nationalism' in presidential discourse, see Roof (2009: 243–265); and Guth (2009: 475–496).

7   On the role of Evangelicals in American politics, see Lindsay (2007).

ticular creed or group of countries associated with it.[8] This was not to be the case with Islam and what would become known in US public diplomacy as the 'Islamic world'.

Clinton and the Origins of Official Islamic Public Diplomacy

Beginning with the presidency of William J. Clinton in 1993,[9] many of the themes of US presidential discourse on Islam have been in the context of acts of terrorism carried out by militant Islamist organizations, many of which the US State Department has designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).[10] From 1993 to 2001, the Clinton administration witnessed and responded to the earliest terrorist attacks carried out, or alleged to have been organized or funded, by al-Qaʿida (est. ca. 1988–1989, and designated as an FTO in 1999), namely (1) the first World Trade Center attack in February 1993;[11] (2) the failed 'Bojinka' plot and attempted downing of Philippine Airline flight 434 in 1995;[12] (3) the bombing of the Saudi National Guard training camp in 1995 (9/11 Commission 2004: 60, 341); and (4) the coordinated bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1998 (9/11 Commission 2004: 108–143). In addition to al-Qaʿida, the Clinton administration contended with the expansion of a number of major militant Islamo-nationalist organizations,

8   Cf. the exception of US government policy after World War II to redefine the (Protestant) American mainstream to include Jews and Catholics in Schultz (2011: 43–96); and Hedstrom (2013: 115–213).

9   Before President Clinton and Samuel P. Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis (*infra*), much, if not all, official public diplomacy directed toward the Middle East, particularly after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and during the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), was, with little reference to the Islamic religion, expressed in terms of nationalisms; i.e., the Arab world, the Iranian revolution, Iranian Shiʿism, Saudi or Arab Sunni Islam, etc.; cf. George H.W. Bush's remarks (1991; also note 22).

10   See the u.s. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism*. On the development of the Clinton administration's counterterrorism policy, see Benjamin and Simon (2002: 219–446).

11   For an official detailed account of the attacks themselves, see National Commission on Terrorist Acts (2004: 71–107; hereafter 9/11 Commission).

12   On the code word 'Bojinka' Khalid Shaykh Muhammad, a planner of the plot who was later identified as 'the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks', was quoted as saying that the word 'is not Serbo-Croatian for "big bang", as has widely been reported, but rather a nonsense word he adopted after hearing it on the front lines in Afghanistan'. See 9/11 Commission (2004; 145–150, 488–489n7).

most notably Hizbullah in Lebanon (est. 1985);[13] Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (est. 1987); Palestinian Islamic Jihad (est. ca. 1979); and al-Gamaʻa al-Islamiyya in Egypt (est. ca. 1970).[14] These four organizations were all designated as FTOs on 8 October 1997.

The 1990s were formative years for many Islamist organizations, during which they established, or redefined, their ideologies and paramilitary tactics to suit the national and nation-state context of the Middle East. These organizations, particularly Hizbullah and Hamas, attempted to merge nationalism, democratic electoral strategy, social services and Islamism into a unified ideological program, expressed through their own brand of public diplomacy. This political program allowed them to more effectively compete with better-established political parties as well as entrenched US interests in the region. By the end of the 1990s, there were at least five, often contending, forms of political Islam in the Middle East: (1) The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood model, after the 1970s, of a non-violent, democratically engaged Islamist political 'party';[15] (2) the Hamas and Hizbullah models of militant Islamism that later engaged in national democratic processes, elections and governance;[16] (3) the Turkish Islamist model of a return to the traditional public morality of the Welfare Party (1983–1998), Abdullah Gül's Virtue Party (1998–2001), and the Justice and Development Party (AKP since 2001), though the latter officially abandoned Islamist ideology for 'conservative democracy';[17] (4) the Iranian revolutionary model of a full-fledged national Islamic government (est. 1979);[18] and (5), the global,

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13   On the history of the Hizbullah and its relation to Iran, see Chehabi (2006: 201–230, 287–308).

14   On the development of militant Islamism in Egypt, see Kepel (1986); Jansen (1997); and Meijer (2009: 189–220).

15   Established as a socioreligious organization in 1928 in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood was banned by Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956–1970) in 1954 and only recognized as a non-political religious group by Hosni Mubarak (1981–2011) in 1984. Members of the group participated in national elections as 'independents', forming a sizable block in the Egyptian parliament in 2010. After the 'Arab Spring', the Muslim Brotherhood established a political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP); Mohammed al-Morsi led the party and was elected as president of Egypt on 24 June 2012, but was deposed in a military coup on 3 July 2013; for a history of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, see Mitchell (1969); and Lia (1998); on the Muslim Brotherhood under Mubarak's rule, see Wickham (2002: 214–226); and on the Muslim Brotherhood's role in the 'Arab Spring', see Wickham (2013: 154–195, 247–288); and Masoud (2014).

16   On Hamas, see Freund (2002); Nüsse (1998); and Mishal and Sela (2006: 49–146).

17   See Hale and Özbudun (2011: 1–70).

18   On the development of Islamo-nationalism in Iran, see Arjomand (1988: 147–210; 2009: 73–89, 133–148); Sivan (1990: 181–208); and Dabashi (1993).

transnational militant Islamist model of al-Qaʿida. How the Clinton administration chose to respond to these complex dynamics of political Islam in the Middle East between 1993 and 2001 largely but not entirely determined the public diplomacy associated with Islam of the following two administrations.

President Clinton made his first public remarks on Islam on 21 October 1993, nearly seven months after the first World Trade Center bombing. The context was how resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could 'bring peace to the Middle East, … [and] revolutionize the range of options we have with Muslims all over the world.' The effect of which, he argued, would 'beat back the forces of radicalism and terrorism that unfairly have been identified with Islam by so many people' (Clinton 1993a: 1796). To influence, or perhaps change, the perceived American public opinion of Muslims as somehow being associated with the actions of Islamist radicals and terrorists—popular media aspects of which go back at least to the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran and the ensuing hostage crisis that lasted until the beginning of 1981[19]—the Clinton administration set forth what I call the 'dissociation thesis'; i.e., that terrorism and Islam are neither linked religiously nor politically. Implicit in this thesis is the assumption that the linchpin of Muslim or Islamist radicalization which leads to acts of and support for terrorism is primarily the failed Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Clinton's other formulations of the dissociation thesis include his statement that 'to equate Islam with terror I think is a big mistake' (Clinton 1996: 442) and

> it is profoundly wrong to equate Palestinians, in particular, and Islam, in general, with terrorism or to see a fundamental conflict between Islam and the West. For the vast majority of the more than one billion Muslims in the world, tolerance is an article of faith and terrorism a travesty of faith.
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> CLINTON 1998d: 2490

The latter iteration of the dissociation thesis, delivered in late 1998, harks back to an earlier theme in the Clinton administration's public diplomacy, namely the refutation of Samuel P. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis, prominent after 1993, which argues that religious and cultural identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War era.[20] In a speech

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19   See Nacos (1994: 16–48, 122–148).

20   See Huntington's article, "The Clash of Civilizations?"—which (re)appeared in *Foreign Affairs*—was first published in the January 1993, approximately a month before the first

delivered to the Jordanian Parliament in July 1994 after the signing of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty, President Clinton made his case against a civilizational clash:

> [T]here are those who insist that between America and the Middle East there are impassable religious and other obstacles to harmony, that our beliefs and our cultures must somehow inevitably clash. But I believe they are wrong. America refuses to accept that our civilizations must collide. We respect Islam. Every day in our own land, millions of our own citizens answer the Moslem call to prayer. And we know the traditional values of Islam, devotion to faith and good works, to family and society, are in harmony with the best of American ideals. Therefore, we know our people, our faiths, our cultures can live in harmony with each other.
>
> CLINTON 1994a: 1880

This address to the Jordanian Parliament provided the textual basis for the repudiation of the thesis of a clash of civilizations for the remainder of the Clinton presidency and, in large part, for both the Bush and Obama administrations, though the former developed its own ideological clash thesis (*infra*). President Clinton frequently referenced the Jordan speech, often paraphrasing the above text, to reassert the view that America was not at war with Islam or Muslims but with the terrorists. Clinton emphasized that the terrorists, referring primarily to al-Qaʿida, falsely claimed to speak in the name of Islam and on behalf of Muslims (Clinton 1994b: 1937). What largely informs the Jordan speech is the general assumption that religion is *ipso facto* peaceful—i.e., excludes violence—and fundamentally concerns the individual's relationship with God. The question of religious, or religiously sanctioned, violence would, in this view, be a perversion of religion and its true essence. This thesis I characterize as the 'perversion of Islam'. This notion of religion and religiosity relates more to certain popular ethnocentric American conceptions of Protestant Christianity[21] than it does with the complex question of how

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World Trade Center bombing, by the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University (1993a); Huntington's thesis is largely based on Bernard Lewis's essay, 'The Roots of Muslim Rage' (2002: 47–60); Huntington later expanded his article into a monograph, titled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996). On the class of civilizations thesis with respect to the Middle East and Islam, see Lockman (2010: 216–278).

21   On the American (Protestant) Jesus, see Prothero (2004); and Fox (2005).

the theologies and sacred laws of some religious traditions, including Islam, address the question of violence, war and society.

By 1998 the clash of civilizations theory had gained ground in the popular media, alongside a higher profile of al-Qaʿida-sponsored terrorist acts which the group justified in the name of its own civilizational clash thesis, namely, one between Islam and the West. In the late summer of 1998, on the eve of American military action against suspected terrorist sites in Afghanistan and Sudan in retaliation for al-Qaʿida's bombing of two US embassies in East Africa just two weeks before, President Clinton emphasized the religious freedom that American Muslims enjoy as resounding proof that there was no inexorable clash of values between the United States and Islam. President Clinton affirmed:

> I want you to understand, I want the world to understand that our actions today were not aimed against Islam, the faith of hundreds of millions of good, peace-loving people all around the world, including the United States. No religion condones the murder of innocent men, women, and children. But our actions were aimed at fanatics and killers who wrap murder in the cloak of righteousness and in so doing profane the great religion in whose name they claim to act.
>
> CLINTON 1998a: 1461

Additionally, in making his case against the clash of civilizations thesis, the president expressed his personal admiration for Islam's civilizational heritage and its shared values with America; I call this the thesis of 'shared values',[22] which was adopted by the next two administrations. Clinton noted that as 'a Westerner, I have tried for more than 20 years now to study and have an appreciation of Islam' (Clinton 1993b: 2078). Furthermore, he said:

> We knew there was nothing in their religion that would divide us, that would promote terrorism, that would be destructive of our values, and

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22   Already in 1991 in a speech by President George H.W. Bush (1989–1993) focusing on the 'Arab' world's response to the first Iraq war and the Madrid Arab-Israeli Peace Conference (both in 1991), the theme of sharing 'values' with a reified Muslim *Other* appeared in the following elliptical remarks: 'I'm not a student of religion, but I don't find anything in what the principal teachings of Islam [are] that put us in contradiction at all. In fact, the principles are the *same* as what (*sic*)—we have a diverse religious culture. But it's kindness, it's [to] be good to your neighbor, it's love, and it's [to] take care of children. It's all these things that (*sic*)—so there's no anti-Islam. There is no anti-Arab'. See George H.W. Bush (1991 [emphasis added]).

that the things that we opposed that we saw—the terrorism there in the Middle East is something that we [together (?)] oppose anywhere (Clinton 1994c: 2068).

… many believe there is an inevitable clash between Western civilization and Western values, and Islamic civilizations and values. I believe this view is terribly wrong. False prophets may use and abuse any religion to justify whatever political objectives they have, even cold-blooded murder. Some may have the world believe that Almighty God himself, the Merciful, grants a license to kill. But that is not our understanding of Islam.

CLINTON 1998b: 1631

The question of 'shared values' with the Muslim *Other* appears to be part of the Clinton administration's rhetoric to celebrate alterity, by showing how we are all the *Same*; or alternately to defuse any assumed threat of this alterity, by reducing the *Other* to the *Same*. The reification of the existence of a Muslim and Islamist *Other* became a major theme in American public diplomacy on Islam.

The Clinton presidency was formative in establishing a set of terms and concepts which became standard for official presidential rhetoric of engagement with Islam, political Islam and the Muslim world. In describing the religio-political ideologies of Islamists, the Clinton administration used descriptors such as 'radicalism', 'militant fundamentalism', 'terrorism' and 'perversions of Islam'. The corrective to these ideologies was later identified as 'moderate Islam'. The proponents of this form of Islam are 'moderate Muslims' (an acceptable Muslim *Other*), many of whom are citizens of 'Islamic states', and heirs to the heritage of 'Islamic civilization'. While Presidents Clinton and Bush did not use the term 'moderate Islam' (instead they referred to 'moderate Muslim states'), many policy-makers after 9/11 considered it to be the prescription for defeating 'Islamic radicalism'.

Finally, Clinton attempted to make 'moderate Islam' part of the American mainstream by officially observing its religious holidays. In 1805, in honor of the first Tunisian (Muslim) ambassador to the United States, President Thomas Jefferson arranged the first White House Ramadan meal, which marks the end of the daily fast (*iftar*). Jefferson ordered the dinnertime to be changed from the usual 'half after the hour' to 'precisely at sunset' (Wilson 2003: 1–3).[23] How-

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23   On the visit of the Tunisian Ambassador, Sidi Soliman Mellimelli, described in official American transcription as the 'most brilliant and splendid spectacle' in 1805 [he arrived on 8 Ramadan 1220 AH], see Wilson (2003: 1–3); and Marr (2006: 66–67n108).

ever, it was not until President Clinton in 1998 that the White House began to observe Islamic religious festivals. The themes of the Clinton White House observance speeches include: the importance of fasting and reading the Qur'an, the religious freedom enjoyed by American Muslims (Clinton 1998c: 2195) and contributions of Muslims to American life (Clinton 1999: 2247). The following US administrations came to officially mark other Islamic religious festivals; this recognition includes most cabinet members in their respective departments hosting *iftar* dinners and a celebration for the ancient Persian holiday of Nawruz, which marks the first day of the solar calendar.

George W. Bush and the Clash of Ideologies

President George W. Bush's first official statement on Islam was made in early 2001, wherein he emphasized the shared values thesis and the role of Muslims in American life. It was the first presidential statement on the occasion of Islam's 'major festival' (*'id al-kabir*), which commemorates the 'sacrificial festival' of the 'immolation', or near-sacrifice of Ishmael (not Isaac as in the Judeo-Christian tradition), and also marks the end of the pilgrimage (*hajj*). He said:

> The variety of nations and cultures represented by those who travel to Mecca each year, and the varied ways in which Muslims contribute to American life across the United States, are powerful reminders that ethnic and racial differences need not divide us when we share common values and purposes. By building strong foundations of mutual respect, we can achieve peace and reconciliation in our world.
>
> BUSH 2001a: 200

President Bush did not speak of Islam again until shortly after 9/11 at the Islamic Center of Washington, DC.

There are at least three central events to analyzing the themes of the Bush administration's public diplomacy on establishing an official Islam: First, al-Qaʿida's coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the deadliest terrorist attack on American soil; second, Operation Enduring Freedom, the US response to al-Qaʿida which toppled the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in late 2001; and third, Operation Iraqi Freedom, the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and its aftermath. The scale of these three events stretched the limits of the public diplomacy on official Islam inherited from the Clinton administration.

The conveyance of political and diplomatic language from one US adminis-
tration to the next appears to be a well-established American tradition. In the
case of Islam it was done without any exceptions. The 9/11 attacks and their
aftermath, however, marked a major point of discontinuity from the Clinton
to the Bush administration. The latter adapted the rhetoric of the Cold War
with the Soviet Union to fashion the rhetoric of an ideological clash between
the United States and al-Qaʿida. One week after the attacks, from a mosque in
Washington, DC, President Bush addressed the nation saying:

> Both Americans, our Muslim friends and citizens, taxpaying citizens, and
> Muslims in nations (*sic*) were just appalled and could not believe what we
> saw on our TV screens. These acts of violence against innocents violate the
> *fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith*. And it's important for my fellow
> Americans to understand that. The face of terror is not the *true faith of
> Islam*. That's not what Islam is all about. *Islam is peace*. These terrorists
> don't represent peace. They represent evil and war.
>
> BUSH 2001C: 1121 [emphasis added]

In establishing an official Islam, President Bush engaged in an act of theology,
wherein the distinctions between religion and religiosity—however defined—
were collapsed into a single category, namely, Islam is x and so Muslims are also
x. This rhetorical move defined, for the purposes of US policy, what Islam is and
who true Muslims are, in effect determining the question who is a true Muslim,
or an apostate, and the religious boundaries of the Islamic polity (*umma*).[24]
At the moment this move seemed to be pivotal to distinguish the yet-to-be-
identified terrorists from the Islamic community. Yet, for the Bush administra-
tion, the broader question of political Islam, or Islamism, and al-Qaʿida's place
within that spectrum of ideology remained unresolved but always defined and
redefined in terms of Bush's ideological clash thesis.

In a speech to a joint session of the US Congress on 20 September 2001, Pres-
ident Bush rejected the notion of a clash of civilizations between America and
the 'Islamic world', but antithetically singled out al-Qaʿida's Islamist ideology:

> The terrorists practice a fringe form of *Islamic extremism* that has been
> rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics, *a*

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24   In Islamic terms *takfir* is the religious, legal act of declaring a(nother) Muslim an infidel
       (*kafir*). See Peters and de Vries (1976–1977: 1–25); and on the modern political use of
       'apostasy' in Egypt, see Kenney (2006).

fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam ... I also
want to speak tonight directly to Muslims throughout the world. We
respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans
and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends. *Its
teachings are good and peaceful, and those who commit evil in the name
of Allah blaspheme the name of Allah.* The terrorists are traitors to their
own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself. The enemy of America is
not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy
is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports
them.

BUSH 2001d: 1141 [emphasis added]

Rhetorically, the invocation of the Arabic word for the name of God (the
first, and to date the last time, this has been done in any State of the Union
address) and the notion of blasphemy appears to have been carefully crafted
to demonstrate to the 'Islamic world' that the President of the United States
understood its religion and perhaps 'its' God. In the ensuing public diplomacy
battle for the 'hearts and minds' of the Muslim world,[25] this speech became
central to the Bush administration's communications strategy. It also framed
the launching of US military actions against the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of
Afghanistan (r. 1996–2001) and al-Qaʿida,[26] and marked the beginning of the
global war on terrorism.[27] On 7 October 2001, President Bush appealed to the
Muslim world when announcing the US intervention in Afghanistan:

The United States of America is a friend to the Afghan people, and we are
the friends of almost a billion (*sic*) worldwide who practice the Islamic
faith. The United States of America is an enemy of those who aid terrorists
and of the barbaric criminals who profane a great religion by committing
murder in its name.

BUSH 2001e: 1201 [emphasis added]

Before analyzing Bush's ideological shift, I note that his administration's com-
plete adoption of Clinton's dissociation and perversion theses was a necessary
rhetorical step to advancing what I describe as his thesis of a clash of ideologies.

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25   On the rhetorical background of 'winning the hearts and minds', see Dickenson (2009: 29).
26   On the Taliban and the American war in Afghanistan, see Dorronsoro (2005: 235–329).
27   For a comparative study of official American, British and Australian discourses of the war
      on terrorism, see, Holland (2013).

Three Bush speeches using Clinton's theses suffice to illustrate this point. First, in remarks at the Afghanistan Embassy in Washington, DC on the day before the first anniversary of 9/11, Bush said:

> All Americans must recognize that the face of terror is not the true faith— face of Islam (*sic*). Islam is a faith that brings comfort to a billion people around the world. It's a faith that has made brothers and sisters of every race. It's a faith based upon love, not hate. As we mourn tomorrow, we must remember that *our enemy is a radical network of terrorists*, not a religion; that *governments which support them are our enemies*, not faithful Muslims who love their families, who yearn for a more peaceful and safe world for their children.
>
>   BUSH 2002c: 1568 [emphasis added]

Second, on another occasion, Bush said: 'Our enemy don't (*sic*) follow the great traditions of Islam. They've hijacked a great religion. But it's important, as we lift that veil, to remember that they are nothing but a bunch of radical terrorists who distort history and the values of Islam' (2002d: 1780). And third, in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2005, two years into the occupation of Iraq, Bush remarked:

> Today I'd like to speak directly to the people across the broader Middle East. My country desires peace. Extremists in your midst spread propaganda claiming that the West is engaged in a war against Islam. This propaganda is false, and its purpose is to confuse you and justify acts of terror. We respect Islam, but we will protect our people from *those who pervert Islam* to sow death and destruction. Our goal is to help you build a more tolerant and hopeful society that honors people of all faiths and promotes the peace.
>
>   BUSH 2006: 1669 [emphasis added]

The political complications following the declaration of an open-ended global war on terrorism redefined, even more acutely, the ideological conflict with al-Qaʻida, other militant Islamist groups, and, for a time, the declared 'rogue' states. While Bush rejected Huntington's thesis of a civilizational clash between Islam and the West, he vociferously affirmed that there was a fundamental clash between the values of the United States and what, in one iteration, he discursively described as 'this new and poisonous and evil form of extremism linked to a perversion of the true faith of Islam and [also] repressive, unstable states that proliferate in and deal in chemical, biological, nuclear weapons—

that security threat is the threat of our times' (Bush 2004c: 1146). The nation-states in question, identified as Iraq, Iran and North Korea, were designated as members of the 'axis of evil' in 2002. After the 2003 invasion of Iraq,[28] with none of the presumed active stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction found,[29] and with al-Qaʿida's escalation of attacks on the US military and Iraqi civilians, President Bush redirected his rhetorical invective largely away from the 'axis of evil' and toward al-Qaʿida and to 'radical' Islamist ideology. In al-Qaʿida, the president found the necessary antagonist for his clash of ideologies thesis.

In brief, from 2001 to 2009, al-Qaʿida continued to expand internationally from its new base in Pakistan, with new and more enterprising branches. These included (1) The Monotheism and Jihad Group (Jamaʿat al-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad; est. early 2003), which changed its name to al-Qaʿida in Mesopotamia (Tanzim al-Qaʿidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn) in October 2004 and rebranded itself, to appeal to Iraqi nationalism, as the Islamic State of Iraq (Dawlat al-ʿIraq al-Islamiyya) in 2006;[30] (2) al-Qaʿida in the Islamic Maghrib (Tanzim al-Qaʿida fi Bilad al-Maghrib al-Islami; est. 2006); and, resulting from the merger between al-Qaʿida in Saudi Arabia and in Yemen, (3) al-Qaʿida in the Arabian Peninsula (al-Qaʿida fi al-Jazira al-ʿArabiyya) in 2009. As for al-Qaʿida's Islamist ideology, namely Jihadi-Salafism, it maintains that the group's declared war on America is a religiously sanctioned militant struggle (*jihad*),[31] modeled on the earliest battles of Islam's prophet, Muhammad, and the first three generation of Muslims, the righteous forebears (*al-salaf al-salih*), who, in relatively small numbers and against insurmountable odds, became supremely victorious in defeating the pagan Arabs and, to boot, the two world empires of their day, the Sasanian (r. 224–651) and (partly) the Byzantine (r. 330–1453), establishing an immutable Islamic order. The goal of this millenarian ideology is, in part, to end the post-colonial nation-state system which the West imposed divisively on the 'Islamic world'. In its place, al-Qaʿida would establish a series of emirates which

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28   On the history of Iraq, with an account of political Islam, from the first to the second Iraq war, see Allawi (2007); reviewed by al-Rahim (2008: 170–174).

29   On the presumed weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, see the National Guard Intelligence Center declassified report on the failure to recover chemical munitions after the first Iraq war in 1991 (2006).

30   On al-Qaʿida's attempt to appeal to Iraqi nationalism by using the British colonial designator for that country to announce the establishment of the Islamic *State of Iraq* (previously al-Qaʿida only employed the appellations associated with the early Islamic conquests of the Middle East; e.g., the Land of the Two Tributaries [Bilad al-Rafidayn]), see al-Rahim (2008: 173–174).

31   See, e.g., Usama b. Ladin (2009: 436–459).

would ultimately reconstitute the authority of a bygone Islamic caliphate under the mantle of an imam-caliph. Based largely on the historical memory of Jihadi-Salafist ideologues,[32] this Islamic imperium would span the former territories of the abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*), from modern-day Spain to Indonesia. It would implement 'Sharia law',[33] bringing about an Islamic utopia, wherein divine justice (*al-'adala al-ilahiyya*), honor (*sharaf*) and military power (*sultan*) would be restored to Islam's polity.

In formulating the clash of ideologies thesis, President Bush (and his speech-writers) revived the rhetoric of the Cold War, of battle between 'good' and 'evil',[34] while recalling an earlier epoch of Europe's history, namely the rise of Fascism and its defeat in the first half of twentieth century. The rhetoric of these past ideological clashes was adapted to defining the new perceived threat emanating from the ideology of Jihadi-Salafism. While the connection between these two ideologies is disparate,[35] the historical parallel drawn by the Bush administration between them is not. In the capital Prague, located behind the old line of the Iron Curtain, in the Czech Republic, President Bush decisively defined, perhaps in chiliastic terms, the new ideological conflict facing America and the world:

> For some, this attack called for a narrow response. In truth, 9/11 was evidence of a much broader danger, an international movement of *violent Islamic extremists* that threatens free peoples everywhere. The extremists' ambition is to build *a totalitarian empire that spans all current and former Muslim lands, including parts of Europe* [a reference to al-Qa'ida's notion of reconstituting the caliphate]. Their strategy to achieve that goal is to frighten the world into surrender through a ruthless campaign of terrorist murder.

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32   For an analysis of Jihadi-Salafi political thought, see Kepel (2002: 219–222, 299–322); Hegghammer (2006: 12–32); Lia (2008); Haykel (2009: 33–51); Lacroix (2009: 58–80); and Wagemakers (2012).

33   The Sharia, or 'God's law', without reference to the four Sunni legal schools, or for that matter the jurisprudential science of understanding (*fiqh*) is a reified concept in Islamist ideologies; it has little, if anything, to do with the development of jurisprudence in the medieval Islamic past; see Hallaq (2009).

34   On President Bush's rhetoric of reviving 'the Cold War hero'—i.e., the one who rallies the world against the 'enemy'—see Winkler (2008: 196–202).

35   I.e., Communism and fascism developed in early-twentieth century Europe, while al-Qa'ida's form of Islamism is rooted in the ideological vacuum following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the 1979–1989 Afghan-Arab jihad against the Soviet Union.

To confront this enemy, America and our allies have taken the offensive with the full range of our military, intelligence, and law enforcement capabilities. Yet this battle is more than a military conflict. *Like the cold war, it's an ideological struggle between two fundamentally different visions of humanity*. On one side are the extremists who promise paradise, but deliver a life of public beatings and repression of women and suicide bombings. On the other side are huge numbers of *moderate* men and women, including millions in the Muslim world, who believe that every human life has dignity and value that no power on Earth can take away.

BUSH 2007a: 686 [emphasis added]

The rhetorical development of Bush's thesis of a clash of ideologies dates back to his first short televised address to the nation on the day of the 9/11 attacks. The nature of the terrorist acts was addressed in biblical language and quotes that are indicative of President Bush's own evangelical Protestant Christian beliefs. The religious import of the following remarks, on 'evil', constitute the cornerstone of the thesis of ideological clash.[36] He said, 'Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by *evil*, despicable acts of terror … Today, our nation saw *evil*—the very worst of human nature … The search is underway for those who are behind these *evil* acts'. In closing his remarks, the president recited Psalm 23:4 for the victims of that day: 'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no *evil*, for You are with me' (Bush 2001b [emphasis added]). Shortly thereafter, Bush disassociated 'evil' from Islam in the Washington, DC mosque address (*supra*). The faith and politics of the Bush presidency, though beyond the scope of this article, is part of a broader trend of the political rise of evangelical Protestantism in American public (and private) life.[37]

President Bush presented the most comprehensive version of the clash of ideologies thesis on the occasion of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) twentieth-year anniversary.[38] Stressing the secular and political, he said:

Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant jihadism; still others, Islamo-fascism. Whatever it's called, this ideology is very different from the religion of Islam. This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision: the establishment, by terrorism and subversion

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36   On the role of religion in President Bush's public diplomacy, see, e.g., Denton Jr. (2012: 157–172).

37   On of the views of neo-Pentecostalism (a conservative globalizing sect of evangelical Protestantism) toward Islam and Islamism after the Cold War, see Michel (2009: 83–84).

38   President Reagan established the NED in 1983 to promote democracy around the world.

and insurgency, of *a totalitarian empire* that denies all political and religious freedom [a reference to al-Qaʿida's notion of the caliphate]. These extremists distort the idea of jihad into a call for terrorist murder against Christians and Jews and Hindus and also against Muslims from other traditions that they regard as heretics ... *Islamic radicalism is more like a loose network with many branches than an army under a single command.* Yet these operatives, fighting on scattered battlefields, share a similar ideology and vision for our world ... The influence of Islamic radicalism is also magnified by helpers and enablers. They have been sheltered by authoritarian regimes, allies of convenience like Syria and Iran, that share the goal of hurting America and *moderate Muslim governments* and use terrorist propaganda to blame their own failures on the West and America and on the Jews ... *The murderous ideology of the Islamic radicals is the great challenge of our new century.* Yet, in many ways, this fight resembles *the struggle against communism in the last century. Like the ideology of communism, Islamic radicalism is elitist, led by a self-appointed vanguard that presumes to speak for the Muslim masses ... And Islamic radicalism, like the ideology of communism, contains inherent contradictions that doom it to failure.*

BUSH 2005 [emphasis added]

In an address to the Israeli Knesset in Jerusalem, Bush stressed the religious:

This struggle is waged with the technology of the 21st century, but *at its core, it is an ancient battle between good and evil.* The killers claim the mantle of Islam, but they are not religious men. No one who prays to the God of Abraham could strap a suicide vest to an innocent child or blow up guiltless guests at a Passover Seder[39] or fly planes into office buildings filled with unsuspecting workers. In truth, the men who carry out these savage acts serve no higher goal than their own desire for power. They accept no God before themselves, and they reserve a special hatred for the most ardent defenders of liberty, including Americans and Israelis.

BUSH 2008a: 685 [emphasis added]

While in the NED speech President Bush was largely correct in how he characterized many Islamist organizations that operate 'more like a loose network

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39   A reference to a Hamas orchestrated suicide bombing in Netanya, Israel on 27 March 2002 (Brinkley 2002).

with many branches than an army under a single command', he lends too much credence to the notion of a cohesively shared ideology of Islamism. In fact, the very suggestion of this notion seems only to have enhanced al-Qaʿida's brand of Islamism. The structure of Jihadi-Salafist ideology, which may be described as rhizomic,[40] is, for example, made explicit in the ongoing religio-political polemics of its followers over such matters as scriptural exegesis, sources of religious authority and legal opinion, or *fatwas*; the Islamic legitimacy of nationalism and other modern forms of identity, and tribalism; sectarianism and apostasy (*takfir*); the definition of holy war, or jihad, and the issue of who can declare it against whom, and of its geographies or battlefields (e.g., Jerusalem versus Kashmir, territorialized versus non-territorialized, etc.). With respect to policy-making, the typology of 'Islamic radicalism' laid out in the NED speech, which includes not only disparate Islamist organizations designated as FTOs but also nation-states with competing ideologies, is problematic if not operationally untenable for policy makers. No one policy, or even set of policies, could account for the disambiguation of 'Islamic radicalism' and the religio-political divisions that exist among Islamist organizations and nation-states. In sum, in the NED speech the juxtaposition of 'Islamic radicalism' with Communism and the global war on terrorism with the Cold War (the latter of which is well-defined, the former largely undefined), elevated al-Qaʿida's profile yet higher, to that of a worthy adversary of the United States.

As for a commensurate foreign policy to confront this ideology and its spread in the Muslim world, the Bush administration launched the Freedom Agenda in 2005 to promote 'freedom as the great alternative to the terrorists' ideology of hatred' … '[with] the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in the world' (*Fact Sheet*). The rhetorical underpinnings for this ambitious policy assume that freedom, or liberty, is culturally universal and not simply the provenance of the West. The president expressed this policy in the rhetoric of his then chief speechwriter, Michael Garson (2001–2006), who coined the notion of the 'soft bigotry of low expectations' (Bush 2003a: 1166–1167). Bush said:

> Some people don't believe if you're a Muslim or an Arab you can be free. I just strongly disagree with that thought. I think everybody yearns to be free, and I think everybody can self-govern. I remind you, some people thought the Japanese could never self-govern or be free.
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> BUSH 2004a: 642

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40   On the theory of complex adaptive structures, or rhizomes, see Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 3–25).

> There's a lot of people in the world who don't believe that people whose skin color may not be the same as ours can be free, can self-govern. I reject that. I reject that strongly. *I believe that people who practice the Muslim faith can self-govern.* I believe that people whose skins aren't necessarily (*sic*)—are a different color than white can self-govern.
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> BUSH 2004b: 692 [emphasis added]

And,

> You know, there were skeptics who said: 'Well, the Japanese, they'll never be able to self-govern. After all, they're not Anglo-Saxon, or they're not Methodists, or I don't know.' There was a lot of skepticism about whether they could self-govern. And there's still that skepticism today. There are some who I'm confident doubt whether or not a Muslim nation can self-govern. We don't doubt that in America. You see, we understand liberty. Thankfully, my predecessors did not fall prey to pessimistic attitudes after World War II, because today Germany and Japan are allies in the war on terror.
>
> BUSH 2004d: 1329

> Peoples of the Middle East *share a high civilization*, a religion of personal responsibility, and a need for freedom as deep as our own. It is not realism to suppose that one-fifth of humanity is unsuited to liberty. It is pessimism and condescension, and we should have none of it. We must shake off decades of failed policy in the Middle East.
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> BUSH 2003b: 1577 [emphasis added]

Putting aside the question of whether freedom and democracy are indeed (modern) universal human values, which some 'radical' Islamists readily concede (e.g., Hizbullah and Hamas), the implementation of the Freedom Agenda in predominantly Muslim countries remained a vexing policy problem for the US Departments of State and Defense to implement. This problem has been especially true in Afghanistan and Iraq, where competing forms of authority (from the tribal to the sectarian), legislation (from the religious to the secular) and human rights (for ethnic to religious minorities to women), conflicted directly with what were assumed to be universal (American) norms and principles.[41] Moreover, President Bush's own millenarian views of spreading liberty

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41   Cf. Efrati (2011: 171–186; and 2012: 163–173).

and democracy to Afghanistan, Iraq and more broadly to the Muslim world, appear to be based on the notion that merely toppling an autocratic regime established in its wake an autonomous social space where 'rational' actors and entrepreneurs would, in a self-evident way, understand that the system of free markets and democracy is in their own best interest. While the desire for democracy may be universal, the assumed autonomous civil society, which is necessary for bringing it forth, does not effectively exist without political legitimacy. However, that political legitimacy is not an abstract notion which derives from a new constitution or the toppling of an autocrat. Rather this form of legitimacy is anchored in a specific history, religiosity, sociology and economy. Tribes and clans[42] and other solidarity groups and their authorities, including, for example, Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani,[43] cannot simply be swept aside to erect a self-interested autonomous democratic space or, for that matter, a 'free society'.[44]

Finally, in putting forth what I call the 'Islamic golden age' thesis, aspects of which go back to the Clinton presidency (*supra*), the Bush administration drew a sharp distinction between the notion of a civilizational clash, which Bush rejected, and an ideological one, which he propounded, between the United States and 'radical Islam'. Bush described Islam's golden age as one of 'ha[ving] given birth to a rich culture of learning and literature and science' (Bush 2002e: 2052). In emphasizing 'Islam's own rich history, with its centuries of learning and tolerance and progress' (Bush 2002a: 131), President Bush sought to establish that (true) Muslims and not 'Islamic radicals' were heirs to a 'high civilization',[45] whose universal values are the *Same* as those of America and the West. This Islamic civilization lives on in America, where, as President Bush said:

> Muslim thinkers and scientists have advanced the frontiers of human knowledge. People of all faiths have benefited from the achievements of Muslims in fields from philosophy and poetry to mathematics and medicine. At the beginning of a new century, Muslims in the United States are continuing this *proud tradition* of innovation and invention.
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>   BUSH 2008b: 1209 [emphasis added]

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42   On tribalism and the US military in Iraq, see Dawod (2010).

43   On Sistani's sectarianism and democracy, see al-Rahim (2005: 50–53); and Hasson (2011: 187–211).

44   Cf. Roy (2004: 229–231).

45   On the critical concept of 'high tradition', see Carré (1993); and Arkoun (1998: 178–179).

> I have a hope for the people of Muslim countries. Your commitments to morality and learning and tolerance led to *great historical achievements*, and *those values are alive in the Islamic world today*. You have a *rich culture*, and you share the aspirations of men and women in every culture. Prosperity and freedom and dignity are not just American hopes or Western hopes. They are *universal, human hopes*.
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> BUSH 2002b: 1062 [emphasis added]

The thesis of the Islamic golden age, coupled with its notion of 'universal human values', transmitted on the rhetorical authority of President Clinton to the Bush White House, were transformed into President Obama's public diplomacy of 'respect for Muslim communities'.

Obama's Discourse to 'Muslim Communities'

Barack H. Obama's public diplomacy attempts to craft a rhetoric that is antithetical to President Bush's thesis of an ideological clash, while at the same time it appropriates earlier themes of an official Islam of the Clinton and Bush administrations. Early on, President Obama abandoned President Bush's thesis of a clash of ideologies; instead he emphasized the shared values thesis to bridge the gap between the Muslim *Other* and non-Muslim *Self*, and the dissociation of Islam from the terrorism thesis. The latter (Obama) iteration of the thesis emphasized politics and not religion, arguing that al-Qaʿida used religion for strictly political ends to the exclusion of Islam, the religion and faith of 'Muslim communities' around the world. The secular distinction between the religious and political would be the hallmark of Obama's public diplomacy and mark the shift away from Bush's ideological clash.[46] In addition, Bush's

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46   The Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, John O. Brennan (2009–2013), described Obama's rhetorical shift in this way: '[T]he President does not describe this [war] as a 'war on terrorism.' That is because 'terrorism' is but a tactic—a means to an end, which in al Qaeda's case is global domination by an Islamic caliphate ... Likewise, the President does not describe this as a 'global war' ... since describing our efforts as a 'global war' only plays into the warped narrative that al Qaeda propagates ... [And] portraying this as a 'global' war risks reinforcing the very image that al Qaeda seeks to project of itself—that it is a highly organized, global entity capable of replacing sovereign nations with a global caliphate ... Nor does President Obama see this challenge as a fight against 'jihadists.' Describing terrorists in this way—using a legitimate term, 'jihad,' meaning to purify oneself or to wage a holy struggle for a moral goal [N.B. the

terms of the 'global war on terrorism' and 'Islamic radicalism' were replaced with 'overseas contingency operations' and 'violent extremism', respectively. The policy addressing this form of extremism, which includes al-Qaʿida and other designated FTOs, was now called Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Furthermore, President Obama sought to distance himself from Bush's rhetoric of an ideological clash by not (always) addressing the war on terrorism himself but relegating that task to counterterrorism officials and particularly to those working in the National Counterterrorism Center (est. 2003)—thus he, the President of the United States, appeared to be above the political and ideological fray of the war on terrorism.

As a case in point, Vice President Joseph R. Biden was tasked with setting out the new phraseology of 'Violent Extremism'. Stressing the shared values thesis, Biden officially disassociated the ideologically-laden concept of 'Islamic radicalism' associated with the Bush administration from the 'Muslim world'. He explained,

> In the Muslim world, a small—and I believe a very small—number of *violent extremists* are beyond the call of reason. We will, and we must, defeat them. But hundreds of millions of hearts and minds in the Muslim world share the values we hold dearly. We must reach them. President Obama has made clear that he will seek a new way forward based on mutual interest and mutual respect.
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> BIDEN 2009 [emphasis added]

The Obama administration elaborated further on the shared values thesis, to include common, American and Muslim, goals which go beyond the mere defeat of terrorism.

In his first formal interview, granted to the pan-Arab satellite news channel al-ʿArabiyya, President Obama focused his remarks not on the war on terrorism but on more conventional Middle Eastern public diplomacy matters, including the resumption of peace talks between the Israelis and Palestinians; he also reiterated his campaign promise to end the Iraq war and close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp. When asked how he would frame the war on terror differently from President Bush, Obama said:

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theological definition of jihad (!)]—risks giving these murderers the religious legitimacy they desperately seek but in no way deserve. Worse, it risks reinforcing the idea that the United States is somehow at war with Islam itself. And this is why President Obama has confronted this perception directly and forcefully in his speeches to Muslim audiences, declaring that America is not and never will be at war with Islam'. See (Brennan 2009).

> [T]he language we use matters. And what we need to understand is, is that there are *extremist* organizations—whether Muslim or any other faith in the past—*that will use faith as a justification for violence*. We cannot paint with a broad brush a faith as a consequence of the violence that is done in that faith's name. And so you will, I think, see our administration be very clear in distinguishing between organizations like al Qaeda that espouse violence, espouse terror and act on it and people who may disagree with my administration and certain actions, or may have a particular viewpoint in terms of how their countries should develop. We can have legitimate disagreements but still be respectful. I cannot respect terrorist organizations that would kill innocent civilians and we will hunt them down. But to the broader Muslim world what we are going to be offering is a hand of friendship.
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> OBAMA 2009c [emphasis added]

By rhetorically including al-Qaʿida among a number of different extremist organizations which use religion to legitimate their violent acts, Obama in effect announced that its Jihadi-Salafist ideology did not, if it ever had, constitute an existential threat to the United States or the West. In other words, al-Qaʿida's profile was downgraded from that of an equal, or worthy, enemy to the United States to a counterterrorism menace with which his administration would have to contend; and not by means of a counter-ideology (though aspects of that remained in use) but through intelligence and military operations. The expansion of the Central Intelligence Agency's unmanned aerial vehicle (drone) program of 'targeted killings' became an integral part of the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy.[47]

These brief remarks to al-ʿArabiyya also signaled a shift away from President Bush's religious phraseology of good and evil and of describing al-Qaʿida's ideology with any Islamic terms, including 'Islamo-fascism', 'Islamic radicalism', etc. Furthermore, the use of the term 'Islamic world' in public diplomacy was replaced with 'Muslim world' or 'Muslim communities'.[48] This change in language emphasized religiosity and membership in a religious community, being

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47   On the policies of 'targeted killings', see Melzer (2008: 1–82).

48   President Bush first used the concept of 'Muslim communities' in his remarks announcing the newly created office of the US Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference [OIC; renamed Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 2011]; this diplomatic appointment of an ambassador was intended to leverage US public diplomacy on official 'moderate Islam' by engaging directly with the OIC, which is the second largest international organization after the United Nations. See George W. Bush (2007b: 808–809).

a Muslim, as opposed to religion itself, Islam *qua* Islam. In bracketing religion in this way, Obama's new phraseology ensured, at least rhetorically, that al-Qaʿidaʾs 'political' use of religion could not be used against the religion and faith of Muslims, itself, even if the organization's grievances are in some way shared by that *Same* world. Accordingly, religion could not be used to explain or legitimate al-Qaʿidaʾs acts of terrorism. Rather, the group's use of religious language and scripture functioned as an instrumental register for justifying its violent actions. Rhetorically, this linguistic turn in presidential discourse on al-Qaʿida and official Islam served to develop further the disassociation of the Islamic religion from terrorism by characterizing al-Qaʿida as fundamentally political and not religious.

There are two major speeches introducing President Obama's broader themes of engagement with 'Muslim communities'. The first speech, delivered to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara, Turkey, was given on 6 April 2009, and the second, propitiously titled 'A New Beginning', was delivered at Cairo University in Egypt, on 4 June 2009. These capital cities were chosen for symbolic reasons: Turkey represented a politically 'moderate Muslim' nation-state and Egypt, the most populous Arab country, has always been considered a barometer of political, religious and intellectual currents in the Middle East. The theme that dominated the addresses was reinvigorating, on the basis of 'mutual interest and respect', America's relationship with the Muslim world and moving beyond how the war on terrorism and the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, though not mentioned explicitly, negatively defined that relationship. Interwoven into this theme was the earlier Clinton and Bush theses of the disassociation of Islam from terrorism, shared values, terrorism as a perversion of Islam and Islam's golden age. Entirely absent, of course, was Bush's clash of ideologies thesis. In Ankara, President Obama said:

> I know that the trust that binds the United States and Turkey has been strained, and I know that strain is shared in many places where the Muslim faith is practiced. So let me say this as clearly as I can: *The United States is not and will never be at war with Islam.* In fact, our partnership with the Muslim world is critical, not just in rolling back the violent ideologies that people of all faiths reject, but also to strengthen opportunity for all its people. I also want to be clear that *America's relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot and will not just be based upon opposition to terrorism. We seek broader engagement based on mutual interests and mutual respect* … We will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over the centuries to shape the

world, including in my own country. The United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans. *Many other Americans have Muslims in their families or have lived in a Muslim-majority country. I know because I am one of them* ... Our focus will be on what we can do, in partnership with people across the Muslim world, to advance *our common hopes and our common dreams.*

<div style="text-align:right">OBAMA 2009a: 453 [emphasis added]</div>

And in Cairo, the President declared:

I've come here to Cairo to seek *a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world*, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect and one *based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap and share common principles, principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings* ... There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us: 'Be conscious of God and speak always the truth.'[49] ... I also know that Islam has always been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second President, John Adams, wrote, 'The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims.'[50] ... I have known Islam on three continents before coming to the region where it was *first revealed*. That experience guides my conviction that partnership between America and Islam must be *based on what Islam is, not what it isn't*. And I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear ... So let there be no doubt, *Islam is a part of America*. And I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations—to live in peace and security;

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49   Qur'an, 33:70. N.B. Obama's use of 'God' and not the Arabic 'Allah' in Bush's discourse (*supra*); the (published?) translation of the Qur'anic verse appears, perhaps intentionally, to be unclear; cf. Jones' translation (2007: 390), 'O you who believe, fear God and speak straight speech'.

50   This is quoted from Article 11 of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which was signed at Tripoli of Barbary on 4 November 1796; for the original Arabic to English translation, corrected by the noted Dutch Orientalist Ch.S. Hurgronje (d. 1936), see http://avalon.law .yale.edu/19th_century/bar1805t.asp#art11 [accessed 21 September 2013].

to get an education and to work with dignity; to love our families, our communities, and our God. *These things we share*. This is the hope of *all humanity*.

<div align="right">OBAMA 2009b [emphasis added]</div>

In using the theses of shared values and of Islam's golden age, President Obama sought to close the divide between the Untied States and the Muslim *Other*, the latter including the American-Muslim *Other*. Furthermore, by invoking his own patrilineal past and early years in Indonesia, President Obama was able to rhetorically collapse this chasm separating America from Islam, by virtue of who he is, namely, an American, with the middle name Hussein, who is the 44th President of the United States.

Finally, in the Cairo speech, Obama also addressed the historical grievances that exist between Muslims and West:

> We meet at a time of great tension between the United States and Muslims around the world, tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of coexistence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims and a cold war in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations. Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam … [I]t is important for Western countries to avoid impeding Muslim citizens from practicing religion as they see fit, for instance, by dictating what clothes a Muslim woman should wear. We can't disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretence of liberalism.

<div align="right">OBAMA 2009b [emphasis added]</div>

For President Obama, recognizing these grievances against the West was a precondition for resolving the current problems Muslims living in Europe face. His remarks on the rise of anti-Islamic legislation in parts of Europe refer to the 2004 French law banning women from wearing the *hijab*, or what the law describes as 'conspicuous' religious symbols, in public schools.[51] Obama's criticism of the French law—or perhaps the principle of *laïcité* on which it is

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51   On the '*hijab* debate' in France, see Bowen (2007: 9–152).

based—is intended to highlight the religious freedom of Muslims living in America. Therefore, the current legislative barriers which some of their European co-religionists face should not be understood as indicating a fundamental incompatibility between Islam and the West of which America is a part. Rather, according to Obama, the principle of religious freedom, which American Muslims enjoy, should emphasize that there is no inherent conflict between the United States (or its ideals) and the Islamic faith (or a reified Islam). Beyond the themes found in the Ankara and Cairo speeches, and with arrival of the 'Arab Spring' in early 2011, the President added little to his public diplomacy on official Islam with this new unfolding of the Arab Middle East.[52]

Whither Official Islam?

In conclusion, the evolution of American presidential discourse on Islam begins not, as it is often assumed, after 9/11 with the Bush presidency, but with President Clinton. It was the first World Trade Center attack in 1993 and, more precipitously and politically, the re-publication of Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis to which Clinton responded that established this discourse on official Islam. The response took the form of a number of rhetorical themes; specifically, what I have identified as the theses of the disassociation of Islam from terrorism, terrorism as a perversion of Islam, the shared values between Islam and America and the golden age of Islam and its contribution to human civilization. In official discourse on Islam and terrorism the 9/11 attacks brought about a major rupture between the Bush and Clinton presidencies. While rejecting the clash of civilizations thesis, President Bush reformulated that thesis, often using the religious phraseology of good versus evil, into a clash of ideologies between the United States and 'Islamic radicalism'. To that end, the president marshaled the Clinton theses on Islam, and especially developed the idea of an Islamic golden age, to argue that the conflict was with the ideology of al-Qa'ida and not with Islamic civilization as such. Thus, the Bush administration revived the model of the Cold War battle into the global war on terrorism, and equated 'Islamic radicalism' with the threat that the Communism of the Soviet Union posed to the 'free world'. With President Obama, the clash of ideologies thesis, along with and including Bush's religious phraseology, was dropped entirely from his administration's public diplomacy on Islam and terrorism. On the latter, Obama emphasized al-Qa'ida's political ends and violent

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52   On political Islam and the 'Arab Spring', see al-Rahim (2011: 8–22).

means to the exclusion of religion and religiosity. In crafting his discourse of respect toward 'Muslim communities', President Obama, like his predecessor, appropriated the theses originated in the Clinton administration, but largely focused on universal human values that unite Muslims and America. Finally, aside from the public diplomacy theses on official Islam, these three presidents share a common essentialized view of Islam, namely, that it is a religion of peace with little, if any, connection to the complex culture, theologies and politics of the Middle East.

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