A.L.M. Thesis

Laid Bare By Prejudice and Paranoia:

How America’s Historical, Misconceived, and Evolving Fear Gave Rise to

Modern Islamophobia

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Thesis in the Field of Religion

For the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts

Harvard University

May 2, 2019
Abstract

Islamophobia has been a major topic of academic and scholarly discussion, as well as a force in the ordinary lives of many Americans, especially since 9/11. This thesis attempts to build on the topic of contemporary Islamophobia in light of America’s historical race- and religion-related prejudicial treatment of “otherized” minority groups. Rather than dismiss Islamophobia as a recent phenomenon, with hatred of Muslims only arising as a result of the 9/11 attacks, this thesis argues that America has a much deeper societal tendency to create an enemy, not only as a response to perceived threats, but in order to affirm the American identity. Throughout history, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between America’s creation of enemies and minority group racial prejudice. It happens to be the case that Muslims are the latest victims of such racial hatred as Islam is viewed as an intrinsically violent religion in the West. To identify the root cause of this social injustice, this thesis takes a close study of Islamophobia, and its various structures and dimensions. The thesis discusses enemy- and race-construction theories, along with people’s social and psychological behavior during times of national crisis. It also looks at other, similar episodes of race-related historical prejudices, such as Orientalism, the “Yellow Peril”, and “Japanophobia” during World War II. To consider these, the thesis studies different theories, research findings, and the writings of social and religious scholars. This analysis reveals that there is indeed a specific, American tendency to misconceive and manufacture a fear of “the other” which is perceived to be different from the rest of society. As this fear affirms the American identity, it is conveniently used by both the mainstream media and politicians alike, and it has had special success more recently, through the proliferation of virtually unregulated viral, and open-source social media. The result has a chilling, devastating, and disruptive effect in Americans’ everyday lives.
Acknowledgments

It has been quite a journey, yet it almost never happened, given the usual busyness of everyday life. Sometimes, I feel this journey happened by accident for me, as I was bed-ridden and confined to my home with my kids. But I have always been a true believer of my faith (specifically, Islam), its teachings regarding life after death and resurrection, and so I found myself driven by the ultimate truth of life: death. Motivated by my religious passion, I suddenly felt the courage to take on my religious spirituality to learn more about Allah and Islam. I signed up to take a course on Islam online, and precipitously felt the jolt and motivation to pursue it further. I was determined to learn more about why we have different systems of faiths, and to learn about other religions. It brought me to where I am today on my journey.

I thank my Almighty Allah, first and foremost, for fueling the fire in me to pursue this spiritual journey. Most of all, I thank Him for guiding me onto the path of light, Islam, and giving me a sense of deeply-rooted conviction and resilience. I especially thank my late mom, Jahanara Begum, and my late dad, Abdul Malek, for sacrificing the very little that they had to give me and my siblings the light of life: education.

I also thank all my beloved siblings, especially my oldest sister, Roxana Malek, who did the most to bring me up and help me become the person I am today. I must especially thank my wife, Monica Kishowar, who struggled a lot by marrying a poor undergraduate student with barely any money, accepting this kind of life. Most of all, I thank the joys of my life, our two beautiful toddler twins, Umayr and Umaiza. Together, the two of them have kept me agile, spirited, and engaged during this difficult journey, by keeping me on my toes, all the time! They taught me how to be resilient, how to repeatedly fall, keep on getting back up, and keep on going (and playing) again and again.

This journey has been made a lot easier by my new-found brother and buddy, Matt Newland. What a source of support he has been for me! I thank him tremendously for his continued support and help with a lot of the academic research, as well as correcting my writings over and over again, tirelessly.

Then there is Professor Stephanie Paulsell, my Thesis Director, whose class I almost dropped in the summer of 2017, since it started at 7:30 in the morning. But her class turned out to be an amazing source of enlightenment and experience for me. Her class was the last walk-off as a student of my academic career! I guess sometimes good things also happen by chance; she became one of my favorite teachers. I thank her very much for taking a deep dive with me into Islamophobia; not too many thesis/research advisers would care or have the courage to study and learn about Islamophobia, given all the recent violence caused by Muslim terrorists. She was a great source of knowledge and feedback for me.

I also want to thank Dr. Stephen Shoemaker, my Research Advisor. Without his guidance and approval, I would not have been able to take on this research topic on contemporary Islamophobia. Last, I must thank everyone at Harvard, especially the Harvard Academic Accessibility Office, who made it possible for me to attend and pursue this program.

Finally, I took on this particular thesis topic of Islamophobia because I, like countless Muslims around the world, constantly feel a perpetual sense of guilt, which always follows any terrorist attack anywhere in the world. I sometimes even find myself making a sigh of relief, if I learn that it is not a Muslim perpetrator. Contemporary Islamophobia, the recent creation of the
West, is a self-inflicted wound that we must get rid of. I feel the entire religion of Islam, and all Muslims, are being put on trial by the West for the misdeeds of few isolated and misguided Muslim extremists, whose views do not at all align with the true teachings of Islam. Like many, I feel Islam has been grossly misunderstood in America. Here, all Muslims have become guilty by association, because of the misguided actions of a few. As a student, I felt a sense of moral and social responsibility to study, understand, and educate others regarding the root cause of modern Islamophobia. I want to help shed some light upon it, and bring it to the forefront of social and cultural debate. As the PEW Research poll indicates that familiarity with Muslims is linked to a more favorable view of Muslims and Islam in the West.\(^1\) I am a true believer that, with proper and truthful learning of Islam and Islamic values, people in the West will learn to see through the actions of extremist few, and see that it is never the religion of Islam that is the catalyst or culprit, but the shameless and perverted view of a few whose ultimate goal is to sow the seeds of division between Islam and the West.

Thank you beyond words for all your support!

Muhammed Parvez
April 30, 2019

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Introduction

Anti-Muslim bias is nothing new in the West, especially in America. Whether it is a subset of traditional racial prejudice, genuine fear of the politics, culture, or religious practices of Islam, the popularization of anti-Muslim cannot be denied, especially since the attack on September 11, 2001 (hereafter referred to as “9/11”). Thanks in part to the mainstream media’s perpetual coverage and prosecution of “Muslim only” instigated terrorist acts, frequently filtered through the lenses of anti-Muslim extremist groups’ minority opinions, the West has developed a very negative view of Muslims. This view is no doubt, magnified with the unprecedented and horrifying attacks on America on 9/11. It marked an earth-shattering geopolitical shift in the portrayal of Muslims across the globe. Like the posting on the placard said, “Everything I needed to know about Islam, I learned on 9/11” (Peek 17). Simply put, it overnight changed West’s perceptions of Islam, undeniably.

In a 2017 study conducted by the Southern Poverty Law Center, from 2015 to 2016 the number of anti-Muslim hate groups in the U.S. grew 197% and anti-Muslim hate crimes surged 67% (Kishi para. 4). As fate would have it, even as I was writing this thesis, the New Zealand shooting massacre took place on March 15, 2019, killing 51 men, women, and children, and injuring hundreds in two separate mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand (Wescott para. 1). The New Zealand massacre is a searing reminder of the human cost of Islamophobia. Sadly, it seems Islamophobia remains an important topic for discussion. It is worth mentioning that waves of similarly racially-charged shootings took place in different places of worship in the days following the New Zealand incident: the Easter Sunday Massacre in three churches in Sri Lanka on April 21 2019, and the Passover shooting in a San Diego synagogue on April 27 2019. Innocent civilians were killed in each (Dakin para. 1). This cycle of racial hatred and violence never ends.
Former US President Barack Obama once said, “No one should ever feel afraid or unsafe in their place of worship” (Somanader para 5). Yet, some Muslims could not find refuge at their most sacred place. In the New Zealand massacre, the terrorist responsible specifically targeted Muslims, as a result of his nationalist views. The murderer indicated in his very killing “manifesto” that he was particularly drawn on to the nationalist and anti-Islam rhetoric of President Donald Trump (“Islam hates us”), and with the recent waves of White Nationalism (Haynes 28).

In the case of the New Zealand massacre, the murderer specifically targeted Muslims for his revenge killing. The 28-year-old Australian man charged with murder in relation to the attacks, was obsessed with terror attacks committed by Islamic extremists, and so decided to plan an attack of his own (Ward para. 14). Interestingly, in the aftermath of this terrorist act, not a single Muslim leader around the world accused Christianity as a terrorist religion, nor put all Christians on trial, blaming them *en masse* for what happened. Surely, every religion has a violent interpretation/side to it; Islam, Christianity, or Judaism, are no different in that way. But if that is the case, then why does only Islam get labeled as a “violent religion” by so many in the West? Whenever we hear news of any terrorist act or mass killing, my first reaction (and the first reaction of so many other Muslims) is always the thought, “Please, do not let it be a Muslim.” Why must this be the case? Is it simply a case of the fear of the unknown? Or is it a case of internalized Islamophobia? That is the very subject of discussion of this thesis.

This thesis intends to build on research on the topic of Islamophobia. The burning question at the heart of this thesis is the nature of Islamophobia today, and its prevalence in today’s society. How can we explain it? There are indeed terrorists with an agenda in the world, who are willing to use violence; the question is whether America’s response to its perceived threat (a trend of fear, suspicion, and discrimination) is, or has ever been, appropriate. All these questions will be considered in the following chapters.
This thesis will argue that Islamophobia is the result of the fear, paranoia, and aggression of a small minority whose views and actions do not represent those of most of the world’s Muslims. As it damages and disturbs American lives in the present time, it is not immediately clear why Islamophobia has become such a force for discord and misunderstanding between fellow Americans, especially with regard to the peace-loving Muslim community.

This thesis will also examine and debate that Islamophobia is the result of the fear and aggression of small minority extremists, whose views and actions do not represent those of most of the world’s 1.8 billion diverse Muslims from all colors, races, regions, and ethnic groups. Islamophobia is a deliberate attempt of some in the West to replace an old enemy with a new and manufactured one, i.e., Islam, in the post-Cold War era. Nonetheless, as it continues to wreck havoc to the peace, and assimilation in American lives, we must seek understand its genesis (Esposito 147).

Therefore this thesis will argue affirmatively that a specific brand of fear underlies the episodes of hatred and discrimination which have recurred throughout American history, even when those citizens who are its victims might differ in their religious views, skin color, or ethnicity. This thesis will argue that this fear is born out of difference itself, and the fact that difference breeds discomfort and a feeling of uncertainty: feelings which Americans seem set to automatically resist. The hypothesis to be considered is that Americans are quick to find enemies among their own, and especially quick to seize upon any perceived difference from what they consider the norm. A look at history in this thesis will question why, and reveal a trend evidenced by events such as the Yellow Peril, which led to the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War, and long before that, Orientalism, an anti-Asian attitude that prevailed in America from the very first decades of its history.
In Chapter 1 of this thesis, we will acknowledge that in America, Muslims are treated differently from the rest of American society. It will consider why, first by determining a definition of Islamophobia that accounts for strictly anti-Muslim prejudice in American society (while considering different possible variations in the way Islamophobia is experienced by Muslim Americans). We will also discuss some of the consequences of post-9/11 Islamophobia. We will then conclude the chapter with an acknowledgement of the unfair reality of Islamophobia in American society. This thesis will make an effort to understand the present trend of unfair treatment happening right now in American society. Chapter 1 will also end with the question as to how America’s Islamophobic attitudes came to be, which we will focus on at length in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2, we will consider why Islamophobia has been so prevalent in American society, asking why Muslims have been and are treated differently in America, and whether or not pre-9/11 Islamophobia was different in character from present-day, 21st-century Islamophobia. Over the course of this chapter, we will consider each question in relation to enemy construction and the sharp increase of Islamophobia following the events of 9/11.

Chapter 3 will explore the nature of anti-Muslim prejudice by comparing it with two earlier events involving fear of fellow Americans in American history: the “Yellow Peril” that shaped America’s immigration policies and defined Americans’ understanding of their “American” (that is, white and English-speaking) identity, and (more specifically) the anti-Japanese sentiment of the 1940s (the fear that Japanese Americans were plotting with Imperial Japan to take down the United States from within). Islamophobia will then be compared and contrasted with these other examples of prejudice, in order to determine its possible relationship to them, as well as to determine what makes it particular and unique.

The final chapter will evaluate the discussions from Chapters 1-3, summing them up and arguing the conclusion that, though the pretexts may change, and in spite of its claim of
championing freedom and liberty for all, America frequently identifies and selects enemies from among its own people, and justifies discriminating against them. This thesis will also argue that the result has been inevitably the same; by suppressing diversity (of religion, race, or political opinion), Americans have believed, and continue to believe, that they will make themselves safe by singling out the enemy and punishing them for who they are. In order to deal with the threat of diversity, the government’s power grows as the people’s freedom diminishes.
Chapter 1
Defining Islamophobia

1.1. Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the prevalence of American Islamophobia in general. Along the way, we will consider some relevant questions that may help us explain its origins and its prevalence in American culture. This chapter will begin with the assumption that Muslims in particular have been singled out by the rest of the America and labeled as alternatively foreign, backward, and at worst, a threat to America’s civilization: “[A] rival ideology at odds with American values, society, and national identity”, which is “inherently violent, alien, and unassimilable” (Beydoun 28). If this is true, this thesis will seek to understand why it is so.

We begin our discussion with how Muslim Americans are judged to be different, alien, or otherwise “other” by a large portion of their fellow Americans, living according to “a rival ideology at odds with American values, society, and national identity” (Beydoun 18), which is “inherently violent, alien, and unassimilable” (Beydoun 28). This will lead to a more pointed discussion of Islamophobia in the following chapters, citing examples of how Muslims are singled out, the effects of Islamophobia on American politics (especially the most recent presidential campaigns), and a more clear and specific definition of “Islamophobia” and what it involves.

The case of proto-Islamophobic sentiment can be traced back to the early medieval period. Christians’ negative representations of Islam increased with the rapid rise of the new religion (Iqbal 83-84). Since then, and especially since the time of the Enlightenment, attitudes which would eventually be described as “Islamophobic” have persisted in and around the West throughout various centuries until the present-day (Beydoun 52-53). The current debate and discussions of Islamophobia have come to the forefront of public and political discourse
starting with the attack on 9/11 (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 836). There has been a plethora of interesting literature on the rise of Islamophobia in contemporary American culture, and theories and observations on how a small minority could have such an impact and influence on the public’s general opinions. In fact, a majority of Americans claim to have never met a Muslim (Aslan vii), thus raising a very important and relevant question: what has led these people to develop such strong feelings about a group of people that they do not know or have never met?

We will discuss three related topics to Islamophobia, in a pre-determined order in this chapter. First, we will recognize the present-day situation of Islamophobia by discussing the ways Muslims in general are affected directly, including some of the ways Islamophobia has affected non-Muslims (Sikhs from Pakistan, or Arab Christians). Second, it will examine the obvious and dubious double-standard that applies to the massively unjust treatment to which Muslims are subjected: the tendency for Muslim perpetrators of violence to be labeled “terrorists”, while non-Muslims responsible for similar violent actions are not. The result of this discussion will be an understanding that the label “terrorist” has a broader extension than is commonly used by the American public and is often miss-applied (or unfairly denied to those who deserve it, usually on the basis of the fact that they are not Muslims). Third, following our recognition that the term “terrorist” is not always accurately applied by the American public, we will make an attempt to more clearly define the term “Islamophobia” to determine what it truly is or what it truly signifies as a general public sentiment. This diagnosis will lead us to its origin in the follow-up discussion in Chapter 2.

1.2. Responding to Violence with Fear: Ifitikhar

We will begin this section with a look at the prevailing presence of Islamophobia in America. We will consider examples provided by the renowned American human rights
advocate Arsalan Iftikhar’s summary from his 2016 book, *Scapegoats* and assessment of Islamophobia in America. Specifically, we will consider individual/personal incidents of violence directed at Muslims (or people thought to be Muslims), which occurred after 9/11. This discussion from Iftikhar will also examine the overall anti-Muslim sentiment at the heart of the 2016 U.S. presidential campaigns, particularly by then presidential candidate, Donald J. Trump. Iftikhar focuses particularly on how effectively Trump was able to influence and manipulate the emotions of a large part of the American public (especially their fear) to be in the White House.

In Chapter 2 of *Scapegoats*, Iftikhar references an article he wrote in 2010 where he quotes a claim that: “Islamophobia has become the accepted form of racism in America. […] You can always take a potshot at Muslims or Arabs and get away with it” (Iftikhar 11). In that same article, Iftikhar predicted the successful rise of US political leaders who would take advantage of this acceptable prejudice, using anti-Muslim sentiment to “stir up the worst human passions and win votes” (Iftikhar 11). And indeed, in *Scapegoats*, Iftikhar goes on to acknowledge the success of Donald Trump’s 2016 then-current presidential campaign, which (along with Ben Carson and Ted Cruz, who also portrayed Islam negatively in their campaigns in order to play upon people’s raw fear) “competed with one another to command the Muslim-bashing heights (or depths).”10 Iftikhar says that this popular attitude is nothing new; anti-Muslim virulence has had a presence in American political circles, especially since the events of 9/11. The question we wish to consider in this thesis is, “why”.

In describing the across-the-board attitudes of many Americans toward Muslims, Iftikhar provides example after example demonstrating the fear of, and anger directed toward, Muslims. Among them, he recounts a Georgia state emergency responder meeting in November 2001, two months after the terror attacks in New York City. He tells of how Congressman Saxby Chambliss (Rep.) suggested turning “the sheriff loose and arrest[ing]
every Muslim that crosses the state line” (Iftikhar 16). Iftikhar then notes that because of his
crowd-pleasing Muslim bashing, a majority of the Georgia voters promoted, and elected,
Chambliss to the Senate the following year. These examples of political achievements show
the prevalence of anti-Muslim attitudes in American politics held by many Americans.¹

Iftikhar also cites statistics and findings from general surveys of Americans who have
been subjected to years of “false and malicious rhetoric” surrounding Muslims (26); he notes
that as a result of their demonization, American converts who embrace Islam as their religion
are regarded with increasingly negative attitudes by their fellow Americans (26). He cites a
2014 poll finding that American favorability toward Muslims “had dropped to 27% from 36%
in 2010” (Iftikhar 26). In a similar poll by a different group, it showed that prior to 9/11 attacks,
American’s favorability towards Muslims were an almost even tie at 47% (“Islamophobia:
Understanding para. 4). In his book, Iftikhar then observes that anti-Muslim animus has since
increased, since the Paris attacks in November, 2015 and the San Bernardino, California
shootings a month later. He notes an Iowa study from that same year, showing that 51% of
Iowa Republicans felt that the practice of Islam should be made illegal in the USA (26-27).

All these cited examples of geopolitical grievance against Islam and Muslims in
general are unfortunately quite common occurrences. However, the present purpose of citing
this information is not to convince the reader of American Muslim sentiment, but to understand
its effects on the American people. Though Iftikhar sees injustice in the fact that millions of
Americans are being scapegoated and discriminated against, he does not expect things to
change any time soon (indeed, Trump’s election following the publication of Iftikhar’s book
would cement his thoughts). Discouraged, Iftikhar laments, “These days, everyone knows that

¹ A further example: Yaswr Ali’s article discusses the 2010 “Save Our State Amendment” in Oklahoma, making it
the first state to ban “Sharia law”. While the federal court blocked this decision, Ali sees this as symptomatic of an
“increased hysteria towards Islam and Muslims”, and sees such policies as racist and alienating; Ali observes that
such measures and attitudes are in fact nothing new, but stem from a long-held tradition of longer history (1027).
you can say whatever you want about Islam and Muslims in the public domain with complete impunity” (32).

This impunity has bred society-wide contempt, fueling the fire among people who already fear Islam and Muslims, in general. Also to be discussed, then, in addition to the opinions and fears Americans display toward Muslims in their rhetoric and voting, there are the violent actions that result from these feelings. Sadly, Iftikhar sees the events of 9/11 as the catalyst in the rise of violence against Muslim Americans, and anyone judged to have any kind of affiliation with Islam (whether real or imagined). Iftikhar puts it this way, before providing his usual litany of examples:

Ever since September 11, 2001, millions of Americans of Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian descent have been on their own version of orange alert, keenly aware that they can suddenly become the target of ignorant violence at the hands of their fellow Americans. And their places of worship--including Muslim mosques, Hindu temples and Sikh gurdwaras--become inviting targets for patriotic terrorists seeking to lash out in blind rage at anyone who bears a resemblance to the foreign-looking people they’ve been programmed to hate. (66)

Among the incidents Iftikhar cites as examples, there are a number of murders in various cities that took place a few days after the New York City attacks, on September 15, 2001. The first victim Iftikhar mentions, Indian-American businessman Balbir Sing Sodhi, was killed by a white American aircraft mechanic named Frank Silva Roque, outside of a gas station in Mesa, Arizona. Sodhi was chosen by his killer because he wore a turban and had dark skin (Karr para. 7); in other words, he fit his killer’s idea of an Islamic terrorist (in fact, the day the attack occurred, Roque told friends of his intention “to go out and shoot some towel-heads”) (Karr para. 7). The second victim killed that same day, Egyptian-American Adel Karras, was shot to death outside the import shop he owned in Los Angeles, California. A third violent incident
began that same day in Dallas, Texas, where a Texan man named Marc Anthony Stroman committed a series of revenge killings in response to the 9/11 attacks, killing a Pakistani grocer named Waqar Hasan. Over the course of the next two weeks, Stroman would also kill an Indian-American gas station owner named Vasudev Patel, and seriously injure a Bangladeshi-American gas station attendant named Rais Bhuiyan (Mears para. 5).

As Iftikhar states in his book, all these violent incidents (and several more, in the months and years which followed) were in response to the 9/11 attacks, and acted out upon people judged to be Muslim or Middle Eastern in appearance, and therefore in some way responsible for the terror attacks. However, many of the victims in these cases were not actually Muslims; Sodhi’s turban should have made him recognizable as a Sikh; Adel Karras was an Egyptian Orthodox Christian, (“Murder of Egyptian Grocery Store Owner” para. 1), while Vasudev Patel, the Dallas gas station owner, was a Hindu. In fact, only Waqar Hasan, killed by Stroman, and Rais Bhuiyan, who survived being shot by Stroman, were actually Muslims (Mears para. 4-5). Further, not only did none of these individuals have anything to do with the 9/11 attacks, but neither did their nations of origin (India, Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh), nor did their religions (again, many of them were not even Muslim). And yet they paid the ultimate price. Does violence justify violent retribution in-kind? As Iftikhar comments, “Logic rarely intrudes when it comes to hate crimes” (66).

These acts of hatred force us to reevaluate the definition of the word, “terrorist”. In these cases, Iftikhar notes the constant use of violence as a means of expressing rage. He then notes what he perceives to be a double-standard regarding media reports of such incidents, and the public perception of such acts of violence: the fact that acts of violence directed at the American public by Muslims are considered “terrorism” and their perpetrators “terrorists”, but the same is not the case when the identities of victim and perpetrator are reversed (64).
A case of such is the San Bernardino, California mass killing incident, which took place on December 2, 2015. Immediately after it happened, then presidential candidate Donald Trump wasted no time in calling for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States five days later (“Donald J. Trump Statement” para. 1). However, he has since failed to call out other instances of violence as acts of terrorism: the Las Vegas mass shooting on October 1, 2017, or the New Zealand mass killing on March 15, 2019, for example (when asked by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) to condemn the New Zealand attacks as “white supremacist terrorist attacks,” Trump only referred to them as a “horrible massacre”) (Russell para. 6-7).

1.3. Defining “Terrorism”: Iftikhar

This section focuses our attention on the actual meaning and nature of the word “terrorism”, and its unequivocal association with Muslims. For the ultimate purpose of this chapter, it is significant that we come to a clear and concise understanding of Islamophobia. By defining one related term, “terrorism”, we shall use the same method to define its related term.

In accurately defining the term, “terrorist”, we can apply the following method: First, we can observe that acts of terror are acts of violence, and that the goal of the violence is to frighten or intimidate a specifically-targeted group of people. Second, we can apply this definition to acts of violence such as Wade’s attack on the Sikh temple, to determine if this (rather than some other motive, such as personal revenge against a specific individual inside the temple) was the motivation. If not, then we can accurately describe an act of violence such as Wade’s (or the 9/11 attacks) as “terrorism”, and their perpetrators as “terrorists”.

While this section considered numerous examples compiled by Iftikhar, they work together to show both the violence and the prevalence of anti-Muslim feelings on both the individual and state levels (this two-dimensional presence of Islamophobia will be verified and
become the focus of Beydoun’s discussion and definition of Islamophobia, later in this chapter.
Additionally, a few key ideas which can be deduced from the examples he gives: First, the events of 9/11 have left an indelible mark on America, and how Americans view Muslims in general. Second, violence committed in response to events like 9/11 is a result of fear and hatred, and has led to troubling implications regarding how Americans understand the word “terrorism”. Third, the true nature and intent of words like “terrorism” and “Islamophobia” need to be clearly understood, in order to understand people’s actions, in order to deal with them effectively. Fourth, we must better comprehend the very true meaning of the word “Islamophobia” so we can understand better the violent actions of individuals, as well as the success of anti-Muslim rhetoric in some mainstream media, and political campaigns. We must ask, is it based on fear of a real threat (like 9/11), hatred, or general xenophobia? Have Muslims been especially singled out? We will touch on this in the following sections of the chapter.

1.4. Defining “Islamophobia”: Bleich and Beydoun

The goal of this thesis is to understand Islamophobia, a topic closely related to terrorism. Thus far, we have a clear definition of terrorism, provided by Iftikhar, even if it is not always recognized for what it is by the media, journalists, or by the public. Iftikhar’s book makes no effort to define Islamophobia as clearly as he does terrorism, but notes the multiple examples of violence directed at Muslims, that instead affected non-Muslims. While we have a clear definition of terrorism, which allows us to judge acts of terrorism objectively (in spite of the skin color of the perpetrators), does a similar definition exist for Islamophobia? If an Egyptian Christian or an Indian Sikh can be as much a victim of Islamophobia as a Muslim from Pakistan, then is the term even accurate? Perhaps it is not strictly Muslims that Islamophobes fear, but anyone from the Middle East, Central Asia, or Southeast Asia? If that’s the case, we
are describing Islamophobia as something closer to racism than the fear of any religion or its members.

In this section we will make a deliberate attempt to define Islamophobia, a complex phenomenon. We will do so with the help of two authors who have devoted careful time in articulating and understanding the meaning of Islamophobia, Erik Bleich and Khaled Beydoun. We will also touch on the matrix of Islamophobia by briefly assessing the point of view of another group of scholars who discuss the political dimension to it. After considering each individual’s definition, we will place their overlapping understandings of Islamophobia side-by-side, in order to complement and enhance one another. Bleich provides a general understanding of Islamophobia that nonetheless defines clear boundaries around specific Islamophobic behavior. Beydoun looks within the parameters of Bleich’s definition, in order to articulate the different levels or dimensions of Islamophobia and how it manifests itself in different ways. At the end of this discussion, we will have arrived at a precise, distinct, and robust understanding of Islamophobia as a complex phenomenon. This understanding will open the door to further discussions in later chapters.

We begin our discussion of Islamophobia with Erik Bleich’s 2012 article, “Defining and Researching Islamophobia”. Here, Bleich confirms that “there is no widely-accepted definition of the term” and that, as a result, it is difficult to discuss levels of Islamophobia without also considering racism or xenophobia (fear or hatred toward members of another race, regardless of their religious beliefs, or individuals from foreign countries, again regardless of their race/religious affiliation) (179). Bleich’s article considers several possible meanings of the word.

Bleich begins by stating his purpose: to review the prevailing uses of the term “Islamophobia”, in order to offer a definition of Islamophobia that is more accurate and precise. For example, he asks, does it refer to “social anxiety toward Islam and Islamic cultures”? Or is
it a rejection toward a religious attitude that differentiates Muslims as “other” in society (thus, dividing Americans between “us” and “them”)? Does it refer to a fear of Muslim people, or to the fear of the religion itself? Is it the tendency to make negative, blanket statements about both or either, or does it refer to a deliberate rejection of Islam? (in which case, are all non-Muslims who choose to follow a different religion automatically Islamophobic?) (Bleich 180).

Bleich begins his attempt to understand the meaning of the term “Islamophobia” by noting the history of “Islamophobia” as a term; he explains that while the Islamophobic sentiment has been in place going as far back as seventeenth century, the actual term was first coined in Britain in 1997, to describe the rhetoric used to negatively portray Muslims in Western democracies (179). “Since then,” Bleich says, “and especially since 2001,” it has been regularly used by the media, by citizens, and by NGOs, particularly in Britain, France, and the United States. Although the term has become relatively common, there is little agreement about Islamophobia’s precise meaning. Some authors deploy Islamophobia without explicitly defining it. […] Others use characterizations that are vague, narrow, or generic. (179-180)

Bleich offers us his own carefully crafted definition on page 181 of his article, summed up in a single sentence: “Islamophobia can best be understood as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims” (180). Bleich goes on to clarify that criticism of Islam itself is not a sign of Islamophobia (case in point: a Christian may explain why he does not believe the teachings of Islam, in order to profess Christianity instead; in such a case, the Christian is not being Islamophobic even while objecting to Islam). Bleich also clarifies that Islamophobic attitudes are “indiscriminate negative attitudes,” unnuanced and directed at

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2 Non-Government Organizations
anything that appears to be “Islamic” or Muslim. In Islamophobia, all aspects of Islam or Muslim people are spoken of negatively.  

When determining how Islamophobic a person or society is, Bleich says, we need only to look at the frequency of anti-Islamic statements made by them. Have they simply made a “one-off” or rare negative statement regarding Islam? Then we could say that this constitutes low-level Islamophobia. However, the more Islamophobic a person is, then, the more frequent their anti-Muslim remarks or expressed attitudes (Bleich 181). Bleich concludes:

Drawing on the concept formation literature and on the scholarship on racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and homophobia makes it possible to construct a definition of Islamophobia that is useful in a number of different contexts. (Bleich 181-182)

Another, perhaps more thorough understanding of Islamophobia is provided by Khaled Beydoun in his 2018 book, American Islamophobia. To further delve into (and better understand and define) Islam, we will compare and contrast Beydoun’s understanding with Bleich’s.

To begin, Beydoun discusses Islamophobia’s presence in America long before the events of 9/11. He explains how the United States courts once painted Islam not only as a foreign religion, but “as a rival ideology” and Muslims as an “enemy race” (18), and how he understands Islamophobia as the more recent expression of this long-held, anti-Muslim American attitude. According to Beydoun, Americans have long viewed Islam, and Muslim people, as “inherently suspicious and unassimilable” (Beydoun 18), and regarded the Muslim faith as a “rival ideology” at odds with American values, society, and national identity (18).

Beydoun provides a more complicated description of Islamophobia, in contrast to Bleich’s articulation of Islamophobia as being directed at people (Bleich 181). He argues that

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3 Having a dislike of Arab people because of Islamophobia could even lead to a dismissal or distrust of Egyptian or Syrian Christians, or other Christian Arabs. In such a case, Islamophobia could even have non-Muslim victims (Bleich 181).
Islamophobia manifests itself in three distinct ways, and they are present in different ways and in the different contexts of American life; *private Islamophobia, structural Islamophobia*, and *dialectical Islamophobia*. According to Beydoun all forms of Islamophobia share a presumption that Islam is “inherently violent, alien, and unassimilable”, and that the practice and expression of Islam correlates with “a propensity for terrorism” (Beydoun 28). This fear is first expressed and propagated by individuals but can affect society at many different levels. This is the first dimension of Islamophobia, what Beydoun calls *private Islamophobia* (28). Note that associating Muslims with a “propensity for terrorism” also aligns with Iftikhar's observation that Muslim perpetrators of violence are usually described as “terrorists,” while white Americans or the so-called white nationalists, who do the same, are not (Iftikhar 73-74).

Citing one of the same examples discussed by Iftikhar, the murder of Babir Sigh Bodhi six days after the 9/11 attacks, Bodhi is described by Beydoun as a victim of private Islamophobia (in spite of not being a Muslim), because his turban and beard made him “fit the caricature of the Muslim terrorist subscribed to by many Americans” (35). Another important detail, implicit in Iftikhar’s discussion of Islamophobia (but directly described by Beydoun) are the three manifestations in which it arises in society. While he never explicitly lists them, we see Islamophobia manifest itself and being promoted by individuals (such as the murderers discussed earlier), the government, through laws, surveillance, and restrictions regarding immigration, and the media (which promotes sensational stories and sows the seeds of suspicion in individuals, leading to a cycle which goes on without end).

*Structural Islamophobia*, the next level of Islamophobia according to Beydoun, occurs when Muslim people are targeted by government institutions (36). Here Islamophobia manifests itself in anti-Muslim policies and state actions “enacted to police Muslims during the protracted war on terror” (Beydoun 37). While structural Islamophobia in its present form only arose after 9/11, it is the heir to what Beydoun calls the “Orientalist” attitude present in
America since before the 19th century (when policies were set in place to discourage immigration from Asia) (37).

*Dialectical Islamophobia*, the third level of Islamophobia as defined by Beydoun, arises from the interaction between private individuals and the state. With dialectical Islamophobia, the private Islamophobia of individuals gives rise to national and international policies, affecting Muslims in America as well as internationally (Beydoun 29). Fear and suspicion on the private level are further encouraged by “rubber-stamping” Muslim stereotypes through racial profiling and enacting surveillance programs, fear and suspicion on the private level are further encouraged (Beydoun 41). Beydoun notes how, following violent events such as 9/11 or the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, Islamophobia was manifested on both private and structural levels: an attack committed by a Muslim (perceived to be an outsider by the public) sparked “a desire to exact revenge and perpetuate violence against anybody and everybody perceived to be Muslim” (40). In such situations, state policies respond to the violence by enforcing popular tropes, and “structural Islamophobic policies are typically enacted, advanced, or zealously lobbied for” (Beydoun 40). Through various other sources, we find such ubiquitous cases of dialectical Islamophobia in every level of US law enforcement, starting from US Military forces and the FBI’s official handling and surveillance of Muslims in New York City. Thus, dialectical Islamophobia is to be found on a state and local level (Ernst 6).

In all the levels of Islamophobia discussed by Beydoun: the private, structural, and dialectic, we see a common thread that prevails in every case of Islamophobia. First, there is a presumption of guilt assigned to Muslims on every level. Second, Islamophobia is directed specifically at people who fit the “idea” of what a Muslim looks like or acts like in his or her

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4 Here, mid- and senior-level intelligence officers are specifically trained to view Islam in a very barbaric and negative light and treat Muslim people as possible terrorist suspects, dismissing Muslims and prominent Muslim organizations as “nothing but radical extremists attempting to impose the sharia on America.”
appearance and/or customs. In Bleich’s definition of Islamophobia, we see the same effects, including the possibility of non-Muslim individuals becoming the victims of Islamophobia as a result of generalized fear and anger directed at anyone who reminds the perpetrators of Islam (due to nationality, skin color, dress, or other forms of outward appearance). Bleich does not reinforce the notion that Islamophobia is ultimately directed at people, though he notes that criticism of Islam itself (for example, by Christians or non-religious people who might write or express theological objections to the teachings of Islam) (181).

After reviewing both Bleich and Beydoun’s understandings of Islamophobia, we can apply the following method to defining the term, much as we did to determine the meaning of the words “terrorism” and “terrorist”. First, we can observe that Islamophobia is an emotional response to Muslims and their faith and/or beliefs (i.e., Islam), based on fear and/or anger. Second, we can observe that Islamophobia comes from an individual’s understanding/beliefs regarding Islam and Muslim people. Therefore, we can assert that Islamophobia exists in the mind of the individual, and so may be misdirected as a result of that individual’s ignorance.

Based on our findings so far, we can also note that discrimination based on the assumption that a person who is Muslim is also a manifestation of Islamophobia. Regardless of the severity of its manifestation, fear is its underlying cause.

To complete this section, we should note that Beydoun’s three-part study of Islamophobia fleshes out an understanding of what Islamophobia entails within the boundaries set forth by Bleich in his article. Moreover, Bleich’s and Beydoun’s definitions of Islamophobia complement one another’s nicely, with Bleich setting the parameters and Beydoun describing the internal structure. We are then able to apply this powerful, two-part, multidimensional definition to the numerous examples provided by Iftikhar, presented in the earliest section of this chapter. The examples of Iftikhar, together with the multifaceted definitions provided by Bleich and Beydoun, provide us with a clear and precise vision of the
scope and severity of Islamophobia, demonstrating the seriousness of the topic and what true sense and nature of Islamophobia entails.

As an extension to our discussion in defining the parameters of Islamophobia, it is worth shedding a brief light on the political dimension to Islamophobia. In “Islamophobia, Social Movements and the State: For a Movement-Centered Approach” (2017), Narzanin Massoumi, Tom Mills, and David Miller critically define Islamophobia from the political point of view. Specifically, they describe it through the “five pillars of Islamophobia”: (1) the institutions and machinery of the state; (2) the far-right, incorporating the counter-jihad movement; (3) the neoconservative movement; (4) the transnational Zionist movement; and (5) the assorted liberal groupings including the pro-war left and the new atheist movement” (Massoumi, Mills, and Miller 4-5). Their definition of Islamophobia through these five pillars indeed uniquely highlights the political agendas by the so-called “neo-con”, right-wing politicians’ deliberate attempt to produce a new post-Cold-War era enemy with the anti-Muslim discourse for their institutional and political gains with the false pretense that Islam may take over the West, due to the fact that they consider Muslims to be uncivilized (Massoumi, Mills, and Miller 37).

1.5. Conclusion

Chapter 1 provided us with a robust and concise definition of Islamophobia, in order to better understand the meaning of the term with many variations to it. This chapter concludes with the broadest, most precise understanding of Islamophobia, which affects the greatest number of people that are Muslims, or at risk of being the victims of violence intended for Muslims.

In our endeavor to provide a solid and concise definition of Islamophobia, we considered the following ideas: first, we discussed Iftikhar’s observation that violence against
Muslims (or those who have been mistaken for Muslims) increased in the wake of 9/11, specifically in response to the terrorist attacks. Iftikhar offered us real examples of how people have suffered on the account of Islamophobia, noting not only specific individuals who have suffered for being Muslim (or have been mistaken for being Muslim), but he also describes a double-standard perpetuated by the media regarding the perpetrators of violence: white Americans or white nationalists are rarely described as “terrorists” when they commit acts of violence (mass shootings, mass murders, etc.), while, even before the facts settle, Muslim Americans invariably are. This artificial distinction, frequently present in the open social media and at times in mainstream and cable news media, neither of which provide oversight on fact finding, while nationally broadcast news reports, only reinforces the public’s idea that Muslim violence is different in nature from white violence, and that Muslim violence is to be particularly feared and hated. Thus, Iftikhar provides us with not only examples of individual-level Islamophobia, but an example of Beydoun’s dialectical Islamophobia in real life action.

According to Erik Bleich, “Islamophobia can best be understood as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims” (Bleich 181). Here it can be observed that Islamophobia may exist solely in the person with negative feelings toward Islam or Muslims, and these negative feelings are focused carelessly and indiscriminately upon anyone or anything that the Islamophobic person thinks may be Muslim (or remind them of Islam). For this reason, non-Muslims (Sikhs or Arab Christians) may be victims of Islamophobia simply because of the Islamophobic person’s assumptions.

To credit Beydoun, we have also been given a fairly comprehensive definition of Islamophobia, encompassing examples of negative feelings toward Islam or Muslims (or people who may be assumed to be Muslim) expressed on two levels. First, there are Islamophobic individuals whose individual prejudices are directed at other people assumed to
be Muslim; these may be manifested in the discrimination of other, presumably Muslim individuals, or acts of violence, against Muslim individuals, or those assumed Muslim based on their appearance. Second, the government may become the enabler of Islamophobia among its citizens with its racist policies and laws, by targeting one particular group of people, in this case, Muslims.

Beydoun also describes a third form of Islamophobia, where negative attitudes and behaviors directed toward Islam or Muslims arises from a dialectic between individual and state-level Islamophobia: the fear and negative feelings of the people led to state-level discrimination (affecting immigration, deportation, etc.; for example, President Trump’s Muslim ban, which subsequently, was upheld by the US Supreme Court Justices) (“Trump v. Hawaii” para. 1), Such government actions in turn validates and reinforces the fear and negative feelings of the public. This dialectic can lead to further examples of Islamophobia, on an international level (the War on Terror being the most obvious example).

As this first chapter concludes, we should carefully note that Islamophobia is not really new; this idea is worth exploring as a means of further understanding Islamophobia: To further study, we will be discuss and try to better understand the phenomenon of contemporary Islamophobia, by looking at the context in which it arose. In the following chapters, we will discuss how, through the result of the fear and aggression of a small minority, Islamophobia has nonetheless become a complex social and cultural phenomenon in American life, and has emerged as a force in politics throughout American history.
Chapter 2

The Nature of Islamophobia: Causes and Effects

2.1. Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis set out to define Islamophobia. This was done by noting first a definition/understanding of Islamophobia as indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims (Bleich 180-181). Being indiscriminate and negative, Islamophobic attitudes are unnuanced and directed at anything that appears to be “Islamic” or Muslim. The previous chapter also suggested that Islamophobia is present only in the Islamophobic person’s mind, and that their negative attitude may be directed at anyone perceived to be Muslim (as a result, non-Muslims could be victims of Islamophobia). The definition of Islamophobia provided by Beydoun in the preceding chapter also suggests that Islamophobia may be found on different levels, manifesting itself in state policies informed by individual fears/feelings. Beydoun also discusses the existence of anti-Muslim sentiment in America long before the events of 9/11, going back nearly 200 years, to the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

In this chapter, within the parameters of the definition of Islamophobia and its dimensions that we came up with, our task is now to understand how Islamophobia is unique from other forms of discrimination suffered by other targeted groups. Suffice it to say that following 9/11, there has been plenty of interesting literature on the rise of Islamophobia in contemporary American culture, and theories and observations on how a radical, small minority could have such an impact and influence on general public opinions. Interestingly, we can rarely find any worthy discussion of Islamophobia in pre-9/11 literature. Interestingly, a majority of Americans claim to have never met a Muslim (Bail 35). This raises a very important question: What has led these people to develop such strong feelings about a group of

5 “More than 60 percent of Americans claimed they had never even met a Muslim--despite the long history of Islam in the United States” (Bail 35).
people they do not personally know? We can also wonder about the other lasting incidents of fear and paranoia in American history, involving other minority groups: How did they emerge? Did similar events prompt similar responses? Perhaps the nature of Islamophobia, which would appear directed at a religious community rather than a nationality or ethnic group, makes Islamophobia “one of a kind” of phenomenon than previous episodes of fear and discrimination in the American history.

This chapter will introduce and analyze Beydoun’s suggestion that Islamophobia is nothing new, but simply a restoration of an “old system that branded Muslims as inherently suspicious, unassimilable and cast Islam as a rival ideology at odds with American values, society, and national identity” (Beydoun 18). He argues that the European Enlightenment philosophies on which America was founded have been at odds with Islam, and frequently painted as a rival ideology of America and its citizens’ values centuries before the present time Islamophobia. The attitude of Orientalism (a term coined by Edward Said in 1978) racialized the Muslim identity, “otherizing” Muslims as alien and unassimilable. Beydoun’s writing sees two phases of Islamophobia, under two names: first was “Orientalism,” from the founding of the United States until the early 20th century, and “Islamophobia” from the start of the 21st century onward. Now the questions loom, given the history of Islamophobic attitudes in America from the start of its history, was pre-9/11 Islamophobia different in character from its present-day form? Is Islamophobia simply a subset of a larger form of xenophobia? Also, are Muslims targeted unfairly, and different from other historical minority groups? We will analyze these questions in the following sections.

2.2. Enemy Construction: Falsely Perceived Problems and Otherizing

In the subsequent sections, we will study how Islamophobia played a pivotal role both in the minds of the general public, as well as in the realm of American politics. We start with a
classic, historical case of how societies respond to threats in an effort to feel safe: America’s response to the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941. The attack anticipates the 9/11 situation in a number of ways (both being rare, major attacks on US soil), and it could be measured as an effective means of respecting America’s post-9/11 response to Muslims, both at home and abroad.

As it pertains to America’s heavy-handed response to Pearl Harbor in her 2000 article on enemy construction, Gina Pentonito offers the following comment regarding human nature: “All conflicts have situations where one group casts the other as enemy. In so doing, the contentious parties draw from available cultural resources to construct the other as a villainous foe” (Pentonito 19). In other words, racial constructs/images provide one resource of such “enemy images” (Pentonito 19). Her constructionist mindset looks for no actual, objective problems, but looks only at the problems those involved claim exist. In other words, if a person perceives a problem, then a problem exists (subjectively, whether the problem is justified or not) (Pentonito 19-20). In a psychological state, people are conditioned to feel that there is a problem which leads them to identify an enemy, reasonably justified or not. Considering this all-too-human tendency, Pentonito asks, what problems do people identify? What solutions do they propose for the problems as they understand them?

Pentonito’s study, written and published a year before the 9/11 attacks, offers some important psychological insights into how human beings regard one another in times of crisis that are quite applicable to 9/11 and its aftermath. First, Pentonito’s suggestion that enemy construction follows the “perception” (though not necessarily the truth) that a group of people is “the enemy,” follows Bleich’s suggestion that Islamophobia is entirely in the mind of the Islamophobic person (and as a result, victims misidentified as Muslims can suffer for the prejudices of those who hate or fear Islam) (Bleich 180). Comparing these parallels, it is worth mentioning that according to Pentonito’s findings, Anglo Americans of the 1940s were the
enemy-casting citizens while all Japanese Americans were “the enemy”. There was a broad accusation of the whole Japanese American population, including both *Issei* and *Nisei*.\(^6\) It consisted of the idea that freedom of Japanese Americans was a threat to American security as a whole, though in reality the problem was in the minds of fearful Americans already predisposed to prejudice toward Asian Americans.\(^7\)

Let us now turn the table and apply Pentonito’s observations to Muslim Americans. The main point that we will carry forward from Pentonito’s observations is that creating or perceiving a problem with a group requires no real incident, act of violence, or other sort of provocation that will lead to acting out of prejudice and intolerance; people will act this way regardless of facts. While it is true that America was founded on principles of freedom (freedom of speech, equality, and liberty for all) and that all are created equal, and while the plights of many minorities have gradually improved (with the end of slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and the apology and reparations paid to Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II), one minority group continues to be a target of public discrimination and prejudice: Muslim Americans. These two examples from American history resemble each other for good reason, and we must discuss this resemblance.

In line with Pentonito’s thinking, but writing almost a decade later (and in the wake of 9/11 and its aftermath), K.O. Kalkan, G.C. Layman, and E.M. Uslaner (2009) put the problem of this coexistence of American values and American prejudice this way: “Prejudice toward religious and racial minority groups has long presented a challenge to values such as equality and liberty that are central to the American ethos” (847). The authors note that while prejudice has been on the decline for years in America, there is one glaring exception: Muslims, who are,

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\(^7\) This point will become important later in this chapter, and again in Chapter 3.
the authors say, “viewed much less favorably than other religious and racial minorities” (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 847).

In fact, they argue that American perception of Muslims has not changed that much, whether pre-9/11 or in the years afterward. Their point of view is based on social identity theory, which “stresses that we are less likely to trust or tolerate people who seem different from ourselves, and Muslims’ religious beliefs and practices, cultural orientations, and ethnicity have long made them different in key ways from the Judeo-Christian mainstream” (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 847-848).

Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner also add that Americans tend to “otherize” or group outsiders apart and segregate them (the authors call such groups “out-groups”). It can be set apart in two ways: groups set apart for racial and/or religious reasons (Blacks or Jewish people, for example), and those who are set apart for cultural reasons (gay people or illegal immigrants) (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 848). The authors say that Muslims are a special case, for they fit into both groups: they may be regarded as racially and religiously distinct, as well as culturally distinct. As a result, Muslims get doubly-otherized, and are put into both categories of “other” (Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 848).

As a result, we see Muslims face discrimination on account of their differences, which are numerous when compared with Anglo Americans in light of their ethnicity, culture, and religious beliefs. Then the events of 9/11 occurred, which presented a false image of how Muslims view Americans (based on the words and actions of an extremist minority). The subsequent War on Terror further led to Americans becoming frightened of a foreign enemy,}

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8 Christopher Bail mentions the impact of the 1979-1981 Iranian hostage crisis in America, while Beydoun recalls how in 1995, the media preemptively blamed Arab terrorists for the Oklahoma City bombing (Bail 24-26).
9 Pentonito and Beydoun, will make similar observations as well.
10 This is reinforced in Margaret Chon and Donna E. Arzt's 2005 article, “Walking While Muslim,” the religious aspect of one's racial identity is specifically noted, arguing that this aspect of race is often ignored: “Race is composed significantly of a religious dimension that has not been critically isolated, analyzed or discussed.” (215). The authors also note that such religious distinctions in part “contributed to the consolidation of Japanese American racial difference during World War II” (215).
and suspicious of certain individuals from among communities of their fellow citizens. For these reasons, it is understandable (though not necessarily reasonable) to understand the discrimination against Muslim Americans, and the rise of Islamophobia following the events of 9/11.

This section began our discussion on the nature and origin of Islamophobia. So far, we discussed it in two ways. First, anthropologically and psychologically with Pentonito, as we have seen how people tend to otherize, vilify, and create enemies out of people who remind them of their fears. We also noted the American tendency to cast “out-groups” comprised of individuals judged responsible for the source of fear and/or violence, and this out-grouping can have cultural, racial, or religious distinctions. Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner noted that Muslims are a particularly singled out group.

2.3. Why Islam? Orientalism and Islamophobia

This section seeks to clarify why Muslims in particular have been singled out as (what Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner call) “outgroups”. Particularly, we must consider what role 9/11 played, and if Islamophobia already visibly existed before the attacks and the subsequent War on Terror. Is Islamophobia merely the result of cultural/religious differences between Muslims and Anglo Americans? This is what Pentonito suggested, when prejudice toward Japanese Americans increased, following the events of Pearl Harbor. To understand this case of “otherized” of Muslims, in this section, then, we will make an attempt to look deeper into this matter.

In American Islamophobia (2018), Beydoun argues that Islamophobia must be understood as a part of a wider context, for it was preceded by the attitude of Orientalism. Beydoun discusses the idea of Orientalism, which was prolifically written about by Western Islamic theorist Edward Said, and suggests that it can explain the presence of American
Islamophobia in the years before 9/11 took place. Since the time of the Enlightenment, there has long been a Western tendency to discredit and “otherize” non-European cultures as inferior, backward, uncivilized, and dangerous. It also presupposed that there was “basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, epics, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind,’ destiny, and so on” (Said 2-3).\footnote{Zafir Iqbal summarizes Edward Said’s understanding of how the Muslim world was “otherized”: [Said] imaginatively divides the world geographically into two disproportionate parts, the outsized and ‘different’ one called ‘the Orient’ and the other, also known as ‘our world’ called ‘the Occident’36 or ‘the West.’ The notion of ‘the Occident’ as opposed to ‘the Orient’ covertly provides legitimization of Western supremacy and colonial power” (Iqbal 86-87).}

Indeed, according to Beydoun, who discusses Said’s work in his book in some detail, it was the culture of Orientalist attitudes from the late 18th century that “mothered Islamophobia” (Beydoun 50) and “[l]ocked in a cultural, civilizational and military crusade against Islam” (Beydoun 50-51). The result was a binary view of “self” and “other” (applied to the home nation and foreign nations, respectively), which in Beydoun’s words, Made Europe the antithesis of the “Orient” and “Orient” synonymous with the “Muslim world”, Orientalism spawned the corollary view that Muslims were a monolithic racial or ethnic bloc, imagined in the narrow form of an Arab or Middle-Eastern. (Beydoun 52)

Beydoun calls this the “racialization” of Muslims as a monolithic racial or ethnic bloc (Beydoun 52). Though Muslims might be from any part of North African, Middle Eastern, Central, or Southeast Asian country, their identity as “Muslim” and specifically, “non-European”,\footnote{Similarly, Steven Salaita observes that despite their political and religious diversity, Arab Americans have been “homogenized in various American discourses as an unstable Southern/Third World (i.e., foreign) presence.” (245) It is Salaita’s understanding that this anti-Arab sentiment is distinct from what he calls “transnational” forms of prejudice such as Islamophobia and Orientalism. Later in this thesis, a similar understanding of anti-Japanese sentiment during World War II will be explored in order to contrast it with Islamophobia.} was the result of political, economic, and cultural pressures and interests: Muslims were “assigned damning attributes in order to elevate the West and characterize it, and its people, as progressive, democratic, and modern” (Beydoun 51). Through political and
military contact with Muslim nations, the West defined its own characterization in contrast to what it saw in the Muslim world.\textsuperscript{13}

As a result of the Westerners’ prevailing attitude, which arose in the Enlightenment, and within which America was colonized and formed as a democratic country, it became impossible for a non-white, non-European to become a U.S. citizen. “From 1790 to 1952,” Beydoun says,

[W]hiteness stood as the legal dividing line between inclusion and exclusion from the range of privileges and benefits that came with formal citizenship. “Whiteness” and “citizen” were made synonymous by law, and the courses were the enforcers and the final gatekeepers. (Beydoun 60)

During the early 20th century, Arab immigrants who sought naturalized American citizenship struggled to be recognized as “white” and eligible for citizenship;\textsuperscript{14} the first case in which an Arab American made a case for his own “whiteness” was Lebanon-born police officer George Shishim, who emigrated to the USA from his home country in 1894 (Gualtieri 57-58). Shishim based his claim of “whiteness” on the fact that he was a Christian, not a Muslim.\textsuperscript{15} Shishim’s possible “Oriental” racial identity rested ultimately on his religion: country of birth, language, and sand skin color were all second to the importance of religion.\textsuperscript{16}

The events of 9/11 have given the militant Muslims a lasting presence in the American consciousness, and have ushered in historic changes which flourished after the timely end of

\textsuperscript{13} Writing before the events of 9/11, Natsu Taylor Saito discusses the distinction of “foreignness” as a category distinct from whiteness (though not including Black or African Americans), essentially dividing the population into three general categories: “White”, “Black”, and “non-White” (which includes all Asian people) (71-95).

\textsuperscript{14} The Naturalization Act of 1790 offered naturalization only to “any alien, being a free white person” (Haney-Lopez 31).

\textsuperscript{15} “Shishim’s spirited appeal insisted that although he was from the Muslim world, he was not a Muslim but in fact a Christian, and therefore white” (Beydoun 60).

\textsuperscript{16} On a related note: In her 2011 article, “Generation Islam”, Sabrina Alimahomed observes that traditionally Muslim Americans have been designated by the government as categorically white, but simultaneously have been the victims of racism in different institutional arenas. However, she notes that the present generation of young American Muslims are more likely to to disidentify with whiteness. Whether or not this means an increased division between Muslim Americans and other Americans, and the ramifications of such a division, are worth seriously considering (381-397).
the Cold War. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, America was searching for a new identity and a new enemy, and Islam provided one once again (GhaneaBassiri 329). Beydoun sees the same “East versus West” dynamic that framed the Cold War at work once again in the Islamophobia and War on Terror that emerged in the 1990s and early 21st century. Old “Orientalist” tropes have since been revived to fit the void left behind by the Soviet Union, creating a “new” enemy against which to reinforce American identity. Beydoun concludes, “The line in the sand was drawn, and the Muslim world, once again, would be cast as the very image of threat, evil and therefore everything un-American” (Beydoun 79).

Writing on this subject, Kambiz GhaneaBassiri (2010) goes further than Beydoun, suggesting that 9/11 did not really change American perceptions of Islam so much as amplify tendencies and processes already in place (GhaneaBassiri 328). Not only had many more Muslims emigrated to the United States by the 1990s, but also a large number of refugees from places like Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan at that time led to communities of American Muslims of varying ethnic backgrounds. These communities, though comprised of many different people, came together as a single community, working together to build new mosques, political and civil rights groups, and charitable organizations (GhaneaBassiri 327). And while American Muslims have since become more and more active in the areas of public service and culture venture (both in their communities and in the federal government), America as a whole (that is, white, Anglo America) remains suspicious of them (GhaneaBassiri 327). For acts of violence at the hands of militant Muslims, together with events such as Desert Storm in 1990 and the World Trade Center bombing of 1993, American Muslims had already come to be regarded as a security threat well before 9/11. As GhaneaBassiri says, Muslim Americans were already “a potential enemy within” (GhaneaBassiri 327). As a result, the civil rights of American Muslims are very frequently violated; they are viewed with suspicion, face discrimination, and deportation (GhaneaBassiri 327-328).
It is undeniable that the impact of 9/11 on America, and on the American perception of Muslims, is certainly grave; as GhaneaBassiri notes, it was “the first time since Pearl Harbor, that the United States was attacked on its own soil” (GhaneaBassiri 328). As a result of this rare attack on America, President George W. Bush created the Department of Homeland Security, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and several other agencies which were placed under the Department of Homeland Security’s control. The USA PATRIOT Act, meanwhile, offered greater power to law enforcement and immigration authorities, allowing for the indefinite detention of immigrants, and authorized law enforcement officers to search the homes and/or workplaces of anyone suspected of terrorist ties. It also allowed the FBI to monitor private communication (telephone, email, etc.) and financial records of anyone with suspected terrorist ties (GhaneaBassiri 329).

While America went through a transformative process as a result of the 9/11 experience, the mainstream American mindset that Islam was incompatible with American values gained popularity, especially when some Muslims acted with hostility against Americans “in the name of Islam” (GhaneaBassiri 329). Earlier events such as the Iranian Evolution (1978-1979) the following Iran hostage crisis (1979-1981), and the World Trade Center bombing (1993) provided context to the post-9/11 narrative, contributing to a stereotype and popular image of Muslims as dangerous extremists, at odds with American principles of freedom. Though

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17 Such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the US Customs and Border Protection, the US Coast Guard, and the Transportation Security Administration. Cary Stacy and Li-Ching Hung list some of these possible abridgments and nullifications of American civil rights: the arrest of those branded “terrorists” or “possible terrorists”, the violation of privacy rights by federal surveillance, and the the detainment of individuals at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (the authors note that various organizations in America and around the world “have difficulties regarding the legality of these detentions”) (xiv). The authors continue: After the [9/11] attacks, more than 80,000 people, primarily Arab and Muslim immigrants had biometric data taken and were registered due to the Alien Registration Act of 1940. More than 8,000 Islamic men were questioned closely, with 5,000 foreign nationals being held under Joint Congressional Resolution 107-40, which authorized military force “to deter and prevent acts of international terrorism against the United States.” (xiv-v)

The authors then note that all action taken by the government following 9/11 was eventually allowed by the USA Patriot Act.

18 During the Cold War, with the looming Soviet threat to American values, America willingly worked with Muslim extremists in places such as Afghanistan to combat Soviet interests (GhaneaBassiri 329).
clearly separated from pro-Soviet culture, Arab, Muslim, Iranian, and fundamentalist identities were no longer clear to Americans, whom GhaneaBassiri says, “did not feel it necessary to familiarize themselves with the differences at that time” (GhaneaBassiri 329-330). Recalling the three-dimensional Islamophobia described by Beydoun, the mutually-encouraging relationship between individuals (ordinary citizens) and the state (organizations like the Department of Homeland Security), it is easy to see how fear and patriotism might have given rise to Islamophobic behavior on the individual, national, and international levels.

Thus far in this section, through the discussion of Beydoun, GhaneaBassiri, and Edward Said, we have analyzed the long history of Islamophobic-like behavior directed at Muslim people. Such behavior predates the events of 9/11 by many years, and it seems ingrained in the time, culture, and philosophical values in which America emerged (the offspring of the European Enlightenment). Moreover, GhaneaBassiri has suggested that the difference between 19th-century Orientalism and present-day Islamophobia is one of degree rather than kind; the real discontinuity came after 19th-century Orientalism gave way to the Cold War. With this historical explanation, we now focus our attention to the success of Islamophobic rhetoric and the spread of anti-Muslim attitudes in the years since 9/11.

2.4. The News Media, the Social Media, the Fringe Groups, and New Enemies

Throughout this chapter, we have focused our attention to “why” part of Islamophobia, i.e., explaining why Islam and Muslims have been singled out. Now, we focus our attention to the “how” part of Islamophobia; that is, how Islam and Muslims have come to be demonized. We do so by discussing social scientist Christopher Bail’s *Terrified* (2015), an analysis of media portrayals of Muslims in America and the effect of these portrayals have on the people who are exposed to them. We should note that, really, Muslims pose very little threat to American life. For example, Reza Aslan, in his introduction to Iftikhar’s book, puts it this way:
“According to the FBI, more Americans will die because of ‘faulty furniture’ than at the hands of Islamic terrorists. Your flat-screen television is a greater threat to your life than either ISIS or Al-Qaeda” (vi).

In *Terrified*, Christopher Bail seeks to understand the rise, and success, of anti-Muslim rhetoric and attitudes among the American public. Turning to the early 1990s, around the time of the demise of the Soviet Union, Bail specifically observes the emergence of civil social organizations in America, which at the time promoted strong “anti-Muslim messages” (28). This is noteworthy because this period follows the end of the Cold War, the very time pointed to by Beydoun and GhaneaBassiri as the beginning of present-day Islamophobia). Bail describes these groups and organizations as being “hawkish”, with their sights focused on overseas Muslim dictatorships, and in search of a new enemy to stand in opposition against since gone are the days of Soviet Union and communism (28). But this was soon to change; as Iftikhar, Beydoun, and GhaneaBassiri have all already discussed, Bail reminds us that the anti-Muslim organizations would soon move to the center of the public sphere, becoming “several of the most powerful influences upon American understandings of Islam” (31). Among the anti-Muslim organizations Bail mentions are the Middle East Forum (MEF), a think tank that continues to publish an academic journal focused on articles about the Middle East and “the threat of Islam” (29), founded by Prof. Daniel Pipes. Another is the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), founded by journalist and self-described “terrorism expert” Steven Emerson (29). Like the MEF, the IPT was and is devoted to publishing articles warning readers of an imminent Muslim threat to America (Bail 28-29). While reaching only a small number of people at first, both, these and other, similar, though at the time mostly ignored, organizations were to gain attention (and importance) at the beginning of the next decade (Bail 30).

It is also worth noting that, in addition to anti-Muslim sentiments by Islamophobic or Orientalist individuals/organizations, Bail also holds the media itself responsible for the spread
and success of Islamophobia since 9/11. The media success of such groups was a gradual process, with many clear steps, which Bail indicates one-by-one. To begin, Bail recognizes that groups like Pipe’s MEF and Emerson’s IPT were the seeds or sparks which would ignite the present iteration of Islamophobia, even though for many years such groups had no real voice. However, their lack of voice (due to insufficient resources, power, or attention) was itself to have serious consequences; not having a voice, Bail says, can and has frequently radicalize(d) organizations or individuals who feel they must resort to more extreme claims in an effort to be heard; the more outrageous the claims, the more attention they are likely to gather (39). Bail goes on to note that while “the literature on collective behavior and the media has mostly ignored such organizations, it is well-known that journalists are attracted to such unusual or novel messages” (39).

This is in part a result of our contemporary, media-saturated environment: news audiences have short attention spans, as a result of the sheer number of options constantly vying for the attention of its members; the 24-hour cable news cycle being a relatively recent phenomenon. In seeking their attention, journalists are constantly seeking out novelty: new stories, new angles for old stories, and more entertaining narratives (Bail 39). News sources were, and continue to be, compelled not only by the stories themselves, but by their competition with other news outlets which are also striving to catch the public's attention (Bail 39-40). All of these factors created a perfect storm: a hungry media, frightened people in the wake of a domestic attack (specifically, on 9/11), and the need to cast as “villains” all contributed to Islamophobia in its present state (Bail 39-40). As a result, journalists may be brought to the fringe of cultural environments in search of an attention-grabbing story, something always in demand in this age of 24-hour cable news cycles and not to mention, ceaselessly on viral social media.
While ideally media sources and journalists ought to be objective and dispassionate, our present-day media is driven by sensationalism (Bail 39). Noting a 300% increase in “angry language” between 1955 and 2009, Bail suggests that media sensationalism is a response to “the public’s appetite for drama” in an increasingly market-driven industry (40). Furthermore, journalists help to create an emotional narrative by which the public understands itself, a broad, “shared narrative about good and evil” as much created as covered by the journalists reporting on it (Bail 41). Genuine feelings of fear or anger being reported not only enrich the authenticity of reports, but also attract reporters who suffer the very same emotional biases as their subjects, all of whom emerged out of, grew up in, and react to the same socio-cultural environments (Bail 42). While a truly objective journalist, and media, is an appealing idea, present-day competition is stiff and demanding, and objectivity is not a realistic ingredient to present-day success. Sensationalism is, however, as a result (especially in a time of crisis) emotion-driven stories responding to real public fears and paranoia that will inevitably garner the most attention.

And indeed, this was the next step of the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia in the media. Bail observes how, following the events of 9/11, journalists were “catapulted” by small anti-Muslim fringe organizations like the MEF and IPT, while organizations such as these counted for only a small percentage of civil society organizations in the American cultural environment (Bail 51). These organizations also provided nearly 50% of the those influencing media representations of Islam. This means that, when presenting Islam to the public, and bearing in mind that a majority of Americans of the time had never met a Muslim (Bail 51), the media took nearly half of its information from decidedly anti-Muslim sources from 2001-2003 (Bail 51).

When a crisis like the 9/11 attack takes place, Bail argues that social and psychological processes, such as public expressions of fear or anger, give an opportunity to fringe
organizations to “transcend their obscurity” and lack of power and resources by “appealing to the media’s legendary appetite for drama” (51). In the meantime, this negative emotion, amplified by the media’s voice, provides a distorted image of its subject (in this case, Islam) to the cultural environment. In other words, “the disproportionate influence of emotional fringe organizations creates the misconception that such groups are in fact mainstream” (Bail 51).

Meanwhile, in Beydoun’s environment of dialectical Islamophobia, this can have real and serious repercussions on how Muslims are accepted and regarded by the general population.

A pivotal moment in the growth of these movements came entirely by accident, with a vocalized assumption that turned out not to be true. When the Oklahoma City bombing occurred in 1993, Daniel Pipes of the MEF received a large amount of media attention when he speculated that “Arabs or Muslims” were to blame for the bombings (following our earlier discussion of Orientalism with Beydoun, it is interesting to note how Daniel Pipes equated “Arabs” and “Muslims” as synonymous) (Bail 29). And while Bail notes that, once Timothy McVeigh stepped forward to claim responsibility for the Oklahoma City attack, the media abandoned the claims made by organizations such as the MEF and IPT until after the events of 9/11. Nonetheless, the Oklahoma City bombing remains a significant moment in the proliferation and aggravation of present-day Islamophobia as majority people in general have short attention span. Once an opinion is shared on the mainstream media, especially in time of

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19 In John L. Esposito's book, What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam (2002/2011), the author deliberately attributes the growth of Islamophobia and the discrimination against Muslims on the media: “Conservative columnists, hard-line Christian Zionist religious leaders, some of them prominent neoconservative radio and television talk show hosts with large audiences, have regularly used hate speech and dangerous invective aimed not at extremists but at Islam and Muslims in general” (227).

20 It has been suggested that there are other ways in which a small, vocal minority directs the discussion/perception of Muslims and influences public opinion simply by gaining attention; Haj Yazdiha defines Islamophobia as “a strategic movement led by a small, tightly networked group of misinformation experts that institutionalizes fear and suspicious of Islam through bills and ballot initiatives” (267). This last part aside (“through bills and ballot initiatives”), this comment is very much in line with Bail's understanding of Islamophobic minority groups influencing the media.

21 Yazdiha also notes later on in her essay that it is through the media that these “experts” are able to spread their misinformation (270).
crisis and fear, it sticks to their mind and they don’t bother to fact-check it later on. Thus, it forever formulates the consumer’s opinions and biases.

The way of thinking demonstrated in the media’s response to the Oklahoma City bombing would appear to validate not only Gina Pentonito’s discussion of “enemy creation,” but also a variation of the three-dimensional Islamophobia Beydoun describes (already present and active in pre-9/11 America). Enemy creation is easily evident based on the unfortunate circumstances of the day; here was a violent attack for which someone was responsible, and there was at that time a need for an enemy to blame. Already suspicious of Muslims, people like Pipes and Emerson suggested “Arabs or Muslims,” again, equating the two (Bail 29). The media, eager for any information to broadcast, gave individuals like Pipes and Emerson a voice, and the public could no longer ignore them, at least, not in that moment.

There is little doubt that the competition between mainstream media partnered with 24/7 cable news network and now with the powerfully open sourced and viral social media like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, have drawn attention to, and made it extremely easy for, Islamophobia to go viral with “fake news” and baseless misinformation (some might say, in other words, fear has made money for their shareholders at the expense of the “other”). It permanently damaged the psyche of many unassuming Americans about Islam, who had never met a Muslim, and it has given birth to a very profitable Islamophobic industry. This virtually unregulated and unbalanced social media with their unchecked stories made it possible for many Americans to hate Muslims as the “others”.

The dialectic movement from individual, to media, to individual, follows the same pattern of dialectical Islamophobia described by Beydoun, and by the time of the events of 9/11, there would be a similar dialectical movement between individuals and the state. By the time this occurred, the media was now playing a vital intermediate role: Fears of the public were transmitted to both one another and the state via the media, which in turn broadcast the state’s
response to a perceived Muslim threat back to the people. This manifested itself in the profiling of suspected Muslims, immigration restrictions, deportation, and government surveillance. Not only does the response to the Oklahoma City bombing now come across as a preview of 9/11, but it also demonstrates and actualizes a number of the tropes described by several of the authors discussed in this chapter.

2.5. Conclusion

This thesis has so far examined the given premise that Islamophobia in the U.S. today is the result of a few selective fringe groups who have deliberately managed to make their extremist, minority position heard and heeded by a majority of American citizens (especially those who have never met a Muslim). This chapter coursed out to consider the ideas and attitudes underlying Islamophobia. GhaneaBassiri’s and Pentonito’s thoughts on enemy construction played an important role in understanding the emergence and rise of Islamophobia in America today, out of a heritage of anti-Orientalist attitudes which not only shaped America in its early years but are traceable back to the time of the European Enlightenment. The present-day notions of Muslims have been “defining” America much as Russia did (as discussed by GhaneaBassiri). The fact is that Pentonito’s thoughts on enemy construction were written before 9/11 but are entirely applicable to the aftermath of 9/11. After that, the final section of this chapter looked to the present, post-9/11 world, to see a mutually-reinforcing dynamic of individual fear and media sensationalism feeding into one another, to expand suspicion and fear of Muslims at an increased rate. Much as the Islamophobia described by Beydoun grew and advanced via a similar process (between individual citizens and the state), we see it happening in the media as well. The need to cast an enemy, discussed by both Gina Pentonito and Khaled Beydoun, instigates the process, and the responses of the people, the media, and the state (in response to both of these) do the rest.
To conclude this chapter, our definition of Islamophobia, and the rise of anti-Muslim violence following 9/11 (discussed in Chapter 1), suggests that the collective response to fear is fertile ground for paranoia and demonization by the public. If this is the case, then we have a further explanation for the success of fringe groups and their influence on the American consciousness: such fear and prejudice has not only happened before, but is a recurring response that Americans have whenever they feel threatened. This much is clear in books such as Bail’s *Terrified* (2015) and Beydoun’s *American Islamophobia* (2018), which explicitly explore this fact and attempt to understand it.

After discussing these ideas, a few new questions emerge, which must also be considered in our effort to understand Islamophobia. First, we must consider whether Islamophobia is a subset of the earlier Orientalism that prevailed in defining America (and that which was decidedly “un-American”) in the years before the Cold War.

The next chapter will consider other groups of citizens victimized by the rest of American society. What does their plight share in common with Islamophobia today? Are the two one and the same, or is Islamophobia unique, and are Muslims unique victims?
Chapter 3
American Behavior: Enemy Races, Sins of the Past, and Future

3.1. Introduction

Historically, people who emigrated into America from non-white, non-European countries have generally been “otherized” and segregated as “different” from the average American (that is, the white and Christian Anglo American). Orientalism, discussed in the preceding chapter, World War II-era Japanese Internment, and post-9/11 Islamophobia are all examples of this. The preceding chapters presented a definition of Islamophobia, and offered an explanation for its presence in America (both pre-9/11, and post-9/11). This chapter will focus on Islamophobia’s relationship with Orientalism, and our aim here is to consider the nature of Islamophobia as a prejudice. While it certainly derived from Orientalism, is Islamophobia merely a subset of Orientalism, or is it its newest reiteration? Or has Islamophobia emerged to become something wholly new, distinct from past forms of prejudice against Muslim Americans and other immigrants from Asia? To draw a conclusion here, we will compare and contrast Islamophobia with other episodes of fear and otherizing, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how to contextualize and understand contemporary Islamophobia.

Specifically, this chapter will discuss an earlier instance from American history involving the public’s fear of fellow Americans; the “Yellow Peril” of the 1940s, which was based on the fear that Japanese Americans were plotting with Imperial Japan to take down the United States from within. This event will be discussed in light of the same, broader Orientalism that defined America’s attitude toward Muslims before World War II, and again immediately before the events of 9/11.
3.2. Enemy Construction

We resume our discussion which began in the previous chapter, continuing with Gina Pentonito’s 2000 essay on enemy construction, this time considering specifically Pentonito’s example of enemy construction, the internment of Japanese American during World War II, and the casting of Japanese Americans as enemies or villains following the events of Pearl Harbor.

Pentonito opens her essay with the following, general statement regarding human behavior: “All conflicts have situations where one group casts the other as enemy, [and in] so doing, the contentious parties draw from available cultural resources to construct the other as a villainous foe” (19). Here, Pentonito argues that when people were (and are) shocked and frightened (whether by real, assumed, or imaginary problems), they tend to look for an enemy or villain to blame, or fear, or both. Pentonito’s focus is specifically on the fearful response; she looks for no actual, objective problems or conditions, but only at the problems those involved claim exist. That is, if a person perceives a problem, then a problem exists (subjectively, whether the problem is justified or not).

Moving from her general arguments to a real case study of “creating an enemy from within” of a real or perceived problem, Pentonito’s specific focus is on the arguments used to show that Japanese Americans were enemies of their own country (19). Pentonito begins describing the method of enemy construction with casting of the roles which groups assumed following the Pearl Harbor attack. She focuses specifically on Anglo Americans and Japanese Americans, and how the former group identified all Japanese Americans living in the continental United States as “the enemy”: She states that this was a broad accusation of the whole Japanese American population, including both Nisei and Issei, and it consisted of the idea that their freedom was a threat to American security (Pentonito 19-20).
The second point Pentonito makes is that since race itself is an artificial category: when it comes to creating factions and divisions among their fellow American citizens, those who regarded Japanese Americans as “different” had to devise reasons for why they were different from other Americans (for racial distinctions only exist if people see them as such) (20-21).

Pentonito seeks to identify how Anglo Americans justified categorizing Japanese Americans as “an enemy race” by looking at West Coast newspapers, the Tolan Committee hearings (22), and what she refers to as “the Papers” (documents by government officials regarding the development of internment policies) (1). All of these provided background information on personal, individual perspectives of Japanese Americans, as well as government insight, into dealing with the “Japanese American problem” (Pentonito 22).

As far as, construction of race in general (and the Japanese as an “enemy race” in particular), Pentonito points out that “[c]laims-making does not occur in a vacuum” (23); for much of American history, Asians and Asian Americans had experienced being “otherized” by white American society (especially on the West Coast). Observing that ideas emerge and become reality, Pentonito says, skin color and nationality were real enough differences to make Asians and whites as “oil and water” (23). For this reason, racial differences were always regarded as real for people in 1941, especially following the Pearl Harbor attack.

Further, another concern expressed by Pentonito is regarding the idea of national loyalty, which had a strong power over reality; Pentonito said that even perceived or suspected loyalty to an enemy country made one “different”, since it was understood that “one person could do a lot of damage” (so put by Congressman John Tolan in 1941) (Pentonito 26). In this case, just one Japanese person on American soil could be a threat to the country (Tolan’s “great problem”). This made the liberty of Japanese Americans a problem in parts of the country.

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22 This was a public forum regarding the “Japanese problem” (Pentonito 22).
where Asian Americans (as non-whites) were otherized (such as the West Coast) (Pentonito 26).

Pentonito concludes her discussion by recognizing how this example of enemy construction “offers valuable insights into racism, enemy construction, genocide, and other social problems where racialized people-categories are the focus of claims-making efforts” (36). While this specific case of Pentonito’s enemy construction focused on the otherizing of Japanese Americans in particular, we may use this example to better understand how both Japanese internment and Islamophobia fit in the larger context of Orientalism.

To understand Islamophobia in relation to Orientalism, in light of Pentonito’s observation of Japanese enemy construction and internment, we need to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the Japanese and Muslim Americans to understand the current case of contemporary Islamophobia. The rest of this chapter will consider two specific points in order to draw a final conclusion: First, we must note whether Anti-Asian sentiments (and its consequences, such as Japanese Internment) are in line with the generalizations and enemy-race construction found in Orientalism. Second, we must construct and explain how Islamophobia, in its present-day form, fits into the Orientalist narrative: is Islamophobia simply an iteration of a revitalized Orientalism (brought back to life after the fall of the Soviet Union), or is there something different or distinct about Islamophobia that sets it apart?

3.3. Race Construction

To understand Americans’ race construction, we might consider how prejudice against Japanese and other East Asian Americans is a part of the same ideological philosophy that otherized Muslim and Arab Americans from the very beginning of America’s history. It is important to first note that Orientalism hinges on the idea that the otherized group (Asians or Muslims) are of another race. This section will return to our earlier discussion of Orientalism
and the racialization of non-European people, which ultimately led to the discussion by Pentonito: her consideration of enemy construction, and race construction.

Specifically discussing Japan and its relation to Orientalism, Steven L. Rosen (2000) defines Orientalism as “a total miss-seeing of the other through a veil of interpretations of reality which are relatively impenetrable and resistant to change” (para. 1). He describes it as a kind of ethnocentrism rooted in cultural myth (which shows what a particular culture thinks about itself as much as others), and is premised on the idea that one’s own culture, and way of life is superior (para. 1). In explaining how Orientalism has articulated itself in the West, Rosen notes that it has explicitly emphasized the East’s perceived “strangeness” and “otherness”; describing it as “separate, passive, eccentric, backwards,” and “with a tendency to despotism.”23 And while Edward Said’s earlier-discussed focus of Orientalism was on Middle Eastern people (and Muslims in particular),24 Rosen observes that these same characterizations apply to East Asia just as well: “the Oriental person is a single image, a sweeping generalization; an essentialized image which carries with it the taint of inferiority” (para. 4).

Rosen describes a broader Orientalism that understands Asian people “from Turkey to Tokyo” as lumped under one rubric, held together by generalized connotations of “exoticism and foreignness (para. 2).” That said, due to the unfortunate circumstances of the Second World War, Americans were able to distinguish between East Asian nationalities, such as Chinese and Japanese Americans, into distinct categories (“friend” for the former, as China was America’s ally during the war, and “enemy” for the latter). Regardless of how Asians were regarded from year to year, or century to century (the Second World War affecting Americans’ understanding of Japanese people as being distinct from other Asians, while earlier decades saw discrimination targeted specifically at Chinese immigrants), the artificiality of racial

24 It’s important to note that Beydoun focuses only on Muslims when he discusses Orientalism; Rosen’s discussion would show that Orientalism was far more far-reaching, covering everyone from “Turkey to Tokyo”, Muslims but also Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, and every other Asian ethnicity/religion (para. 2).
construction should be evident, affecting people from particular East Asian countries as much as the Muslim people who were racialized in Beydoun’s discussion.

Rosen articulates on how Americans frequently viewed Japanese culture as “inferior” to theirs. He notes that Japan’s customs and traditions also mark it as “exotic, quixotic, and even absurd” to the 20th-century American mindset, which once regarded the Japanese as “basically fanatical, deceitful, with a tendency to cruelty in their private lives and totalitarianism in their public practices” (para. 2). He also mentions that the Japanese are seen as having a particular willingness to sacrifice individuality and submerge each of their entire individual identities into that of the group, company, or nationality (para. 2), an idea very much at odds with the freedom-focused American attitude empathizing individual liberty, or respect for the dignity of individual rights, as found in America. Rosen further explains that this stereotyping is a kind of mental schema making designed to help us grasp reality- to make things more understandable and less threatening; these mental schema such as stereotypes provide us with the illusion of understanding by dividing up and categorizing the flux of experience into easily manageable cognitive maps. (para. 8)

Following Rosen’s article, we can deduce the following observations about Americans’ attitudes towards foreigners. First, by categorizing, judging, and otherizing foreign cultures in light of one’s own (and reinforcing one’s own beliefs and self-image in the process), one creates an illusion of safety for oneself, allowing one to cope with that which one does not understand. Second, the one who otherizes can “feel politically correct, hence superior, remaining all the while unaware of his or her own fixed structures of interpretation/orientation” (Rosen para. 11). Third, one must recognize that this appearance of safety comes at a hefty price, for every construction and devaluation of human conditions can result in
misunderstanding and discrimination of others, who are also very much a fabric of one’s own society.

In discussing at length the conditioning and otherizing of Japanese Americans in the last two sections, we came across several “assumed traits” which marked them as “other” in the eyes of Anglo-Americans. For example, because loyalty was understood to be a non-physical trait distinguishing race, it came to pass that Nisei\(^{25}\) were suspected of harboring loyalty to Japan because of their perceived race, unlike white Americans who are only loyal to the United States. In that case, this would be a clear case of Said’s Orientalism at work, in which a particular group defines its own identity in part by contrasting it with the identity and traits of a perceived enemy. What is particularly interesting is that this specific racial marker allowed Anglo-Americans to regard Japanese Americans as being of a different race from Chinese Americans, or Korean Americans, or Filipino Americans, who were regarded as different from Japanese in their loyalty to America (these other Asian nationalities were victims of Japanese aggression, thus making the Japanese racially more like Nazis than other Asian people) (Pentonito 29).

### 3.4. The Other Face of Orientalism: Anti-Asian Discrimination in America

In order to understand the connection of the contemporary Islamophobia to Orientalism, we must next discuss the prevailing anti-Asian sentiment of Americans as it existed throughout the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) and 20\(^{\text{th}}\) centuries in the United States. In our effort to understand where Islamophobia fits into the history of Orientalism, early American anti-Asian sentiment and wartime Japanese discrimination are both worthwhile topics for our consideration. As we discussed already, through the social and psychological behavior of enemy construction discussed by both Pentonito and Rosen, this anti-Asian sentiment culminated in the specific event of Japanese

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internment, which occurred during World War II (at which time one Asian country in particular, Japan, posed a very real threat to American peace). However, this was only the last chapter of a much longer story.

In studying the anti-Asian sentiment, historian Roger Daniels\(^{26}\) notes that as soon as Asian people began to immigrate in mass to the United States in the early 19\(^{th}\) century, a social anti-Asian sentiment began to shape up within the white American communities in America. Prejudice against Asians was present starting with the arrival of Chinese immigrants in the 19\(^{th}\) century, whose plight became the symbol of anti-Asian hysteria for other people coming from Asia (and perhaps it manifested itself as the very first instance of Orientalism in America). Though Daniels recognizes that Asia is a land of vast diversity and difference, and home to many distinct ethnic groups, “to most Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, all Asian immigrants seemed alike and alike seemed to present a threat to the American standard of living and to the racial integrity of the nation.”\(^{27}\) Daniels also acknowledges that while such attitudes and actions were clearly racist (loc. 198), he also writes that “most Americans in those years would not have recognized them as such; they would have argued that their attitudes were simply ‘American’” (loc. 198).

Roger Daniels book, *Prisoners without Trial* (1993) attempts to explain how and why 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated between 1942-1945. Due to the terrible circumstances of that time, during which the Empire of Japan and the USA were at war; Daniels explains that this violation of human rights was justified by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on the grounds of military necessity. Nonetheless, Daniels regards the incarceration of Japanese Americans “our worst wartime mistake” (loc. 182), even though it was hardly a mistake. Instead, it appeared to be the result of pre-existing condition of White Americans

\(^{26}\) Unless indicated otherwise, all references to Daniels refer to his book, *Prisoners without Trial* (2017).

\(^{27}\) The first chapter of Daniel’s book, “Background for a Roundup” (loc. 176-582), offers numerous examples of how anti-Japanese sentiment was established and grew in the decades leading up to the Second World War.
(especially on the West Coast) of anti-Asian attitudes that existed long before Japan’s Pearl Harbor attack, rather than a simple response to one instance of Japanese aggression. Daniel’s book provides some worthwhile material for this present discussion, as anti-Asian prejudice and wartime Japanese discrimination and incarceration would appear to be as much a part of the story of Orientalism as is Islamophobia.

Wartime anti-Japanese sentiment manifested some features that were keys to Orientalism: a monolithic depiction of a vast number of cultures, languages, and traditions is the most obvious. Daniels begins his discussion of race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership by going back to the 1800s and looking at American attitudes to Chinese immigrants: the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, and the shifting of prejudice from Chinese to Japanese immigrants who came to America in their place (until the Exclusion Act, most Asian immigrants had come from China) (loc. 270).

Though known to be family-oriented citizens with a strong work ethic (Heinrichs 9), Japanese immigrants had long suffered prejudice and discrimination, especially in the West Coast. And as more Japanese people came to America, more efforts were made to suppress them. Indeed, Daniels notes that they were denied citizenship for being non-white, a point which Beydoun also mentions in his discussion of Orientalism. This denied citizenship made it difficult for them to purchase property, etc. (Daniels loc. 278). In addition to this, Daniels notes that efforts were made to segregate them and send Japanese children to separate schools. Daniels concludes that while there is little logic to American attitudes at the time (which regarded Asian immigrants as decidedly “un-American,” and therefore bad), “the United States was then an explicitly racist nation which discriminated in both law and custom against any persons who were not recognized as ‘white’” (loc. 201). In short, the we see the hallmarks of the Orientalism which distinguished other Asian groups, with similar results, as a result of
similar social and psychological attitudes, whether their targets were Japanese Americans or American Muslims.

Depicting the events of December 7, 1941 and its aftermath, Daniels next chronicles how American attitudes toward Japanese Americans (as well as other Asian Americans) changed as America entered the War. Starting with Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and numerous other military victories by the often-underestimated Japanese military forces against the United States and allied forces, a new-found fear of Japanese military might was kindled in the minds of Americans. This wartime fear, coupled with the pre-existing anti-Asian prejudice, had a real effect on how Japanese-American people were treated by their fellow Americans. This was more than mere prejudice, but an active effort designed to deliberately disrupt the lives of some targeted American citizens, and deprive them of their rights in the name of national security.

Before converging on to the next section, we shall summarize the points discussed thus far regarding both anti-Asian Orientalism and modern Islamophobia. First, we noted that early American anti-Asian sentiment and wartime Japanese discrimination share much in common with present-day Islamophobia. Second, Daniels suggested that the 19th-century discrimination against Chinese immigrants in California served as “preview” for what was to follow for other people coming from Asia (including Japanese and Muslim immigrants), setting the template for the discrimination and prejudice to follow. Third, Daniels observed that in spite of Asia’s great diversity of people and cultures, a vast majority of Americans felt threatened by it and felt it was an obstacle to their White racial ethnicity and traditional American values. While anti-Japanese prejudice singled out Japanese Americans, it also suggested that Japanese Americans and Japanese people living in Japan shared the same attitudes and posed similar threats to America; coincidentally, the contemporary Islamophobia has led to a similar blindness and confusion which equates anyone of Middle Eastern, Indian, or South East Asian
heritage as being “the same”, whether Pakistani Sikh, Indian Hindu, or Syrian, or Egyptian Christian. Fourth, Daniel’s presentation of anti-Asian prejudice and wartime Japanese discrimination appears to be as much a part of the story of Orientalism as Islamophobia.

3.5. Evaluating the Response to a Crisis: Could it happen again?

Though many ideas on anti-Asian biases have already been raised in the earlier sections, we will discuss a few more here, in an orderly fashion, considering views from both before and after the 9/11 attacks, in order to assess the similarities between Japanese internment and post-9/11 Islamophobia. In this section, we will compare three readings from different times and perspectives.

First, we will discuss Beydoun’s reflection on the prospect of Japanese internment, and the similarities it shares with the treatment of Muslims in America in the aftermath of 9/11. Beydoun’s personal perspective as a Muslim American affected by discrimination and Islamophobia offers us a subjective perspective from which to evaluate the other discussions. Second, Daniels speculates on the possibility of Japanese Internment (or something of that nature and magnitude) happening again to some other group of Americans (his book originally written before the events of 9/11). Third, we consider the German-American sociologist Amitai Etzioni’s 2005 discussion of America’s response to 9/11. Here Etzioni argues that Beydoun’s concerns may be exaggerated or misplaced. We will then summarize and evaluate each of these arguments to draw a conclusion regarding whether the discrimination faced by Muslim Americans is the same as that suffered by Japanese Americans during the Second World War, and how/why the plight of each is different, with an understanding of these two phenomena and their place in history, within the larger context of Orientalism.

We begin by highlighting Beydoun’s comparison of Japanese internment with present-day Islamophobia, and his fears about what the future may hold for Muslim Americans
in light of past attacks on US soil. Reflecting on these, Beydoun first recognizes the connection linking the present situation facing Muslims with the Orientalism of the past, as well as the plight of the miscast and mistreated people from other periods of US history: “The tragedy of Islamophobia unfolding in America today rises from seeds sowed centuries ago, and it stands alongside other tragedies, similar and distinct, experienced by a host of other groups” (194). Beydoun cites as an example the infamous Korematsu v. United States case, “popularly known as the ‘Japanese internment case’, ” which he teaches frequently as a Constitutional Law professor and as an expert on Islamophobia research and documentation (194). Beydoun is speaking of the specific 1944 case in which the US Supreme Court upheld President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066, “which compelled the rounding up and internment of 110,000 to 120,000 Japanese American citizens and residents” shortly after the Empire of Japan bombed Pearl Harbor (194). Beydoun notes the context of the court’s decision, in which America’s growing fear of Japanese military might and intensifying battle with the Empire of Japan [no comma; this is part of the same clause] led to the US military designating the Japanese as a monolithic enemy race which “came to encompass anyone who was of Japanese descent” (194). This unfortunately included Japanese American citizens and longtime US residents, who were lumped together with America’s overseas enemies (i.e., Japanese government) and cast in the role of enemy villains together with them. Beydoun quotes the words of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black, who ruled on behalf of the case:

We uphold the exclusion order … In doing so, we are not unmindful of the hardships imposed by it upon a large group of American citizens. But hardships are part of war, and war is an aggregation of hardships. All citizens alike, both in and out of uniform, feel the impact of war in greater or lesser measure. (195)

Beydoun also comments on the full impact of this ruling, and the precedent it sets for similar, future instances of “compelling state interest” (195). In Beydoun’s opinion, the Supreme Court
had justified a “discriminatory, strident, and racist policy” in the name of national security (195), based not on evidence, for there was none suggesting that Japanese Americans had committed espionage or acts of subversion against their own country, but fear (195).

Beydoun, turning his attention to the post-9/11 America, empathizes that the *Korematsu v. United States* ruling, though rooted in stereotypes and vilification, has not been overturned (195). Furthermore, Beydoun points out how the words quoted from Supreme Court Justice Black set a dangerous precedent for other possibilities of minority group vilification, and the treatment of future events of crises. Beydoun notes how Black’s appeal to the “hardships of war” reflects the present-day situation faced by Muslims in America (named before in the forms of immigration restriction, racial profiling, and other methods of discrimination based on fear rather than facts).28

Like the Japanese citizens and residents of 1940s America, in post-9/11 America, Beydoun observes the same standards being used to assign suspicion and guilt onto an “enemy race” (195). Much as Pentonito pointed to our reflexive tendency to create or construct enemies in order to deal with a real or imagined threat, Beydoun sees a similar process at work in the months following December 7, 1941, where “national security interests and fears of the state, real or imagined, enabled the en masse internment of individuals who had nothing to do with the Pearl Harbor attack” (195). Japanese Americans of that time should have been protected, as citizens and residents of the United States, by both the Constitution and by the due process of

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28 Natsu Taylor Saito quotes the words of Judge Marilyn Hall Patel (1984) on the Korematsu case:

*Korematsu remains on the pages of our legal and political history. As a legal precedent is it now recognized as having very limited application. As historical precedent it stands as a constant caution that in times of war or declared military necessity our institutions must be vigilant in protecting constitutional guarantees. It stands as a caution that in times of distress the shield of military necessity and national security must not be used to protect governmental actions from close scrutiny and accountability. It stands as a caution that in times of international hostility and antagonisms our institutions, legislative, executive and judicial, must be prepared to protect all citizens from the petty fears and prejudices that are so easily aroused (173).*

To sum up, times of crisis or distress cannot be used to justify government actions or hold the government unaccountable for violating the rights of individuals.
the law. Instead, the “hardships of war” deprived them of justice and protection, and they suffered racial discrimination, property loss, and internment as a result (Beydoun 195).

Like Beydoun, we observe a similar approach to the question, “Could it happen again?” by Daniels, who follows up his discussion. In the sixth chapter of Prisoners without Trial, Daniels does not hesitate to describe Japanese Internment as “a betrayal of All Americans” because it “violated fundamental values of American democracy in the guise of fighting a war to preserve that democracy” (loc. 2437). However, he also notes that so far, Japanese internment was also the first, and so far only, time that the US government violated the rights of an ethnic group granted citizenship by the Constitution (the children of Japanese immigrants born on US soil).

That said, there have been cases where the US government considered doing something similar: Daniels touches on that during President Jimmy Carter’s administration, a similar plan to round up and incarcerate Iranian college students was considered during the Iranian hostage crisis of 1970-1981 (loc. 2554). This was, perhaps, the closest the US ever came to something on the level of Japanese internment; President Carter even made steps to get the addresses of students, but the Immigration Office did not keep good records, thus making this difficult (loc. 2555). Daniels goes on to comment that this proposed unconstitutional action would also have been “violations of the spirit of the Constitution” and posed “a real threat to the groups and individuals concerned” (loc. 2574). And like Japanese internment, such plans, had they been put into action would also have been, to quote Daniels again, “a betrayal of all Americans”, violating fundamental values of American democracy in the name of protecting democracy (loc. 2437).

In his epilogue, “Since 1990” on his post-9/11 commentary we see Daniels’ discussion of how the future politicians and presidents’ administration learned from past governments’ unwise, and short-sighted policies towards minority groups in times of national crisis. Daniels
discusses the reparations paid to those Japanese Americans incarcerated during the war, noting also how, in 1992, the first President Bush also made one of the concentration camps a national memorial; with the endeavor that that such a thing would never happen again.

Daniels notes that racial prejudice, war hysteria, and the failings of political leadership were all factors leading to Japanese incarceration in the 1940s (loc. 188). In 2001, while there was definitely racial/religious prejudice and fearful hysteria, Daniels argues that the government repeatedly reminded the people not to make assumptions about people because of their race or religion (loc. 2681). A case in point, immediately in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, violence against Muslim or Muslim alike people and groups, spiked up. However, it dramatically reduced within two weeks of the second President Bush’s visit to a Dallas, Texas mosque in a show of government’s support for the Muslim minorities as rightful part of American fabric.²⁹

Recognizing the challenges to comparatively analyzing two non-contemporaneous historic events to one another, Daniels attempts to list a number of parallels between Japanese internment and discrimination of Muslims after 9/11; this is why his discussion is especially valuable. First, he notes the presence of prejudice and hysteria in both the events of 1941 and 2001, though he notes one important difference: in 2001, “the government repeatedly warned people not to make assumptions about guilt based on race or religion” (“Speech: Japanese Incarceration Revisited” 145).

Second, Daniels argues that there was enough public support against Muslim prejudice against Muslim Americans and Arab Americans immediately after the 9/11 attacks; however, during the Second World War, almost no public figures spoke out against Japanese internment, or the massive civil right violations it entailed. Daniels suggests that “the increased awareness

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²⁹ Daniels suggests that the government would appear to have learned its lesson (at least at that point), even if individual citizens had not. That said, Daniels also observes how, some government actions suggest that the government did not believe its own words: Immigration officials applied different standards to Middle Eastern immigrants, as did airline inspectors.
of that gross injustice was a factor in the heightened sensitivity within and without the
government” (“The Japanese-American Cases” 170). Based on his analysis of prejudicial
treatment of both Japanese and Muslim Americans after the respective attacks of 1941 and
2001, Daniels finds that discrimination directed against Muslim Americans, while wrong, was
(and remains) significantly less than what the Japanese suffered. A final point Daniels makes,
suggesting that the present-day plight of post-9/11 Muslims is not as severe as the situation
Japanese Americans once faced, was that following 9/11, people were quick to speak out if
they found the treatment of Middle Eastern, or anyone who might be mistaken for being
Middle Eastern, unfair (Daniels loc. 2681).

Daniels confides, however, that the 9/11 attacks were a “one-off” attack by a small
group, whereas the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was followed by a number of Japanese
victories against US forces, with each Japanese victory, and every American death, reinforcing
the fear of the danger posed by Japan to America. As a result of these, Daniels admits that it is
impossible to know what might have happened to Muslim Americans if further, similar attacks
had followed on 9/12, 9/13, and 9/14 (loc. 2705).

One advantage to living after the occurrence of regretful mistakes, like Japanese
internment, is the ability to gauge one’s present actions in light of them. This is where
post-9/11 perspectives become crucial in evaluating the nature of anti-Muslim
discrimination/Islamophobia. Our final perspective on the sheer effect of prejudice directed to
both Japanese and Muslim Americans, following the attacks of 1941 and 2001, comes from a
writer who seeks to evaluate the severity of the rights violations caused by measures such as the
USA PATRIOT Act, with a firm acknowledgement of the sins of America’s past: Amitai
Etzioni. Etzioni’s 2005 book, How Patriotic is the Patriot Act? will help us determine the
nature of post-9/11 anti-Muslim discrimination as a form of Islamophobia or Orientalism, and
whether the two can be equated. A former Carter-administration advisor on domestic affairs,
Etzioni argues that while public safety measures may be crucial to democracy, it is not true that “any and all” safety measures enhance liberty (25). Etzioni specifically focuses on how well American society might protect its citizens without compromising or violating the individual rights of Americans, arguing that there are two important things at stake: “protecting our homeland” and “safeguarding our rights” (1).

Etzioni starts off by saying that a particular, frightened response has arisen since the 9/11 attacks: the call to suspend the Constitution and Bill of Rights, revoking rights until we win the war on terror (1-2). Etzioni notes a big problem posted by this response: the fact that the “War on Terror” would not be a short-term war. Unlike the Japanese Pearl Harbor attack, following 9/11 there was no definable state enemy. As a result, the present state of affairs is not an urgent, a dire emergency, but the “new normal” (2). Therefore, Etzioni asks, what is the best course of action to respond to the changes 9/11 has brought, in order to preserve the hallmarks of America’s individual liberty and the protection of their freedom?

In the aftermath of 9/11 in his book, Etzioni makes his argument that in the interest of public and national security, the country must adjust to the way of life post-9/11, whereby some measures of temporary changes have to be made as rights being fashioned and revised as society changes, to counter further foreign attack and violence on Americans. He also acknowledges that while Americans find some security measures reasonable, measures which “they may well have not embraced before the attacks on September 11” (5), this hardly means that the Bill of Rights should be thrown out the window. This is in part due to the changing, evolving nature of the Constitution, which has “always been a living document and it has been adapted to the changing needs of the times” (Etzioni 5).

In making his points, Etzioni understands, individuals who may fear the possibility of a “slippery slope” eroding individual rights and freedoms over time (10). He mentions, for example, civil libertarians, who might fear the aftermath of a disaster or perceived threat that
leads to the trimming of the rights of some specified group, “which raises little alarm at the time” (10). Here, Etzioni specifically cites Japanese Americans during World War II, pairing it with the assumption that more and more rights will be lost until “the entire institutional structure on which democracy rests tumbles down the slope with nobody able to stop it” (11). The slippery slope is a logical fallacy, of course, and is based on fears of what could happen, rather than actual facts. Etzioni sees this fear as misplaced. But in addition to this, we can also note that American democracy did not collapse into full-on fascism after World War II. The internment of Japanese Americans was unfortunate, but proved to be only a temporary lapse in judgment.

Comparing the two similar cases of Japanese Internment with the rights-violating measures of the USA PATRIOT Act, devised to counter similar 9/11 attacks, Etzioni notes that during the “immediate period after the attack, when the public was most concerned about its safety (fearing more attacks to follow) people were indeed more willing to support a strong government, including one that would set aside many basic individual rights” (13). This is similar to the public’s willingness to stand aside and allow the detention and mass internment of Japanese Americans). However, this is not the whole story; in the time following 9/11, Etzioni continues, as no new attacks occurred following the government’s initial public safety measures, “the public gradually restored its commitment to the rights-centered, democratic regime” (13). Therefore, he argues that what happened in America following 9/11 supports the idea that when the government reacted firmly to a measured challenge, “support for constitutional democracy was sustained rather than undermined” (Etzioni 14). Etzioni concludes this discussion with the observation that “democracy is endangered not when strong measures are taken to enhance safety, to protect and reassure the public, but when these measures are not taken.” Quite the opposite of what civil libertarians claim with their “slippery slope” argument (24).
Therefore, one must not remain trapped in the past in fear of changes to the protection of his or her human rights. After all, not all changes to the Constitution were for the worse. Keeping with the illustration of a “slippery slope” Etzioni suggests that we “make notches” in it. We, as a nation must assess the clear and present danger, whatever it is, decide if anything needs to be changed, and mark how far we are willing to go regarding possible changes. We must identify “what is unacceptable in order to avoid slipping to a place one is not willing and ought not to go” (Etzioni 11). It is Etzioni’s understanding that it is backwards to think that changes to the Constitution signify the end of democratic government and the protection of individual rights; rather, it is the other way round: ”when democratic institutions and policies do not provide an adequate response to new challenges, they are undermined” (12).

Summing up all of their ideas discussed thus far in these sections, we can take notes that Daniels' tone is somewhat contrary to Beydoun's. Daniels allows that America acknowledged its mistake by paying reparations to Japanese Americans and apologized for its previous discrimination. Beydoun, meanwhile, emphasizes the Supreme Court’s ruling in the *Korematsu v. United States* case, dwelling upon how it was never overturned. We can to some degree explain the difference of opinions between Beydoun, Daniels, and Etzioni to the fact that, being a victim of Muslim prejudice himself, Beydoun carries a sentiment which is very personal, which neither Daniels nor Etzioni (neither one Asian American, nor specifically Japanese or Muslim) can comprehend.

Both Daniels and Etzioni also argue that while both Japanese Americans and Muslim Americans have been subject to unfair social prejudice and state-sanctioned discrimination after attacks by their fellow Americans, they both note that there are subtle differences in how the present situation faced by Muslim Americans is distinct and different from that faced by Japanese Americans in the 1940s. If we compare Etzioni with Beydoun and Daniels, it would appear that Beydoun gives in to the slippery slope fallacy mentioned by Etzioni; he genuinely
fears the consequences of another attack, should it come to pass. Daniels also raises the hypothetical possibility of a different situation arising in the event of another attack, but like Etzioni, Daniels takes a more measured approach. Finally, like Daniels, when Etzioni specifically brings up Japanese Americans, he points to clear similarities, but also notes the measures which America has made since the internment of the Japanese, and discriminatory measures against Arab Americans and Muslim Americans were scaled back if they were deemed too intrusive or excessive.

In this final analysis, we can conclude that according to Etzioni, the discrimination against Muslim Americans was unfortunate but perhaps, temporarily, necessary, and not a deliberate example of clear Islamophobia. Consider a situation where it was deemed necessary, for the purpose of temporary security, to detain and question Muslim Americans (or individuals from Saudi Arabia) for a short time following an attack by hypothetical Saudi terrorists. Would such a situation be an example of Islamophobic discrimination, according to the definition presented by Erich Bleich in Chapter 1? For instance, the age and nationality of the individuals, as well as whether they are men or women, might be a reason for interest in them, and not necessarily their religion. Whether indeed it fits the earlier definition of Islamophobia established in Chapter 1 or not, is a question worth pondering upon in order to avoid future historical misstep as a society in response to an imaginary or perceived fear by those who seemed different from us.

This detailed discussions of contrary opinions in this chapter offered some interesting comparisons between the plights of Japanese Americans in the 1940s and Muslim Americans today after the attacks on 9/11. We can see both to be victims of individual discrimination, with a similar form of Orientalism ostracizing both groups in the eyes of individual citizens. On the state level, things become a bit less clear; the Muslim American population has not been rounded up or interred the way Japanese Americans were following Pearl Harbor, though other
measures have been put in place that have compromised the rights and freedoms of Muslim Americans.

3.6. Conclusion

Our main focus on this chapter was the relationship between Islamophobia and Orientalism. It built on research on the topic of Islamophobia by looking at both the “Yellow Peril” of the 1940s and the broader Orientalism that defined America’s attitude toward Asian Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries. The aim of this chapter was to consider the nature of Islamophobia as a prejudice in light of Orientalism: Is it merely a subset of Orientalism, its newest reiteration, or something distinct? If not, where does Islamophobia fit?

In order to better understand the nature and distinct identity of Islamophobia as a prejudice, it is necessary to look at other groups of citizens victimized by the rest of American society, to consider what their plight shares in common with Islamophobia today. Upon reviewing the materials discussed in this chapter, we may say that Orientalism spans a large number of groups, allowing for discrimination for anyone “from Turkey to Tokyo”, as Rosen observed (para. 2). Therefore, we can consider Islamophobia to fall within this broader category of Orientalism, but distinct within it. (Chinese immigration was not halted because of Islam, for example.)

We also considered anti-Japanese sentiment to be something similar, a distinct subcategory within the broader limits of Orientalism. Pentonito, for example, noted the extreme view that the Japanese were not really Asian, but a separate race more closely related to Nazi Germany. This was a theory that developed during the Second World War (28). Similarly, Rosen comments on the distinction between how China and Japan have been seen as being very different from each other in the West.
Following America’s racial profiling of American Japanese following the attack on Pearl Harbor, this chapter considered how fearful attitudes could be exacerbated, throwing fire on prejudices and leading to enemy casting and racial constructions (as discussed in the previous chapter). We saw it happen with Muslims in Chapter 2, and again with the Japanese in this chapter. We determined that anti-Asian sentiment (and its consequences, such as Japanese Internment) was certainly in line with the generalizations and enemy-race construction found in Orientalism. However, whether or not the same could be said of Islamophobia was shown to be more difficult to ascertain, since there was some moral public outrage against the anti-Muslim victimization following 9/11. This included pro-Muslim messages made by the US government; something that was completely absent regarding Japanese Americans following the Pearl Harbor attack. While there was no large-scale incarceration of Muslim Americans, there were other forms of discrimination that may have been temporarily justified as a result of 9/11 (which, sources note, were repealed when they were deemed either excessive or no longer necessary) (Daniels loc. 2713; Etzioni 13-14).

However, the open and unregulated social media access, along with the mainstream media’s lending voice (for sensational news coverage) to many anti-Muslim fringe groups (discussed by Bail in Chapter 2), together with the three-dimensional Islamophobia identified by Beydoun, show that Beydoun’s first dimension of Islamophobia could be well be active and influencing government policies (which according to Bleich’s definition might not be exactly Islamophobic, but deemed necessary as a result of the fears of an Islamophobic public).

Therefore, this chapter concludes with the suggestion that Islamophobia is indeed, a form of Orientalism. However, it is also from the “pure” form of Orientalism that encompasses all non-European cultures from North Africa to Mongolia to Japan. The conclusion of this thesis, which comprises the next chapter, will reflect on the sources discussed so far in order to find an answer.
Chapter 4

Contemporary Islamophobia - Conclusion and Reflections

Our first chapter outlined Islamophobia in general, and considered some of the questions that helped explain its origins, and its prevalence in American culture. Chapter 1 also began with an assumption: that Muslims in particular have been (and continue to be) specifically singled out by the rest of America, labeled as alternatively foreign, backward, and at worst, an enemy and threat to America. This thesis sought to understand why.

We began our discussion about how Muslims, and especially Muslim Americans, have been judged to be “different” by their fellow Americans, and as a result of violent events such as 9/11, labeled “enemies” and discriminated against by their fellow Americans. In this thesis, this observation led to a more specific discussion of Islamophobia, which included examples demonstrating how Muslims are singled out, the effects of Islamophobia on American politics, and a clearer and more specific definition of “Islamophobia”. Examples taken from Arsalan Iftikhar’s Scapegoats (2016) described examples of both anti-Muslim violence and political attitudes in the wake of 9/11, and the most recent presidential campaigns.

Preceded by the earlier discussion, we made an effort to define the word “Islamophobia”, which allowed us to see what the examples offered by Iftikhar shared in common. Using Eric Bleich (2012) and Khaled Beydoun (2018), we considered their overlapping understandings of Islamophobia, which we placed side-by-side in order to complement and enhance one another. Bleich provided a general understanding of Islamophobia that nonetheless defined clear boundaries around specifically Islamophobic behavior. Afterward, Beydoun looked within the parameters of Bleich’s definition in order to articulate the different levels and dimensions of Islamophobia and how it manifests itself in different ways. By the time we completed our discussion, we had arrived at a clear, distinct,
and robust understanding of Islamophobia: an emotional response to Muslims and their beliefs, based on fear and/or anger, which may be misdirected as a result of ignorance.

We then, compared the understandings of Islamophobia provided by Bleich and Beydoun, and the examples given by Iftikhar. We were able to discuss the writer’s ideas in a complimentary way: Iftikhar's examples demonstrated Beydoun's three dimensions of Islamophobia, which in turn elaborated the more basic definition provided by Bleich.

In Chapter 2, we paid special attention to Beydoun’s suggestion that Islamophobia was nothing new, but simply a restoration of an “old system that branded Muslims as inherently suspicious and unassimilable, and cast Islam as a rival ideology at odds with American values, society, and national identity” (Beydoun 18). Beydoun argued that, centuries before the presence of Islamophobia in our time, Islam had already been painted as a rival ideology and enemy race through the lens of Orientalism. Beydoun’s writing essentially saw two phases of Orientalism/Islamophobia: it was “Orientalism” from the founding of the United States until the early 20th century (up to and including America’s fear of Japanese Americans), when the Cold War gave America a new anti-American enemy to fear. Then, a return to Orientalism (this time with a particularly “Islamophobic” flavor--i.e., contemporary Islamophobia) followed the conclusion of the Cold War in from the 1990s onward.

One of the most important questions considered in Chapter 2 was: why Muslims have been treated differently than other minority groups? To find the answer, we considered essays from Gina Pentonito (whose essay predates 9/11), and K.O. Kalkan, G.C. Layman, and E.M. Uslaner (whose essay was written many years into the Islamophobia that flourished after the events of 9/11 and the War on Terror). Pentonito’s discussion offered some important insights into enemy construction, describing generally how human beings react to one another in times of crisis (often directing their hostility, socially and psychologically, by blaming someone).
Pentonito’s discussion proved to be relevant as it correlated to Bleich’s suggestion that Islamophobia is entirely in the mind of the Islamophobic person.

Following Pentonito’s observations on enemy construction, we formed the central thesis of Chapter 2: How Islamophobia has come to play such a prevalent role in both American politics and the private lives of individuals. We began the discussion with a general example of how societies respond to threats in an effort to feel safe (Pentonito’s enemy construction, again), but this time with a look at two events: Pearl Harbor and 9/11, and how the consequences of both these events followed long-standing prejudices against Asian Americans (American Orientalism). By the end of the chapter, we considered questions regarding the nature of Islamophobia and its origins, which we discussed in two ways: as a response to difference (prejudice), as well as a response to genuine fear (following a real crisis or attack).

Answering the “why” of Islamophobia (explaining the reasons Muslims were singled as scapegoats in America), Chapter 2 next considered the “how”: What has led to the rampant success of Islamophobia in America at the start of the 21st century? This led to a discussion of Christopher Bail’s analysis of media portrayals of Muslims in America, especially following 9/11, and the effect of these portrayals on the people who are exposed to them. Bail argued that public expressions of fear or anger, especially in the wake of an attack, have given a temporary voice to fringe organizations with strong, prejudicial views. This negative emotion can be amplified by the media, which are looking to fill up hours in our world of 24-hour news, and sensation to generate attention, lending voice to them, providing a distorted image of Islam to the cultural environment (Bail 39-40). The result is a process similar to the dialectical Islamophobia which Beydoun described (between the public and the media, rather than the public and the state), and the resulting repercussions can negatively affect how Muslims are accepted and regarded by the general population.
Ultimately, Bail suggested that it has been the desire of political leaders to control the public through fear and paranoia, which together with the sensationalist and attention-grabbing nature of a media, has resulted in a distorted understanding of Islam in the consciousness of predominantly white, Christian America. This idea also echoed Beydoun’s understanding that present-day Islamophobia is a restoration of the racist Orientalist attitudes that ostracized Asian Americans and prevented non-white immigrants from becoming US citizens until the early 20th century. This, in addition to explanations discussed in Bail’s and Iftikhar’s books, helped us to further explain the present phenomenon of Islamophobia in this chapter.

Chapter 3 considered whether Islamophobia is just a symptom of a larger problem: the Orientalism which Chapter 2 suggested provided historical context and philosophical justification for otherizing Muslim people. We discussed the nature of Islamophobia as a prejudice and considered its link with Orientalism, and whether Islamophobia has emerged to become something distinct from past forms of prejudice against Asian Americans and immigrants. For a possible answer, we returned to Pentonito’s essay in order to look at her actual example of enemy construction: the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. We considered two specific points in order to draw a final conclusion regarding the possible similarities (or differences) between Orientalism and Islamophobia: whether Anti-Asian sentiments were in line with the generalizations and enemy-race construction found in Orientalism, and how Contemporary Islamophobia in its present-day form fits into the Orientalist narrative.

We noted that though Japanese and other East Asian immigrants were not Muslims, prejudice against Japanese and other East Asian Americans may still be regarded as a part of the same ideological philosophy that otherized Muslim and Arab Americans from the very beginning of America’s history. Pentonito’s article, along with Steven Rosen’s article (2000), both looked at the social behavior of enemy construction in light of the general anti-Asian
sentiments which prevailed in America throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, which preceded wartime Japanese discrimination.

Focusing next on Japanese discrimination and internment, Roger Daniels (1993/2004) presented a description of anti-Asian prejudice and wartime Japanese discrimination that appears to be as much a part of the story of Orientalism as is Islamophobia. Daniels’ summary, taken from writings both before and after 9/11 (including a new afterward from a later edition of his book published in 2004) and his description of anti-Asian sentiment preceding Japanese internment, which led to the suggestion that the hallmarks of Orientalism that set Muslims apart were also used to distinguish other Asian groups, with similar results.

In the final section of Chapter 3, we assessed the similarities between Japanese internment and post-9/11 Islamophobia by considering possible answers to the question: Could something like Japanese internment happen again? We did a comparative analysis of all the sources and materials discussed thus far in this thesis, to find answers. We first returned to Daniels’ speculations on the possibility of Japanese Internment, or something like it, from the time of the early 1990s. Then, we considered Beydoun’s post-9/11 discussion of Islamophobia, comparing the Japanese internment of the 1940s with the discrimination Muslim Americans faced in the aftermath of 9/11. Third, we considered another notable scholar on this subject, Amitai Etzioni’s 2005 discussion of America’s response to 9/11, to argue that Beydoun’s concerns may be exaggerated or misplaced. We thoroughly considered each of the authors’ varying points of view in order to draw our conclusion over whether the discrimination faced by Muslim Americans resembles that suffered by Japanese Americans during the Second World War, and how and why the plight of each is different.

In our final analysis on this topic, we may conclude that while the discrimination suffered by Muslim Americans after 9/11 was not on the level of that suffered by Japanese Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, it was, and remains, symptomatic of the
Orientalist attitudes that prevailed in America since the country’s founding. We further take away the idea that recognizing our past societal mistakes (of casting our prejudices towards our fellow citizens) will embolden our resolve not to repeat the same mistake.

Reflection 1. Points Taken

Each chapter briefly summarized above provides an important addition to our discussion, each providing an important idea that helps us to understand Islamophobia, its defining features, its origins, and how we can resist it, and how we can work to make it a thing of the past. Each idea will now be described in brief:

First: the preceding chapters established that Islamophobia has been established as “indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims” (Bleich 180). Islamophobia may be understood as irrational and based on fear and prejudice against difference, and often manifests itself in violence.

Second, Islamophobia in individuals increases in times of stress, whether the targeted individuals are to blame or not (consider the reaction to the Oklahoma City Bombing, for which Muslims were not responsible, or the anti-Muslim violence directed at Sikhs, Hindus, or Christians among others, following 9/11, who were mistaken for being Muslim as well).

Third, Islamophobia is self-perpetuating, as the Islamophobia of individuals affects the way Muslim Americans and Muslim immigrants are treated by the state, in a process which validates the fears of individuals: the result is a culture of Islamophobia in which the fears and actions of individuals affect state policies, which in turn affirm the feelings of individuals.

Fourth, Islamophobia, fear, and violence stem from enemy-creating behavior, which is a frequent human social and psychological reaction to real or perceived outside threats, especially after attacks like Pearl Harbor or 9/11.
Fifth, the otherizing and “enemizing” of ethnic groups/nationalities/religious communities is the legacy of America’s history of Orientalism, which has its roots in the Enlightenment. We will discuss further this process of movements feeding other movements in our final conclusion.

To conclude this present discussion, we might see the process of self-perpetuating Islamophobia writ large, with Islamophobia and Orientalism as stages of a larger process, writ large.

Reflection 2. Comparing and Contrasting Historical Prejudicial Episodes

Based on the analysis of our thesis thus far, it is incumbent upon us to compare and contrast Orientalism, World War II-era anti-Asian sentiment, and Islamophobia by listing some of the most obvious features of each. We will tabulate and discuss them, in turn.

Speaking first of Orientalism, we can observe that it is premised on racialization, a process by which Americans of European descent negatively distinguished and excluded non-Europeans from being fellow citizens, officially denying them citizenship and equal rights on account of their imagined inferiority. Very generally speaking, hallmarks of Orientalism included the “otherizing” of Middle Eastern and East Asian people through a binary understanding of identity: rational, enlightened Europeans took a dim view of people from parts of the world holding different systems of values or government. Further, it meant the subsuming of people “from Turkey to Tokyo” under one single monolithic, ethnic, or racial bloc (Rosen para. 2).

Considering anti-Asian sentiment, leading up to, and including, World War II-era Japanese internment), we can recognize it as the first instance of Orientalism to be manifested in America. This is because, from the time of the 19th century, we see the broad generalization of an entire continent of people under one generic label. (Example: the discrimination of
Chinese immigrants gave way to the discrimination of Japanese immigrants when immigration from China was outlawed; as Daniels noted in Chapter 3, “all Asian immigrants seemed alike”) (loc. 197). In other words, the hallmarks of Orientalism that set Muslims apart were also used to distinguish other Asian groups, with similar outcomes.

Finally, we can demonstrate, by the effect of the Second World War on American attitudes towards Japanese and other Asian people, the artificiality of this racialization of Asian people. As America’s enemy, the Japanese were suddenly distinguished from other Asian people, who were no longer regarded as an “enemy race” (for America’s war was being fought specifically with Japan, and the Japanese people were likened as having more in common with the people of Nazi Germany than other Asian people).

Last but not least, if we compare both Orientalism and the anti-Asian sentiment which gave rise to Japanese internment with Islamophobia post-9/11, some further parallels are observed: First, we observe that a history of Orientalism, racial prejudice, war hysteria, and the failings of political leadership contributed to Japanese internment following the attack on Pearl Harbor. We also note something similar about the fear, distrust, and violence directed toward Muslim Americans, largely at the hands of the public (the murders which followed 9/11, as well as forms of state-sanctioned discrimination), thus suggesting that something similar to the Orientalist mindset was at work in the minds of those responsible.

As for contrasts, which make post-9/11 distinct and different from the anti-Asian discrimination that preceded it, we may take note of the following: after 9/11, while there were indeed racial/religious prejudices expressed against Muslims, the government, and President George W. Bush himself, repeatedly reminded the public not to make assumptions about Muslim people because of their race or religion, something which was noticeably absent during
the anti-Japanese movement following Japan’s 1941 attack on US soil.\textsuperscript{30} Though as noted above, not every government agency applied this thinking to its dealings with Muslims, Muslim Americans, and other clearly Middle Eastern people. The question ultimately is whether the same culture and state of mind gave rise to anti-Asian sentiment in the past as well as Islamophobia in the present, and whether history is doomed to repeat itself. The contrasts noted here suggest that perhaps the future has the potential to be different from what was, but only if a deliberate effort is taken to make it different. Perhaps historical distinction such as this, shows that America is learning from its past missteps. Perhaps it shows that diversity and a difference of opinion is not a liability, but an asset that sets America, with its diversity, apart from the rest of the world.

\textit{Final Reflection 3. A Vicious Cycle and Americans’ Coming Together}

We began our thesis with the question of what Islamophobia is and concluded with the suggestion that while not all discrimination against Muslims counts as Islamophobia, much of it is contagious and rooted in the Islamophobia of individual citizens, itself passed down to them, from the culture into which they were born. For example, it could be argued that the security steps taken against non-immigrant Muslims or Muslim Americans in the wake of 9/11 attack, with the specific intent to only protect America from such foreign terrorist attacks, were indeed a temporary safety measure necessary to protect its citizens, like Etzioni argued. In that case, we need not necessarily agree that this is a case of American Islamophobia.

However, some form of Islamophobia might still be at work in such a case; if the fear of individual citizens led to the spread lies and deceit by minority fringe groups, whose words

\textsuperscript{30} “If this historical account of the aftermath of the September 11th attacks is unfamiliar [such as the fact that the Bush administration voiced pro-Muslim messages and rebuked those with anti-Muslim views], it is surely because most pro-Muslim messages did not reach the newspapers, television programs, websites, and social media sites that most people rely upon to understand such crises” (Bail 136).
were amplified by the mainstream media, the state could still be led to judge such
discriminatory actions as necessary. In that case, then Beydoun’s first dimension of
Islamophobia could be underscoring the state’s security efforts. The Islamophobia of
individuals could lead to the government taking security measures against Muslims that are not
in and of themselves Islamophobic.

Social psychology affects government and culture, and government and culture
influence the people born, raised, and educated under their governance and guidance; people in
turn pass their ideas down to the next generation. Punctuate this process of learning, teaching,
with the occasional act of violence (Pearl Harbor, the Oklahoma City bombing, and 9/11), and
the resulting forms of Orientalist/Islamophobic attitudes, and thus enemy creation and blaming
may develop as a result. Such ignominious events stifle the progression of culture and ideas
such as Orientalism. The point is to be aware of this, to see it happening, so that a conscious
effort can be made to overcome such attitudes.

We, in our present time, have the advantage of hindsight, together with our new-found
awareness of the historical processes which led to Islamophobia in its present form. We have
identified Islamophobia as an irrational form of discrimination born out of fear and anger, a
response to both violence and the cultural effects of Western history. We, the heirs of this
culture and its historical legacy, can use our self-awareness and knowledge to speak out against
Islamophobia, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism both by educating the ignorant and by standing
up to the media-saturated environment in which we live today. Doing both will begin a slow
process of rising above such unreasonable, emotional attitudes, and herald the beginning of a
more understanding, more peaceful society. The contrasts that distinguish present-day
Islamophobia from the anti-Asian sentiment of the past, and the fact that the government seems
prepared to listen when it oversteps or infringes on the rights of individual citizens, as Etzioni

31 Only Oklahoma City’s Islamophobic enemy creation was cut short by the arrest of Timothy McVeigh (Beydoun
73-74).
notes, and paid reparations to the Japanese effected by internment during the Second World War, as Daniels mentions, suggest that there is indeed hope for the future.

The focus of this thesis was the study of contemporary Islamophobia and its interplay with race, culture, politics, religion, and the media. Along the way we discussed its root, its various dimensions, its pervasiveness, its causes and effects, and how it damages the very foundation of our American values and moral psyche. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon us to at least try to scratch the surface as we “look ahead” to find a way that, as a unified society, we can come together with Muslims by overcoming the cancer of Islamophobia. Developing an effective response to, and to curb, such anti-Muslim venom is the next step, following this study.

To that, one of the Executive Directors of CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations), Edward Mitchell laid out several strategies to effectively counter Islamophobia and anti-Muslim movement: I. Educating the Muslim Communities (51); II. Engaging with People of Different Faiths and Backgrounds (51); III. Building Coalitions with Other Communities; IV. Countering Anti-Muslim Hate Groups (52); V. Politically Empower American Muslims (52); VI. Countering Extremism Effectively (53); and VII. Seek a Just American Foreign Policy (Mitchell 54).

To rid ourselves of Islamophobia effectively, we must educate our community and help others to know the real teaching of Islam. We must engage in interfaith dialogues, discuss and debate with right-wing anti-Muslim hate groups, stop linking and equating any act of Muslim terrorism with Islam as a religion, and be part of making laws and policies locally and abroad that are just. According to a recent 2018, PEW Research poll, familiarity with Muslims is

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32 Etzioni observes that “immediate period after the [9/11] attack, when the public was most concerned about its safety (fearing additional attacks from sleeper terrorist cells on short order), people were most willing to support a strong government, including one that would set aside many basic individual rights” (13). However, that is not the whole story; during the time following 9/11, as no new attacks occurred following the government’s public safety measures, “the public gradually restored its commitment to the rights-centered, democratic regime” (13-14).

33 The whole of Chapter 5 of Daniels’ Prisoners without Trial focuses on this (loc. 2051-2421).
linked to a more favorable view of Muslims and Islam in the West (Gardner and Evans para. 1-2). Bail and Aslan both noted that the majority of Americans have never yet a Muslim, and that these people account for much of the anti-Muslim sentiment in America (Bail 35; Aslan vi); therefore, it would appear necessary to engage and mingle with Muslims, if Americans are to be rid of their unsubstantiated fear of Islamophobia.

In the final analysis, if we reflect upon our past Western and American history, we may find that while it passed through many difficult and challenging dark eras, it always found a way to overcome them and outgrow its prejudices. In the circle of life, our current generation might reconcile our forefathers’ mistakes and misjudgments by correcting and repaying for them: we banished Catholics and Quakers, later we accepted them as fellow Americans. America once practiced and regulated the slavery and slave trade; we later abolished it (though it took the Civil War to accomplish this). We put on a blindfold to ignore the Nazis’ systematic extermination of millions of innocent Jews during the Second World War; later we risked our lives to fight for their freedom and brought them home with open arms. We created internment camps to isolate our fellow Japanese Americans in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor attack during Second World War; we later paid reparations and apologized for this.

If the past history is any indication, then there is definite hope that one day soon, we Americans will recognize our unsubstantiated fear of Islam, deconstruct Islamophobia as an ideologue to replace the Cold War foe with a new enemy, and stop our anti-Muslim attitudes. We must not take part or propagate the very misguided, anti-Muslim venom shared by so many. Doing so will only fan the flames of hatred and fury, like the ones we saw in the latest New Zealand Muslim massacre on March 15, 2019. No one says that the road ahead will be obstacle-free, or that redemption will be easy, but it must happen, it has to happen, for the future of our nation, and for the sake of our human dignity, and decency.
The struggle for justice must be with “all hands on deck”. To reiterate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — dignity, equality, and freedom denied to one group is a threat to all (Abadi 7). For this reason, modern Islamophobia is not just a knock or hatred expressed towards Islam or Muslims, it is an attack on our very human decency, and a flagrant violation of our fundamental human rights. In his effort to raise serious global awareness and shed a major focus on the fight against the metastasized Islamophobia Industry in America, the former US President, Jimmy Carter reflected upon the crisis this way: “Respect for human rights and the elimination of discrimination are essential to advancing global peace and democracy. When we turn a blind eye to discrimination against our Muslim neighbors, we cannot claim to remain true to our American values, and if we tolerate discrimination against those of another faith, we undermine our own cherished religious freedom. None of us can ignore the challenge that rising Islamophobia presents to our nation. We must resolve to fight fear and abuse with solidarity and a commitment to justice — especially for those whose communities have suffered oppression and discrimination.” (Carter 4).

Indeed, we must muster the courage, conviction, compassion, and determination collectively as a society, to overcome our misguided (and often manufactured) suspicion, fears, and paranoia of others, in order to present our future generations with a more promising, inclusive, and assimilating world. Otherwise, make no mistake, we are destined to hand our children and grand children a dysfunctional world with a doomed future.
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