Naming the Enemy:

An Analysis of How Presidential Rhetoric and Foreign Policy Contributed to American Islamophobia During the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations

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Introduction

      The relationship between Islamophobia and the United States of America is complicated

and has become a prevalent social issue since September 11th, 2001. While Islamophobia has

existed for hundreds of years, its definition has evolved over the past twenty years. Scholars have

provided numerous definitions of Islamophobia. Webster's dictionary defines it as "irrational fear

of, aversion to, or discrimination against Islam or people who practice Islam."[1] While this

definition is very broad, many scholars of religion and Islam have formulated their own

definitions of Islamophobia, focusing on everything from race to gender. Carl Ernst's 2013

edited volume *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance* provides several

definitions. For example, Peter Gottschalk, a scholar of American perception of Muslims, defines

it as follows: "Islamophobia accurately reflects a social anxiety towards Islam and Muslim

cultures that is largely unexamined by, yet deeply ingrained in, Americans."[2] Kambiz

GhaneaBassiri, a scholar of Islam and the United States, claims Islamophobia is related to

depictions of Islam and violence in popular media. He also links Islamophobia to other

prejudices against "out-groups" in the United States, like Catholics and Jews. "Islamophobia," he

writes, "insofar as it reduces anti-Muslim attitudes to a fear of Islam, appears to be too narrow a

concept to capture the racial and political factors that underpin current negative attitudes toward

Muslims."[3] Edward Curtis, who specializes in African American Islam and Islam in the U.S.,

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[1] "Islamophobia," Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, n.d., https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Islamophobia.

[2] Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, "From Muhammad to Obama: Caricatures, Cartoons, and Stereotypes of Muslims," in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23.

[3] Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, "Islamophobia and American History: Religious Stereotyping and Out-Grouping of Muslims in the United States," in *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 57.

"highlights the element of racism in Islamophobia, which he links to state repression of political dissent."[4] Curtis also relates his definition to Gottschalk's notion of Islamophobia as "social anxiety" but adds the importance of governmental influence. He writes that "though Islamophobia may be a social anxiety, its salience in U.S. society is not exclusively the reflection of certain cultural and political interests, including those of some evangelical Christians, pro-Israeli activists, academic orientalists, and mass media; Islamophobia is also the product of the state's legal and extralegal attempts to control, discipline, and punish Muslim American individuals and organizations."[5] Juliane Hammer "draws attention to the importance of gender in images of terrorists and the construction of Islamophobia, although she cautions that particular examples of Islamophobia must be analyzed in terms of the particular political and intellectual currents that drive them."[6] She explains further that "Islamophobia is not about innate or natural fear of Islam or Muslims. Rather, it is an ideological construct produced and reproduced at the intersection of imperial ideology, political expediency, and the exploitation of nationalist, racial, and religious insecurities."[7]

While all of these definitions have their merits and are essential for understanding this form of discrimination, the definitions that I have found most helpful for my argument are Andrew Shryock's and Carl Ernst's definitions. Shryock, a cultural anthropologist, defines Islamophobia as "symptomatic of our inability—in some cases, our explicit refusal—to let

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[4] Carl Ernst, *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 2.

[5] Edward E. Curtis IV, "The Black Muslim Scare of the Twentieth Century: The History of State Islamophobia and Its Post-9/11 Variations" (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 76.

[6] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America: The Anatomy of Intolerance*, 3.

[7] Juliane Hammer, "(Muslim) Women's Bodies, Islamophobia, and American Politics," *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 2013, 1–8.

Muslims take part in the construction of national identity."[8] Shryock heavily focuses on the nationalist component that goes into Islamophobia, describing further, "Contemporary Islamophobes entertain a wild variety of hostile beliefs about Muslims and Islam, but they tend to agree that Islam, or some essential version of it, falls outside the acceptable range of tolerance and equal treatment that comes with membership in both nation and state."[9] One of the main reasons that I chose this definition of Islamophobia for this thesis was because of the importance of national identity and nationalism that is present in presidential rhetoric and foreign policy. The power of a nation and the importance of American dedication is present in the rhetoric of each of these administrations along with the idea of doing what is best for the U.S. and the people of the U.S. By using Shryock's definition of Islamophobia we can see that Muslim Americans are not always considered to be fully American and therefore their rights as citizens are not equal to those of non-Muslims.We see how the ignorance about Muslims in American society and culture can lead to both domestic and foreign policies that exclude the needs of this group; this can be seen in the "Muslim ban" and the heavy use of racial profiling by the Department of Homeland Security.

According to Carl Ernst, "The basic point is that, for the many Americans who have no personal experience knowing Muslims as human beings, the overwhelmingly negative images of Islam circulated in the popular media amount to prejudice."[10] The use of nationalism perpetuated through popular media and the lack of personal experience with Islam in the U.S. are significant contributing factors to Islamophobia. The widespread negative images that are present through

[8] Andrew Shryock, "Attack of the Islamophobes: Religious War (and Peace) in Arab/Muslim Detroit," in *Islamophobia in America an Anatomy of Intolerance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 146.

[9] Andrew Shryock, "Attack of the Islamophobes Religious War (and Peace) in Arab/Muslim Detroit," in *Islamophobia in America An Anatomy of Intolerance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). 146.

[10] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America: the Anatomy of Intolerance*. 3.

television, social media platforms, and other forms of media have a wide reach in the U.S. With the spread of negative images comes discrimination. This can be seen with the utilization of Islamophobia in the media during the 2016 election cycle. Trump was running on the goal of keeping Americans safe from "radical Islam" and the threats that ISIL was making against the west. This increased threat from ISIL resulted in a spike in hate crimes in 2015-2016.[11] These two definitions provide concepts that help show how instances of Islamophobic rhetoric and foreign policy have correlated with American Islamophobia. In this thesis, I will show how political rhetoric and foreign policy declarations, as seen in presidential speeches, also contribute to Islamophobia. It is important for me to note that while political rhetoric and American foreign policy have a correlation to Islamophobia. Islamophobia is a much more nuanced form of discrimination especially in the U.S. As we can see with the other definitions mentioned above, there are many components that play a role in Islamophobia in the U.S., a huge contributor being racism. Islamophobia in politics can also be seen through both domestic and foreign policies. I chose to focus on rhetoric as a way of showing how elected officials in such an influential position have contributed to this narrative. Using Ernst's and Shryock's definitions, I will demonstrate how presidential rhetoric since 9/11 has contributed to an Islamophobic narrative in the U.S.

Negative images of Muslims were widely spread during the first three administrations after 9/11; this, along with American and Christian nationalism, were contributing factors to Islamophobia in the U.S. Shryock's and Ernst's definitions help us to see the connections between Islamophobia, presidential rhetoric, and foreign policy. Ernst's definition focuses

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[11] Uniform Crime Reporting Program Hate Crime Statistics," government, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001-2019., https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime.(accessed March 25, 2022).

heavily on negative images in popular media, including images and narratives shown on television, social media, and during public addresses. Shryock focuses on the nationalist motivations behind Islamophobia, writing: "The problem is that Islamophobia defines Islam as unacceptable in the modern state, and Muslims as incapable of being true citizens."[12]

When Europeans first colonized North America, most of the settlers of the original thirteen colonies were Protestant Christians. While the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights did grant freedom of religion, religious traditions other than Protestantism have not always been accepted. For American Jews and Catholics, their assimilation has been fraught with difficulty.[13] Other religious traditions were even less common in the U.S. until the 20th century. In the 20th century came the rise of Islamic presence in the United States; this correlated with growth in Muslim immigration to the U.S., like Catholics and Jews, but also with the liberation of formerly enslaved African Americans and their conversion to Islam.[14] In the 1930s came the creation and the rise of the Nation of Islam (NOI). The NOI, led by the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, was a religious-political group that fought for Black liberation and claimed that Christianity was an oppressive religion for African Americans.[15] Over the next few decades, the NOI continued to grow and became a substantial organization in the Civil Rights Movement. With the growth of the NOI emerged a form of Islamophobia and bias against Muslims in the U.S. In his definition of Islamophobia, Edward Curtis identifies how race plays a role in Islamophobia for African

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[12] Shryock, "Attack of the Islamophobes: Religious War (and Peace) in Arab/Muslim Detroit,"14.

[13] Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: an Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1955), 153, 164.

[14] Edward E. Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African American Islamic Thought* (New York: University of New York Press, 2002), 31.

[15] Curtis IV. *Islam in Black America,* 31.

American Muslims; their race and religion are both points of possible discrimination.[16] After the death of Elijah Muhammad, Wallace Muhammad, his son, took over the Nation and led the largest religious conversion in U.S. history with the conversion of former NOI members to Sunni Islam.[17]

Currently, 20% of the Muslim population in the U.S. are African Americans.[18] In the late 20th century, when the era of globalization began, the U.S. started to attract more Muslim immigrants, changing the demographic of Islam in the U.S. In the years since 1990, rates of Muslim immigrants have increased, such that a 2007 survey found that 65% of Muslims in the U.S. were born elsewhere.[19] Islamophobia after 9/11 focused less on race and prejudice against African American Muslims and more on the fundamentals of the religion. This new version of Islamophobia is described by the definitions of Shryock, Ernst, and Hammer, all of which focus on the public perception of Muslims after 9/11 and less on the large population of African American Muslims throughout the nation. While race was obviously still relevant in the racial profiling that Muslims experienced after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the race and ethnicity of the targets changed. Islamophobia also became a more common form of discrimination after 9/11.

[16] Curtis IV, "Islamophobia and American History: Religious Stereotyping and Out-Grouping of Muslims in the United States.", 94.

[17] Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America.*113.

[18] Besheer Mohamed and Jeff Diamant, "Black Muslims Account for a Fifth of All U.S. Muslims, and About Half Are Converts to Islam," Pew Research Center, January 17, 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/black-muslims-account-for-a-fifth-of-all-u-s-muslims-and-about-half-are-converts-to-islam/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[19] Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," May 22, 2007, https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2007/05/22/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly-mainstream/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

The Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations were the first three administrations after 9/11; these three administrations each had a crucial role in the so-called "War on Terror" in response to 9/11 and the overall American narrative about Muslims. This narrative came from the foreign policy efforts and the rhetoric used by these three administrations. Throughout each presidential administration, the use of specific terms contributed to the Islamophobia narrative in the U.S. Each of these presidents sought to identify a particular "enemy" of the U.S. The "us versus them" mentality stems from the forming of "otherness."[20] In the case of the U.S. and Islam, after 9/11 the perceived otherness of Muslims resulted in a national "us versus them" narrative in which Muslims were perceived as terrorists, and a threat to American freedom. This narrative played a role in the identification of the "enemy" that these administrations took part in.

George Bush utilized American fear and response to 9/11 to announce the "War on Terror," deliberately using the terms "terrorist" and "war on terror" to explain the increased American military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately for Muslims, the use of these terms and the implementation of the Department of Homeland Security created internal fear throughout the nation that any Muslim Americans, were a possible threat to national security. The Obama administration's most used term to identify national enemies was "violent extremists." Citing the "extremist" views of terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS while also using "violent" as a vital aspect of the identity of these organizations, Obama was conscious of never using "Islamic" or "Muslim" in the language around the targets of the "War on Terror." Donald Trump, eschewing all political correctness, used terms including "radical Islam" to

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[20] Arash Emamzadeh, "The Psychology of 'Us-vs-Them,'" *Psychology Today*, August 9, 2019, https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/finding-new-home/201908/the-psychology-us-vs-them. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

describe the enemy. Trump identified the threat to the U.S. not as specific groups but rather Islam in general.

While having differences, these administrations also had similarities. In the Bush and Trump administrations, there is a theme of hyper-vigilance toward Muslims and Muslim countries. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in the Bush administration came racial profiling, and the "Muslim ban" in the Trump administration, the fear of Islam was a central part of the U.S. narrative being created about Muslims. According to the FBI, there were spikes in anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2001, 2004, 2015, and 2016.[21] The rise of hate crimes correlates with threats made by extremist groups that targeted the U.S., this can be shown through the spike right after 9/11 and the gradual rise between 2013-2016 that was associated with the rise of ISIL. The rise and fall of hate crimes in the U.S. during these three administrations was tumultuous. After the immediate spike after the 9/11 attacks rates declined over the next two years only to have a slight uptick in 2004. The decline in 2005 was short lived with another small increase in 2006; however, the years 2007, 2008, and 2009, were the lowest rates since 9/11. After going up, back down, and slightly up again in the years 2010, 2011, and 2012, there was a steady increase in anti-Muslim hate crime instances between the years 2013-2016. While rates began to decrease in the year 2017, 2018, and 2019, the number of instances in these three years were still substantially higher than they had been prior to 2015.[22] These three administrations contributed to Islamophobia by utilizing nationalism to prioritize U.S. interests and spreading negative images of Muslims through popular media, which included televised

[21] "Uniform Crime Reporting Program Hate Crime Statistics," government, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001-2019., https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime.(accessed March 25, 2022).
[22] Uniform Crime Reporting Program Hate Crime Statistics,"

remarks given by the President and Presidential use of social media.[23] On the other hand, Obama contributed to the Islamophobic narrative through the foreign and domestic policies he executed during his time in office. The increased U.S. military presence in Afghanistan during "the surge" and emphasis on the enemy overseas played into Islamophobia by militarily adding to the "us versus them" narrative. While not a rhetorical fear-monger like his predecessor and successor, Obama still contributed to a biased narrative about Islam in the U.S. by confirming the fear of Muslims through his actions militarily. A similarity between Bush and Obama was the focus on foreign policy and the importance of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, whereas Trump focused more on diplomatic foreign policy and less on militaristic foreign policy. But beyond these differences and similarities, all three of these presidents influenced the curation of an American Islamophobic narrative after 9/11.

Attention to this problematic narrative is essential because it has negatively affected the way of life for a substantial population of human beings. Islam is the second-largest religion in the world, with more than two billion Muslims worldwide and around three to four million Muslims in the United States.[24] Islamophobia has a huge impact on daily life for Muslim Americans as well as Muslims around the world.[25] By examining the influence that the executive branch has had on Islamophobia in the U.S., we can see how Islamophobia has changed the landscape of the U.S. for Muslims, and changed the understanding of Islam in the U.S. Rather than protecting and serving the people, these presidents have contributed to a narrative that was

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[23] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*. 3. "The U.S. War in Afghanistan Timeline," Council of Foreign Relations, n.d., https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

[24] Basheer Mohamed, "New Estimates Show U.S. Muslim Population Continues to Grow," Pew Research Center, January 3, 2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/03/new-estimates-show-u-s-muslim-population-continues-to-grow/. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

[25] Basheer Mohamed, "New Estimates Show U.S. Muslim Population Continues to Grow."

incredibly harmful to a large portion of the U.S. population. The rise of Islamophobia in America after 9/11 also continued the longstanding white, Christian supremacist narrative that has been present since the creation of the U.S. While there is a long history of discrimination against religious minorities in the U.S., the rise of Islamophobia was not only based on religious differences but also differences of race and ethnicity.

Presidential speech is influential and is amplified and perpetuated by the media's interpretations and repetitions. The same can be said for foreign policy in perpetuating an "us versus them" mentality. The War on Terror was a unique example of war because the U.S. was responding to an attack on American soil. So, this enemy narrative was in full effect despite the targets of the War on Terror being seemingly vague.

George W. Bush was a crucial figure in the rise of the Islamophobic narrative after 9/11. It is essential to see his contribution to this narrative through his rhetoric after 9/11 and his military response. Bush's rhetoric after the attacks was very public since Bush continuously addressed the country for months after the attacks. His rhetoric was supportive of the American people and the trauma they experienced on 9/11. However, with the introduction of the War on Terror, the enemy became blurred. The perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, they became public enemy number one. However, with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the enemy expanded from being a terrorist organization to entire Muslim countries. The religious identification and geographical location were the most significant similarities that connected Afghanistan and Iraq in the minds of the American public. With the increase of military intervention correlating with the growth of the "us versus them" narrative came increasingly hostile feelings towards Muslims.

Obama, during his candidacy for the presidency, was a victim of the "birther movement" and an offensive *New Yorker* cover that depicted him and his wife as terrorists.[26] Obama was adamant in a speech he gave after being inducted into office that one of his goals was to stop the continuation of offensive Muslim stereotypes and bias against Muslims in the U.S.[27] His rhetoric targeted a U.S. audience that was adamant about avenging the events of 9/11 and capturing Osama bin Laden. With an international audience, Obama took a slightly different approach, claiming that mending relations with the Muslim world would be mutually beneficial. Despite his claims about restoring ties, President Obama did increase U.S. military presence in Afghanistan during his time in office with "the surge" in Afghanistan and his implementation of drone warfare that targeted Yemen.[28] He also utilized problematic domestic policies that negatively impacted Muslim Americans.[29] The military actions demonstrated a remaining fear and need to fight a particular group that was considered a threat to the U.S.

During his administration, Trump took a different stance from Obama, decreasing the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan but keeping a military presence in the Middle East. During his presidency, Trump heavily utilized social media to perpetuate his rhetoric about Muslims and their relationship with the U.S. Trump's contribution to the Islamophobic narrative was his aggressive and offensive rhetoric relating to Muslims domestically and internationally.

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[26] Mary Louise Kelly, "'I'm Just Trying to Make Myself Laugh': 'New Yorker' Artist Shares His Cover Stories," NPR, 2017 https://www.npr.org/2017/10/20/558777025/im-just-trying-to-make-myself-laugh-new-yorker-artist-shares-his-cover-stories. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

[27] Barack Obama, "A New Beginning," transcript of speech delivered at University of Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09

[28] Gabriel Rubin, "Barack Obama: From an End to Terror to Drone Wars and ISIS," *Montclair State University Digital Commons*, March 22, 2020. 15.

[29] ACLU, "FBI given Power to Thwart Immigration Applications for Muslims," *ACLU*, accessed March 25, 2022, https://hackinglawpractice.com/blog/fbi-given-power-to-thwart-immigration-applications-for-muslims/.

Additionally, with the implementation of the travel ban on seven predominantly Muslim countries in January 2017, President Trump was very outspoken about the perceived Muslim threat to the U.S. His use of social media and inflammatory speech that swept news outlets spread Islamophobic narratives throughout his term.

After 9/11, the political response turned from wanting to avenge those lost to a two-decade fight against Muslims in the United States and internationally. The use of U.S. nationalism and the spread of negatively associated Islamophobic images in popular media significantly contributed to Islamophobia in the U.S. The three presidential administrations after the attack aided this narrative with their political rhetoric and foreign policy. Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump led the country as the plague of Islamophobia swept through the country as a increasingly accepted form of discrimination. The resurgence of fear, while understandable on some level, did not warrant the hate imposed on Muslims. The lack of widespread knowledge about Muslims and the Islamic tradition contributed to the fear of Muslims in the U.S. As the saying goes, "ignorance breeds fear," and that was what happened after 9/11.

BUSH: The War on Terror and Good v. Evil

George W. Bush held the office of President of the United States during a time of global divide and American fear. The events that took place in the first year of his presidency changed the course of his time in office. Following the years after 9/11, while Bush remained in office, two major themes emerged in his rhetoric. The first theme is the "War on Terror." The origin of this phrase stems from the U.S. campaign of responding politically and militarily to the events of 9/11. This phrase was common in Bush's rhetoric when referring to political and, in some cases, social changes in response to the terrorist attacks. Another theme that remained prevalent in his rhetoric was the idea of "good versus evil." In his War on Terror campaign, Bush focused heavily on the evil that had perpetrated the attacks on 9/11 and why bringing justice to these evil terrorists would provide safety and security for the U.S. However, the term "evil" was not exclusive to terrorist organizations but included figures like Saddam Hussein and even the Taliban. These themes and their connection to Islamophobia can be analyzed through political moves like the invasions of both Iraq and Afghanistan. The repercussions of these rhetorical themes can also be seen through the Islamophobic narrative in the U.S. during the Bush administration and how "good versus evil" can be explored through Bush's use of Christian rhetoric. The rhetorical themes evident in the Bush administration can help analyze his connection to Islamophobia.

On September 11, 2001, two planes flew into the World Trade Center in New York City. A few minutes later, a plane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Almost 3,000 people died on September 11th. This attack was the first attack on U.S. soil since Pearl Harbor and is one of the most devastating days in U.S. history. At the time of the attacks, George W. Bush had

been President for less than a year. The former Texas governor ran his campaign on platforms

including lowering taxes and increasing military spending.[30] Bush won the 2000 election against

Democratic primary candidate Al Gore, who had previously served as Vice President under

President Bill Clinton. Despite an incredibly close election that went to the Supreme Court, Bush

came out victorious and was inaugurated in January 2001, only eight months before the 9/11

attacks. However, after 9/11, the trajectory of Bush's presidential efforts shifted to response to

the terrorist attacks. This event forever changed the narrative attached to Muslims in the U.S.

Even though the 9/11 attacks took place on U.S. soil, the severity of the attacks resulted in

responses on an enormous global stage. That night Bush revealed that the perpetrators of the 9/11

attacks were Al-Qaeda, a militant Islamist organization. Their leader and co-founder, Osama bin

Laden, became public enemy number one. While U.S. intelligence had information on Al-Qaeda

and Osama bin Laden, they could not catch and kill him until a decade after 9/11. 9/11 was a

defining moment for Islamophobia and spurred biased political opinions and an uneducated

narrative related to Muslims that have morphed into a pillar in U.S. political ideation even two

decades later and a prejudicial epidemic that influences everyday life for Muslims in America.

On the night of 9/11, President Bush addressed the country in his "Address to the Nation"

speech. Bush's speech was short but powerful, evoking emotions in viewers with his patriotic

tone. In this speech, he began,

> Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in
> a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts… Thousands of lives were suddenly ended
> by evil, despicable acts of terror… Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who
> grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety
> and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a Power greater

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[30] "George W. Bush for President 2000 Campaign Brochure 'Opportunity, Security and Responsibility -- A Fresh Start for America.," n.d., http://www.4president.org/brochures/georgewbush2000brochure.htm. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me.*[31]

Bush gave this address to reassure the nation that the terrorist acts perpetrated were being recognized and acknowledged. Bush's demeanor in this speech was a combination of somber and patriotic. His use of "evil" and even "terror" in this speech were precursors to eventual rhetorical themes that would be key throughout his time in office. Bush continued to publicly address U.S. citizens, Congress, the press, and allied countries for weeks following the attacks. A month after the attacks, the U.S. sent airstrikes into Afghanistan since the Taliban had publicly expressed their support for Al-Qaeda and the U.S. had intel that Al-Qaeda had retreated to Afghanistan; Bush sent soldiers into Afghanistan in November 2001.[32] The immediate attack on Afghanistan changed the optics from the U.S. standpoint. A year and a half after the 9/11 attacks, Bush invaded Iraq in March 2003, and the basis of this invasion was the need to rid Saddam Hussein of power. The Bush administration claimed that Hussein was committing human rights violations, leading an authoritarian regime, and building an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. This invasion, paired with Bush's rhetoric, soon began to curate a specific image that Americans attached to the "War on Terror" and the "enemy."[33]

When Bush and his administration. publicly identified the perpetrators of 9/11, they became an assumed common enemy that inspired patriotism among U.S. citizens. The confirmation that the militant Islamic group Al-Qaeda was responsible for 9/11 resulted in a great shift toward Muslims and the Islamic tradition, with many examining the tradition and

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[31] George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation" Transcript of speech delivered at The White House, Washington D.C., September 11, 2001. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html

[32] Stephan D. Biddle, "Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2005): 161–76.

[33] Andrew Shryock, *Islamophobia/Islamophilia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

those who followed it. The narrative that started to emerge brought up questions about whether Islam was "anti-American" and if Americans thought Islam "promoted violence."[34] Prejudice in the U.S. was not new; prejudice against Muslims had already been present in the United States for decades, and instances of bias and orientalism have followed Muslims for centuries. But it was changing. The navigation and existence of Islamophobia throughout the United States have had many contributing factors, including the minority population of Muslims and racial relations that contribute to inequality in U.S. society and history.

But the use of derogatory terms and aggressive rhetoric towards Muslims gained popularity in the months and years following 9/11. Muslims and Sikhs were easily identified because of skin color and the traditional conservative religious garb many wore. Muslims began to experience a level of discrimination they had not experienced in the past in the U.S.[35] While Islamophobia was present in the U.S. before the events of September 11th, the targets of this Islamophobia were more often black Americans. After the rise and fall of the Nation of Islam in the 20th century, Black Muslims remained a substantial religious demographic in the U.S.[36] The targeted demographic of Islamophobia changed after Middle Eastern Muslims attacked the World Trade Center. Muslims experienced discrimination on a societal level supported by politics and political jargon. Bush's rhetoric after 9/11 lacked precise insulting terms. Instead, it instigated a narrative that painted Muslims as the enemies of the U.S., with terms including "evil" and labeling governments the same as terrorist organizations. His one-track mind of

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[34] Michael Lipka, "Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World," Pew Research Center, August 9, 2017. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/09/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/, (accessed March 25, 2022).

[35] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*. 1-20.

[36] Curtis IV, *Islam in Black America: Identity, Liberation, and Difference in African American Islamic Thought*.

avenging the U.S. alienated Muslim Americans and perpetuated the idea that Muslims were to blame.

In the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attacks, President Bush was center stage, addressing the country and the world multiple times throughout September and October about the response to the attacks. In his speeches and through the press, Bush began to paint the narrative that would eventually lead him into the invasion of not only Afghanistan but also Iraq; the narrative being that these Muslim countries were a threat to the "freedom" of the U.S. and needed to be stopped.[37] In the first few days after the attack, Bush introduced the "War on Terror," which became the overarching name for the conflicts that the U.S. would engage in for at least the next 20 years.

> Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated. Americans are asking "Why do they hate us?" They hate what they see right here in this chamber: a democratically elected government. Their leaders are self-appointed. They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. They want to overthrow existing governments in many Muslim countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. They want to drive Israel out of the Middle East. They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa.[38]

In this speech, Bush wove a story of the fear that the U.S. and the rest of the world should have of these extremist groups. Here Bush utilizes the question that will continue to be critical throughout the next two decades, "Why do they hate us?" This question refers to "them" as Islamic extremist groups like Al-Qaeda and "us" being the U.S. and U.S. allies in the Middle

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[37] George W. Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11" transcript of speech delivered at the Capitol, Washington D.C., September 20, 2001. https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-united-states-response-the-terrorist-attacks

[38] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11".

East, a prime example of the "us versus them" narrative mentioned above. The fear-mongering Bush used in this speech continued to point to a genuine threat while omitting the specific countries subject to U.S. invasion. The War on Terror was a strategic name to sidestep the true targets of this war and categorize the enemy as "terror," something no one could be in favor of.

A major governmental result of the September 11th attacks was creating and implementing the Department of Homeland Security. The goal of the Department of Homeland Security was to protect the country from further terrorist attacks and other threats to the American people. On November 25, 2002, President Bush announced the Homeland Security Act had passed through Congress:[39]

> We recognize our greatest security is found in the relentless pursuit of these cold-blooded killers. Yet, because terrorists are targeting America, the front of the new war is here in America. Our life changed and changed in dramatic fashion on September the 11th, 2001. In the last 14 months, every level of our government has taken steps to be better prepared against a terrorist attack. We understand the nature of the enemy. We understand they hate us because of what we love. We're doing everything we can to enhance security at our airports and power plants and border crossings. We've deployed detection equipment to look for weapons of mass destruction. We've given law enforcement better tools to detect and disrupt terrorist cells which might be hiding in our own country.[40]

In this speech, he echoed themes that had been key in other addresses he had given throughout the previous year. Because the creation of this department was a part of the "War on Terror," this announcement also confirmed to Americans that there were terrorists in the U.S. Muslims in the U.S. became the target of increased Islamophobia with the Homeland Security Act, with their religion, race, and ethnicity as obvious identifiers. According to Zareena Grewal, "Before

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[39] Nicholas De Genova, "The Production of Culprits: From Deportability to Detainability in the Aftermath of "homeland Security," *Citizenship Studies* 11, no. 5 (2007): 430.

[40] George W. Bush, "President Bush Signs Homeland Security Act" transcript of speech delivered at the White House, Washington D.C., November 25, 2002. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/11/20021125-6.html

September 11th, there was a growing political consensus on the right and the left that racial profiling was an inefficient, ineffective, and unfair policy…After September 11th, the national consensus flipped, with people on the right and even many on the left embracing the profiling of Muslims in the name of national security."[41] The passing of the Homeland Security Act was bipartisan, since it was clear after 9/11 that U.S. defense forces within the country needed to improve.

With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, TSA (Transportation Security Administration), implemented in November 2001, became a branch of the Homeland Security Department. With the creation of TSA, airport security was unrecognizable; security screenings and extreme vigilance were implemented and continue to be a part of daily travel even over two decades later.[42] This domestic implementation was widely praised; however, behind the scenes of the Department of Homeland Security and TSA came problematic practices and racial profiling.

The first few years after the 9/11 attacks, the American attitude towards Muslims changed drastically; this was never more evident than it was in airports.[43] While Bush was taking foreign policy measures to prevent another attack, the work the Department of Homeland Security did focused on the Muslim population within the United States. Thousands of screenings and interrogations took place to identify possible threats within the country. Most of those targeted Muslims or people with ties to the Middle East, constituting a new form of racial profiling. One incredibly controversial and critiqued practice of Homeland Security was the

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[41] Zareena Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country: American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 8.

[42] De Genova, 422.

[43] Deborah Wilkins Newman and Nikki-Qui D. Brown, "Historical Overview and Perceptions of Racial and Terrorist Profiling in an Era of Homeland Security," *Crim. Just. Pol'y Rev.* 20 (2009).

Patriot Act, which increased surveillance efforts to the extent that many argued constituted a breach of freedom. This Act also altered the legal regulations regarding suspected terrorists, including detaining or deporting suspected threats for an unregulated amount of time.[44] The Department of Homeland Security and TSA practices heavily targeted Muslim Americans by invading their privacy and personal correspondence. This rise of racial profiling and targeted attacks on American Muslims demonstrated a shift in viewpoint of the U.S. government from Muslims as friends to Muslims as enemies.[45] While President Bush stated in his early rhetoric that Muslims are a "peaceful people," the surveillance efforts of the Department of Homeland Security villainized and viewed many Muslims as a threat to American freedom.[46]

Bush claimed his motives were avenging the lives of thousands of Americans and "serving justice" to those who made an enemy out of the U.S. Still, American citizens widely questioned the invasion of Afghanistan. At the time of the invasion, Afghanistan was under the leadership of the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic government. The Taliban was a known ally of Al-Qaeda and was suspected to be harboring Al-Qaeda during the time of the invasion. Bush claimed that the Taliban was an enemy of the United States, and this was one of the many reasons he gave for invading and beginning operations in Afghanistan, in addition to the hunt for Osama bin Laden.[47] According to Ernst, "Islamophobic discourse was arguably produced in conjunction with legal, administrative, and domestic policy measures covered under the 'War on Terror.'"[48] In the first few months after 9/11, Bush used his inspiring rhetoric and aggressive

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[44] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*, 1-20.

[45] Shryock, *Islamophobia/Islamophilia*.

[46] Bush, "Address to the Nation".

[47] Barnett R. Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 86 (2007).

[48] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*. 113.

foreign policy movements to appease the American people. Bush boasted about U.S. achievements made in the "War on Terror," saying, "we liberated a country."[49] He used the "War on Terror" as a vague descriptor for what was happening overseas. Understandably, many called for a response to the 9/11 attacks. However, the American success rates in the "War on Terror" were not high.

The announcement of the War on Terror was a defining moment for President Bush and his administration. The War on Terror became a standard term for the active occupations overseas and the initiatives the U.S. was taking to prevent groups like Al-Qaeda from continuing to terrorize. Afghanistan and Iraq were global south countries with their fair share of economic and governmental instability. For years the United States had peaceful relations with Muslim countries since their lack of stability posed no threat to the U.S.

In 2002 during his State of the Union address, Bush infamously used the term "Axis of Evil" as a moniker for Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. The "Axis of Evil" was a political descriptor used for U.S. enemies, but rather than the enemy being "terror" as before, now Bush distinctly named certain countries as "evil." The U.S. depended on the ability to import oil from countries including Iraq and Saudi Arabia, making these trade relationships crucial. After 9/11, the U.S. called for their trade partners and allies in Muslim countries to stand in solidarity with them as they moved forward with the War on Terror.[50] Bush needed to find a rhetorical balance between holding important alliances with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey while continuing to alter the U.S. perception of Muslims. As the fear of Muslims in the U.S. continued to become a prevalent

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[49] Bush, *President Bush Signs Homeland Security Act*.

[50] Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the United States Response to the Terrorist Attacks of September 11."

opinion, foreign relations in Muslim countries began to follow this narrative.[51] The War on Terror and the military invasions of one of the countries named in the "Axis of Evil" muddled the public perception of the actual U.S. enemy. The enemy now included governments as well as organizations who were supposed perpetrators of terror.

On March 17, 2003, Bush addressed the country, informing them that the situation in Iraq had escalated to the point of necessary U.S. military intervention. In his speech, Bush mentioned the relationship between Iraq and Al-Qaeda, stating that Iraq has a "deep hatred for America": '[52]

> If Saddam Hussein attempts to cling to power, he will remain a deadly foe until the end. In desperation, he and terrorist groups might try to conduct terrorist operations against the American people and our friends. These attacks are not inevitable. They are, however, possible. And this very fact underscores the reason we cannot live under the threat of blackmail. The terrorist threat to America and the world will be diminished the moment that Saddam Hussein is disarmed. Our government is on heightened watch against these dangers. Just as we are preparing to ensure victory in Iraq, we are taking further actions to protect our homeland.[53]

In this announcement, Bush alluded to the connection between Saddam Hussein and possible terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. The use of "War on Terror" now encapsulated the war he was calling for in Iraq. He was claiming that with the abolition of Hussein's reign over Iraq they would neutralize the threat of more terrorist attacks in the U.S., when in fact 9/11 had no connection to Saddam Hussein. While Saddam Hussein was a threat to his neighbors like Iran, the information that Bush used as justification to go after him and paint him as a threat to America was later revealed to be falsified information.[54] Media sources reported that Bush held

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[51] Biddle, "Allies, Airpower, and Modern Warfare: The Afghan Model in Afghanistan and Iraq."

[52] George W. Bush, "Address to the Nation on Iraq" transcript delivered at the White House, Washington D.C., March 17,2003.https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-nation-iraq

[53] Bush, "Address to the Nation on Iraq."

[54] Joshua Kameel, "The Iraq War: Bad Intelligence or Bad Policy?" *American Intelligence Journal* 32, no. 1 (2015): 8.

an interest in removing Saddam and finishing the Gulf War that his father had engaged in during his presidency.[55] In many speeches like this one, Bush grouped Saddam and the Ba'ath party with Al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations. This grouping contributed to the narrative of Muslims being synonymous with terrorists. By failing to differentiate the operations of these groups (and the Taliban), the "evil" label given to Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups was now translating to Afghanistan and Iraq, thereby providing rhetorical justification for Bush to launch attacks on entire Muslim countries.

This narrative translated into the foreign policy Bush instituted during his term and into the culture and goals of the military during the invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The lack of cultural understanding of Muslim countries like these came to a head when the U.S. continued to experience failures during its occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, leading the U.S. to waste lives and resources only to fail in their expectations. Shryock points out the presence of Islamophobia in those who have no personal experience with it.[56] With the arrival of American soldiers who had little to no experience with or knowledge of the Islamic tradition, this made the goal of "winning hearts and minds" in Iraq almost impossible. In extreme instances of violence overseas like Abu Ghraib and the Haditha massacre, there is a correlation between these events and the "us versus them" narrative that had been building.[57] The Haditha massacre, when 24 Iraqi civilians perished at the hands of the U.S. military, resulted from seeking revenge for a

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[55] John King, "Bush Calls Saddam 'the Guy Who Tried to Kill My Dad,'" CNN, September 27, 2002, https://edition.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/09/27/bush.war.talk/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[56] Shryock, "Attack of the Islamophobes Religious War (and Peace) in Arab/Muslim Detroit." 3.

[57] Seymour M. Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," *The New Yorker*, April 30, 2004, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/05/10/torture-at-abu-ghraib.(accessed March 25, 2022).

fallen soldier.[58] These and other human rights violations committed by the U.S. military are instances in which the "War on Terror" perpetuated the exact thing it was fighting against, "terror."

When examining Bush's rhetoric in the early years of his presidency, his language was simple and easily understood. While the standard for "political correctness" has changed in the years since Bush was in office, he was practiced with his speech in his early years regarding Muslims. Rather than commonly utilizing improper or offensive words, his perpetuation of Islamophobia came more from the narrative he was weaving about Muslims as "others."

The American fear of Islam became as radical as the fear of communism in the 20th century. The notion of "good" and "bad" religions that Robert Orsi explores in his book, *Between Heaven and Earth,* was incredibly relevant during post 9/11 American society.[59] The general idea that this religion supported violent terrorist attacks like 9/11 because Al-Qaeda and other groups accredited their actions to Allah and religious holy war was a scary notion. Islamophobia was a massive component in justifying the invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq. The fear that predominantly Muslim countries presented as a threat to American freedom and democracy spurred an attempt to implement a U.S. democratic system in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq.[60]

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[58] Charlie Savage and Elizabeth Bumiller, "An Iraqi Massacre, a Light Sentence and a Question of Military Justice," The New York Times, January 27, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/28/us/an-iraqi-massacre-a-light-sentence-and-a-question-of-military-justice.html. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

[59] Robert Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton University Press, 2005). 171.

[60] Jeffrey Record, "Back to the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine?" *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2007): 79–95.

After 9/11, hate crimes toward Muslims had reached a new high.[61] According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Program Hate Crime statistics with the FBI, in the years between 1996-2000 anti-Islamic hate crime instances fell to between 21-32 a year, but in 2001 these spiked to over 400 instances in just one year. Hate crimes against Muslim Americans, while they rose and fell year to year, never fell below a triple digit number after 9/11.[62] The first man who was killed after 9/11 was not a Muslim but was rather a Sikh from India.[63] Muslim Americans were scared to leave their houses and return to their regular lives because of the reaction they would be met with. Muslim parents refused to let their children return to school since Muslims all over the country were in danger.[64] The "War on Terror" was affecting everyday life for Muslim Americans; as Grewal puts it, "War on Terror policies at home and abroad collectively punished Muslims for the 9/11 attacks."[65] This punishment was expressed in different forms throughout the nation. A rise in the perpetuation of stereotypes was also a result of the September 11th attacks and gained popularity as the U.S. continued intervention overseas. Referencing Shryock's definition, this was the shift from viewing Muslims as the "friend" to seeing them as the "enemy."[66]

President Bush was avid about speaking to the American public and keeping U.S. citizens up to date on the invasion of Afghanistan and the war in Iraq. In these years when Bush was

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[61] Uniform Crime Reporting Program Hate Crime Statistics," 2001-2019.

[62] Uniform Crime Reporting Program Hate Crime Statistics," 2001-2019.

[63] Tamar Lewin, "Sikh Owner of Gas Station Is Fatally Shot In Rampage," *New York Times*, September 17, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/17/us/sikh-owner-of-gas-station-is-fatally-shot-in-rampage.html.

[64] Moustafa Bayoumi, *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem: Being Young and Arab in America* (Penguin Books, 2008), 101.

[65] Grewal, *Islam Is a Foreign Country American Muslims and the Global Crisis of Authority*, 7.

[66] Shryock, *Islamophobia/Islamophilia*.

referring to the foreign policy action being taken or even the September 11th attacks, he kept the basis of many of his public addresses focused on the importance of the U.S. and uplifting U.S. citizens, using terms like, "good versus evil."[67] After Bush's first term, his rhetoric shifted, being influenced by the rhetoric that was used by his administration. While at the start of his presidency Bush had an astronomically high approval rating it was rapidly declining as he went into his second term. Bush knew he needed to improve. He was adamant about "winning the war on terror" and had no goal of ending the war until the U.S. had defeated all terrorist threats and killed or captured Osama bin Laden. A strategy that President Bush used in his second term was incorporating more obvious categorical terms than he had in his previous years in office. Attaching the term "Muslim" when speaking about the terrorists made it harder to separate Muslims and terrorists from the American point of view. He continued to constantly use "War on Terror" but also let the Islamophobic terms that had gained popularity in his administration begin to seep out during public addresses. According to Juan Cole, "Bush himself picked up these expressions with alacrity around the same time."[68] By categorizing terrorists and American enemies through a religion, Bush appealed more to his demographic which consisted of most of the American evangelical population. This also presented the American enemies as "Muslim" and perpetuated negative images of Muslims throughout the nation.

One term that became common in Bush's rhetoric was "Islamic Fascism."[69] This term was used to describe what the U.S. was fighting in the Middle East:

> All these separate images of destruction and suffering that we see on the news can seem like random and isolated acts of madness. Innocent men and women and children have

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[67] Bush, "Address to the Nation on Iraq."

[68] Juan Cole, "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After," in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 127–42.

[69] Cole, "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After." 166.

died simply because they boarded the wrong train or worked in the wrong building or checked into the wrong hotel. And while the killers choose their victims indiscriminately, their attacks serve a clear and focused ideology, a set of beliefs and goals that are evil but not insane. Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant Jihadism; still others, Islamo-fascism.[70]

Bush's use of this term also emboldened other Republicans to use the words "Muslim" and Islam" widely and to preface these terms with "evil," adding to a destructive narrative. Bush represented Al-Qaeda as an American enemy and less of a world terror when countries like Saudi Arabia had also been terrified of Al-Qaeda and fought with the U.S. to stop the continuation of these terrorists. Instead of applauding this, it was virtually ignored in the American view. Bush's common use of the word "fascism" brought a new perspective onto Muslim countries that Americans had not had since World War II. In the 2000s, fascism was still considered a great threat to democracy, and this only continued to paint Muslim countries as something to fear. During his second term, most negative images from the Middle East and Central Asia during the War on Terror were shown in the press, and in Ernst's words, "amount to prejudice."[71]

George Bush was a devoted evangelical Christian who ran for the presidency using Christian ideals to appeal to American voters. In the United States, a predominantly Christian nation, despite the claim of secularization, there is an insurmountable amount of Christian influences throughout the foundation and societal inner workings. "American Christian Values" are something that almost every elected president has run on. It is important to many American voters to see their religious beliefs present in their elected officials. George Bush was no

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[70] George W. Bush, "President Discusses War on Terror at National Endowment for Democracy," transcript of speech delivered at Ronald Regan building, Washington D.C., October 6, 2005,https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2005/10/20051006-3.html

[71] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*. 3.

exception. As a native Texan living in the Bible Belt, Bush's religious affiliation was present in his campaign and in his time as president.

The September 11th attacks heavily altered how Americans viewed terrorism. Because some of the 9/11 hijackers claimed to be religiously motivated, Bush used the "otherness" of Islam as opposed to Christianity to create an "us versus them" narrative. After the attacks on 9/11, Bush continuously made religious remarks and used Bible quotes in his public speaking. There are plenty of motivating and unifying verses throughout the Bible; however, Bush's use of these verses was calculated and contributed to the growing Islamophobia throughout the country. By his choice of particular Bible verses Bush utilized Christianity to lift Christian Americans and prove resilience. In doing so, Christianity was seen as a "peaceful" religion instead of "violent" Islam.[72] What makes a religion good or bad? If people could commit this horrible act in the name of their religion, how can that religion be good? Orsi states, "There has long been a tendency to divide religions into good ones… and bad ones… but religious imaginings and practices do not grid quite as neatly on the pragmatic axis so beloved to Americans."[73] With his employment of Christian rhetoric and the correlation between Christian and "American" values, Bush alienated American Muslims and contributed to bias surrounding Muslims in America. Bush's Address to the Nation on the night of the attacks, he quotes Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me."[74] Bush's religious rhetoric increased support for him amongst evangelicals throughout the country. With the use of these references and quotes during his speeches regarding Afghanistan and Iraq, Bush strategically appealed to Christian voters and gained support from them regarding the two wars in Muslim

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[72] Cole, "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After." 176.

[73] Robert Orsi, 171.

[74] Bush, "Address to the Nation."

countries. According to Cole, Bush also perpetuated the white savior ideal to justify his invasion by employing Christian rhetoric in his public speeches.[75] Bush referred to the action he was taking in Muslim countries as a "crusade." Because of the historical context of the Crusades centuries earlier, this was incredibly ignorant. The Crusades were a horrific series of events that took place in the 9th, 10th, and 11th when Christian soldiers traveled to the Middle East and committed horrific crimes including genocide against Muslims and Jews. It would be easy for Muslims to interpret this statement from Bush as inappropriate. Some would claim that Bush was simply a man of faith who was invoking his religious ideals; however, stigmatizing Muslim countries led to unfair stigmas of Muslims in the U.S.

Examining President Bush's rhetoric and foreign policy reveals a connection between them and the narrative of Islamophobia in the U.S. His vague stereotypes paired with bold statements illustrate Shryock's definition of Islamophobia through nationalism. Bush's tactical move of using increasingly controversial terms to gain more American support was bold. His use of Christian references appealed to Christian Americans but alienated Muslim Americans and received backlash.

The legacy that George W. Bush left behind would define the following two decades of foreign policy and U.S. Muslim relations. With his rhetoric and foreign policy, George Bush was successful in changing the perception of Muslims in the eyes of most Americans.[76] In a Pew study conducted in 2007, "A majority of Muslim Americans say it has become more difficult to

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[75] Cole, "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After." 166., Sara Kamali, "Sharbat Gula's Experience Exemplifies the 'White Savior' Lens Through Which Most Americans View Afghanistan," *Religion Dispatches*, January 24, 2022, https://religiondispatches.org/sharbat-gulas-experience-exemplifies-the-white-savior-lens-through-which-most-americans-view-afghanistan/.

[76] Cole, "Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After." 166.

be a Muslim in the U.S. since the September 11th terrorist attacks. Most also believe that the government 'singles out' Muslims for increased surveillance and monitoring."[77] Bush's additions to the "us versus them" narrative came with the vague labels of the "enemy" and action against multiple targets. Bush also left his successor, Barack Obama, a country falling into economic recession, and a government engaged in two wars.

The rhetorical themes that came from the Bush presidency stemmed from the response to the 9/11 attacks. Through these seven years, the "War on Terror" and "good versus evil" themes were hugely beneficial for the growing narrative of Islamophobia in the U.S. The existing fear of Muslims after 9/11 only continued to grow with the vaguely titled "War on Terror" and the opposition of good versus evil, the "evil" often being presented as Islam. The aggressive campaign of the War on Terror, including the implementation of the Department of Homeland Security and a scare that was reminiscent of the fear from the Cold War were contributing factors in Islamophobia in the U. S.

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[77] Pew Research Center, "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," *Pew Research Center*, May 22, 2007, https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2007/05/22/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly-mainstream/.

OBAMA: Violent Extremists and Mutual Interests

The presidential rhetoric drastically changed when Barack Obama was elected. Rather than focus on the War on Terror, Obama saw an opportunity to mend Muslim and U.S. relations when he entered office. One theme Obama used to aid the mending of ties was to remove the use of words like "Muslim" or "Islamic" altogether when referring to terrorist groups. Instead, Obama almost exclusively used the term "violent extremists." By using "violent extremist" or other words that excluded religious affiliation, Obama took away the opportunity to correlate Muslims with extremists in his rhetoric. Another theme seen in his rhetoric and foreign policy is the "mutual interests" that Obama proposed for the Muslim world. One of Obama's strategies was to appeal to the Muslim world about how continuing trade relations and the absence of sanctions could be hugely beneficial for both regions. While this was a theme in Obama's rhetoric, his foreign policy did not always adhere to this strategy. These rhetorical themes through Obama's presidency can be related to his influence on Islamophobia and how the foreign policies during his term were not always congruent with his rhetorical goals.

After the complex legacy left by two terms of the Bush administration, the United States was ready to change direction. Toward the end of his presidency, Bush had attracted negative media attention, angered international allies, and left a challenging U.S. economy. The Great Recession devastated the U.S. economy and put many Americans out of work. In the 2008 election, John McCain, a senator from Arizona and a decorated war hero, was the Republican nominee. McCain was a strong Republican candidate; however, he was running against the

young idealist Democratic candidate Barack Obama. Obama was a senator from Illinois who ran

heavily on protecting taxpayers and bringing jobs back to America.[78]

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii to his American mother and Kenyan father. When

Obama was young, his parents divorced and his mother remarried an Indonesian man, so he

spent time in Indonesia during his childhood. Unlike President Bush, Obama's family was not

involved in the U.S. political sphere. However, Obama did grow up with knowledge and

exposure to Islam. After getting his law degree, he started his career in politics. In 2004 he was

elected to Congress. As a Senator, he was very outspoken against Bush's foreign policy,

specifically in Iraq. As President, Obama accomplished a lot in international and domestic

policy, and was also awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009 "for his extraordinary efforts to

strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples."[79] This acknowledgment

came during the first year of his presidency, in the years following Obama's and the US's

foreign diplomacy would be controversial.

While having an incredible political career, Obama had his share of controversy and

difficulties during his campaigns and terms. One massive issue was his race. Never in the history

of the United States had a non-white man been elected president. Being the first Black president

came with its fair share of difficulties. Even though Obama ran for president decades after the

civil rights movement, white supremacy and racism in America is still incredibly present.

Obama's race was not the only piece of his identity that stirred controversy and prejudice from

right-winged politicians and supporters. Because his father was Kenyan, during his 2008

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[78] "McCain vs. Obama: The First 2008 Presidential Debate,'" *PBS NewsHour* (PBS, September 22, 2008).

[79] "The Nobel Peace Prize 2009," Nobel Prize, n.d., Tamar Lewin, "Sikh Owner Of Gas Station Is Fatally Shot In Rampage," *New York Times*, September 17, 2001, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/17/us/sikh-owner-of-gas-station-is-fatally-shot-in-rampage.html.. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

campaign, speculation surrounding Obama's place of birth came to light. The speculation

surrounding his place of birth gained popularity and was weaponized by his political opponents.

Throughout the eight years of his presidency, this rumor resurfaced every few years to plant

doubt in the minds of Americans. This campaign against Obama was called the "birther

movement" and it was rooted in an American systemic prejudice. The birther movement not only

was an instance of white nationalist thought and racism, but it also held implications that because

of aspects of his identity Obama was not easily believed to be an American citizen who was born

in the U.S. This is the same idea that Shryock brings up about Muslims not being seen as part of

American society.[80] While many on the right believed that there was accuracy to this rumor, the

left called out this rumor as being racist and pointed out that it would never happen to a white

candidate. During his campaign and presidency, a third aspect of Obama's identity that people

called into question was his religion. Obama adamantly claimed his Christian faith, like almost

every other president before him. However, failure to believe his religious convictions arose, and

many thought that he was secretly Muslim, citing his father, his middle name, and his time spent

in Indonesia as "evidence" of his alleged lies about his religious faith.[81] After the attacks on 9/11,

many voters had qualms about electing someone who was Muslim or even "allegedly" Muslim.

All these controversies during Obama's rise to political success were motivated by racism,

Islamophobia, and widespread discrimination.

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[80] Shryock, "Attack of the Islamophobes Religious War (and Peace) in Arab/Muslim Detroit."

[81] Todd K. Hartman and Adam J. Newmark, "Motivated Reasoning, Political Sophistication, and Associations between President Obama and Islam," *Cambridge Core: Political Science and Politics*, June 12, 2012, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-and-politics/article/abs/motivated-reasoning-political-sophistication-and-associations-between-president-obama-and-islam/9D043158FA6705AEBF042403EFF5E1B0. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

Obama quickly identified the "mutual interests" between the U.S. and Muslim countries; he believed that appealing to Muslim governments with these interests would contribute to the mending of relationships. While this set him apart and appealed to Muslim countries, some Americans were rubbed the wrong way by his approach. In 2008 the *New Yorker* published a cover that depicted an image of President Obama and his wife as terrorists, Obama wearing a turban and Michelle with a machine gun strapped to her back while burning an American flag.[82] This cover was racially insensitive and Islamophobic. The inaccuracy of proper Muslim garb in the cartoon underscored the idea that the lack of knowledge about Muslims is a driving factor in prejudice against them. According to Ernst's definition of Islamophobia, violent crimes and prejudice begin with the "overwhelming negative images of Islam circulated in popular media."[83] With the increase of negative images that surfaced during the Obama campaign, and even targeted the President, Muslims in the U.S. still had a target on their backs.

Despite the barriers and the rumors surrounding his identity, when Obama was elected in 2008, he not only made history as the first African American president, but he also began a new era of foreign policy and activism. President Obama watched as the economy tanked in his early years in office. With shaky relations with former allies and thousands of Americans losing jobs, Obama had the job of completely fixing the failures of the previous administration. With the U.S. engaged in two wars in Muslim countries, Muslim countries and in many ways, Muslims were viewed as the enemy. Although some might assume that the election of the first African American president meant a more tolerant America, this was not the case. Obama's election

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[82] Gottschalk and Greenberg, "From Muhammad to Obama: Caricatures, Cartoons, and Stereotypes of Muslims." 192.

[83] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*, 3.

spurred an increase in anti-black hate crimes throughout the country.[84] In his acceptance speech, a newly elected Obama ended on a positive note,

> This is our time — to put our people back to work and open doors of opportunity for our kids; to restore prosperity and promote the cause of peace; to reclaim the American Dream and reaffirm that fundamental truth that out of many, we are one; that while we breathe, we hope, and where we are met with cynicism, and doubt, and those who tell us that we can't, we will respond with that timeless creed that sums up the spirit of a people: Yes, we can.[85]

Obama was widely renowned for his speeches, vocabulary, and rhetoric. Many of his constituents tuned in when he was in interviews or press conferences because of his charisma and talent in a public speaking setting. Scholars like Manfred Kienpointner and others have studied Obama's rhetoric and cadence; his rhetoric is known for "being both successful on the one hand and rational, according to normative standards of argumentative discourse, on the other."[86] His temperament was calm, and his rhetoric was impressive, unlike his predecessor and successor. Another more significant difference in rhetoric between Bush and Obama was that Bush constantly used words like Muslim and Islam when speaking about the dangers of terrorism. Obama spoke much less about the War on Terror; it was no longer as glaringly prevalent in U.S. news, as other issues had eclipsed it in widespread media. The decrease in mentions led to the decline in damaging stories about Muslims shown throughout the nation.[87]

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[84] Matthew Bigg, "Election of Obama Provokes Rise in U.S. Hate Crimes," Reuters, November 24, 2008, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-obama-hatecrimes/election-of-obama-provokes-rise-in-u-s-hate-crimes-idUSTRE4AN81U20081124.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[85] Barack Obama, "2008 Presidential Election Victory Speech," transcript delivered in Chicago, Illinois, 2008, November 4, 2008, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=96624326

[86] Manfred Kienpointner, "Strategic Maneuvering in the Political Rhetoric of Barack Obama," *Journal of Language and Politics* 12, no. 3 (2013): 357.

[87] G. Rubin, "Barack Obama: From an End to Terror to Drone Wars and ISIS."

By decreasing the use of categorical words like "Muslim," Muslims worldwide were allowed to further distance themselves from the narrative of Muslims being terrorists.

One defining moment between the U.S. and the Muslim world during the Obama Administration was in June 2009, when he gave a speech at the University of Cairo with the intention of starting a new chapter between the U.S. and the Muslim world. The title of the address is "A New Beginning," and Obama used that phrase multiple times throughout the speech. In this speech, Obama starts by thanking the people of Cairo for welcoming him and his country; he cited that there had been tension between the West and the Muslim world over the past years. The goal of this speech was to begin mending these tensions and relations. One key point was the distinction between violent Muslims versus the Muslim community worldwide. Obama said,

> Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. All this has bred more fear and more mistrust.[88]

It is important to note that he addressed a heavily Muslim population with this speech. If he had been more vocal about Islamophobia during a State of the Union or domestically directed speech, this anecdote might have been different. Domestically, it had become difficult for Islamophobes to see "American" and "Muslim" as belonging to the same community. This is exactly the argument that Shryock makes in his definition of Islamophobia. Obama never used "Muslim" or "Islamic" in the same phrase as "extremist," instead referring to terrorists as "violent extremists." For the remainder of his time in office, Obama used "violent extremists"

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[88] Obama, "A New Beginning."

when referring to Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and other terrorist organizations. Obama remained calculated in his language by using the "War on Terror" and "violent extremist," never using a religious identifier.

A few minutes into this speech, Obama used the term "mutual interest." Another time this term comes up is towards the end of the address when Obama mentions economic development as being a mutual interest:

> Trade can bring new wealth and opportunities, but also huge disruptions and change in communities. In all nations -- including America -- this change can bring fear. Fear that because of modernity we lose control over our economic choices, our politics, and most importantly our identities -- those things we most cherish about our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faith.[89]

This portion of the speech gives excellent insight into the motivations behind the speech: how trade relations between the U.S. and the Muslim world can be mutually beneficial. While it was important from a diplomatic and human rights standpoint, one primary goal of Obama's was to revive the U.S. economy and having strong relations with the Muslim world means having access to trade and, most importantly, oil. It would be naive not to consider the importance of U.S.-Muslim relations in this light, and how access to oil from the Middle East is important for the U.S. economy.

In the speech, Obama also detailed how important it is to cure Islamophobic views across the world, saying, "I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear."[90] As a victim of these stereotypes, Obama had intimate knowledge of the horrible use of prejudice to perpetuate

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[89] Obama, "A New Beginning."

[90] Obama, "A New Beginning."

stereotypes. Despite this statement, while it had seemingly positive intentions, there were so many other aspects and contributors to Islamophobia that related to and resulted from his foreign and domestic policy that were more important than stopping stereotypes of Muslims. This is an example of how Obama's rhetoric was outwardly about wanting to combat Islamophobia but instead of taking concrete measures to do this, he made blanket statements like the one above, highlighting stereotypes as an important issue rather than the Islamophobic policies he had implemented. While he does mention that fear of the unknown and of Muslims was understandable after the September 11th attacks, he also states that eight years after the fact, there needs to be broader understanding and acceptance:

> Nine-eleven was an enormous trauma to our country. The fear and anger that it provoked was understandable, but in some cases, it led us to act contrary to our traditions and our ideals. We are taking concrete actions to change course.[91]

Obama appeals to the human side of his audience by asking them to understand the fear of the unknown and how Obama and his era of Americanism are going to correct this fear that had led to Islamophobia. However, Obama's hopeful rhetoric in this speech may have started the mending of these relations on a surface level but the military and political actions he took later in his years in office completely negated what he was attempting with this speech.

Obama knew that using words like "Islam" or "Muslim" when referencing extremist groups would continue to alienate Muslim Americans from their neighbors and communities. He was purposeful not to label terrorists with a religion when they were the minority of the religious demographic. With the history of bigotry in the U.S. and hate that President Obama had been a victim of, he was conscious not to spread an improper narrative or more Islamophobic ideals

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[91] Obama, "A New Beginning."

through his rhetoric; the same cannot be said for the message sent by his foreign policy. While his rhetoric surrounding Islam was seemingly pro-Muslim, his foreign policy told a different story. While he was adamant during his 2008 campaign and the start of his first term that the War on Terror was not a war on Muslims, his efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq made that hard to believe. The increase of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and the fact that the U.S. stayed in Afghanistan even after Bin Laden died, created cynicism surrounding the true intentions of the occupation. With the Arab Spring and the rise of democratically motivated uprisings in Muslim countries, Obama did not implement policy and intervention that backed up his claims in Cairo only two years prior. The continuance of the war in Afghanistan and lack of support given to Muslim countries did nothing to change the biased narrative about Muslims in the U.S.; instead, it continued to paint them as "the other" and, in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, "the enemy."

When Obama was running for president, he was very outspoken about his opposition to the wars that the U.S. was engaged in. He was much more critical of the war in Iraq than the one in Afghanistan; however, Obama still said that he would find peace by ending both wars during his presidency. Obama expressed the difference between the Afghani and Iraqi wars during his speech in Cairo, "We did not go by choice; we went because of necessity…Let me also address the issue of Iraq. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world."[92] Like Bush, as the years went on and the U.S. was still engaged in wars overseas, it made it more challenging to hold onto the support both domestically and internationally. Instead of ending these conflicts and rehabilitating the view of Islam in the U.S., Obama was sorely lacking in the promises he made in Cairo. While the war in Afghanistan began while Bush was in office, it is often referred to as "Obama's War" because Obama was in

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[92]Obama, "A New Beginning."

office when the war in Afghanistan made substantial shifts. This included the "surge" that took place under the Obama administration and the drone warfare program that Obama implemented.[93] Obama disregarded the correlation that these decisions had to the rising prejudice against Muslims domestically, and how the images and stories in the media contributed to discrimination. Not only was his foreign policy influencing domestic perception but the domestic policy that Obama had implemented was very similar to the monitoring and screening processes under the Bush administration. These domestic policies inhibited immigration for people entering the country from Muslim countries.[94] The domestic and foreign policy under the Obama administration was not making the efforts that he had promised in his speech in Cairo.

Obama fought for "an increased emphasis on the war in Afghanistan, which he has characterized as the real frontline of the war on terror—as opposed to the 'distraction' of the Iraq war."[95] When he was addressing the Muslim world, Obama held the conviction of wanting to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, as this was in their "mutual interest."[96] But only a few months into his term, his stance changed. Muslims worldwide had put their faith in Obama to end conflict and bias towards their countries, and he went back on his word. In a 2009 address to U.S. ambassadors, Obama announced a new plan that would involve a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Previously the U.S. and Pakistan had solid relations, and Obama decided to utilize this relationship in his strategy to defeat the insurgents in Afghanistan, saying,

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[93] Gabriel Rubin, "Barack Obama: From an End to Terror to Drone Wars and ISIS," *Montclair State University Digital Commons*, March 22, 2020.

[94] ACLU, "FBI given Power to Thwart Immigration Applications for Muslims."

[95] Trevor McCrisken, "Justifying Sacrifice: Barack Obama and the Selling and Ending of the War in Afghanistan," *International Affairs* 88, no. 5 (2012): 993–1007.

[96] Obama, "A New Beginning."

"Pakistan must demonstrate its commitment to rooting out al Qaeda and the violent extremists within its borders and we will insist that action be taken -- one way or another -- when we have intelligence about high-level terrorist targets."[97] Like Bush, Obama utilized the help of a Muslim country, while his firm stance on the war in Afghanistan continued to perpetuate a negative narrative about Muslims. The nationalist aspect of Shryock's definition of Islamophobia strengthened the longer the U.S. had an obvious "enemy."[98]

The invasion efforts the U.S. had employed while in Afghanistan were failing. Afghani citizens did not trust the U.S. since the U.S. had such a lack of understanding of Afghani culture, religion, and societal expectations. The U.S. military had taken only small unsuccessful measures since the Bush administration to attempt increased religious and cultural understanding in the occupied nations.[99] The "enemy" narrative in the U.S. was detrimental to the success of the military in Afghanistan. The lack of knowledge the U.S. military had of Afghanistan and of Islam made it difficult to gain trust in Afghanistan.[100] The inability for the U.S. to appeal to local Afghani citizens and gain their trust and loyalty against the Taliban resulted in a series of failed attempts.[101] This was a good example of how the absence of understanding in the U.S. was costing the U.S. so much.

Afghanistan was the priority for Obama during his term in office, and he was ready to end the occupation in Iraq the minute he entered office. In 2002 he gave a speech vehemently

[97] Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan" transcript delivered at the White House, Washington D.C., March 27, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan

[98] Ernst, *Islamophobia in America the Anatomy of Intolerance*. 3.

[99] *Obama's War*, Documentary (Frontline PBS, 2010).

[100] *Obama's War*, Documentary.

[101] *Obama's War*, Documentary.

opposing the possibility of going into Iraq, "That's what I'm opposed to. A dumb war. A rash war. A war based not on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics."[102] With the pressure of the 2012 election looming, Obama began 2011 still unsuccessful in his promise to remove troops from Iraq. Turmoil was brewing, and the Obama administration craved a victory. This victory came with the retreat from Iraq and the assassination of Osama bin Laden.[103] But with bin Laden dead and Al-Qaeda neutralized, American fear of Islam and extremists did not end, in a 2011 survey 48% of U.S. citizens claimed that relations between the west and Muslims "were poor."[104] The capture of Osama bin Laden, while a significant accomplishment, did not have much impact on Islamophobia in the U.S. Despite Obama's joy at capturing "violent extremists," Bush's "evil" label was still lingering on peaceful Muslims. The rise of other terrorist organizations only continued to attach violence to religion and therefore continued to play into Islamophobia.

The world was at a place where the U.S. had caught the perpetrators of 9/11 and prejudice against Muslims could begin to decrease around the world, especially in the U.S. However, the emergence of other groups like ISIL, Boko Haram, and others around the globe re-confirmed the fear many had. ISIL, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, gained international attention and anxiety in 2013 with their perpetration of terrorist attacks and posting violent videos on the internet. ISIL's use of the internet changed how terrorist organizations were

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[102] Barack Obama, "Against Going to War with Iraq." transcript delivered from Federal Plaza, Chicago, IL October 2, 2002, *https://www.famous-speeches-and-speech-topics.info/famous-speeches/barack-obama-speech-against-going-to-war-with-iraq.htm*

[103] Alice Fordham, "Fact Check: Did Obama Withdraw from Iraq Too Soon, Allowing ISIS to Grow?" NPR, December 19, 2015.

[104] Michael Lipka, "Muslims and Islam: Key Findings in the U.S. and around the World," *Pew Research Center*, August 9, 2017.

viewed. Instead of their attacks being solely known by intelligence organizations, anyone with

internet access could watch the violent murders and attacks that ISIL carried out.[105] This

triggered a new fear of Muslims, and a steady rise in hate crimes between the years of 2013-

2015, the years in which ISIL emerged heavily on a global stage. While this does not prove that

presidential rhetoric is directly correlated to hate crimes, it does give evidence that with the

increased feeling of a threat to the U.S. like the 9/11 attacks and the rise of ISIL, there may be a

correlation with a rise in hate crimes. Furthermore, it is important to see how political figures

handle this threat in the media. Much like the immediate reaction after 9/11, hypervigilance

among non-Muslim Americans resurfaced, eventually turning into Islamophobia. ISIL was

recruiting members worldwide, including in the U.S.; just as many assumed any Muslim in

America was part of a terrorist cell post-9/11, many Muslims in the U.S. were accused of

recruiting for ISIL.[106]

The rise of ISIL and cyber-terrorism was not the only newer aspect to contribute to a

negative narrative of Muslims; the American coverage of the Arab Spring continued to enforce a

sense of otherness regarding Muslims and Middle Eastern and North African countries. In the

spring of 2011, countries all over the Middle East and Africa began to protest and fight their

oppressive governments for a democratic government. These uprisings went on for years in

Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, and Sudan.[107] One of the

common questions that arose during these uprisings was the relationship between religion and

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[105] Dominika Giantas and Dimitrios Stergiou, "From Terrorism to Cyber-Terrorism: The Case of ISIS," March 7, 2018.

[106] Samantha Mahood, "Islamist Narratives in ISIS Recruitment Propaganda.," *The Journal of International Communication* 23, no. 1 (2017): 15–35.

[107] "Timeline: How the Arab Spring Unfolded," News, Al Jazeera, January 14, 2021, ttps://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/14/arab-spring-ten-years-on.(accessed March 25, 2022).

government. Authoritarian regimes led all these countries, and since the Cold War, the narrative that the U.S. had cultivated about non-democratic countries has been primarily negative. The question of the possibility of a thriving non-secular democracy was at the forefront of the minds of politicians and scholars globally.[108] While Obama was vocal about backing the protestors and their fight for democracy, U.S. involvement did not demonstrate that support.[109] Obama provided verbal and some economic support along with the U.S. and the rest of the UN Security Council, but the Arab Spring was an opportunity for the U.S. to support a new chapter in the Middle East, and Obama did not take this opportunity. The lack of action around the Arab Spring debunked the neo-conservative narrative that Muslims were a threat to democracy. Instead, the truth behind the prejudice was revealed to be racially and religiously motivated.

Obama entered office when the U.S. was in a difficult position, and he was able to change so much economically, socially, and politically. His role in social justice and foreign policy in the U.S. led to a new America. His rhetoric and public presence were widely praised by American citizens as well as internationally. After the Bush administration and the events of 9/11, the presence of Islamophobia in the U.S. was still present. However, with the election of Barack Obama, many became hopeful that with him in office, the U.S. would become a more tolerant place. When it came to the Muslim world, Obama was a beacon of hope when he was elected. However, his words were empty; he spoke of finding peace and supporting Muslims in his own country when political actions he took proved the opposite.

One notable difference between Obama and his predecessor and successor is that he was the first true minority elected to the office of president. And in a country that has a long history

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[108] Alfred Stepan, "Democratization Theory and the" Arab Spring," *Journal of Democracy* 24, no. 2 (2013): 15–30.

[109] Alfred Stepan, "Democratization Theory and the" Arab Spring," 15–30.

of racism and Christian nationalism, Obama had an uphill fight. His sole presence in office spurred hate among certain groups of Americans. With his identity constantly in question and widespread claims that he was a "secret" Muslim, for non-supporters, this only continued to antagonize them and deepen their hatred and bias towards minorities in the U.S., including Muslim Americans. But despite all of this, the perpetuation of an Islamophobic narrative still came from Obama and his administration. His increased military action in Afghanistan only added to the narrative that started with Bush and the War on Terror. These foreign policy efforts by Obama contributed to many Americans' "us versus them" stance. However, with Obama, "they" or the enemy are not all Muslims but rather Afghanistan and "violent extremists". The election of Obama's successor is proof that even with a decrease in Islamophobic rhetoric, Islamophobia was still widely supported in the U.S.

The two rhetorical themes that held constant in the Obama administration were correlated to foreign policy efforts. "Violent extremists" and "mutual interests" were conscious rhetorical choices by President Obama to not further alienate Muslims after the Bush administration and their aggressive actions. Obama understood the importance of having good relations with the Muslim world because of the oil access in that region. While his rhetoric corresponded with this agenda, his domestic and foreign policy and increased presence in Afghanistan did the opposite.

TRUMP: Radical Islam

With the controversial entrance of Donald Trump into office in 2016, the rhetorical themes were an incredible switch from the Obama and Bush administrations. Trump was known for his explosive rhetoric, and this was a massive theme throughout his presidency. Unlike Obama, who completely avoided religious identification in his rhetoric surrounding extremists, Trump positioned religious beliefs front and center, his most common term being "radical Islam." The theme of "radical Islam" is what warranted the travel ban and insulting statements Trump made during his time in office. Another theme and action at the forefront of Trump's rhetoric was his self-proclaimed "Muslim ban," a travel ban that Trump implemented during his first week in office. The "Muslim ban" was the source of incredible backlash and even legal action, and a substantial rhetorical theme that encapsulates the goals of the Trump era.

The election of Donald J. Trump into the Oval Office was a political controversy for the books. After eight years of Obama and his moderately liberal stances, the country went in a drastically different direction with the 2016 election, a contest between Hilary Clinton, former secretary of state, and Donald Trump, New York real estate mogul. When Trump announced his intention to run for president in 2015, many Americans believed it was a joke. Trump, who had no prior experience in politics, was known for his multi-billion-dollar real estate empire, reality television show, and affinity for beautiful women. However, once he won the Republican primary things became very serious very quickly. Coming out of two terms under Obama, it was clear that the U.S. was looking for a change; at the same time, Clinton stuck to standard campaign practices and initially practiced professionalism. But Trump's campaign changed the game. He had always been controversial, but his blunt and risqué approach to his campaign

appealed to many Americans; he was giving a voice to conservative thoughts. He was the opposite of Clinton in almost every way; where she was the typical candidate, he was erratic, aggressive, and an "outsider" compared to the lifelong politicians.

Donald Trump was born in New York to successful real estate developer Fred Trump. He attended military school and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He eventually took over his father's real estate business. In the early 1990s, a couple of Trump's properties declared bankruptcy because of the 1990 recession. This bankruptcy created setbacks for his business dealings and had an incredible impact on his personal net worth. However, he rebounded quickly and overcame the financial setbacks. This was not the end of Trump's financial problems; "in 2004 his company Trump Hotels & Casino Resorts filed for bankruptcy after several of its properties accumulated unmanageable debt, and the same company, renamed Trump Entertainment Resorts, went bankrupt again in 2009."[110] In 2004 Trump started his reality television show, *The Apprentice*. This competition show had contestants compete to prove their skills in the business world. In his personal life, Trump was married three times and has five children, the oldest three all having a role in either his campaign or presidential administration.[111] But Trump's tumultuous business history did not stop him from accumulating a billion-dollar net worth and being the alleged richest president in U.S. history.[112]

Donald Trump has been in the public eye since the 1980s, and throughout the four decades of his fame there have been plenty of controversies surrounding his business dealings

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[110] "Donald Trump," Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.

[111] "Donald Trump," Encyclopedia Britannica.

[112] Michael B. Sauter, Grant Suneson, and Samuel Stebbins, "From Washington to Trump: This Is the Net Worth of Every American President.," News, USA Today, November 5, 2020, https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2020/11/05/the-net-worth-of-the-american-presidents-washington-to-trump/114599966/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

and personal life. Over the years, he has been accused of sexual harassment, abuse, and misconduct many times. While on the campaign trail, a recording of Trump making aggressive sexual comments about a woman resurfaced and was a massive source of uproar from his opposition.[113] Another consistent controversy that followed Trump throughout his career was the accusation of discriminating against interested tenants in his buildings based on their race; "The Department of Justice sued Trump and his father Fred in 1973 for housing discrimination at 39 sites around New York."[114] Trump was also accused of being racist when he purchased ads in New York City newspapers in 1989 calling for New York to reinstate the death penalty for the Central Park Five. The Central Park Five were five teenagers who were wrongly accused and convicted of raping a woman in Central Park. These teenagers were African American and Latino and claimed to be coerced into admitting guilt by the police.[115] These controversies all played an essential role in the 2016 and 2020 elections.

When Obama left office, the U.S. economy was on the rise, and the country was in a relatively stable place. America still had a presence in Afghanistan, and it was still dealing with the outcomes of the Arab Spring. ISIL was also still considered a massive threat to American security. While Obama was collected in his rhetoric, Trump had no desire to follow in those footsteps. He was elected because of his lack of political persona, and he would stray from

[113] "Donald Trump's Taped Comments About Women," *New York Times*, October 8, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/donald-trump-tape-transcript.html.

[114] Alana Abramson, "How Donald Trump Perpetuated the 'Birther' Movement for Years," ABC News, September 16, 2016, https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/donald-trump-perpetuated-birther-movement-years/story?id=42138176.

[115] Jan Ransom, "Trump Will Not Apologize for Calling for Death Penalty over Central Park Five," News, The New York Times, June 18, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/18/nyregion/central-park-five-trump.html.(accessed March 25, 2022).

typical presidential expectations. The obvious switch from "violent extremist" to "radical Islam" was clear evidence that the pro-Muslim language from the Obama administration was gone.

The 2016 election was intense and divisive. While every presidential election in the U.S. created tension throughout the nation, 2016 took it to a new level. The candidates consistently wielded verbal daggers at each other and succeeded in dividing the country. As the candidates traveled the country on their campaign tours, Donald Trump was receiving incredible reception from his supporters around the country. Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again " or MAGA, virtually the same as Ronald Reagan's slogan in 1980, was adored by his supporters. MAGA hats swept the nation. At his rallies, Trump played to his audience, making inflammatory comments that were racist, xenophobic, and insulting to many different groups.[116] He ran on radical policies like building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico and cracking down on immigration. The use of social media played a huge role in the campaign as well, with Trump being active on social media platforms. After the election it was revealed how Trump's campaign took advantage of the data-mining features in Facebook to target ads to potential voters.[117] In the debates between Clinton and Trump the candidates spent an hour and a half insulting, interrupting, and rolling their eyes at each other. When it came time for the election, while Clinton snagged the popular vote, Trump had a higher number of electoral votes. A man with no political experience and a questionable background won the highest elected position in the country, seemingly because of his lack of filter and radical ideals.

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[116] Nick Gass, "The 15 Most Offensive Things That Have Come out of Trump's Mouth," December 8, 2015, https://www.politico.eu/article/15-most-offensive-things-trump-campaign-feminism-migration-racism/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[117] Matthew Rosenberg, Nicholas Confessore, and Carole Cadwalladr, "How Trump Consultants Exploited the Facebook Data of Millions," News, The New York Times, March 17, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-trump-campaign.html.(accessed March 25, 2022).

Trump's use of inflammatory language towards Muslims revealed itself in the early days

of his campaign. During his campaign Trump touted the "Birther Movement," which was the

movement that consistently called President Obama's birthplace into question.[118] After receiving

incredible backlash and pressing interview questions, Trump eventually admitted publicly that he

believed President Obama was indeed born in the U.S., saying, "President Barack Obama was

born in the United States period."[119] Trump was also very adamant about the danger of "radical

Islamic groups" in the U.S. and was vocal about the steps he believed the U.S. needed to take in

order to protect Americans. During an interview on Fox in 2015, when asked if he would

consider closing Mosques in the U.S. if elected, his response was,

> Nobody wants to say this, and nobody wants to shut down religious institutions or anything, but you know, you understand it. A lot of people understand it. We're going to have no choice…There's absolutely no choice. Some really bad things are happening and they're happening fast, certainly a lot faster than our president understands because he doesn't understand anything. He doesn't get it. Refuses to even call it by its correct name.[120]

Trump's jab at Obama failing to use "Islam and "Muslim" in his rhetoric shows his contempt for

his predecessors' rhetoric. Making these statements after a series of terrorist's attacks in

November 2015 in Paris, Trump continued to fuel the fire of Islamophobia. Trump's constant

presence on television and social media made his comments hard to miss. He was outwardly

vocal about drastic measures he planned to take that would include bans, racial profiling, and

First Amendment violations. Closing mosques in America would be incredibly Islamophobic and

a violation of the First Amendment, but Trump supporters were ecstatic to hear this as an option.

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[118] Michael Tesler, "Islamophobia in the 2016 Election," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2018): 153–55.

[119] Abramson, "How Donald Trump Perpetuated the 'Birther' Movement for Years."

[120] Donald Trump, Donald Trump on Hannity, television, November 2015, https://www.politico.com/story/2015/11/trump-close-mosques-216008.(accessed March 25, 2022).

Unlike Obama and Bush, Trump almost exclusively used terms like "radical Islam" when referring to extremist groups in Muslim countries. His use of "Muslim" as an identifier of these groups was purposeful in continuing Islamophobic narratives in the U.S. These insulting and Islamophobic comments were not exclusively made during interviews but rather were all over Trump's social media, particularly on Twitter. On November 29, 2017, Trump retweeted three videos that contained "anti-Muslim content."[121] These videos were widely criticized by world leaders, but Trump and his press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders stood behind the posts, claiming that regardless of the reality of the videos, "the threat is still real."[122] One of Trump's most famous quotes when referring to Muslims was from a sit-down one-on-one interview with Anderson Cooper. In this interview, Cooper asks if "Islam is at war with the west" and Trump answers with the curt saying, "I think Islam hates us."[123] While this five-word quote may seem minor, its implications only furthered the "us versus them" narrative that the U.S. had held on to since 9/11. In this instance, Trump explicitly identified "Islam" as the "they." The resentment towards Muslims was mildly repressed during the Obama administration, but with Trump in office, he was creating a safe space for bigotry.

For many, this "safe space" for hatred and discrimination included Trump rallies, which soon became a global phenomenon. They started as typical campaign tactics but grew into something more significant. During his campaign Trump held rallies all over the country; he stood on stage in front of waves of red hats and American flags and expressed his plans for America and his true feelings about pressing political and social issues. These rallies were an

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[121] Elizabeth Landers and James Masters, "Trump Retweets Anti-Muslim Videos," News, CNN, November 30, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/29/politics/donald-trump-retweet-jayda-fransen/index.html.

[122] Landers and Masters, "Trump Retweets Anti-Muslim Videos."

[123] Donald Trump, Donald Trump One-on-One with Anderson Cooper, Television, March 9, 2016.

opportunity for Trump to be blunt about his ideas and cheered on by supporters. Despite Trump

being seemingly unfiltered in his rhetoric, he catered to specific audiences, much like Obama.

Trump became the most inflammatory at his rallies, utilizing his audiences' anger and belief in

his ideals to garner support, using buzzwords, and making claims like, "Obama is the founder of

ISIS."[124] Not only is this statement untrue but it plays on the narrative that Obama was secretly a

Muslim, and that all Muslims are terrorists. According to Shryock's and Ernst's definitions of

Islamophobia, Trump was playing into the nationalist narrative that perpetuates Islamophobic

images and narratives. His inflammatory language was obviously Islamophobic and contributed

to the national view that is harming Muslim Americans.

Trump is still partaking in rallies today. His supporters wait outside the venue for hours

before the rallies and participate in tailgating and purchasing MAGA merchandise. When

examining the attendees at these rallies, like any other rally, it is connecting like-minded people;

however, by connecting this group of people, does this perpetuate bigoted ideas and narratives?

According to a Pew research study in 2016, assaults against Muslims in the U.S. passed the level

of assaults in 2001, which had previously been the highest level of anti-Muslim attacks in the

U.S.[125] In the years 2015 and 2016, Trump held over 300 rallies.[126] It would make sense that

connecting and empowering like-minded Islamophobes at these rallies could explain an uptick in

violence.[127]

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[124] *The Most Outrageous Trump Rally Moments* (YouTube, 2020),
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NxflRScoXpM.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[125] Katayoun Kishi, "Assaults against Muslims in U.S. Surpass 2001 Level," Pew Research Center, July 22, 2021,
https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/15/assaults-against-muslims-in-u-s-surpass-2001-level/.(accessed
March 25, 2022).

[126] Ayal Feinberg, Regina Branton, and Valerie Martinez-Ebers, "The Trump Effect: How 2016 Campaign Rallies
Explain Spikes in Hate" (2020).

[127] Feinberg, et al, "The Trump Effect."

Counterterrorism was a primary goal of the Trump administration. Trump took radical and Islamophobic measures to institute these goals. As Earl Maltz writes, "soon after President Trump took office, his administration issued several variations of what has become known as the 'travel ban,' an order that temporarily banned the entry of aliens from a number of predominantly Muslim countries."[128] This ban spoke volumes on Trump's opinions on Muslims and goals for foreign policy regarding Muslim countries. Trump announced this travel ban as the only way to keep terrorist threats out of the U.S., completely disregarding refugees and even U.S. citizens who were in or from these predominantly Muslim countries. Trump also had no desire to mend relations with Muslim countries, as evidenced by his policies during his term. He often used Islamophobic terms when referring to Muslims both domestically and abroad. Trump wanted nothing to do with Muslim countries except to withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

Trump's foreign policy also supported the Islamophobic narrative. One issue with President Obama was that his rhetoric did not match his foreign policies; when Donald Trump claimed he was going to ban Muslims from entering the country during his campaign, after only a week in office, this is exactly what he did. On January 27, 2017, Donald Trump announced his Muslim ban, a travel ban that prohibited citizens of seven different predominantly Muslim countries from traveling to or entering the U.S.[129] Trump appropriately named this travel ban the "Muslim Ban," clearly stating that the reasoning for the bans on these specific countries was not based on credible threats but rather high populations of Muslims. This travel ban was unlike any the U.S. had seen before, strictly prohibiting a large population from traveling to the U.S. because of prejudice surrounding their religious beliefs. This ban proved the government was not

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[128] Earl M. Maltz, "The Constitution and the Trump Travel Ban.," *Lewis and Clark Law Review* 22 (2018).

[129] Stephanie L. Gomez, "'Not White/Not Quite': Racial/Ethnic Hybridity and the Rhetoric of the" Muslim Ban," *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 8 (2018).

only supporting but also actively supplying the narrative that Muslims and terrorists are the same

into American foreign policy. With an administration filled with Christian right-wing

nationalists, it was easy to see how Trump and his administration made this ban happen so

quickly. The rhetoric surrounding the "Muslim ban" was similarly problematic. When Trump

signed the act that included the travel ban, he made some statements about the reasoning behind

the ban,

> I'm establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America. We don't want them here. We want to make sure that we are not admitting into our country the very threats our soldiers are fighting overseas. We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country, and love, deeply, our people.[130]

His use of "we" here contributed to the "us vs. them" narrative, with "we" being Americans and

"them" being "radical Islamic terrorists." By excluding Muslims from seven different countries

from entering the U.S, the message he sent is that white, Christian Americans need protection

from "radical Islam" more than Muslims from these countries need freedom and safety like the

ones looking for asylum. With these refugees fighting for their lives, their safety and security

was denied in the U.S. because of growing prejudice. Even the name proves the lack of

knowledge the Trump administration had about global Islam. Trump only named countries in

Northern Africa and the Middle East. He was ignoring the large Muslim populations in Central

Asia and Indonesia. One country on the travel ban list was Syria, which had been experiencing a

violent revolution; Syrian refugees were looking for asylum anywhere they could find. Instead of

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[130] Donald Trump, "Trump's Executive Order on 7-Nation Ban, Refugee Suspension" transcript of speech delivered at the White House, Washington, D.C., January 27, 2017, https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/28/politics/text-of-trump-executive-order-nation-ban-refugees/index.htmlhttp

providing humanitarian relief like the EU countries, the U.S. closed its borders to those seeking safety and security.

For many, it was difficult to understand how this ban was even legal; a religious discriminatory-based travel ban seemed to violate anti-discrimination laws in the U.S. and was contrary to the First Amendment. This ban was accused of being unconstitutional and received criticism from politicians, scholars, and citizens: "The opponents of the travel ban almost immediately challenged the legality of these restrictions in federal court."[131] After two months in the court system, the Trump administration repealed the original version of the travel ban only to replace it with a different version.[132] In September 2017, there were more alterations to the travel ban. The most significant change in this third version was the switch from an executive order to a Presidential Proclamation.[133] With accusations of the travel ban being unconstitutional, when looking at the ban from a legal standpoint, it is difficult to claim that it violates the U.S. Constitution when the people in question are not U.S. citizens.[134] The implementation of the travel ban in the first place was a serious challenge to the foreign policies used in the prior administrations. While there had been versions of travel bans in the past with the Nixon administration and the Carter administration, these bans were not based on discriminatory bias but rather current happenings in foreign policy.[135] After a series of lawsuits against President

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[131] Maltz, "The Constitution and the Trump Travel Ban."

[132] Maltz. "The Constitution and the Trump Travel Ban."

[133] Maltz. "The Constitution and the Trump Travel Ban."

[134] Maltz. "The Constitution and the Trump Travel Ban."

[135] Ibrahim Al-Marashi, "Travel Bans in Historical Perspective," Perspectives on History, November 1, 2017, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/november-2017/travel-bans-in-historical-perspective-executive-orders-have-defined-terrorists-since-nixon.(accessed March 25, 2022).

Trump and his administration, including *Hawaii v. Trump* and *Doe v. Trump,* the Muslim ban no

longer included the original initiatives that Trump implemented in January 2017.[136]

  Unsurprisingly when Trump implemented the travel ban, he was met with immediate

backlash from domestic and foreign forces. The response domestically to the ban and the

increasing issues of Islamophobia was stronger than it had been during the past administrations.

Trump has been perspicuous regarding his Islamophobia; Muslim Americans and progressive

Americans were gaining force from their anger and began to speak up. Muslim Americans had

long been trying to distance themselves from extremists; Movements of Moderate Islam and

Progressive Islam began to surface during the Obama administration.[137] However, the Trump

administration sparked a different reaction from American Muslims as his policies and rhetoric

were undoubtedly Islamophobic and rooted in ignorance. After implementing the travel ban,

protesters all over the country took to the streets to protest this overtly Islamophobic ban. CAIR,

or the Council on American-Islamic Relations, has long been an outspoken organization that

fought for the civil rights of Muslims in the U.S.; they were very critical of the implementation

of the travel ban.[138] They even filed legal action against the administration.[139] There were many

different approaches that American Muslims were taking to help mend the view of Muslims in

America, including educating non-Muslims about Islam, advocating for progressive Islam within

Muslim circles, building solidarity between immigrant and African American Muslims,

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[136] "Muslim Ban Timeline," ACLU NorCal, n.d., https://www.aclunc.org/sites/muslim-ban/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[137] Rosemary R. Corbett, *Making Moderate Islam Sufism, Service, and the "Ground Zero Mosque" Controversy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[138] "CAIR Press Releases," CAIR, n.d., https://www.cair.com/press-releases/.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[139] "CAIR Press Releases."

strengthening interfaith bonds, and advocating for Muslim rights.[140] American Muslims also fought hard for asylum for the many Syrian and other Muslim refugees. The consequences of the Arab Spring were still impacting citizens in the Middle East, and many were seeking asylum. On an international level, many countries were shocked by the implementation of the ban. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was one of the first organizations to speak out against the ban, saying that the U.S. should "maintain its moral obligation to provide leadership and hope at a time of great uncertainty and unrest in the world."[141] The countries that were named in the ban publicly condemned Trump, the U.S., and the U.S.'s relationship with Islam.

Much like the speech Obama gave in Cairo, in May 2017 Trump traveled to Saudi Arabia, where he delivered a speech. Trump's focus of this speech was the goal of repairing relations between the U.S. and Muslim countries while also combating extremism. Trump explained the importance of international Muslim involvement in the fight against terrorism, saying,

> If we do not stand in uniform condemnation of this killing—then not only will we be judged by our people, not only will we be judged by history, but we will be judged by God. This is not a battle between different faiths, different sects, or different civilizations. This is a battle between barbaric criminals who seek to obliterate human life, and decent people of all religions who seek to protect it. This is a battle between Good and Evil… America is prepared to stand with you – in pursuit of shared interests and common security. But the nations of the Middle East cannot wait for American power to crush this enemy for them. The nations of the Middle East will have to decide what kind of future they want for themselves, for their countries, and for their children. It is a choice between two futures – and it is a choice America cannot make for you.[142]

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[140] Grace Yukich, "Muslim American Activism in the Age of Trump," *Sociology of Religion* 79, no. 2 (2018): 220–47.

[141] Bill Chappell, "7 Targeted Countries React to Trump's Ban on Immigration," NPR, January 30, 2017, https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/01/30/512438879/7-targeted-countries-react-to-trumps-ban-on-immigration.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[142] Donald Trump, "President Trump Remarks at Arab-Islamic-American Summit," transcript of speech delivered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, May 21, 2017, https://www.politico.com/story/2017/05/21/full-transcript-trumps-speech-to-the-arab-islamic-american-summit-238654

This quote is reminiscent of Bush's rhetoric post-9/11. Trump goes on to propose a decision that must be made by Muslim countries: either side with the U.S. and eradicate all religious extremists in their countries or don't. The "us or them" notion that Trump makes correlated to the "good versus evil" themes from the Bush administration. Proving that, Trump is taking a similar approach to Bush 15 years after the fact. This speech was hypocritical because of the drastic measures Trump had already taken against citizens of Muslim countries, like the "Muslim ban." Trump's military presence in Muslim countries was different than Obama's; he was more flippant about military efforts and more motivated to eradicate extremists. For example, "in the case of Yemen, the Trump administration carried out more airstrikes in the first 100 days than the Obama administration did in all of 2015 and 2016."[143] As opposed to Bush and Obama, Trump was not as heavily involved in the wars in the Middle East. Trump wanted to get out of Afghanistan but was unsuccessful in this goal.[144] However, Trump always had an eye on Iran, and the Iranian nuclear deal was a point of focus for the Trump administration. Trump was skeptical about Iran and their intentions with nuclear power and was keen on containing Iran. His goal was "to rectify the deficiencies of the nuclear deal."[145] . He had an old-school approach to Middle Eastern relations and wanted to neutralize the threat of any nation taking radical measures. This meant establishing U.S. power in the Middle East through allies. like Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Turkey.[146] Trump utilized diplomacy in relations with the Middle East and

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[143] Robert Malley and Jon Finer, "The Long Shadow of 9/11: How Counterterrorism Warps US Foreign Policy.," *Foreign Affairs* 97 (2018).

[144] Michael Doran, "The Trump Doctrine in the Middle East," in *The Evolving American Presidency* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 202

[145] Doran, "The Trump Doctrine in the Middle East."

[146] Doran, "The Trump Doctrine in the Middle East."

left the military efforts to his administration. His goal was to recreate the need for a U.S. alliance

around the world so that countries would be motivated to appease him and the U.S. government.

With the campaign heavily dedicated to implementing a Muslim ban, the follow through

of this foreign policy was implemented immediately when Trump entered office, and once again

Muslims were at the forefront of American controversy. Another theme evident during the

Trump administration was white supremacy; As Gomez states, "the age of Trumpism [was]

widely marked by a resurgence of open white supremacy."[147] The Christian conservative ideals

that were the backbone of the Trump administration were built on American white supremacy.[148]

With his history of racial discrimination and his derogatory comments made about minorities, it

was not a stretch for people to conclude that Donald Trump had white supremacist tendencies.

Trump was even endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan during the 2016 election "While Trump wants to

make America great again, we have to ask ourselves, 'What made America great in the first

place?' The short answer to that is simple. America was great not because of what our

forefathers did — but because of who our forefathers were. America was founded as a White

Christian Republic. And as a White Christian Republic it became great."[149] This was published

in the *Crusaders*, a KKK run publication.

In the first debate for the 2020 election, the moderator explicitly asked Trump if he

condemned white supremacy. After making vague comments in response, Trump was able to

avoid answering the question.[150] Throughout his time in office, Trump's relationship with white

[147] Gomez, "'Not White/Not Quite': Racial/Ethnic Hybridity and the Rhetoric of the" Muslim Ban."

[148] Gomez, "'Not White/Not Quite': Racial/Ethnic Hybridity and the Rhetoric of the" Muslim Ban."

[149] Scott Detrow, "KKK Paper Endorses Trump; Campaign Calls Outlet 'Repulsive,'" November 2, 2016, https://www.npr.org/2016/11/02/500352353/kkk-paper-endorses-trump-campaign-calls-outlet-repulsive.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[150] John Haltiwanger, "Trump Has Repeatedly Been Endorsed by White Supremacist Groups and Other Far-Right Extremists, and They've Looked to Him as a Source of Encouragement.," Business Insider, September 30, 2020,

supremacy was called into question more than a couple of times. The white supremacist

demonstration that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017, is a prime

example of the emboldening of white supremacists that happened under the Trump

administration. The Unite the Right rally congregated white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and other

far right groups to oppose the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee. That night the protesters took

to the streets. The next day when opposing protesters met the alt-right supporters on the streets of

Charlottesville, a protester was killed when "an alt-right supporter deliberately drove into a

crowd of protestors."[151] After this event at a press conference Trump was asked about the events

that transpired; he answered,

> they didn't put themselves down as neo-Nazis, and you had some very bad people in that
> group. But you also had people that were very fine people on both sides. You had people
> in that group – excuse me, excuse me. I saw the same pictures as you did. You had
> people in that group that were there to protest the taking down of, to them, a very, very
> important statue and the renaming of a park from Robert E. Lee to another name.[152]

This claim about "fine people on both sides" immediately incurred backlash, since Trump had

been relatively quiet regarding a denunciation of white nationalism. There was also speculation

and eventual lawsuits that Trump incited this rally, which eventually became a violent and

deadly event. [153] Speculation around Trump's role in inciting violent rallies lasted through the

entirety of his time in office, citing instances like Charlottesville and the January 6th

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https://www.businessinsider.com/trumps-history-of-support-from-white-supremacist-far-right-groups-2020-9.(accessed March 25, 2022).

[151] JoAnne Sweeny, "Incitement in the Era of Trump and Charlottesville." *Cap. UL Rev.* 47 (2019): 585.

[152] Donald Trump, "Press Briefing After Charlottesville," transcript of speech delivered at Trump Tower, New York, New York, August 15, 2017, https://www.vox.com/2017/8/15/16154028/trump-press-conference-transcript-charlottesville

[153] Sweeny, "Incitement in the Era of Trump and Charlottesville."

insurrection. With "radical" being a key term in his vocabulary, Trump did not label this demonstration turned fatal incident "radical," instead he used it to reference Muslims.

While social media had been a part of the global social scene for years before Donald Trump was elected, Trump and his administration changed the political norm of the spread of information and how politics and social media overlapped. It became the norm for politicians to have a solid social media presence, specifically using Twitter; now politicians all over the world are active on Twitter all day long. When Trump was elected, his colleagues followed the lead of consistent posting. However, the increase of social media in politics has resulted in more public conflict between politicians and has also led to the further spread of misinformation.[154] Social media also provides the freedom to hide behind a screen. Internet trolls could be outwardly Islamophobic, threatening and insulting Muslims. Trump, while active on social media, took part in trolling and even took part in contributing to the Islamophobic social media presence.[155] The rise of conspiracy theorists on social media also had an impact on the political landscape of the U.S., because of "the power of conspiracies to play on deeply held beliefs, fears, prejudices, abided across time. But the contemporary political and media environment has given new impetus and scale to conspiracies."[156] Conspiracies that hold right-winged beliefs have swept the nation, and Donald Trump has only aided these beliefs with his use of prejudice and fears in the public imagination.

The Trump administration and Trump himself introduced a new era in U.S. politics. He used his sensationalist and aggressive TV persona to promote racism and prejudice. The fight

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[154] "U.S. Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes Rose 15 Percent in 2017: Advocacy Group."

[155] Landers and Masters, "Trump Retweets Anti-Muslim Videos."

[156] Pablo J. Boczkowski and Zizi Papacharissi, *Trump, and the Media* (MIT Press, 2018), 28.

against political correctness, while considered a noble crusade by him and his supporters, had negative impacts on minorities around the country. Trump gave a voice to Islamophobic America; his hypervigilance of terrorists and failure to acknowledge the small population of global Muslims that belong to extremist groups promoted the spread of a harmful narrative about Muslims. Trump emboldened white supremacists throughout the U.S. with his election, which sent a message that racism is not a large enough deterrent in a presidential candidate. This election also was a telling sign that prejudice in the U.S. had not decreased as much as it had been expected to under the Obama administration. Trump's election to office is evidence that Islamophobia has a considerable presence in the United States. Trump's erratic foreign policy was driven by his bias against Muslims while keeping important U.S. alliances and economic interests in mind. His introduction of the "Muslim ban" within his first weeks in office because of a sequential story about Muslims during his campaign was a theme through his entire term. He consistently painted the immigration of Muslims to the U.S. as one of the most prominent dangers in the world. His rhetoric was overtly offensive and Islamophobic, as was his foreign policy. When looking at critical analysis of Muslim related foreign policy during the Trump administration, President Trump kept Muslim countries at arm's length, never making significant militaristic changes like during the Bush or Obama administrations. Donald Trump left a legacy of reprehensible rhetoric surrounding different groups in the U.S. He also instituted one of the most discriminatory executive orders in years.

The key themes in Trump's rhetoric, "radical Islam" and "Muslim ban," were huge rhetorical contributors to the problematic narrative surrounding Islamophobia that the Trump administration facilitated. He furthered the "us versus them" narrative by identifying "them" explicitly as Muslims and taking extreme measures of alienating Muslims in and outside of the

country. These terms were standard in Trump's rhetoric and his presence on his social media.

Trump also disparaged Obama for disregarding the "Muslim" label when referring to extremists.

"Radical Islam" and the "Muslim ban" illustrate the bluntness behind his rhetoric and foreign

policy. These themes, connected with the foreign policy efforts and social media use during the

Trump administration culminated in an immense contribution to the American Islamophobic

narrative.

Conclusion

9/11 was a devastating event that rocked the world. The men who perpetrated these attacks attributed their actions to U.S. political involvement in the Muslim world, with bin Laden saying in a speech about 9/11, "No we fight you because we are free men who don't sleep under oppression. We want to restore freedom to our Nation and just as you lay waste to our Nation, so shall we lay waste to yours."[157] Later in this speech bin Laden mentions that the results of the war between extremist groups and the U.S. "have been by the Grace of Allah."[158] With this justification, a spotlight was cast on Islam globally. In the U.S., the politicization of this religious tradition took shape. During the three administrations after the attacks, the Islamophobic narrative in the U.S. was influenced by both presidential political rhetoric and foreign policy. As I have discussed in this thesis, two measures of Islamophobia in the U.S. are hate crimes statistics and surveys that explore non-Muslim Americans' perceptions of Muslim Americans, along with Muslim Americans' perceptions of the relationship between the U.S. and the Muslim world. Increases in anti-Muslim hate crimes often align with actual or perceived threats by extremist groups. The initial fear of the unknown during the Bush administration eventually hardened into anti-Muslim prejudice that became deeply embedded in U.S. society. Whether or not the contributions by these Presidents were intentional, the result of their rhetoric and foreign policy was the rise of an "us versus them," Islamophobic narrative. Trump's influence on this narrative came mainly through his rhetoric, while for Obama it was predominantly through his foreign policy. For Bush, his foreign policy and rhetoric had equal influence. Andrew Shryock sees Islamophobia in the U.S. as a political tactic; certainly, these three presidents all used it to

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[157] *Bin Laden's Videotaped Message*, 2004, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A16990-2004Nov1.html. (Accessed March 25, 2022).

[158] *Bin Laden's Videotaped Message*, 2004

gain political leverage and support. The connection between Islamophobia and the spread of negative images through the media is key to understanding its influence. When a U.S. President takes the stage, people listen. News outlets will find soundbites and blast them all over the media. When the President of the United States declares that military action needs to be taken as a matter of domestic security, and that the threat is coming from Muslims, the "us versus them" instinct activates in many of his constituents.

The rhetorical themes in these three different administrations all make different contributions to American Islamophobia. Bush focused on the notion of "good versus evil" and how "good" can be seen through America and their allies in the "War on Terror" and evil coming from American enemies. America and its allies claimed the "good" title as opposed to the notorious "axis of evil" that contained two Muslim countries. In Bush's view there is a clear distinction of "good versus evil" that he explicitly identitifies. This dichotomy did not only extend to nations but also the difference in religions and their moralities. The themes of Bush's rhetoric support the policy changes he made while he was in office. For Obama, his rhetorical and policy themes were focusing on mending relations with Muslim countries after the Bush administration damaged these relations. While his rhetoric fully supported this theme, his militaristic actions in Afghanistan and Yemen reflected something entirely different. Obama had a different stance on Islamophobia than the other two because he was a victim of the phobia despite the fact that he was not a Muslim. For Trump, his rhetorical and foreign policy themes hung tightly onto white nationalism and the villainizing of Muslims both domestically and internationally. Trump's offensive rhetoric was blatantly Islamophobic, and Trump embraced this phobia in his supporters. His outlandish statements and radical foreign policies prompted intense backlash.

The examination of this topic and how presidential rhetoric and foreign policy are so crucial when looking at how prejudicial narratives form in societies, is important for many reasons. There is a common misconception that to be discriminatory or prejudicial, an individual needs to be blatant and obvious with their discrimination. This thesis shows that even with the absence of overtly offensive comments, outside factors can still contribute to prejudice, not only on an individual level but also on a societal one. Growing up in a world post 9/11, I was privy to the Islamophobic narratives in U.S. society, and it was expected, almost as if this prejudice was in retaliation for the events of 9/11. There is no question that 9/11 was a horrific experience, but the narrative of villainizing Islam and Muslims that was a result of 9/11 deserves more attention. The goal of this thesis was to prove how Islamophobic prejudice after 9/11 manifested in different ways and completely changed the societal expectations surrounding Muslims and how they are viewed in the United States.

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