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The Political Economy of Islamophobia
and the Global Discourse on Islam

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Contents

Overview	3
Setting the Context	4
Islamophobia: The Concept and its Critics	8
Islam as a Threat to the West: Revisiting the Dominant Paradigm	12
Islam as a Threat to the West: Alternative Interpretations.....	16
Islam as a Threat to the West: Sustaining a Dominant Paradigm by Subverting the Marketplace of Ideas	19
Beyond Islamophobia: Concluding Comments	23
Bibliography	25
Notes	29

Overview¹

This paper explores the notion of Islamophobia or the fear of, and prejudicial views on, the Islamic faith and Muslims as an ethno-religious community. Islamophobia can be 'passive' entailing the mere embodiment of unfavourable attitudes towards Muslims. It can also be 'active' entailing hate crimes against Muslims and symbols of Islamic identity as well as institutional discrimination. While conceptually closely related to racism and anti-Semitism, Islamophobia has only recently become the subject of scholarly investigations.

In discussing the salient attributes of Islamophobia as a conceptual construct, the paper takes on board the views of those who question its validity. The debate, it seems, is between those who wish to protect minorities against bigotry and prejudice and those who would like to protect freedom of expression in a secular democracy. One can draw on the political economy of hatred and the notion of externalities to shed light on this topical debate.

The paper argues that Islamophobic sentiments cannot be disentangled from the epistemological stance of an American-led global discourse on Islam. Accordingly, it re-examines the ideas of two influential American scholars in the post-Cold War era who attach primacy to immutable religious values and entrenched historical circumstances in suggesting that Islamic fundamentalism and even Islam is a threat to the West. This sets the context to revisit the hypothesis that Islamic fundamentalism is a secular movement and the product of Cold War politics and the view that the US-led West needs to acquire a deeper understanding of Islam as a political and societal force. Given competing paradigms that seek to explain the role of Islam in contemporary international affairs, the paper suggests how influential advocates of one theory based on cultural and historical determinism seek to dominate rival theories that highlight the primacy of contextual variables. It is ultimately a political strategy led by those who believe in developing a close relationship between the scholar and the state to subvert the 'marketplace of ideas'. The paper concludes with the hope that one can move beyond Islamophobia to a more pluralist discourse on Islam.

Setting the Context

Islamophobia – fear of, and prejudicial views on, the Islamic faith and Muslims as an ethno-religious community – is a relatively new word in the English language. It first emerged in print in 1991.² Islamophobia can be ‘passive’ entailing the mere embodiment of unfavourable attitude towards Muslims. It can also be ‘active’ entailing hate crimes against Muslims and symbols of Islamic identity as well as institutional discrimination.³

A key feature of Islamophobia is the perception of Islam as a threat to the ‘Western way of life’. As millions of Muslims migrated from their homeland over the past three to four decades to make Western nations their new home, the ‘enemy without’ became the ‘enemy within’.⁴ A nuanced version of this idea makes a distinction between ‘bad’ Muslims (extremist and violent) and ‘good’ Muslims (secular and tolerant).⁵ The latter represent a majority, but seem to be ambivalent about their fanatical fellow travellers. An instinctive allegiance to the pan-Islamic community among ‘good’ Muslims has restrained their capacity to condemn and delegitimise the activities of ‘bad’ Muslims.⁶

Islamophobia appears to be a relatively neglected area of study vis-à-vis other closely related phenomena, such as anti-Semitism and racism. For example, an electronic search reveals only six citations on Islamophobia in scholarly journals compared with 153 citations in the case of anti-Semitism and 4,541 citations in the case of racism.⁷ Such benign neglect by scholars belies the fact that Islamophobia is a significant and perhaps even pervasive phenomenon.

Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, notes that when ‘...the world is compelled to coin a new term to take account of increasingly widespread bigotry, that is a sad and troubling development...in too many circles, disparaging remarks about Muslims are allowed to pass without censure, with the result that prejudice acquires a veneer of respectability’.⁸ William Dalrymple [2004a:2], noted British writer and historian, laments that ‘... it sometimes feels as if Islamophobia is replacing anti-Semitism as the principal western statement of bigotry against “the other”’. A survey of global attitudes by a highly respected US organisation suggests that a sizeable minority in Western countries harbour unfavourable attitudes towards Muslims [The Pew Research Center, 2004:5].⁹

These statistics underscore an important point: Islamophobic sentiments attract a diverse constituency. A former leader of a Dutch political party who is now a European Commissioner, sparked off a row recently when he warned that ‘Europe’s Christian civilisation risked being overrun by Islam’ [Evans-Pritchard, 2004]. Some liberals have joined – as if in an unwitting alliance – with right-wing pundits to express their anxieties about Islam as a faith and Muslims as an ethno-religious group. Thus, for example, Lady Cox, a ‘leading human rights campaigner’ in Britain, has called for a ban on the migration of ‘Islamic ideologues’ to Britain. She has suggested that the silent majority of Muslims must adopt the ‘British way of life’ and condemn the activities of their doctrinaire co-religionists or else face the anger of an aggrieved British public [Johnston, 2003].

Luminaries of English literature have been forthright in issuing their ‘fatwas’ against Islam. English feminist novelist Fay Weldon dismissed the Quran as fomenting a creed that incites its followers to ‘...kill, kill, kill’.¹⁰ V.S. Naipaul, the Nobel laureate, has promoted the notion that Muslim Mughuls in India plundered and pillaged a pristine Hindu civilisation.¹¹

A favourite target of opprobrium in Islamophobic discourse is the Prophet Mohammad, the founder of Islam. Thus, conservative Australian commentator Andrew Bolt made an unflattering – even vicious – comparison between Jesus Christ and Mohammad. He advised his readers that

unlike Mohammed, Christ did not slaughter unbelievers, execute women who sang rude songs about him, cut off the limbs of apostates, sleep with a woman whose family he had just killed, have sex with a nine-year-old, urge the murder of Jews, authorise the beating of wives ... and promise heaven above all to those who made war on infidels.¹²

He was probably taking the cue from Jerry Falwell, the American 'televangelist' who, in the wake of 9/11, opined that 'Mohammad was a terrorist'.¹³ Both Bolt and Falwell may seek inspiration from the scholarly reflections of Mary Habeck, a Professor at Yale University, who examined the strategies of the terrorists or 'jihadists' of today and concluded that they were following the 'methods of Mohammad'.¹⁴

What is perhaps less well known is the role that some commentators and writers of Middle Eastern and Muslim origin have played, whether by design or default, in depicting the followers of the Islamic faith as victims and villains. Fouad Ajami [2003], Director of Middle Eastern Studies at John Hopkins University, chastises Arabs for their 'belligerent self-pity' and enthuses about the use of American power to transform the Muslim world.¹⁵ Amir Taheri [1987] believes that terrorism is integral to the Islamic faith. Fareed Zakaria [2001], one of the editors of *Newsweek*, expresses a similar sentiment when he suggests that Muslims '... come out of culture that reinforces their hostility, distrust and hatred of the West – and of America in particular. This culture does not condone terrorism but fuels the fanaticism that is at its heart'.¹⁶ Irshad Manji [2004] is the latest instant celebrity who has discovered (or re-discovered) what is the 'Trouble with Islam'.¹⁷ To her, many Muslims have become victims of Quranic literalism that make them innately misogynistic, anti-Semitic and anti-Western.

Perhaps the most conspicuous case is the Indian-born, Cambridge-educated Salman Rushdie, the Booker Prize winning novelist. Using (or abusing) his artistic licence and prodigious talent, Rushdie proceeded to write a fictionalised account of Mohammad in which he mutates as 'Mahound', the progenitor of 'satanic verses' and possessor of an insatiable sexual appetite. The so-called 'Rushdie affair' engendered global attention after Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini issued a singularly ill-judged 'fatwa' against Salman Rushdie. This led to a divisive debate about freedom of expression and the alleged medievalism of Islam that sought to silence its critics.¹⁸

These contemporary proclamations against the founder of Islam echo voices from the past. Prophet Mohammad was called 'Mahound' or the devil in early Christendom – a sentiment that was endorsed by such figures as Dante and Martin Luther.¹⁹ The early encounter of Christianity with Islam and the hostility it engendered was understandable as the latter was a rival religion and its followers eventually evolved into an imperial power that threatened Europe. Yet, the historical rivalries between Islam and other faith-based communities also entailed productive collaboration enriching both – a fact that is often forgotten today.²⁰ Peters [2003a:xiii], a leading scholar of comparative religion, observes:

What is incontestable is that Islam, almost from its inception is a party to the great religious competition that took place for many centuries among the monotheists around the Mediterranean, eastward into Asia and southward into Africa. It was indeed a confrontation as much as a competition...but it was also an extraordinarily rich era of interaction ...Jews, Christians, and Muslims worshipped the same God; they shared many, though by no means identical ideals and aspirations, operated often in the same social and economic environment, and at certain times lived side by side within the same culture, indistinguishable in language, costume and manners...

Little of that reality is apparent today. Judaism and Christianity have evolved in the public consciousness into "Western religions", while Islam remains at best a "Middle Eastern" or at worst an "oriental" religion.

As the Cold War loomed large in the Western consciousness, preoccupation with the notion of Islam as a threat to the West appeared to subside. The threat of the global spread of Communism as well as the prospect of a nuclear confrontation between the US as the 'leader of the free world' and the Soviet Union as the 'evil empire' temporarily cast aside concerns and fears about Islam as a faith and the challenges that it posed to the West.

Some scholars, most notably Mahmud Mamdani [2004], have argued that the need for a pragmatic alliance between Islamic extremists and the US emerged under the Reagan administration. It was driven by the amoral principle that 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. Islamic *Mujahedeens* fighting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were eagerly embraced as the foot soldiers that could defeat the ideological adversary of Communism. Even Hollywood celebrated this alliance, as in one of the *Rambo* movies when the muscular Sylvester Stallone teamed up with the *Mujahedeens* to vanquish a common enemy.

The courting of the *Mujahedeens* was a departure from the doctrine of strategic containment of the Soviet Union and its Communist satellites. The latter was, of course, the hallmark of US foreign policy that typically led to the support of 'friendly tyrants' in the Muslim world and elsewhere during the Cold War era. In moving away from the notion of strategic deterrence, little did the strategic planners of the Reagan era and the Hollywood movie producers realise that *Rambo's* comrades-in-arms would one day mutate into global jihadists.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the US-led West was widely seen as winning a fundamental ideological battle. Liberal democracy and the ethos of the free market finally arrived as a global phenomena. One could celebrate the 'end of history' [Fukuyama, 1992].

For a while, this verdict seemed to resonate with the global community. Two of the world's most populous countries – China and India – embarked on a monumental change in their ideological directions. The enthusiastic embracing of a market economy by a post-Maoist China, and the gradual shedding of its Nehruvian socialist garb by India, reinforced the notion of Western – and more specifically US – triumphalism. Thus was born the post-Cold War era and the enthronement of the lone superpower.

The celebration of the 'end of history' did not last long. Samuel Huntington – one of the most influential strategic thinkers of the US establishment – declared the beginning of a new era of the 'clash of civilizations' [Huntington, 1996]. The 'evil empire' was gone, but the US-led West faced dual threats from Islamic extremism and the economic ascendancy of East Asia, best exemplified by the rise of China. The West should recognise and respond to these developments rather than being lulled into a complacent conclusion that the ideological wars of the past were over.

In retrospect, it appears that 'Sinitic assertiveness' (as Huntington put it) entailed more of an economic rather than an ideological threat to the US and its Western allies. It could be blunted through peaceful co-option, as in the successfully accomplished project to transform China into a strategic partner through its membership of the WTO and its membership of the UN Security Council. These arrangements could be relied on to accommodate the peaceful rise of China.

Islamic extremism, however, could not be readily contained. Unlike Sinitic assertiveness that expressed itself through economic aspirations to grow rapidly and accumulate wealth, the fundamentalist adherents of the Islamic faith represented an implacable ideological foe. This was the conclusion of the influential historian Bernard Lewis in his analysis of 'the roots of Muslim rage' [Lewis, 1990]. Muslims were consumed by nihilistic rage against the West; they were driven by the need to recreate a glorious past while being unable to adapt to modernity. The Islamophobic narrative that was being constructed at the end of the Cold War needed, it seems, a trigger – most notably the terrorist attacks on the US – to unleash the fears and phobias in the West against a designated 'other'.

In July 2004, a group of influential American politicians announced that they had embarked on a bipartisan enterprise to resurrect the 'Committee on the Present Danger' (CPD), first set up in the 1950s to deal with the global threat of Communism. Now, argued the midwives who saw the re-birth of the CPD, it was necessary to deal with the global threat of Islamic fundamentalism.²¹ The construction of the 'new enemy' – or the reconstruction of an old nemesis – was accomplished: the 'green menace' of Islam replaced the 'red menace' of the past.²²

The key point, then, is that the phenomenon of Islamophobia cannot be disentangled from the epistemological stance of an American-led global discourse on Islam. In propagating this message, this paper probes and pushes in multiple directions. As a preamble, it highlights the salient attributes of Islamophobia as a conceptual construct and takes on board the views of those who question its validity. The debate, it seems, is between those who wish to protect minorities against bigotry and prejudice and those who would like to protect freedom of expression in a secular democracy.

The paper re-examines the ideas of two influential American scholars in the post-Cold War era who attach primacy to immutable religious values and entrenched historical circumstances in suggesting that Islamic fundamentalism and even Islam is a threat to the West. This sets the context to revisit the hypothesis that Islamic fundamentalism is a secular movement and the product of Cold War politics. Given competing paradigms that seek to explain the role of Islam in contemporary international relations, the paper suggests how influential advocates of one theory based on cultural and historical determinism seek to dominate rival theories that highlight the primacy of contextual variables. It is ultimately a political strategy led by those who believe in developing a close relationship between the scholar and the state to subvert the 'marketplace of ideas'. The paper concludes with the hope that one can move beyond Islamophobia to a more pluralist discourse on Islam.

Islamophobia: The Concept and its Critics

A British think-tank [Runnymede Trust, 1997] makes one of the most determined attempts to provide a conceptual framework for analysing the salient attributes of Islamophobia. It distinguishes between two views on Islam: 'closed' and 'open' and contrasts them along eight dimensions. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: 'Closed' and 'open' views of Islam: A framework

Closed views of Islam	Open views of Islam
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islam seen as a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities Islam seen as separate and other – (a) not having any aims or values in common with other cultures (b) not affected by them (c) not influencing them. Islam seen as inferior to the West – barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist. Islam seen as violent, aggressive, threatening, supportive of terrorism, engaged in 'a clash of civilizations'. Islam seen as a political ideology, used for political or military advantage. Criticisms made by Islam of 'the West' rejected out of hand. Hostility towards Islam used to justify discriminatory practices towards Muslims and exclusion of Muslims from mainstream society. Anti-Muslim hostility accepted as natural and 'normal'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islam seen as diverse and progressive, with internal differences, debates and development. Islam seen as interdependent with other faiths and cultures – (a) having certain shared values and aims (b) affected by them (c) enriching them. Islam seen as distinctively different, but not deficient, and as equally worthy of respect. Islam seen as an actual or potential partner in joint cooperative enterprises and in the solution of shared problems. Islam seen as a genuine religious faith, practised sincerely by its adherents. Criticisms of 'the West' and other cultures are considered and debated. Debates and disagreements with Islam do not diminish efforts to combat discrimination and exclusion. Critical views of Islam are themselves subjected to critique, lest they be inaccurate.

Source: Runnymede Trust, 1997, adapted from executive summary

As can be seen, Islamophobia as a mindset is associated with a 'closed' view of Islam in which the faith is seen as a monolithic and fixed entity impervious to change. It is aggressive and intolerant, aligned with a militant political ideology and terrorism, and inferior to, and incompatible with, Western values. Not surprisingly, this framework rejects any Western critique by adherents of the Islamic faith while supposing that it is normal to hold negative views about Islam. Advocates of the 'closed' view about the Muslim community may harbour some or all of the negative attributes noted above.

It is also increasingly common to regard Islamophobia as a good example of the 'new racism'. As Australian academic Robert Manne suggests [2002]:

Old racism argued that the intractable differences between human groups were rooted in biology and blood. This form of racism was discredited by Hitler and the Holocaust. A new racism took its place. It argued that differences between human collectivities were based on the ultimate incompatibility not of blood and biology but of culture and religion.

After September 11, Manne argued that one detected a disturbing increase in the sentiment of the 'new' racism based on the incompatibility of cultural and religious values among the influential commentariat in the media. As if to prove this point, John Loconte [2004:14], writing in the right wing *Weekly Standard*, compares 'radical Islam' to the rise of Nazism and suggests that '... this time [it] is not national and race-based, but supranational and faith-based' – a thesis that has come to be regarded as 'Islamofacism'.²³

The alternative to the 'new' racism embedded in the 'closed' view of Islam depicts the latter as diverse and progressive with its internal debates and differences. It is interdependent with other faiths and cultures, a necessary partner in solving shared problems. It is as legitimate for Muslims to criticise the West as it is for Westerners to critique Islam as part of a broader discourse in multi-faith communities on culture and religious identity and how they shape one's response to the demands of modernity. Such debates and discussions enhance, rather than diminish, societal capacities to combat Islamophobia.

There are influential critics of the concept of Islamophobia. Such critics maintain that the notion of Islamophobia can be abused to stifle free speech and the principle of secularism in liberal democracies. Hence, granting special status to one particular religion and seeking to make it immune to public criticism in the name of inculcating 'open views' on Islam goes against well-established principles of free speech and secularism. As the left-leaning *Guardian's* Polly Toynbee claims [2004]: 'we must be free to criticise without being called racists'.

This is a theme that is evident in the views of Lady Cox, a prominent human rights campaigner in Britain, who, along with John Marks, Director of the Education Research Trust, '...maintain that the concept of Islamophobia...is used to close down criticism of religion' [Johnston, 2003]. Others, such as Jim Herrick [2005], seek to resist the 'tyranny of the offended' in defence of free speech.

Well-known British writer and broadcaster Kenan Malik [2005:2-6] has also joined the chorus of critics arguing against the notion of Islamophobia. As he puts it:

The trouble with Islamophobia is that it is an irrational concept. It confuses hatred of, and discrimination against Muslims on the one hand with criticism of Islam on the other. The charge of Islamophobia is all too often used not to highlight racism but to stifle criticism...What is being created is a culture of victimhood in which Islamophobia has become a one-stop cause of the myriad problems facing Muslims.

Fred Halliday [1999:898] offers a nuanced critique of the notion of Islamophobia even as he accepts the fact of entrenched prejudice against Muslims. As he observes: 'That there is such a thing as denoted by the term "Islamophobia" is undoubtedly true', but heavily qualifies this point by suggesting that 'the attack now is against not *Islam* as a faith but *Muslims* as a people, the latter grouping together all, especially immigrants, who might be covered by the term' (italics in original). Hence, he claims that 'the more accurate term is not "Islamophobia" but "anti-Muslimism"'.

Halliday [1999:899] goes on to argue that the uncritical use of the term 'Islamophobia' has several undesirable consequences. It perpetuates the distortion that there is only one Islam. This in turn plays into the hands of those within the Muslim community who wish to reply to this attack by offering their selective interpretation of what Islam is. More importantly, it 'challenges the possibility of dialogue based on universal principles' against which Islam and other religious beliefs can be judged.

Despite the empathetic disposition that Halliday projects, he is essentially agreeing with Polly Toynbee and others that the notion of Islamophobia should not be used to stifle debate on the role of Islam – and religion in general – in a secular liberal democracy. Halliday's contention that Islam is not being attacked as a faith is not credible. There is a powerful body of opinion that is relentless in its zeal to show that Islam serves as a fertile ground for a totalitarian ideology that is implacably opposed to the US and its Western allies. It is also disingenuous to argue that the term 'Islamophobia' perpetuates the distortion that there is only one Islam, when the rationale for using the term is precisely to expose such a distortion and to highlight the deleterious consequences that follow from it.

Halliday and his fellow critics are on firmer ground when they express concerns about the potential abuse of the term in stifling legitimate debate about the role of Islam and its

relationship to modernity. The notion of a 'dialogue based on universal principles' is certainly attractive, but it is far from clear that this must inevitably mean secularism. The challenge is to craft notions of universal human values within the context of multi-faith communities.

Toynbee, Malik, Halliday and others also fail to appreciate the 'political economy of hatred'. Edward Glaeser [2004], a Harvard economist who is the progenitor of this analytical framework, suggests that 'political entrepreneurs' can exploit the ignorance of voters even in a mature democracy to spread prejudice and hatred against 'out-groups'. He constructs a formal economic model to demonstrate that the 'supply of hatred' in a society goes up when political entrepreneurs have the resources and incentives to tap into the underlying 'demand' to listen to 'hate-creating' stories, although such stories may bear little resemblance to reality. This sorry state of affairs may persist over time because voters often lack the private incentive to find out the truth. Out-groups who are conspicuous along politically relevant dimensions are especially likely to become scapegoats for 'entrepreneurs of hate'.

Although Glaeser, rather surprisingly, does not consider anti-Muslim prejudice and prefers instead to focus on other cases, it is clear that his model can be used to illuminate the issues raised in this paper.²⁴ Examples of 'entrepreneurs of hate' in Western societies are not hard to find, such as the right-wing British National Party in the UK, Front National Party in France and the Northern League in Italy. These political parties often direct their venomous rhetoric against Muslims in propagating their anti-immigration and nativist agenda.²⁵ Being rational political actors, they are aware that they cannot readily focus on traditional minorities in Western societies (Blacks and Jews) because of legal and social sanctions against the public display of prejudice towards such minorities. Thus, even as the 'supply of hatred' has gone down against traditional minorities, it has intensified against 'soft' targets such as Muslims. Critics of Islamophobia overlook the important shift from 'hard' to 'soft' targets in the strategy adopted by nativist political entrepreneurs in demonising the 'other' in Western societies.²⁶ Furthermore, Muslims in a post-9/11 era are especially vulnerable given the widely held perception of a close association between the Islamic world and the threat of global terrorism.²⁷

The oft-heard argument that the notion of Islamophobia is a threat to freedom of expression can be re-examined in the light of the concept of externalities used by economists. It contends that private actions have social consequences – or externalities – that cannot be ignored because they affect the welfare of others. There are numerous examples of the different ways in which the deleterious consequences of private actions become legitimate concerns of public policy. For example, the right of smokers has to be balanced against the plight of the victims of 'passive smoking'. The operation of non-smoking flights by international airlines falls within the rubric of a movement to promote a smoke-free environment that takes into account the concerns of 'passive smoking'.

The sustained expression of negative opinions about Islam by politicians and mass media opinion makers may be seen as private acts freely exercised by citizens, but it may engender negative externalities where Muslims, as in the case of 'passive smokers', become passive victims. In this case, public authorities have to balance the need to preserve freedom of expression with the need to protect minorities from persecution and prejudice. In any case, freedom of expression is not inviolable even in Western liberal democracies as both social and legal sanctions against public displays of racist and anti-Semitic sentiments clearly suggest. The objective of those who are concerned about Islamophobia is to ensure that the same approach is applied to protect Muslims as an ethno-religious group from being vilified. This can only be done by public authorities demonstrating a credible commitment to reasoned debate while delegitimising outright bigotry. Indeed, Toynbee's passionate plea that 'we must be able to criticise' has been enthusiastically taken up by other British commentators whose published views about Muslims in the mainstream British media have been so inflammatory that the organisations that they were affiliated with had to disown them by suspending and sacking them.²⁸

One cannot deny that there are certain groups or persons who correspond to some and even all of the negative attributes of the 'closed' view of Islam, but in exposing the conduct

of such groups or persons, one can easily end up making victims of all Muslims. Such victimisation can take multiple forms in Western and non-Muslim societies: verbal and physical abuse, attacks on religious symbols, such as mosques, discrimination in education and employment, and, ultimately, exclusion from mainstream society.²⁹ If left unchecked and unchallenged, Islamophobia can engender significant negative externalities. It can impair the social cohesion of Western societies in which Muslims represent a significant minority and inflame prevailing tensions between the West and the Muslim world.

These risks are no longer exaggerated speculations. The post-9/11 era has witnessed the rise of a 'security state' both in Europe and the United States entailing enhanced surveillance and counter-terrorism legislation and, it seems, the harassment and targeting of Muslims by security agencies. As Akbar Ahmed [2004:55], a noted US-based scholar of Islam puts it, Muslims are now confronted with 'intractable problems at every border; they [are] checked and rechecked at airports; their business and financial concerns [are] repeatedly scrutinised; their beliefs and customs [are] viewed with suspicion and often ridiculed; and they [are] made to feel unwelcome in the community of world cultures'.³⁰ This in turn runs the risk of radicalising young Muslims and even those who are opposed to Islamic fundamentalism simply because they feel the need to establish the legitimacy of a Muslim identity in a post-9/11 environment. Such experiences under the auspices of a 'security state' have prompted debates about the need to balance the interest of national security and the erosion of civil liberties, not just of the Muslim diaspora but also of all citizens in Western societies. It has revived emotional debates about the desirability of multiculturalism that promotes diversity vs. a more aggressive strategy of assimilating minorities into mainstream Western culture.³¹

Islam as a Threat to the West: Revisiting the Dominant Paradigm

The dominant paradigm that shapes the view that Islamic fundamentalism and even Islam is a threat to the West can be traced to the work of two conservative American scholars. The discussion commences with Harvard's Samuel Huntington's thesis of a 'clash of civilizations' and proceeds to the so-called Lewis doctrine associated with the work of Princeton historian Bernard Lewis.

Samuel Huntington's thesis of the 'clash of civilizations' came to global attention after the publication of an article on this theme in the summer of 1993 in *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the foreign policy elite in the United States.³² As Huntington notes: 'That article, according to the *Foreign Affairs* editors, stirred up more discussion in three years than any other article they had published since the 1940s'.³³ The *Foreign Affairs* article provided the basis for a book in 1996. This work was revitalised – as Glenn [2004] notes – after the September 11 terrorist attacks on America and became a bestseller.

The author seeks to offer '...an interpretation of the evolution of global politics after the Cold War. It aspires to present a framework, a paradigm, for viewing global politics that will be meaningful to scholars and useful to policymakers'. While he clearly does not expect his approach to account for everything in global politics, he clearly expects that it will provide 'a more meaningful and useful lens through which to view international developments than any alternative paradigm' [Huntington, 1996:14].

Huntington posits 'seven or eight' civilisations that make up the post-Cold War era, but he focuses on the implications of the interactions of the West with Islam and China. The cultural determinism of Huntington's framework stems from the view that 'efforts to shift society from one civilisation to another are unsuccessful' [p.20]. In a multicivilisational world, the West should give up 'universalist pretensions'. Modernisation, he contends, is distinct from 'Westernisation' and is not producing a universal civilisation in any meaningful sense. Western universalism, if left unchecked, will find itself '...in conflict with other civilizations, most seriously Islam and China' [p.20].

While Huntington posits dual challenges to the West – Sinic assertiveness and Islamic militancy – there is a crucial difference between the two challenges. In the case of China, the assertiveness is primarily expressed in terms of acquiring economic, political and military strength. In the case of Islam, however, the militancy is ideological in nature and entails an aggressive re-affirmation of its non-Western cultural values.

He has two concerns: (a) how to preserve the survival of the West; (b) how to avoid a global war of civilisations. This will entail a reaffirmation of Western identity by America as a 'core state' of the Western civilisation and 'Westerners accepting their civilization as unique not universal and uniting to renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies' [p.21]. It will also entail 'world leaders accepting and cooperating to maintain the multicivilizational character of global politics' [p.21].

It is clear that Huntington ultimately subscribes to the conventional notion of 'strategic containment' that has been the hallmark of US foreign policy since the end of the Second World War. Instead of containing the 'old' threat of the Soviet Union, he is urging America's policymakers and Western allies to contain the 'new' threats of Sinic assertiveness and Islamic militancy. He clearly advises against the much more ambitious idea of the US seeking to shift non-Western societies to a Western civilisational mode because it will trigger a 'clash of civilizations'.

In retrospect, US policymakers appear to have followed Huntington's advice with respect to China, accepting its economic and political clout, and legitimising its global role through supporting China's membership of the WTO and the UN's Security Council. It seems that the Bush doctrine and its attempt to democratise the Muslim world through regime change in Iraq and through the subsequent promulgation of the 'Greater Middle East initiative' is very much at odds with Huntington's notion of maintaining the 'multicivilizational character of global politics'.³⁴

It is important to emphasise that Huntington's model of a post-Cold War world of multiple civilisations does not necessarily stem from a respect for diversity. He accepts diversity on a global scale as inevitable. This is the logic of his cultural determinism. One cannot – and should not – remake the world in the American/Western image, but one should seek to re-assert the Western identity of American society.³⁵

His cultural determinism is reflected in his view that 'in the modern world, religion is a central, *the* central, force that motivates and mobilises people in the world' [p.66, italics in original]. It is perhaps not surprising, given such a view, that Huntington is driven, as if by default, to adopt a model of the collective behaviour of Muslims that is historically determined, culturally ordained and doctrinally embedded. It yields attributes of a 'closed' view of Islam that abstracts from debates and diversity within the Islamic faith as well as the notion of shared values with the West. He draws attention to an 'Islamic Resurgence' that has swept the Muslim world over the last twenty years, but is generally pessimistic that it will yield a democratic dividend. Thus:

The general failure of liberal democracy to take hold of Muslim societies is a continuing and repeated phenomenon for an entire century beginning in the late 1800s. This failure has its source at least in part in the inhospitable nature of Islamic culture and society to Western liberal concepts. [p.114]

Huntington's pessimism about the relationship between Islam and the West stems from his belief in the inability of communities to break the shackles of history. As he puts it:

Some Westerners, including President Bill Clinton, have argued that the West does not have problems with Islam but only with violent Islamist extremists. Fourteen hundred years of history demonstrate otherwise. The relations between Islam and Christianity ... have often been stormy. Each has been the other's Other. The twentieth-century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist-Leninism is only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to continuing and deeply conflictual relation between Islam and the West. [p.209]

Drawing attention to the link between the Islamic faith and terrorism, which he calls a 'quasi-war', Huntington notes:

American leaders allege that Muslims involved in the quasi-war are a small minority, whose use of violence is rejected by the great majority of moderate Muslims. This may be true, but evidence to support it is lacking. Protests against anti-Western violence have been totally absent in Muslim countries. Muslim governments, even the bunker governments friendly to and dependent on the West, have been strikingly reticent when it comes to condemning terrorist acts against the West. [p.217]

He is emphatic that '[the] underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power'. [p.217]

A major influence on Samuel Huntington's interpretation of the relationship between Islam and the West is the work of Bernard Lewis, Professor Emeritus of Middle Eastern Studies at Princeton.³⁶ Huntington notes that Lewis highlighted the issue of 'clash of civilizations' in

an influential 1990 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, although Charles Glass [2004] points out that Lewis first referred to the 'clash of civilizations' in a 1957 seminar at Johns Hopkins University.

In his much-noted 1990 piece, Lewis dissects the 'roots of Muslim rage' and observes:

It should by now be clear that we are facing ... no less than a clash of civilizations - that perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present and the worldwide expansion of both.

As in the case of Huntington, Lewis was quick to point out that the confrontation with this 'ancient rival' could indeed provoke a clash of civilizations. He thus warns: 'It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival'.³⁷

At the core of Lewis' 'roots of Muslim rage' is a theory of terminal decline of Islamic civilisation and an imperial power that coincided with the decline of the Ottoman Empire and ultimately the dissolution of the caliphate. This looms large, claims Lewis, in the Muslim consciousness. Thus:

During its nearly thirteen centuries, the caliphate ... remained a potent symbol of Muslim unity, even identity; its disappearance ... was felt throughout the Muslim world ... Many Muslims are still painfully conscious of this void [Lewis, 2003: xviii].

Using this perspective, Lewis paints a picture of Muslim peoples trapped in the ruins of their history and unable to adapt to modernity, with some among them consumed by nihilistic rage against the West.

He asks: 'Is Islam, whether fundamentalist or other, a threat to the West?' and suggests that

there are a growing number of Muslims, both there and here, who desire nothing better than a closer and more friendly relationship with the West and the development of democratic institutions within their countries. But a significant number of Muslims – notably but not exclusively those whom we call fundamentalists – are hostile and dangerous not because we need an enemy but they do. [Lewis, 2003:24]³⁸

The 1990 piece by Lewis urged caution and restraint in dealing with the Muslim world, lest it provoke a 'clash of civilizations'. This view was steeped in the doctrine of strategic containment that still held sway in official circles in the US. After 9/11, he shed such inhibitions. Peter Waldman [2004] offers a flattering account of the so-called Lewis doctrine as Bernard Lewis resurrects his enduring thesis of the historic 'roots of Muslim rage' and conveys it to the key planners who eventually carve out a strategy for invading Iraq. Lewis wastes no time in media interviews to embellish his long-held beliefs.

The question people are asking is why they hate us. That's the wrong question,

Lewis opined after the Sept. 11 attacks.

In a sense, they've been hating us for centuries, and it's very natural that they should. You have this millennial rivalry between two world religions, and now, from their point of view, the wrong one seems to be winning.

More generally ... you can't be rich, strong, successful and loved, particularly by those who are not rich, not strong, and not successful. So the hatred is something almost axiomatic. The question which we should be asking is why do they neither fear nor respect us?

Waldman notes that after 9/11 Lewis advocated the need to confront an implacable and irrational foe to instil 'fear and respect' through a combination of American military might and benevolence.

Waldman appears to suggest that the Lewis doctrine was shaped under the trauma of 9/11, but Robert Blecher [2003:12] makes the important point that the genesis of the so-called Lewis doctrine can be found in 1998 when Lewis urged, along with others, the then President Bill Clinton to use military intervention to topple Saddam Hussein. In any case, it is clear that Bernard Lewis and his conceptual framework about Islam has had a considerable impact on key members of the Bush administration. Paul Wolfowitz is on record as claiming that 'Bernard has taught how to understand the complex and important history of the Middle East, and use it to guide us where we will go next to build a better world for generations to come.' Dick Cheney referred to Lewis as 'one of the great students' of the Muslim world.³⁹ Indeed, some observers, such as Michael Hirsh [2004], claim that key members of the Bush administration have 'misread' the Muslim world because of the undue influence of the Lewis doctrine.

Islam as a Threat to the West: Alternative Interpretations⁴⁰

Both Huntington and Lewis realise that alternative interpretations of the relationship between Islam and the West can be – and have been – readily constructed. Consider, for example, the relationship between Islamic values and Western liberalism. While Huntington [1996:114-115] argues that the failure of democracy to take root in the Muslim world is due to the incompatibility between Islamic values and the ethos of Western liberal democracy, he concedes that other non-cultural factors may be more important as explanatory variables.

During the Cold War era, the US and its Western allies often embraced 'friendly tyrants' in the Muslim world and were rather wary of 'unfriendly democracies' because their primary concern was to find allies in the Western world that could act as a bulwark against the global spread of Communism. Thus, the US-led West was reluctant to encourage democracy in Muslim societies. At the same time, the 'friendly tyrants' suppressed the development of a secular opposition and even courted Islamists to offset such opposition. Thus, it is possible to argue, through a careful reading of Huntington's work, that the rise of radical Islamists can at least partly be attributed to the nature of Cold War politics.⁴¹

Lewis recognises alternative paradigms to the one he propounds, but disparages their credibility. He rejects the view that the so-called Muslim rage could in any way be connected to '... all the dreadful things that we of the West have done to them' [p.23]. While he readily accepts that Islam needs an enemy, he denies that the West needs '... an enemy to replace the defunct Soviet Union' [p.23]. Despite such denials, other scholars have assembled evidence to show that a culture of fear pervades the West in modern times where the Muslims are once again the enemy in the 'new crusades' [Qureshi and Sells, 2003].

Mahmud Mamdani [2004] offers perhaps the most forthright argument, rejecting the notion that Islamic fundamentalism or even Islam is a threat to the West because of immutable religious beliefs and deeply entrenched historical circumstances. The 'bad Muslim/good Muslim' dichotomy that pervades the dominant paradigm on the relationship between Islam and the West is, in his view, fundamentally flawed. In Mamdani's framework, contextual variables play the primary role in understanding the rise of radical Islamism. It is a very modern and secular phenomenon and is the product of Cold War politics.⁴² He suggests that the 'bad' Muslims of today were, in fact, the 'good' Muslims of yesterday. In order to appreciate this point, it is necessary to trace the evolution of Cold war politics and how it eventually deviated from the traditional doctrine of strategic containment of global Communism.

After its defeat in the Vietnam war, the US administration resorted to 'proxy wars' to contain the threat of global communism. This entailed the active, but indirect, support by the CIA of violent new right wing groups that were essentially terrorist and proto-terrorist organisations. These proxy wars erupted across a wide front encompassing Indo-China, Latin America, Africa and Afghanistan with the aim of rolling back nationalist movements fuelled by Marxist-Leninist principles. Although these proxy wars can be traced to the Nixon administration under the guidance of Henry Kissinger, it became an ideology under the Reagan administration that was committed to delivering the fatal blow to the 'evil empire' of the Soviet Union. It is in such an environment that a pan-Islamic front was created to repel the Soviet invasion. Members of this front were even hailed by Reagan as the 'moral equivalent' of America's founding fathers.

For the first time, religiously inspired Islamists had a clearly defined enemy and became part of a global network of uprooted and stateless individuals. The defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan emboldened this group of *Mujahedeens* – the predecessor of *Al-*

Qaeda and its affiliates – in their capacity to defeat superpowers. Thus was born the creed of global Jihadism that fused religious fervour and the use of political violence into a murderous mix.

In trying to demonstrate that Islamic fundamentalism is essentially a secular movement, Mamdani [2003] compares and contrasts it with Christian fundamentalism. The latter entails the entry of religious clergy into secular politics best exemplified by such 'televangelists' as Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell in the United States. In the case of Islamic fundamentalism, it was a movement to 'Islamise' politics led by intellectuals who were not part of the clergy. Iconic figures include Maududi, a Pakistani journalist, Syed Qutb, an 'Egyptian literary and educational scholar' and Ali Shariati, an Iranian 'humanist intellectual'.⁴³ Both the state and the clergy in Muslim societies then had to respond to this movement.

As Hugh Eakin [2004] notes, Mamdani's thesis will inevitably engender controversy, given that it deliberately seeks to overturn the dominant paradigm on Islamic fundamentalism. Its detractors predictably belong to the Huntington/Lewis camp. Its supporters, who see the thesis that Islam is an existential threat to the West as a self-serving paradigm, feel vindicated. Others, such as John Esposito, seek a middle ground in which both religious identity and international politics interact to create the current global discourse on Islam.

One could argue that Esposito and like-minded colleagues – such as John Voll and Charles Kurzman – primarily object to the 'clash of civilizations' hypothesis and the caricature of Muslims in the work of Lewis because it offers a rather partial and misleading picture of developments in the Muslim world. The Islamic Resurgence under way over the last two decades may be seen as the basis of both a 'quiet revolution' and a 'reformation'. The Resurgence is led by educated middle-class Muslims rather than obscurantist mullahs. Such a group is interested in political and social change through 'ballots rather than bullets'. One should take account of 'Islam's democratic essence' and the emergence of 'Islamic democrats'. The contemporary intellectual debates among Muslim scholars resonate with the modernist movement between 1840 and 1940. Such debates, both then and now, show remarkable similarities with the values of Western liberalism pertaining to religious pluralism, equality and human rights.⁴⁴

There is a growing conviction by other scholars [Keppel, 2003; Takeyh and Gosdev, 2004] that radical Islamism was, by the mid-1990s, a spent political force. Indeed, Sadik Al-Azm [2004] makes the provocative claim that 9/11, far from signifying the resurgence of militant Islam, represents its 'last gasp'.

The thesis of the rise and decline of militant Islam draws attention to its failure to engender mass support. Islamic states from Pakistan to Sudan turned out to be bitter disappointments. Pro-western and secular regimes in much of the Middle East and North Africa remained firmly in power as they defeated the militants with the backing of US power by the late 1990s. The failure of the Islamic Revolution in Iran was a particularly hard blow to the Islamists who looked forward to it as a model worthy of emulation. Wahhabist Saudi Arabia is now under a great deal of global scrutiny for seeking to export a puritanical brand of Islam to the rest of the Muslim world.⁴⁵

There is a fascinating attempt by some scholars to chart the ramifications of the political decline of Islamic fundamentalism in the Muslim heartland. In the case of Gerges [1999, 2001], the impending demise of the militants in the 1990s led an extremist fringe – typified by Bin Laden and associates – to shift attention from the 'internal enemy' of incumbent Arab regimes to the US as the 'external enemy' that should be the target of attack.⁴⁶ Dealing a blow to the US would, according to the logic that was employed by this group, in turn deal a mortal blow to the US-backed regimes in the Middle East. Gerges notes that the US found itself entangled in the internal struggle for ascendancy in the Muslim world by backing extant regimes as the 'accommodationists' within the US foreign policy community were superseded in the late 1990s by the 'confrontationists' who argued the case for confronting – rather than merely containing – Islamic fundamentalism.

Gerges concedes that, while militant Islam witnessed a political demise, the Islamic resurgence left its mark in the Muslim world. Its spontaneous and widespread nature means that it cannot be reversed but needs to be understood. There is a conscious effort by Muslim intellectuals and others to seek a more peaceful and democratic process of change in the Muslim heartland. Ziauddin Sardar [2004b] claims that in the post-9/11 era, countries ranging from Morocco to Indonesia may be in the throes of an early 'reformation'.⁴⁷ These developments, if sustained, suggest a complex evolution in the Muslim world that cannot be captured in the 'closed' view of Islam embedded in the work of Huntington and Lewis. Indeed, one can make the argument that the Huntington/Lewis framework revived the waning political fortunes of radical Islam by granting it global publicity. It seems to have been a case of choosing the wrong enemy at the wrong time.

In sum, the resolution of the troubled relationship between Islam and the US-led West depends a lot on unlearning the Huntington/Lewis framework and acquiring a deeper understanding of the diversity of Islam and its appeal as both a political and societal force. As the respected Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) [2005: i] puts it, to regard all movements within 'Islamic activism' as radical is

fundamentally misconceived. Islamic activism has a number of very different streams, only a few of them violent and only a small minority justifying a confrontational response. The West needs a discriminating strategy that takes account of the diversity of outlooks within political Islamism; that accepts that even the most modernist of Islamists are deeply opposed to current U.S. policies and committed to renegotiating their relations with the West.⁴⁸

Islam as a Threat to the West: Sustaining a Dominant Paradigm by Subverting the Marketplace of Ideas⁴⁹

If one accepts Islamophobia as the adoption of a 'closed' view of Islam, one needs to ask why it emerges and persists even in well functioning democracies where there is, in principle, free flow of information in a well-functioning marketplace of ideas. Given that there are alternative theories of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the post-Cold War era and an established literature that espouses the 'open' view of Islam, why is a particular version given primacy today by the US and its 'coalition of the willing' over others? A plausible explanation is that a powerful lobby can sustain the dominance of a paradigm by subverting the marketplace of ideas. Such a lobby reflects the premise that the principal function of scholars is to produce policy-relevant knowledge that responds to the imperatives of the state, especially in the area of foreign policy and national security.

One can think of the marketplace of ideas as a collection of stakeholders – universities, think tanks, media, business, government, civil society associations, and the broader community – who interact to create and use ideas. There is a specialist segment of this market that entails substantial and often irreversible investments of intellectual capital by individuals, usually residing within the academic community, who produce ideas through their acts of research and scholarship.

In an ideal world, the creation of ideas is likely to proceed in a neutral and rational fashion through empirical investigations and verifications of competing theories and paradigms undertaken within a framework of transparent and accountable peer review. Robust ideas that have withstood rigorous scrutiny dominate those that cannot meet this test. Such a process of professional certification in turn shapes the collective views of a well-informed citizenry who engage in public discourse on a variety of issues.

Unfortunately, the marketplace of ideas in the real world may be afflicted by a number of imperfections. These imperfections in turn may lead to 'market failure', that is, ideas that inform policy choices do not necessarily emerge through a process of intellectual competition. In analysing the marketplace of ideas, one should take account of the problem of scientific uncertainty, the difficulty of insulating dispassionate scholarship from ideological proclivities and the information asymmetries that afflict both the willingness and ability of ordinary citizens to form an informed opinion. All of these features that characterise the marketplace of ideas create a fertile environment for the exercise of 'market power' by an agenda-driven group of public intellectuals and opinion makers with close ties to the policy and political elite. Such exercise of 'market power' can in turn be used to temper the emergence of rival ideas to contest a dominant paradigm.

Consider first the implications that flow from the incidence of scientific uncertainty.⁵⁰ Although the notion that paradigms rise and decline within a neutral, rational framework is attractive, in practice expert opinion is often divided over various issues because of the inherent difficulty of 'proving' beyond any reasonable doubt that theory X is superior to theory Y. While some extreme positions may become untenable, genuine disagreements may persist over issues such as the effects of global warming, the socio-economic consequences of globalisation, the role of religious beliefs in fuelling terrorism and so forth. Furthermore, there is no unambiguous way in which controversies can be resolved in the presence of scientific uncertainty. Politicians, however, have to reach policy decisions on a wide spectrum of issues even in the presence of scientific uncertainty. They are also

beholden to specific political agendas. This yields the incentive – and at times the compulsion – to create an artificial consensus even in a democracy that simultaneously nurtures the belief in the diversity of views. This is a process that Herman and Chomsky [1998] famously describe as a process of ‘manufacturing consent’.

In understanding the particular nature of the marketplace of ideas, it is necessary to take account of the multiple identities that shape the intellectual disposition of the scholarly community as producers of knowledge. The view that scholars are engaged in a dispassionate and relentless quest for knowledge strains reality. They are actors in a political and social space and have to juggle multiple identities that shape their personal views and values independently of their professional experiences. They are citizens; they are members of a community; they may have particular political and ideological proclivities.⁵¹

Research also requires external funding and patronage that may create conflicts of interest between the personal convictions of the scholar and the agenda of the patrons. While concerns about professional reputation is a powerful motive for insulating personal beliefs and the agenda of external actors from influencing the integrity of the scholarly community, it is not always possible to maintain such independence. This leads to a situation where members of the scholarly community may cross the line from being independent thinkers to partisan activists seeking to influence public opinion. They can strike strategic alliances with powerful elites in the media and in the political community who in turn require intellectual legitimacy for their agendas. This creates a utilitarian relationship between the scholar and the state. The former produces policy-relevant knowledge that serves the political imperatives of the latter.⁵² A typical strategy, that is now quite common in the US, is to set up think tanks and preferential access to influential outlets in the media with the aim of circumventing the peer review process that typifies traditional research.⁵³ This works to the detriment of a well-functioning marketplace of ideas as individual scholars are then pitted against an influential lobby seeking to mould civic opinion in favour of its agenda.

Informational asymmetries between producers and consumers of knowledge also need to be taken into account in analysing the marketplace of ideas. Given the complexities of many social and political issues, it is usually not possible for ordinary citizens to be armed with sufficient information to make considered judgements on a variety of issues. They may rely on media reports and expert commentary offered through the media to enunciate an opinion or reinforce their views on particular issues. They may rely on mere ‘sound bites’ and interactions with their peers to either form a view on a political or social issue or to reinforce their prior convictions. Such an environment of collective ignorance is particularly conducive for motivated and agenda-setting public intellectuals and opinion makers to either co-opt or delegitimise producers of rival ideas. The effect, in essence, is to construct collusive arrangements that aim to sustain a dominant paradigm. Thus, the marketplace of ideas is unable to work in a contestable fashion.

Of course, forces of competition in the marketplace of ideas, as in other markets, cannot be forestalled forever. Rival ideas are always jostling to overturn the prevalence of existing ones. The power structure may shift, causing the political patrons to lose their capacity to support a process of manufacturing consent. Global events may change in such a way that it thoroughly discredits a dominant view.⁵⁴ The spread of modernisation itself has been antithetical to the prevalence of orthodoxies. Examples of such developments are not hard to find. Thus, widely held views about slavery, colonisation, gender discrimination, racial discrimination and anti-Semitism have, at various points, been supported and sanctioned by intellectuals. Yet, their ethical and intellectual legitimacy have crumbled under the influence of modernity and the unpredictable onslaught of global events, such as the American civil war, the two World wars and the horrors of the Holocaust.

To what extent will external developments today impinge on the market place of ideas? Will the war in Iraq and its aftermath change the nature of the global debate on the role of Islam in contemporary international relations, especially in the US? There are grounds for optimism as well as reasons for being circumspect.

To the obvious discomfort of the Bush administration and its loyal band of public intellectuals and opinion-makers, the war in Iraq has turned out to be a highly hazardous enterprise. The initial rationale for regime change in Iraq pertaining to Saddam Hussein's alleged links to *Al-Qaeda* and the possession of weapons of mass destruction can no longer be sustained. It is, by now, public knowledge that virtually no credible evidence exists to support the thesis that the invasion of Iraq was undertaken as a central element in a US-led 'war on terror' on *Al-Qaeda* and its affiliates. The final rationale that the invasion of Iraq was an essential first step to democratise the Middle East and that it will be widely embraced by the local populace as a 'war of liberation' is also becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, given continued violence and instability in that country. In such circumstances, the ability of a dominant paradigm to be sustained becomes progressively difficult. Such developments can create a window of opportunity for producers of rival ideas to shift the global discourse on Islam in a progressive direction.

On the other hand, defenders of orthodoxy who claim that 'Islamofascism' is the biggest threat to an American-led global order that has emerged in the Cold War era are unlikely to cede their ideological terrain to their critics easily. It is always possible for highly motivated political actors to defend their views even in the presence of seemingly overwhelming empirical evidence that undercuts the affirmation of such views. Consider how the Bush administration has reacted to the latest finding confirming the absence of WMDs in Iraq prior to its invasion. An ex-post rationale has been constructed in which lack of possession of WMDs does not 'prove' that Saddam Hussein did not intend to acquire them if he had been given an opportunity to do so. Unfortunately, the latest report on WMDs in Iraq encourages such a position by explicitly stating that Saddam Hussein harboured ambitions to reconstitute WMDs. Opinion polls in the US suggest that 59 per cent of Americans endorse the Bush administration's position that Saddam Hussein intended to produce WMDs.⁵⁵ This example illustrates how political elites can sustain a plausible, but empirically invalid, position that resonates with the broader community.

One could argue that while the Bush victory in the November elections will sustain the 'market power' of the Islamophobic lobby in Washington and its close allies, it does not necessarily follow that the electoral demise of the Bush administration would have fatally impaired its legacy. It is important to remember that the Islamophobic constituency is not the exclusive preserve of right-wing public intellectuals and their strategic partners in the media and the political realm. They include, as was noted, liberal voices and some influential Muslim commentators. Indeed, William Tabb [2003] has proposed the thesis of 'the two wings of the eagle' in which there is an enduring elite consensus in the US that cuts across political boundaries. Mainstream Republicans and Democrats share the paradigm of the benevolence of American power and the sheer malevolence of its enemies. Of course, millions of Americans oppose such an elite consensus, but it is also true that '[t]ens of millions of Americans ... accept unquestioningly the bright, positive image of America and its unique goodness'.⁵⁶ Surveys apparently consistently show Americans to be among the most patriotic and religious nations in the world.⁵⁷ Such a combination of patriotism and religiosity makes it difficult for dissidents to effectively challenge the durability of elite consensus in the US.

One should also not underestimate the ability of those who support a 'closed' view of Islam to use aggressive tactics to intimidate their ideological adversaries. Such tactics go beyond the use of think tanks and media commentary to create a counterweight to the ideas about Islam emanating from traditional research. They entail, what Joel Beinin [2004a] has called a strategy of 'new American McCarthyism' as it parallels the fear and intimidation that the late Senator McCarthy used to suppress dissenting views about the threat of global Communism during the early years of the Cold War.

Beinin's point is that there is a systematic campaign in the US 'by the American Right and the Bush administration to delegitimize critical thought about the Middle East, Islam and the Arab world' [Beinin, 2004a :101].⁵⁸ The 'new' McCarthyism starts from the premise that the external threat of radical Islamism is matched by the internal threat of those 'who

blame America first'. This group of 'un-American' voices includes American scholars of the Middle East – and of Islam in general. They failed, so the argument goes, to alert US policymakers to the existential threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism and, even worse, ended up being an apologist for it. The 'new' McCarthyism sees itself as defenders of civilisation against pre-modern, fanatical forces. Advocates for this view are strong supporters of the American invasion of Iraq and adopt, given their links with the right-wing, pro-Israeli lobby, an uncompromising attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this worldview, both Israel and the US are engaged in a 'war on terror' against a common foe. Israel deserves unconditional support as a close US ally in its fight against Palestinian terrorism.

Activists in this campaign to marginalise dissenting voices within the American scholarly community on the Middle East include Daniel Pipes, Michael Kramer and Stanley Kurtz. Pipes, who runs the *Middle East Forum*, is responsible for setting up *Campus Watch* to monitor the activities of the Professoriate engaged in the study of the Middle East in the United States.⁵⁹ In effect, this is a strategy to intimidate scholars – such as John Esposito, John Voll and Richard Bulliet – who question the 'closed' view of Islam.

A salient target of attack appears to be the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), the peak body in the United States bringing together scholars, students and others interested in the Middle East. Kramer, whose intellectual patron is Bernard Lewis, led an intemperate attack on MESA. Stanley Kurtz, fellow of the Hoover Institution and a contributing Editor of the conservative *National Review*, highlighted the Kramer critique of the 'failure of Middle East Studies in America'. The gist of such a critique 'is that MESA has been taken over by a crowd of postcolonial studies/postmodernist extremists inspired by the late Edward Said's book *Orientalism*. These un-American radicals, they claim, have imposed an intellectual and political orthodoxy on the study of Islam and the Middle East [Beinin, 2000a,b]. Given this logic, such a lobby argues that a 'new' paradigm on Middle Eastern Studies (and hence on Islam) needs to be constructed that would entail, as Kramer puts it, the basic premise that the 'US plays an essentially beneficent role in the world'.⁶⁰

The right-wing critique of the perceived ideological orthodoxy of the academic community in the US as it pertains to the Middle East resonates with the sentiments expressed by politically well-connected bodies that are concerned about an alleged culture of 'blaming America first'. These include organisations such as the American Victory over Terrorism (AVOT), a subsidiary of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). The latter – that has been advocating regime change in Iraq since 1998 – came to public attention because it included in its list of membership key members of the current Bush administration. AVOT is run by William Bennet, a former Secretary of State for Education. Also noteworthy is the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) that published in November 2001 a treatise entitled 'Defending civilization: how our universities are failing America and what can be done about it'. ACTA is chaired by the wife of Dick Cheney, the current American Vice President.

The latest phase in the 'new McCarthyism' to suppress open debate on the Middle East is the attempt by the right-wing lobby to influence funding policies of the US government that directly impinge on the study of Islam and its role in current world affairs. The aim is to promote 'ideological diversity' in the academic community by seeking to ensure, through legislative initiatives, that funding supports work that can ameliorate the alleged ideological bias inherent in the study of the Middle East and promote the notion of American benevolence. Whether this ambitious strategy will succeed remains to be seen, but the case study presented here is a good illustration of the various ways in which a powerful lobby seeks to subvert a well-functioning marketplace of ideas.

Beyond Islamophobia: Concluding Comments

The notion of Islam as a different civilisation incompatible with the Western way of life has a well-known historical lineage and goes back to Christendom's adversarial reaction to the birth of Islam. The latter was understandably seen as a rival religion and a rival power that threatened Europe. Yet, it is easy to overlook the fact that there was intermingling and productive collaboration between the two civilisations, enriching both. The 'clash of civilizations' hypothesis that Huntington, the eminent emissary of the US foreign policy establishment, propounded and the analysis of the 'roots of Muslim rage' that the influential historian Lewis proposed at the end of the Cold War highlight the historical animosities between Islam and the West while ignoring their shared heritage.⁶¹ The Huntington/Lewis paradigm interprets the collective behaviour of a faith-based community that is driven by the inexorable forces of history and immutable nature of religious beliefs. This lies at the core of an Islamophobic discourse that emerged at the end of the Cold War. The post-9/11 era has tragically reinforced the conviction among US policymakers and its close allies that Islamic fundamentalism led by 'bad' Muslims represents a fundamental threat both to the West and to 'good' Muslims who are the potential allies of the West.

Perhaps the most radical alternative to the Huntington/Lewis framework is the work of Mamdani who explains the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a secular phenomenon that grew out of Cold War politics. Certainly, there is a correlation between Islam and extremism, but the causality between the two resides in extraneous political circumstances. Even if one moves away from the contentious issue of the importance of Cold War politics in fuelling Islamic fundamentalism, other scholars of Islam contest the Huntington/Lewis model as providing a credible interpretation of the evolution of Islam in the post-Cold War era. Such a model overlooks the 'quiet revolution' that is under way in the Muslim world, fails to appreciate Islam's 'democratic essence' and the early, but promising, signs of a reformation in the post-9/11 period in countries ranging from Indonesia to Morocco. Indeed, some authors have argued that, by the mid-1990s, Islamic fundamentalism was a waning political force. This implies that it was inadvertently given a new lease of life by the global publicity about an Islamic threat engendered by the Huntington/Lewis framework.

It is thus reasonable to conclude that Islamophobia is derived from a flawed and highly contested model of human behaviour. Yet, Islamophobic sentiments in Western nations cut across a diverse constituency. Right-wing pundits, EU officials, American politicians, liberal voices, distinguished representatives of English literature and even some commentators of Muslim and Middle Eastern identity have jostled and joined, whether by design or default, to depict Muslims either as villains or as victims.

One could argue that what is Islamophobia to someone is an act of free speech to another, but a private act of expressing a prejudicial opinion entails social consequences that cannot be ignored. Islamophobic sentiments, when widely and repeatedly aired in public spaces, engender negative externalities that are borne by minorities. This is particularly the case when influential opinion makers issue Islamophobic commentary. The messenger cannot be isolated from the message.

One way of fighting Islamophobia in Western countries is for public authorities to recognise that, like racism and anti-Semitism, it is a mainstream concern and should not be regarded as the preoccupation of Muslims alone. Nobody seriously argues anymore that racist and anti-Semitic remarks are an acceptable part of public discourse in Western democracies. Unfortunately, the same privilege is not extended to Muslims as minorities in non-Muslim societies. Currently, Islamophobes operate with impunity, secure in the knowledge that they cannot be prosecuted within the existing legal framework and that their opinions are unlikely to be vilified in the court of public opinion.⁶² They are astute enough to know that

global coverage in the media of Muslims over there – whether it is Baghdad, Beslan or Bali – inevitably colours local perceptions of Muslims over here.⁶³ Of course, partisan advocates of the concept of Islamophobia can always abuse their mandate to stifle legitimate debate about Islam and its role in a secular liberal democracy. The aim of prudent public policy is to ensure that this does not happen while protecting the fine dividing line between informed commentary and outright bigotry.

Ultimately, moving beyond Islamophobia entails moving beyond the dominant paradigm embedded in the idea that Islamic fundamentalism represents an existential threat to the West. The troubled relationship between a US-led West and Islam will only fester if the former is unwilling and unable to acquire a deeper understanding of political Islam.

The presence of a powerful lobby in the United States has shown that when public intellectuals become the advocates of state policy, they can usurp the competitive process that underpins a vibrant marketplace of ideas. Individual scholars working independently in the arena of traditional research will find it difficult to dislodge orthodoxy. On the other hand, global events since 9/11 have evolved in such a way that the US finds itself in the cruel paradox of being an unrivalled power with severely impaired legitimacy in the international court of public opinion. This glaring gap between power and legitimacy can be used by a trans-national coalition of like-minded civic, political and intellectual leaders who need to chip away at the credibility of a post-Cold War framework that seeks to reinforce a self-serving global narrative on Islam. In such a coalition, critical Muslim intellectuals, civic and political leaders, both over here and there, will have to play a key role in a number of ways. They can take the lead in harnessing and consolidating the early signs of an Islamic reformation.⁶⁴ Such an act of leadership is worth a thousand words of condemnation of the murderous misdeeds of terrorism carried out in the name of Islam. At the same time, critical Muslims across the world should not refrain from highlighting the culpability of the Western powers in maintaining their silence over the complex roots of Islamic fundamentalism.

The greatest success of the purveyors of Islamophobia lies in reducing Muslims to one-dimensional entities. In the popular imagination, they are merely theocratic creatures trapped in the ruins of their history and hostage to their beliefs. Muslims have thus allowed others to rob them of their complexity and humanity. An overarching religious identity has effectively suppressed the multiple and essentially secular identities of Muslims as citizens of nation-states and members of a global community. Reversing this regressive narrative will require an affirmation of our common heritage and values that many scholars – such as Karen Armstrong, Richard Bulliet and William Dalrymple – have so eloquently argued.⁶⁵ Recognising our shared heritage, while respecting diversity, is the only sustainable way to build an inclusive, multi-faith global community. When this will happen, and whether this will happen at all, represents the central question of the 21st century.

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Notes

- ¹ This paper has benefited from comments received from John Butcher, Brendan O'Connor, Michael Wesley, Michael Heazle, Nancy Viviani, Mary Farquhar, Maureen Todhunter, Anis Chowdhury and Reza Kibria. Rosemary Murray provided expert editorial assistance. The standard disclaimer applies: the author bears sole responsibility for any remaining errors and omissions.
- ² See Werbner [2005] who draws on the Runnymede Trust [1997] to point out that an American journalist first used the term in 1991.
- ³ This distinction between 'passive' and 'active' forms of Islamophobia is important, given that the alleged lack of evidence of the latter as a common phenomenon has been used by some commentators to debunk the view that Islamophobia is significant. See Pipes [2000] and Malik [2005].
- ⁴ In an interview with *Die Welt*, Bernard Lewis claimed that Europe would become an

'Islamic' country by the end of the 21st century [Caldwell, 2004]. It caused uproar in Europe. Samuel Huntington [2003:4] issues a warning about the consequences of unabated migration to Europe: 'In Europe you have Muslim immigration. This poses serious social and cultural problems and questions of national identity which have come to the fore in European countries. It also, quite obviously, poses security problems in that so many of the terrorists have found a home in Western European countries.' The revitalized 'Committee on the Present Danger' led by a group of American politicians warns that in '... North America ... "sleeper cells" of Islamic terrorists are believed to be positioned for operations within the U.S. and Canada.' [Lieberman and Kyl, 2004]. Stephen Schwartz [2004] argues the case for investigating 'radical Islam in America'. The work of both Lewis and Huntington is central to an understanding of the nature of the global debate on Islam and its relationship to the West in the post-Cold War era. See subsequent discussion in the paper.

- ⁵ This evocative distinction is due to Mamdani [2004]. His work is discussed in this paper. A typical example of the 'bad Muslim/good Muslim' dichotomy is the special report prepared by *Time* magazine on the 'Struggle for Islam' in which moderates are pitted against extremists in its September 13, 2004 issue. Noted US economist Bradford DeLong [2004] claims that 'the Islamic world today is being held prisoner, not by Western but by Islamic captors, who are fighting to keep closed a world that a badly outnumbered few are trying to open. As long as the majority remains silent, this will be a tough war to win.' This is posted [November 27, 2002] in his weblog [http://www.j-bradford-delong.net/movable_type/archives/001169.html]. The US government believes that 'winning the Muslim mind' is best done through enhanced public diplomacy. See Kinnane [2004] for a useful discussion and the testimony to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations by noted US scholar Shibli Telhami [2004]. See also Deeb [2004] and Wright [2004].
- ⁶ This is part of the standard refrain that Muslims are not sufficiently forthcoming in condemning terrorism. See Huntington [1996:217]. The facts suggest otherwise. Charles Kurzman, Professor of Sociology at North Carolina University, has compiled statements by more than 50 prominent Muslims from different parts of the world condemning the September 11 terrorist attacks on the US. This valuable compendium is available on his website [<http://www.unc.edu/~kurzman>]. He also draws attention to similar compilations produced by others and provides useful weblinks.
- ⁷ The author conducted this search as part of preparing this paper between September and October, 2004. One must emphasize that there is a large literature on Islam. An electronic search reveals 8,378 references.
- ⁸ Anon [2004] based on an address delivered by Kofi Annan in New York on 7 December, 2007. The address was delivered to open the seminar on 'Confronting Islamophobia' at UN Headquarters in New York.
- ⁹ The countries covered are: US [32%], Britain [18%], France [29%], Germany [46%], Russia [38%]. Other surveys also reveal a sizeable minority with anti-Muslim attitudes. *Cornell News* (2004) draws attention to the results of a survey by Cornell University and observes: 'about 44 percent said ... that some curtailment of civil liberties is necessary for Muslim Americans'. An editorial in *Arab News* [2003] notes: 'a survey in Australia (indicates) that nearly half the population believes that Muslims and people from the Middle East do not belong in the country'.
- ¹⁰ As cited in Sardar [2004a: 283].
- ¹¹ Dalrymple [2004b] discusses Naipaul's long-standing hostility towards the Muslim faith.
- ¹² As cited in Manne [2002]
- ¹³ As cited in Cole [2002:1].
- ¹⁴ As cited and discussed in Al-Arian [2004:82]. The Quran - Islam's holy book - is also implicated as the inspiration behind modern terrorism. Robert Spencer, a self-appointed vigilante of Islamic extremism who describes himself as the Director of 'Jihad Watch', approvingly cites the observations of a former CIA official that 'Islamic terrorism is based on Islam as revealed through the [Q]uran' [Spencer, 2004:17].

- ¹⁵ See Adam Shatz [2003] for a fascinating portrait of Ajami.
- ¹⁶ As cited in Sardar and Davies [2002:22].
- ¹⁷ Manji runs a website entitled 'Muslim Refusenik' [www.muslim-refusenik.com]
- ¹⁸ The aforementioned Fay Weldon's prejudicial pronouncements were unleashed in the heat of that debate. The Rushdie affair is discussed in Sardar [2004a: chapter 13]. Rushdie's [2003] own version of his experiences can be found in his collection of essays.
- ¹⁹ Sardar [2004a: 279] highlights the use of the term 'Mahound' used in the Middle Ages to describe Mohammad, while [Cole, 2002: 3] highlights the case of Dante and Martin Luther.
- ²⁰ Fletcher [2003] examines the relationship between Christianity and Islam from the time of Mohammad to the Reformation, while Wheatcroft [2003] offers a magisterial review of the conflict between Islam and Christianity until contemporary times. Sardar [2003:2] draws attention to the work of Fletcher and Wheatcroft to highlight the case of '...Islamic Spain, where Christians, Muslims and Jews lived in peaceful harmony for almost 800 years'. Some scholars also claim that the cooperation between Islam and Christendom in the Middle Ages extended to the intellectual realm. Thus, George Saliba [2002] argues that the medieval Islamic astronomers played a 'fundamental role' in the scientific revolution that took place in Europe during the Renaissance.
- ²¹ Joe Lieberman, Democratic Senator from Connecticut, and Jon Kyl, Republican Senator from Arizona, announced themselves as 'honorary co-chairmen of 'The Committee on the Present Danger' [CPD]. The Chairman is James Woolsey. The CPD '...' was first formed at the dawn of the Cold War in 1950 to educate Americans about the growing threat of Soviet communism ... In this ... incarnation, we intend to focus the committee on the present danger our generation faces: international terrorism from Islamic extremists and the outlaw states that either harbor or support them... [T]oday too many people are insufficiently aware of our enemy's evil worldwide designs, which include waging jihad against all Americans and re-establishing a totalitarian religious empire in the Middle East. The past struggle against communism was, in some ways, different from the current war against Islamist terrorism. But America's freedom and security, which each has aimed to undermine, are exactly the same. The national and international solidarity needed to prevail over both enemies is also the same. In fact, the world war against Islamic terrorism is the test of our time'. [Lieberman and Kyl, 2004:17]. Echoes of this sentiment can be found in the early 1990s when Mort Zuckerman [1993] warned the US administration about the rise of 'religious Stalinists'. In its website [www.fightterror.org], the CPD expands on the theme of the 'nature of the global threat'. Pat Buchanan [2004] castigates the CPD as the 'Committee on the Present Confusion'. See Lobe [2004] and Regan [2004] for insightful accounts on the background and membership of the CPD.
- ²² As noted, this process of constructing the 'new' enemy began in the early 1990s. Leon Hader [1993:27-29] writes: 'Like the Red Menace of the Cold War era, the Green Peril - green being the colour of Islam - is described as a cancer spreading around the globe, undermining the legitimacy of Western values and threatening the national security of the United States'.
- ²³ The term is associated with the controversial British-born American journalist Christopher Hitchens who, until recently, was widely regarded as one of the luminaries of the Anglo-American left. See Johan Hari [2004] who provides an insightful interview with Hitchens.
- ²⁴ Glaeser [2004] discusses the cases of racism, anti-semitism and 'Islamic anti-Americanism'. See Islam [2005] for an interpretation of anti-Americanism in the Muslim world that is contrary to Glaeser's arguments.
- ²⁵ International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights [IHF] [2005: 65; 142]. Semi [2004:51] discusses the case of the Northern League. She writes: 'Muslims have become...the favourite target of the League's press campaign and barely a day passes when they are not stigmatised as microbes and *parasites*, terms already well known in anti-Semitic rhetoric' (italics in original).

- ²⁶ This is also consistent with the transformation of 'old' racism based on colour and ethnicity to the 'new' racism based on culture and values.
- ²⁷ One survey reveals that 83 per cent of Germans associate the word 'Islam' with 'terrorism' [International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHT) 2005: 76]. See also *Die Welt* [March 7, 2005] that draws attention to 'tough times for Muslims in Europe'.
- ²⁸ There are two notorious cases. One is Will Cummins who wrote a series of inflammatory articles against Muslims in the UK's *Daily Telegraph*. It turns out that he adopted a pseudonym and was a senior officer of the British Council. He was suspended and sacked. Bunting [2004] highlights the case of Cummins as part of the argument that Islamophobia is ensconced in the British establishment. See also Branigan [2004]. The other conspicuous example is Robert Kilroy-Silk whose article in a British newspaper (*Sunday Express*) has been described by Dalrymple [2004:16] as a 'blatant incitement to racial hatred'. Apart from being a well-known commentator, Kilroy-Silk was a popular BBC TV show host until he was also suspended and sacked by the BBC.
- ²⁹ Pipes [2000] rejects the view that Muslims in America at least have been discriminated against by either public authorities or mainstream society. This assessment was written in the pre 9/11 period and may be less valid today.
- ³⁰ As cited in Sullivan [2004]. Note, however, that Malik [2005], drawing on the British experience disputes the contention that harassment of Muslims is widespread. He focuses on 'active' forms of Islamophobia but overlooks its less tractable 'passive' strain. Malik's position is at variance with a report by the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHT) [2005] that covers evidence of anti-Muslim prejudice across 11 EU member countries, including the UK. The report paints a much gloomier picture than Malik does.
- ³¹ Fekete [2004] discusses these issues at some length by drawing on the European experience. Even the wearing of the traditional Muslim dress – the Hijab and its more austere variation – has now become a major public issue in Europe. See the insightful report in the *New York Times* by Ian Fisher [2004].
- ³² Two articles from the 1993 issues of *Foreign Affairs* are also noteworthy as they encapsulate the debate at the time between those who highlighted the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and those who regarded such a threat as scare mongering. See Judith Miller [1993] who draws attention to the 'rise of radical Islam' and contrast this with Leon Hader [1993] who asks: 'What green peril?'
- ³³ Huntington [1996: preface]. Huntington's work readily attracts controversy. His admirers regard him as a sage. Thus, Lowry [2004:1] observes '[when] Huntington writes, people listen — or they should.' Robert Kaplan [2001:1] offers the following eulogy: 'Huntington has been ridiculed and vilified, but in the decades ahead his view of the world will be the way it really looks'. Those who have 'ridiculed' him include the late Edward Said [2002] who has dismissed Huntington's work as the 'clash of ignorance'. To Tariq Ali [2003:302], Huntington is a 'state-intellectual' who, like others, emerged from the 'bowels of the US state machine'. Benjamin Barber [2001: xv] regards Huntington as a 'hyperbolic commentator'.
- ³⁴ See Achcar [2004] on the 'Greater Middle East Plan'. Huntington clarifies his views in a recent interview with a *New York Times* correspondent where he describes himself as an 'old fashioned Democrat' who was 'dead-set against us going into Iraq' [Solomon, 2004].
- ³⁵ This emphasis on re-affirming the Western identity of American society has recently become the subject of heated debate. Huntington's [2004a] latest work, warning of the dangers that America's 'Anglo-Protestant' culture faces from a 'Hispanic challenge' is, like his preceding work, once again at the centre of controversy. He has faced an avalanche of criticism. See, for example, Wolfe [2004] who chastises him for whipping up 'nativist hysteria' and Menand [2004], who is also worried about Huntington's nativist preoccupation. Others [Fuentes, 2004] have called his work a clear example of racism where Mexicans are seen as a 'brown menace', while Jon Dunlop [2004] laments that in a post-9/11 landscape bigotry has become

respectable. Even conservatives offered a gentle rebuke. See Brooks [2004] and *The Economist* [2004]. Clearly stung by an adverse reaction to his work – especially Wolfe – Huntington [2004b] offered a rare reply to his critics. To the true believers, Huntington is merely being prescient. See Lowry [2004].

- ³⁶ As in the case of Huntington, Lewis has his band of admirers but faces an army of detractors. Martin Kramer [1999] describes him ‘... as the most influential postwar historian of Islam and the Middle East’. Emily Yoffe [2001] deifies Lewis as not just an historian but as someone who ‘... is one-stop shopping for baffled Westerners needing a coherent worldview to explain our current situation’. *Wall Street Journal’s* Tunku Varadarajan [2003] suggests that ‘Of all the scholars of Islam, Mr. Lewis is the one whom Muslims would do best to heed.’ The late Edward Said is the most famous critic of the work of Lewis. In his 1978 study on *Orientalism*, Lewis emerges as a prime exemplar of an Orientalist who, as a Western scholar of Islam, is merely using it as a vehicle to justify Western cultural superiority and power. Ian Buruma [2004] strives to offer a balanced account of Lewis, tracing the evolution of his ideas from a scholar of Islam to a well meaning, but ultimately, misguided ‘political don’. Chris Patten [2004] offers a similar sentiment. Thompson and Steinberg [2001] provide a much less flattering account of Lewis’ past and political life. Others who have offered insightful, but highly critical, interpretations of Lewis’ recent work include Shivani [2002] and Alam [2003]. Fellow historians of Lewis, such as Juan Cole, are concerned by the polemical nature of his recent work. A clearly exasperated Cole [2003] asks: ‘What kind of history writing is this?’
- ³⁷ As cited in Huntington [1996:213].
- ³⁸ Note the ‘bad Muslim/good Muslim’ dichotomy.
- ³⁹ Waldman [2004] highlights these remarks by Wolfowitz and Cheney.
- ⁴⁰ Tony Lang [2003] offers an insightful review of alternative perspectives on Islam and its relationship to an American-led West based on the work of US-based scholars of Islam and the Middle East.
- ⁴¹ Huntington himself is clearly worried that a project of supporting democracy in the Muslim world will simply allow the ‘fundamentalists’ to assume power. As he puts it: ‘... the fact of the matter is –at least in the Muslim world where elections have been held – it is the fundamentalist groups that come out ahead ...They represent to a very large extent popular opinion. If we organize elections anytime soon in Iraq I would be willing to bet it will be the more extreme Shiite and Sunni fundamentalists who will come out ahead. So while we are all in favor of democracy, we might want to restrain ourselves in persuading some countries to become democratic.’ [Huntington, 2003:3]
- ⁴² Mamdani’s thesis is part of a growing literature that seeks to interpret Islamic fundamentalism as a secular and modern movement that cannot be isolated from the arena of international politics. Representative examples of work in this genre include Coll [2004], Khalidi [2004], Kinzer [2003], Pintak [2003], Saikal [2003], Telhami [2002] and the collection of essays in Azza Karam [2004]. See Malik [2004] for an insightful review of this literature. See also Ibrahim [2004] who draws attention to the work of Mohammad Ayoob, a US-based scholar of political Islam. Of course, the various scholars cited here vary in terms of their arguments, but international politics as a key variable permeates such work.
- ⁴³ The work of some of these iconic figures and their impact on Islamic fundamentalism is subject to a variety of interpretations. For example, Peter Berman [2003] regards Qutb as a ‘philosopher of terror’, but Khan [2003] portrays Qutb in a much more sympathetic light, highlighting his passion for social justice.
- ⁴⁴ Excellent examples of scholarship in this genre include Esposito [1994, 2003] who depicts the Islamic Resurgence as a ‘quiet revolution’, Voll and Esposito [1994] who highlight the notion of Islam’s ‘democratic essence’ and Reese [2004] who draws attention to the case of ‘Islamic democrats’. See also the important collection of essays in Esposito and Burgat [2003] that reflect a nuanced model of political and social developments in the Muslim world. Kurzman [1998,1999, 2002] highlights the work of Muslim intellectuals in the Muslim heartland – largely drawn from outside the clergy – who are seen as the heirs of the ‘modernist movement’ in Islam (1840-1940) and whose work clearly resonates with concerns about religious

- pluralism that a Western liberal would find very much in line with contemporary concerns about human rights and democracy. Browsers and Kurzman [2003] even suggest that an Islamic reformation is under way.
- ⁴⁵ See Stephen Schwartz [2003] who is one of the most virulent critics of Wahhabism, but he overstates his case by making it the overarching culprit in contemporary international relations. Why, one might legitimately ask, if Wahhabism is behind global terrorism has the US administration been so reticent in including it as the key target in its 'war on terror'? Bas [2004] represents a much more complex account, claiming that the founder of Wahhabism did not advocate the use of violence to attain political ends. He focused instead on the edification of the Muslim community through education and debate.
- ⁴⁶ Mamdani [2005:149] draws attention to the ideas of Ayman Al-Zawahiri, widely regarded as bin Laden's 'right hand man', who calls for shifting 'the jihad's target from the "nearby enemy" to the "faraway enemy"'.
- ⁴⁷ See also Sabir [2004] who documents the significant changes to the family code in Morocco that seeks to ensure gender equality for the first time in Moroccan history.
- ⁴⁸ See also Fuller [2003] who highlights the diversity of political Islam and speculates on its future.
- ⁴⁹ This section bears an intellectual affinity with the important contribution by Kaufman [2004]. He explores the 'failure of the market place of ideas' as it pertains to the misrepresentation of the evidence by the Bush administration on Saddam Hussein's regime. Such misrepresentation of the evidence served as the prelude to the invasion of Iraq.
- ⁵⁰ Heazle [2004] discusses the implications of scientific uncertainty for policymaking.
- ⁵¹ Edwards [2000:34-5] stresses the importance of ideology in shaping 'grand theories' and their application to the real world. As she puts it: 'Grand theories take the small step into political ideology when efforts to explain the world are hijacked by vested interests ... ideology is most powerful when the vested interest is emotional ... then the commitment to an ideology becomes deeply personal. The depth of conviction can lead people to wilfully ignore facts that challenge their beliefs and to dismiss alternative explanations of the world'.
- ⁵² As Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz [2002, Preface] puts it: 'Academics involved in making policy recommendations become politicized and start to bend the evidence to fit the ideas of those in charge'. Drawing on the US experience, Anatol Lieven [2004:16] observes: 'As Henry Kissinger pointed out almost thirty years ago, too many people in the academic world are either defending previous records when in government or aiming to be in the next administration'. This leads to the following dismal conclusion: 'I used to think that it is wonderful that the American state can recruit from people in academia but I have come to find it deeply corrupting'.
- ⁵³ Lockman [2004] highlights the ascendancy of the think-tanks in the USA, especially in the areas of foreign policy and national security. To Paul Krugman [2003: 3] such an ascendancy is part of an attempt by the 'radical right wing movement' in the US to usurp political power.
- ⁵⁴ In the parlance of economics, these would be regarded as 'external shocks' that disturb a prevailing equilibrium in the marketplace of ideas and engender forces that propel a 'new' equilibrium to emerge.
- ⁵⁵ The latest report confirming the absence of WMDs in Iraq is known as the Duelfer report that nevertheless claimed that Saddam Hussein had the 'intention' to pursue a program of reconstituting WMDs. The opinion poll is based on a CNN survey. For details, see Eccleston [2004].
- ⁵⁶ Singer [2004:7].
- ⁵⁷ Menand [2004]. Huntington [1996,2004a] has consistently highlighted the religiosity of Americans.
- ⁵⁸ The rest of the discussion in this section draws on Beinin [2004a, 2004b], Zogby [2004], Lockman [2004] and Dobbs [2004]. It is important to emphasise that one should not conflate the right-wing movement discussed here with the American conservative movement in general. There are many distinguished conservative critics of the Bush administration.
- ⁵⁹ See Goldenberg [2004] on Pipes and his hostility to Muslims.

- ⁶⁰ As cited in Lockman [2004:7].
- ⁶¹ Such an omission is particularly unfortunate in the case of Lewis who has drawn attention to Islam's contribution to the West and its shared heritage with both Judaism and Christianity [Lewis, 2003:4-5].
- ⁶² In 2004, some civic leaders from the British Muslim community expected that the British government would grant incitement to religious hatred the same legal status as incitement to racial hatred [Shamash, 2004]. It now appears that the government has dropped that legislative effort, at least temporarily, because of the impending election scheduled for May 5, 2005. See *Observer* ['Blair drops crime bills as election race hots up', April 3, 2005]
- ⁶³ Elizabeth Poole [2000, 2002] uses a British case study to discuss the tendentious global coverage of Muslims and the way it influences local perceptions. See also Christopher Allen [2001]. Edward Said's [1997] 'Covering Islam' is a classic study of Western media representations of Muslims and the Middle East.
- ⁶⁴ Tariq Ramadan [2004] places the onus on 'Western Muslims' to play a leadership role.
- ⁶⁵ See Armstrong [1994] who provides a magisterial history of the world's three great religions demonstrating their commonalities and differences. Peters [2004] is another classic study of the three Abrahamic faiths. Dalrymple [2002] highlights the syncretic tradition in Islam and demonstrates the commonalities between the practices and rituals of Islam and Eastern Christianity, while Bulliet [2003] makes the case for an 'Islamo-Christian civilization'. He predicts that in about two decades the Muslim world will have active democracies led by a new generation of leaders who are currently at the periphery. See also Rauf [2004] who advocates a new vision for Islam and the West based on a shared understanding of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this framework, all stakeholders – politicians, civil society, members of the religious communities and business – will have to play a key role.

