

Conclusion

As the 10th anniversary of 9/11 approaches, the Islamophobia network will be working overtime. The anniversary could be manipulated to ratchet up the non-existent threat of Sharia and warn of apocalyptic dangers stemming from Muslims living in America.

We want this report to help create a resilient and secure America by providing the public with fact-based knowledge, rather than shrill, fear-based attacks. Violent extremism exists in America. But it does not lie solely within Muslim American communities. Across the globe, there are terrorists killing in the name of Islam, but a new study from the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point Military Academy shows that al Qaeda attacks kill eight times more Muslims than non-Muslims.¹ Extremist attacks need to be vigorously investigated and effectively thwarted, wherever they are found.²

In the past few years we have seen high-profile acts of violence perpetrated by American Muslims, such as the senseless murder of 13 soldiers at Fort Hood by Major Nidal Malik Hasan. We have seen violent attacks prevented, such as the failed New York City Times Square bombing by Faisal Shahzad.³

Such attacks need to be put in context. Since 9/11, authorities have identified 161 Muslim American terrorist suspects and perpetrators, according to a 2011 study by University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill sociologist Charles Kurzman. That's a lot; yet the study, "Muslim-American Terrorism Since 9/11: An Accounting," concludes that "out of the thousands of acts of violence that occur in the United States each year, an efficient system of government prosecution and media coverage brings Muslim-American terrorism suspects to national attention, creating the impression—perhaps unintentionally—that Muslim-American terrorism is more prevalent than it really is."⁴

These cases enable the Islamophobia network to peddle their myths and misconceptions about Islam. Their rhetoric and actions are deeply unfortunate because they threaten to isolate and alienate a growing portion of the American popula-

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tion. In 2010, there were an estimated 2.6 million American Muslims. That number is expected to more than double over the next 20 years, to 6.2 million.⁵

President George W. Bush, of course, drew a distinct line between radical Islamist groups abroad who seek to kill Americans and the overwhelming majority of peaceful Muslims at home and abroad.⁶ He also stood up to the Islamophobia network with his outreach to American Muslims during his presidency.⁷

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie is doing the same. He recently came under intense attack for his appointment of Sohail Mohammed, who defended Muslims who were wrongly detained after 9/11, to be a superior court judge. The conservative governor summed up the criticism in one word: ignorance. An Investigative Project on Terrorism report “Gov. Christie’s Strange Relationship with Radical Islam” declared that Gov. Christie’s appointment of Mohammed “shows the governor’s tin ear for radical Islam.” Pressed by reporters on the reason for attacks Christie said, “Ignorance is behind the criticism of Sohail Mohammed. They are criticizing him as a Muslim American.”⁸ Despite the efforts of this Robert Spencer⁹, Frank Gaffney¹⁰, and Andrew McCarthy¹¹ and their grassroots partners, Christie prevailed. On July 26, 2011, Mohammed was sworn in.¹²

Then there is businessman Herman Cain—once a favorite on the Islamophobia network for his outspoken views about Sharia law when he first launched his campaign for the Republican Party nomination for president. The former CEO of Godfather’s Pizza once was vocal in his anti-Muslim sentiments, stating in March, for example, that:

*There is this creeping attempt, there is an attempt to gradually ease Sharia law and the Muslim faith into our government. It does not belong in our government. [...] I said the role of Islam in America is for those that believe in Islam to practice it and leave us alone. Just like Christianity. We have a First Amendment. And I get upset when the Muslims in this country, some of them, try to force their Sharia law onto the rest of us.*¹³

Since then, Cain has walked back from such extremism—and in the process irked the Islamophobia network to no end. Most recently, he retracted and publicly apologized for a number of these views.¹⁴ Cain in July went to the ADAMS Center in Northern Virginia, where he broke bread with Imam Mohamed Magid, the executive director of the center, and other Muslims. After the meeting, he said he

was “humble and contrite for any statements I have made that might have caused offense to American Muslims and their friends.”

Furthermore, he said he was “truly sorry” for creating the impression that he was against the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion. “We discovered we have much more in common in our values and virtues,” he said about his meeting. “In my own life as a black youth growing up in the segregated South, I understand their frustration with stereotypes. Those in attendance, like most American Muslims, are peaceful Muslims and patriotic Americans whose good will is often drowned out by the reprehensible actions of jihadists.”¹⁵

Cain’s experience is instructive. Once he detached himself from the web of the Islamophobia network, he encountered American Muslims who shattered many of the false impressions and stereotypes he held. Cain also regained his place supporting American values of religious liberty, freedom, and equal justice under the law.

Of course, the Islamophobia network was utterly contemptuous of Cain’s efforts to reach out to moderate Muslims. At the Western Conservative Conference in Denver this summer, Frank Gaffney alleged that Cain had actually met with members of the “Muslim Brotherhood apparatus in Washington, D.C.” Gaffney added, “If, in fact, he’s now changed his position in ways that are being reported, that’s even more troubling than if he was spending time with Muslim Brothers.”¹⁶

Such unchecked bullying by the misinformation experts should not be tolerated. Our nation needs more responsible conservatives to stand side by side with progressives to safeguard our national security and uphold America’s core values of religious freedom and respect for ethnic diversity. A required first step is to expose the influence of the organizations, individuals, and groups who make up the Islamophobia network in America.

Endnotes

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