paradigm shift in how the US interacts with the world—but he draws on stereotypes to argue for the dismantling of the US Empire and for global social justice. His analysis replicates the analysis of rightists and neoliberals as well, contending that Muslims have a different conception of and relationship to time, society, history and politics. They hold firmly to the defense of Islam “against infidels” and are prohibited from capitulating to rule in their homelands by Christian and Jews. Therefore, war with the Muslim world is a futile enterprise because Muslims have an open sense of time that allows them to battle “infidels” endlessly. In other words, the United States would do best to end its wars with Muslims because inside every Muslim is a fundamentalist who will tirelessly fight the domination of non-Muslims.

From Left to Right, religious to atheist, Islamophobia pervades all levels of American life. Bush and his supporters are easily cast as Islamophobic boogeymen who think every Muslim is an “asshole” and a “terrorist.” On the other hand, Democrats and liberals just as readily deploy stereotypes that invoke Arab and Muslim irrationality and hostility to modernity, to justify their own support for US economic and political hegemony. We will see that Islamophobia is manifest in multiple sectors of American society, exuding from the media, political think tanks, pseudo-“expert” pundits, “native informers,” rogue academics, lobbies and activist organizations. Muslims not only feel the daily barrage of hate-speech and hate-acts through insulting and deriding analyses and images that flood television, print media and even billboards on highways. They also are under surveillance by the government, profiled in public places like streets, mosques, universities, and have their movements tracked, their associations, finances and charitable giving monitored. Additionally, they are spied on, coerced and prosecuted by the United States government. Every discussion in US civil society and media about war, Iraq, and Afghanistan manifests Islamophobia. Every discussion about the war on terror is structured by Islamophobia. Every discussion on “repairing relations with the Muslim World” is underwritten by Islamophobic mindsets. Every discussion of Palestine is infused with Islamophobic precepts. Every discussion of Iran, its nuclear potential and its regionalism, is an expression of Islamophobia. Every discussion of oil and energy sovereignty is bounded by a strategic and willful hate and fear of Muslims.

Islamophobia as an Ideological Formation of US Empire

All of this said, Islamophobia is not a political ideology in itself nor is it an isolated dogma just as Islam itself is not a political ideology. Islamophobia does not have a platform or even a political vision. Islamophobia is something more substantive, abstract, sustained, ingrained and prevalent. This book contends that Islamophobia is an ideological formation. This does not mean that it is the purview of any particular political party. Rather, an ideological formation is created by a culture that deploys particular tropes, analyses and beliefs, as facts upon which governmental policies and social practices are framed. This book argues that Islamophobia, in its current form, is a new ideological formation that has taken full expression since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Islamophobia does not originate in one particular administration, thinker, philosopher, activist, media outlet, special interest group, think tank, or even economic...
sector or industry though indeed, these actors are collectively responsible for the virulent dissemination of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab stereotypes and beliefs, circulated in order to naturalize and justify US global, economic and political hegemony. The Bush administration unabashedly wore its disdain for Muslims and Arabs on its sleeve from the first day of his administration. The subsequent chapters will show that even the Clinton and Obama administrations are rife with Islamophobic paradigms and acts that couple with a similarly imperial American outlook. Indeed, we have witnessed the unprecedented mainstreaming of Islamophobia since 9/11. An extremist flake such as Robert Spencer, for example, has authored two vitriolic, racist screeds on Islam that became New York Times bestsellers while Bruce Bawer’s incendiary and hackneyed The Enemy Within was nominated by the prestigious National Book Critics Circle for the best book of criticism.  

While scholars, activists and community groups as well as projects such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting have taken on the ideological hacks and pseudo-intellectuals in the mainstream, this book adopts a different tack. Rather than understanding Islamophobia as a series of actions and beliefs that target Muslims and arise from a generic misunderstanding of who Muslims are and what Islam is, it reveals that Islamophobia is an ideological phenomenon which exists to promote political and economic goals, both domestically and abroad. The effects of Islamophobia can be a series of acts institutionalized by the United States government ranging from war to programmatic torture to extrajudicial kidnappings, incarcerations and executions to surveillance and entrapment. The effects of Islamophobia are experienced in the daily lives of Muslims who encounter harassment, discrimination and hate speech in the street, anti-Muslim rants on nationally syndicated television and radio shows, and hate acts such as mosque bombings. These effects, however, will only be understood as scattered albeit tangentially related acts if they are not seen to be located in a complete paradigm or discourse of Islamophobia that permeates American culture and society.

For these effects to work in unison with a rhetoric that justifies them, Islamophobia must act concurrently on two levels: the level of thought, speech and perception; then, the material level of policies, violence and action. Therefore, this book is structured by a dual methodology that excavates how Islamophobia operates as a powerful ideological formation that facilitates American Empire. On the one hand, the book anchors its analysis on works by Bernard Lewis and Fareed Zakaria, on “native informants” such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Irfad Manji, and on speeches by presidents Bush and Obama as well as their cabinet members and underlings whose analyses and political philosophies provide the discursive bedrock that naturalizes and justifies Islamophobia as state, foreign, security, economic and energy policy, domestically and abroad.

To streamline the massive, multifaceted ideological edifice of Islamophobia, two similar but competing paradigms of Islamophobia by Bernard Lewis and Fareed Zakaria will be mapped out. As bears repeating, these two are certainly not progenitors of the Islamophobic narratives deployed post 9/11, but arguably their work condenses Islamophobic narratives that have previously circulated and accumulated over the preceding decade. Lewis and Zakaria distilled many Islamophobic tenets into two separate but intersecting Islamophobic discourses that explicitly intend to legitimize the deployment of US political power in the Middle East and the control of its own domestic populations. The talking points within these two versions of Islamophobia are continually repeated throughout the mainstream media, in policy circles, and by native informants (persons of Muslim or Arab descent who are purportedly best placed to lay bare an inside view or critique of Arab-Islamic culture), but more importantly, echo in the speeches of Bush and Obama.

On the other hand, this book will show how these Islamophobic discourses have very real effects. In other words, the words of Islamophobia are the raw materials for the sticks and stones that break Muslim bones. Through engineering, managing, mediating and directing Euro-American hatred and fear of Muslims and Arabs inside the US and globally, new levels of domestic control and surveillance could be achieved. Domestic policies that previously would have been considered unconstitutional, even un-American, could be justified as necessary matters of security and self-preservation. Torture (from water-boarding to extreme isolation of American defendants in the United States), racial profiling, kidnapping and extraordinary renditions, extrajudicial assassinations, freezing habeas corpus, and total war against and occupation of sovereign countries are the effects of the deployment of Islamophobic foils, stereotypes, paradigms and analyses.

This book will examine the violent and not-so-subtle effects of Islamophobia, particularly how attacks on Muslims and Arabs in the US are multipronged. Government organizations and agencies work with the legislature, the Executive and even the judiciary in targeting, profiling and disenfranchising Muslim and Arab Americans of their Constitutional rights. Political interest groups, lobby and political action committees work with local, state and federal authorities to isolate, intimidate and harass Muslim communities, student organizations, activists, and scholars. Likewise, the media efficiently disseminates overtly anti-Muslim propaganda that demonizes Muslims and Arabs and amplifies mainstream hostility to Islam and its adherents. We will also see how against the backdrop of a sheen of Muslim-hating white noise, extremist acts are committed against Muslims, Arabs and minorities who are mistaken for them.

Indeed, the book is not comprehensive. Unfortunately, the list of anti-Arab and Islamophobic hate acts, speech, activists, legislators and incidents are far too numerous to review. If this book were to name the litany of Islamophobic acts committed by the government, private citizens, public organizations and Hollywood and the media, then it would be a tome-like catalogue of hate. While diligently tracking Arab-hating and Islamophobia is important, this book hopes to crack open the complexities of the ideological formation itself, to understand how it is constructed and organized, and critically observe how it is manifested in American society. For this reason, Islamophobia is defined and examined in terms of discursive archetypes taken in the form of two master-narratives as
provided by Lewis and Zakaria. Rather than discuss every Islamophobic rogue pseudo-scholar, political hack, charlatan native informant, opportunist pundit or activist journalist, the works of a handful of Islamophobes serves to define the scaffolding upon which Islamophobic acts and policies are grafted and American foreign and domestic policies find justification.

Clinton-Bush-Obama: Islamophobia Continuity

Much has been written on how the Bush presidency used 9/11 to transform the nature of civil liberties, the presidency, and politics in the United States. Bush’s “War on Terror” and subsequently Obama’s “War on al-Qaeda” have facilitated outward repression of environmentalists, anti-war activists, anarchists and others who have engaged in dissent as well as continued the degeneration of American civil liberties. However, this book strongly asserts that Islamophobia precedes 9/11. It also asserts that it has outlived the Bush administration. Continuity exists between presidents, reaching back to George H.W. Bush. Operatives who have mastered the mainstreaming and institutionalization of Islamophobia into the minds of Americans, if not the legal system itself, have appeared and reappeared in different positions and places throughout the decades since the fall of the Soviet Union. The continuity is strong between the Obama and Bush administration, and the seepage of policies originated against Arabs and Muslims into use against other social sectors is ongoing, as the example of Kris Kobach’s work on population tracking demonstrates. The former Bush Administration attorney helped Attorney General John Ashcroft create the National Security Entry-Exit Registration, a tracking program that requires that all citizens from mostly Arab countries be fingerprinted and monitored during their stay in the United States. Kobach’s attack on civil liberties of non-American citizens made its debut in the Ashcroft Department of Justice. Only later, does it reemerge in the recent pogroms against Latinos in the United States, where he has helped draft a Kansas law that permits law enforcement to stop anyone suspected as being undocumented.

Private hate acts, policies of profiling, surveillance, entrapment and prosecuting Muslim Americans and immigrants by the use of agent-provocateurs and spurious, vague and broad charges of “material support for terrorism” continue regardless of the change in presidency. Policies of extraordinary rendition and extrajudicial assassination have increased. Prosecution of Muslims who were illegally kidnapped and detained by the United States military, including a 15-year-old defendant who normatively should have been given restorative treatment as a child soldier, continue. Rather than prosecuting Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Alberto Gonzalez as war criminals, in view of their clear violation of established international conventions against torture and the treatment of prisoners of war, the Obama Department of Justice’s Attorney General, Eric Holder, has sought to continue the suppression of the civil liberties of Muslims in the United States. His office has challenged the grievances of those like Maher Arar and Khaled al-Mastri, who were kidnapped by the US and tortured by Syrian

and US authorities respectively. These are just a few of many similar undertakings that strongly indicate to us that Islamophobia is not an episodic phenomenon. To the contrary, it is a sustained campaign that finds its origins with the rise of the unipolar world.

Therefore, issues addressed in this book extend beyond the heady days of the Bush regime, which brazenly violated Muslim and Arab American rights, targeted Muslim and Arab American communities, activists and scholars, and used militarism as the principal tool in its Islamophobic foreign policy, incorporating many recent examples of Islamophobic speech and hate acts to prove its points. In fact, many disturbing acts of violence against Muslims and Arabs in the United States during GW’s first term have been omitted in favor of including recent incidents, speeches, policies and prosecutions. In addition, the book provides as many mainstream and accessible sources that are readily available to a general, non-specialist readership as possible. That is, the method of this book relies on the academic rigor that defines good scholarship, diligently footnoting and citing all incidents, sources and texts that it references. However, as the basis of its scholarly method, I have intentionally relied on articles, documents and books that are obtainable by a non-specialist. This includes relying almost exclusively on mainstream Angophone publishing and media outlets. In other words, I have not relied on the specialized skill set that distinguishes scholars’ academic methods from other more mainstream, albeit not pedestrian, research methods of policymakers and journalists.

The complexity of Islamophobia is challenging. The unrelenting developments of the past several years have made it difficult, in fact, to complete this book due to a surfeit of materials. When does one stop noting and analyzing significant developments when they unfold every day? The dual approach of this book serves to give its insights longevity and relevance beyond when the incidents, prosecutions and gurus cited are themselves long ascribed to history. In the end, Islamophobia is a political and cultural construct. Therefore, this book has no intention to defend Islam. Islam needs no defense. It is as complex, elegant, sophisticated, complicated and contradictory as, for example, are Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. It is heterogeneous with several heterodox and orthodox sects, schools and communities. This book is not an apologia for Islam nor is it a defense of the religion or a defense of Muslims. The very idea that Islam needs to be defended, I would argue, is Islamophobic, as it completely erases the intricacy of the religion and reduces the cultural, regional, and religious variations to a monolithic religion with a monolithic believer, i.e., The Muslim.

Vagaries of Islamophobia: Europe and the United States

The fact that we today are still discussing “what is Islam,” who are Muslims, “why do they hate us,” and so forth is shocking especially as scholarship of eminent Orientalists such as Jacques Berque, Maxime Rodinson and Albert Hourani demolished the idea of Islam as a singular religion without any internal variations between peoples, times, and geographies. Too many good studies of