



A New Political Vision For Muslim Americans:

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By Abdullah bin Hamid Ali

“And, he turned away saying: “O my people! I have delivered you my Lord’s message and have offered you counsel. You, however, do not love those who offer counsel.”

Quran Al-A’raf: 79

“There is no good in people who do not offer counsel. And, there is no good in people who do not love those who offer counsel.”

Umar b. al-Khattab

Bernie’s out. Now, what’s left for Muslim Americans in the realm of politics? What are our interests and goals? How do we achieve them? With whom shall we ally? The story of Muslim involvement in American politics since its early years is complicated, to say the least. A significant number of Muslim mosque-goers pre-9/11 called America’s legitimacy into question. In their eyes, Muslims were not allowed to identify with America; Muslimness and Americanness was an irreconcilable dichotomy since America was a “godless” nation ruled by “man-made laws” and was complicit in the colonization and suppression of Muslim countries. For these reasons, running for office, voting, or serving in the military—not to mention paying taxes—directly and indirectly undermined “God’s rule” and stood in the way of the “Islamic awakening.”

Those old enough to remember those days would also recall how Muslim support for political participation shifted slightly during the runup to the election of President George W. Bush in 2000. Though a small slice of the total Muslim population, the Muslim electorate was split between support for the republican and democrat candidates, with most supporting the election of Bush. Among the reasons given for the Republican candidate's favor was the fact that Bush took the initiative to meet with local and national representatives of the Muslim community and had promised to address domestic and foreign concerns. One particular domestic concern was the disproportionate use of secret evidence by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service to deport Muslims during the Clinton administration.[1] Bush was also favored as the candidate who would take a harder stance against Israel regarding Palestine. At the same time, former Vice President Al Gore and his Jewish running mate Joe Lieberman were suspected of being more biased in Israel's favor.[2]

Bush won. After approximately three quarters of his first year in office, the country and world were rocked by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent announcement of the war on terror. All Muslims were blamed for acts committed by a maniacal minority and have not recovered ever since. A seismic shift occurred in Muslim attitudes towards US citizenship, especially after realizing the value of the freedoms they enjoyed, which were absent in their home countries. Muslims quickly went from antagonizing America as the “Great Satan,” “Enemy of Islam,” and “...at war with Islam” to wrapping themselves in the American flag and proclaiming openly and proudly that “I am an AMERICAN-Muslim.” The “Muslim” part in their newly embraced hyphenated identities was practically marginalized.

2016 saw another shift in Muslim political understanding. After decades of being demonized by the American media, Hollywood, and both political parties, Muslims found comfort in the sudden “embrace” of democrats. As if out of nowhere, Muslims were thrown into the forefront of national politics, some prominent Muslims even featured at the Democratic National Convention. The left abandoned its previous demands for Muslims to consistently condemn terrorist acts and explain why allegedly only Muslims justified violent actions in the name of their religion.

Looking at the state of national and world politics today, one would scarcely believe there was a time before the election of Donald J. Trump that Muslims were being constantly badgered by members of “both” parties and painted as a fifth column in the mainstream media. Many Muslims themselves have even forgiven and forgotten about this dark time, placing great trust in the sincerity of their so-called “allies” on the left.

In 2016, like so many, I was “Bernie or Bust.” So, once the DNC and its pro-Clinton chairman Debbie Wasserman Shultz rigged the process in her favor, I refused to cast my vote for either candidate Clinton or candidate Trump. (Full disclosure: I’ve only voted once in my entire life, which was 2008 for Senator Barack Obama).[3] Many said not voting was a vote for Trump. But, in my mind, I wondered why a non-vote couldn’t be a vote for Hillary? I wasn’t pleased with either candidate, but I still assumed that Hillary would win. As I told many friends and others I respect, I was willing to risk a Trump presidency to shake up the system. In my mind, the neoliberal establishment was corrupt—as it continues to be—and establishment politicians were primarily concerned with serving big business and other powerful lobbies. I wanted “real” change like the change promised by candidate Obama, which he never delivered.

Upon Obama’s victory, Dr. Khalid Blankinship stated to me that though he was hopeful he suspected the real objective of the American state through the Obama presidency was simply to shore up its image “by placing a lamb’s head on a wolf’s body.” Corroborating Dr. Khalid’s suspicions, early in his presidency, it wasn’t new talent that Obama brought into the White House. He simply reassembled much of Clinton’s old cabinet. He rewarded the very people on Wall Street, mostly responsible for the worst economic recession the country had endured since the Great Depression. Main Street was left out to dry. Despite all, Muslims loved Obama, as did black America and much of white America. He convinced us that America’s role in the Middle East would differ from that of his predecessors. The truth, however, turned out to be much starker.

Currently—and especially after Bernie’s defeat by the establishment and subsequent capitulation, Muslims working under the umbrella of the progressive left, much like their benefactors, have only one goal = “Defeat Trump!” Hatred for Trump has renewed trust in federal authorities except for when Trump sends them to Portland to shut down protests just as Obama’s election restored confidence in America’s intentions in the Middle East. Anti-Trumpism has also vindicated warmonger neocons like George W. Bush, Colin Powell, John Bolton, and James Mattis. It no longer matters how many people were killed due to the decisions and actions of these men. These days the degree of one’s moral depravity matters naught because the assumption is that whatever you do, nothing can make you as bad as Trump.

While several Muslims had roles in Obama’s cabinet, mosques were regularly monitored by the feds, and Muslim youth were targeted for entrapment. The murders of both Imam Luqman Abdullah[4] and Usaamah Rahim[5] happened at the hands of Obama’s FBI. While Muslims have passionately debated and condemned fellow Muslims involved in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) efforts, Muslims under Obama were disproportionately targeted. At the same time, no real evidence existed, proving that “radical Islam” was the greatest threat to American democracy, security, and the Constitution. In other words, Muslims gave the Obama administration carte blanche and gleefully attended his Ramadan White House iftars. That was all even though Obama expanded the war on terror, renewed the Patriot Act, did not close Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp as promised, condoned extraordinary renditions, fueled the carnage of the Arab Spring. He conducted multiple targeted drone strikes that took innocent lives, including American citizens, resulting in thousands of Muslims’ deaths. All of this is to say that Muslim participation in politics has been an utter failure up until this present moment.

Of course, I have little reason to anticipate that my words will alter the political priorities and calculus of Muslim national organizations, and most others are concerned with the outcomes of presidential elections. However, I hope that people of reason will interpret my sincere counsel as an attempt to provide moral clarity about decisions that will affect our lives in significant ways. And, though my focus is mainly on national elections, my desire is not to prolong the error of limiting our attention to the national outcomes. Far more can be achieved locally, in many cases, than nationally. Similarly, I do not wish to give the impression that our community is monolithic or that our approach to politics throughout the country should be uniform. There is far too much racial, cultural, and class diversity to demand such conformity. Every distinct faction among us has every right to approach matters following their local needs and interests. I caution that those needs and interests be defined in accordance with Qur'anic standards, moral assumptions, and the appropriate prioritization of those needs and interests.

As I expect many ad hominem dismissals due to challenging the Muslim political status quo, I am sure that readers who are less steeped in partisan fervor will be able to judge my arguments on their merits. Whether or not one decides to vote for Biden, Trump, a third party, a write-in candidate, or chooses not to vote at all, our political decisions should always be based on informed consent. During the election process, our voting choices should not be based on hatred for nor fear of one candidate or another.

The Role of Self-Mastery in Making Wise Choices

Islam's greatness has always been measured by the strength of its spiritual teachings and spiritual exemplars. This strength is often best shown through the capacity to forgive an offense when one has the power to punish. The spiritually oriented act magnanimously and out of concern for the common good rather than vengeance and bloodlust. This is exactly why an indelible mark has been left by the brave deeds of people like the Prophet Joseph, Prophet Muhammad, Salah al-din al-Ayyubi, and Omar Mukhtar. Islam's radical monotheism, spiritual meritocracy, and the doctrine of racial equality have, similarly, garnered the praise of many people, including Mahatma Gandhi^[6] and Dr. Howard Thurman.^[7] This is because human greatness is not measured by how similar our response is to that of other people but by how much it is not.

Absolute free will does not exist. All people's decisions are influenced by factors like environment, culture, education, morality, appetites, emotions, and thoughts. Only God has authentic freewill since nothing either obstructs or dictates His decisions. While the influence of some of these factors may be overcome, none can successfully break free of appetites, emotions, and thoughts. These are inborn characteristics of which no human can rid him/herself regardless of setting, condition, or position. However, we are expected to exert effort to lessen their influence on our decisions, the political being one of the most important of those decisions.

According to Lord Acton, "Power corrupts. And, absolute power corrupts absolutely." It should be unsurprising to find the first listed among seven who will be given shade in God's shade on Judgment Day, "The Just Leader" (Bukhari #1423).^[8] The "Just Leader" is also among three people whose prayers will not be rejected (Tirmidhi #3598).^[9] The Qur'an demands justice "even if against yourselves, your parents, and relatives" (Q 4:135). It also commands to "...not allow the hatred of a people induce you to be unjust" (Q 5:8). In other words, fair treatment is a virtue whose perfection can only be fulfilled when we afford it both to friends and foes. This can be called the Muslim version of "love thy enemy." Trump has just as much right to fair treatment as Biden or Obama. To suggest anything else would be to challenge God's wisdom and risk eternal damnation. The most memorable people in history are not those who succumbed to their anger but those who suppressed it.

All of this is to say that unless leaders of national organizations, thinktanks, mosques, schools, and Muslim politicians master our emotions and appetites, we disqualify ourselves from the burdensome role of leadership and forfeit the possibility of the reward awaiting us in the Hereafter. We also strip ourselves of divine favor, which is the guarantee of answered prayers as promised by the Messenger of Allah (blessing and peace upon him). Put plainly, Muslim leaders must prioritize the overall well-being of the national and international community, not merely focus on one or two particulars that may not even score high on the list of communal priorities.

This is the mandate of “just” leadership. Anything else is demagoguery and a Faustian bargain serving selfish aims. Our political priorities can be determined neither by how we feel nor by seeking to appease the crowds. Wise leadership requires the courage to run upstream when so many are pressuring us to ride the wave of popular sentiment. When conscience properly informed by sound knowledge and wisdom is abandoned to appease the crowds, we perform a great disservice to our community. Unless our politics operate in this way, we will risk losing the capacity to realize physical and religious security. Our political interests can only be achieved when they are realistic. And, those given charge to guide us to realize those interests must neither be selfish nor a slave to their passions and emotions.

Keeping Score

We often hear about choosing “the lesser of two evils” concerning the question of aligning with progressives or conservatives and voting for either Trump or Biden. Clearly, for Muslims following the marching orders of progressives, the greater evils are Trump and the conservatives.

Conservatives, especially many evangelical Christians^[10] and some Jews who have contributed enormous sums to the Islamophobia industry, have been the most hostile to Muslim inclusion, especially since 9/11. During the years immediately after 9/11, members of these groups sponsored anti-Shariah legislation and exerted effort to undermine Muslim security. They pushed to have Islam declared an “ideology” rather than a “religion,” a move intended to ensure that Muslims obtained no constitutional rights worthy of respect in the religious realm.

Even Donald J. Trump, in his 2016 Republican National Convention acceptance speech, took aim at Muslims, promising the LGBT community that he would protect them from a “foreign ideology.”^[11] In other words, Trump and many others understood the uncompromising stance of the Islamic teachings on the immorality of sodomy and other violations of gender norms,^[12] like cross-dressing,^[13] etc. Conservative Christians share such views with Muslims. However, many of them willingly sacrificed their moral teachings to score points against Muslims and to rid the country of this “foreign invasion” and “intrusion” into “Judeo-Christian civilization.”

Today, many conservatives continue to ignore Islam’s clear contributions to Western civilization, which even America’s founding institutions acknowledged. Why else would the US Supreme Court in 1935 honor the Prophet Muhammad among the greatest lawgivers of the world in its chamber?^[14] Why would the Library of Congress honor Islam among the civilizations that contributed most to western civilization?^[15] Islam is listed in a mural against a wall of mosaic patterns as having contributed to the West, of all things, the most fundamental science of physics. The current denials, in addition to multiple incidents of violence against Muslims committed by people associated with the right, make it difficult for most Muslims to believe in the possibility of a genuine Muslim-conservative alliance.

Conservative pundits, similarly, ignore Islam’s contributions and Muslim’s role in strengthening America, claiming that concepts like “secularism,” “individualism,” and “free-market capitalism” are the exclusive proceed of Judeo-Christian philosophical influence. They claim that, besides their respective religions, these three ideas are what made the West great. What this view ignores, however, is the fact that Western civilization did not win supremacy due to a simple “conversation” between the Old or New Worlds. Many lives had to be lost, enslaved, and physically dominated in the process.

And, even if we were to submit to the assertion that western individualism makes for a better world, one must acknowledge that the reason that white Protestants, Catholics, and Jews made it to the top had far less to do with everyone acting as individuals. Instead, it was due to them operating as politically organized "groups." Nothing significant is achieved in the realm of politics as individuals. That can only happen when like-minded people bring their resources together, strategize, and execute a well thought out plan. In other words, "Judeo-Christian" imperialism, domination, suppression, enslavement, genocide, exclusion, and other hard power tactics also played a significant role in the ascendancy of the so-called "Judeo-Christian West."

There is no causal link between Islam and the rates of divorce, suicide, homicide, incarceration, poverty, vagrancy, child abuse, drug abuse, and other violent crimes in America. Islam bears no responsibility for the unequal enforcement and misapplication of the Constitution, its legislative cancellation of rights by laws like the Patriot Act, or the spread of hate among the sundry classes of intersectional "oppressed" peoples now setting America ablaze. This same so-called "Judeo-Christian" civilization so many conservatives boast of is the real target of this newly embraced anti-capitalist atheistic hedonistic nihilistic movement. Instead, all the discontent among feminists, gays, transgenders, racial minorities, and the poor is primarily directed against the world's economic elite and the "Judeo-Christian" civilizational supremacists. They respond to the historical violations committed against them by elite white Christians and others, not by Muslims.

If freedom, capitalism, and individualism naturally profuse from Biblical teachings, then domination, corruption, and racial collectivism must do as well. In other words, it wasn't Muslims who embraced the "Curse of Ham" to justify the exclusive enslavement of blacks. Nor did Muslims sacralize the "free market" and "deregulation" that led to the concentration of wealth and power to influence politics into corporatists' hands. Judeo-Christian "capitalism" could not prevent Wall Street gamblers from crashing our economy multiple times while expanding their wealth manifold through deceptive and manipulative practices. Likewise, Muslims played no role in the numerous legislative acts, banning and limiting immigration from non-Anglophone countries throughout America's history to ensure "whites" maintained a numerical majority. Be it the "doctrine of discovery," the "white man's burden," the "treaty of Tordesillas" wherein the pope split the largely undiscovered world between the Spanish and Portuguese, conservatives will need to embrace both the successes and failures of their alleged and exclusive "Judeo-Christian civilization." Or, they will need to acknowledge that a lot more than Jewish and Christian influence went into making America the great magnet of international immigration and land of the great promise it is.

To an extent, Judeo-Christian desire to further disenfranchise Muslims from American and Western history is understandable. The matter of Palestine remains a thorn in the side of Zionist Jews, while Islam still competes with Christianity for the hearts of the world's potential converts. Whether white or black, we find the same demonization of Islam and Muslims among most Christian conservatives. And, as we find more common ground and common cause with conservatives in today's environment, quite often, both Jewish and Christian pundits seem incapable of having a reasoned debate when the topics of Palestine and Islam are raised.

On the other hand, Muslims are threatened by progressives but in a different and more sinister fashion. Progressives abhor Islam's distinct ethics, which clash with progressive mores. Progressives are happy to support "Muslims." However, one never hears progressives expressing their admiration for Islam, perhaps other than compliments about the headscarves Muslim women wear. Like many conservatives, progressives remain ambivalent about Islam and the true intentions of committed Muslims. This is because they continue to believe Islam to be a threat to notions of "progress." For that reason, "good Muslims" are those who vocally advocate for and promote gay, lesbian, and transgender norms and ideas. If one is not an open advocate, reserving public criticism for LGBT mores is deemed tolerable enough to win progressive support. The left's only compromise with Muslims is to publicly avoid negative statements about Islam, which wins over most Muslims, perhaps, since the ultimate goal of many Muslims is simply to "feel" safe and accepted.

That is to say that “allyship” with the left puts demands on Muslims that are not reciprocated by progressives or simply that the compromise is on a point which does not substantially guarantee Muslims a truly dignified role in the life and future of the country. Muslims must both mute Islamically informed criticism of the lifestyles and practices of the LGBT members of society while simultaneously advocating for the normalization of LGBT mores. That’s not being an ally. That’s being on a leash. Progressives only accept Muslims who they can control and follow their marching orders. And, Muslims willfully comply with their wishes. The evidence is that Muslims join progressives in support of practically every policy or practice promoted and endorsed by the left, be it prejudgment of the accused, late-term abortion, illegal immigration, rioting, looting, destruction of property, defunding the police, anti-gun legislation, the normalization of transgenderism and other ideas from queer theory, anti-capitalism, anti-whiteness and so-called “anti-racism” efforts, the desecration of historical monuments, and the use of tactics that undermine public order and promote anarchy. Perhaps, the single moral issue that distinguishes Muslims in the political realm with any Islamic import is the support for justice for Palestinians. All else is a list of policies originating from the progressive leadership. And, Muslims are expected to embrace them uncritically without any dissent or reservation fully.

Post 9/11, the small but highly vocal group of conservatives pushing for anti-Shariah legislation^[16] and openly Islamophobic activities warned of the spread of “Islamofascism” and undermining American security. With Muslim politicians and their supporters from the Muslim populace uncritically adopting the partisan politics of the left, it would seem that the fears of conservatives are now being realized. Most Muslim politicians and popular activists clearly support rioting, dismantling the police, and other forms of anarchy intended to destroy and undermine American civilization and security. Muslim political participation is a far cry from the magnanimous farsightedness of our great moral exemplars who showed the world the unique power that Islam has to reform the human spirit and heal society. Conscientious Muslims should no longer allow themselves to be bullied and scared into sacrificing the good name of their religion to achieve the selfish goals of people who do not truly have Muslim best interests or our society at heart.

What We Want ‘in’ America Should Reflect What We Want ‘for’ America

Another widespread discussion of the pre-9/11 era in Muslim circles was whether or not one required an excuse for residing in America? Many scholars in the Muslim world and others living in the West asserted that unless Muslims were either enrolled in a university, involved in temporary employment or missionary work to spread Islam (da’wah), residing in the US was unlawful (haram). All others, therefore, were required to immigrate to “Muslim lands.” Anyone remaining without a valid excuse was deemed sinful. For many black American converts, this was an easy pill to swallow because so many had already accepted the thesis that blacks weren’t truly Americans nor were they ever meant to be given equal citizenship status with whites. Many Middle Eastern Muslims, similarly, found certain religious justifications. And, while many Muslims did not share this sentiment before 9/11, the terrorist attacks had a significant impact on thinking on this topic.

Most of the same people suddenly became flag-waving “Americans” who had every right to be here, especially since America was “a nation of immigrants.” Eventually, this meant embracing the stories about African Muslims enslaved in the Americas and the celebration of black Muslim civil rights heroes as part of the larger narrative about Islam’s role and inseparableness from American culture. Ivan Van Sertima’s *They Came Before Columbus* was also an enormous boon to this narrative for those familiar with and convinced of his arguments. But while Muslims underscored these historical connections, those working in the political realm lost touch with the missionary impulse.

The propagation of Islam in a post-9/11 world became less and less important. What mattered most was full integration into American society, which apparently could only be achieved by further secularizing Muslims and Islam while arguing that Muslims were no more remarkable than anyone else; ‘There are bad Muslims just like there are bad Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, or Atheists.’ This, however, clashes with the Qur’anic mandate to appoint a faction “who call to goodness, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong” (Q 3:104) as well as its declaration that “You are the best community brought forth for humanity...” (Q 3:110).

One gets the impression today that Muslims and Islam have nothing considerable to contribute to America and the broader West. And, this mindset has led to precisely a lack of wise leadership and leadership vacuums which have been filled by partially educated social media sensations who feed the hunger of so many young Muslims who, appropriately, believe Islam to be the solution to the world's moral crises. On the opposite pole are young Muslims being led by activists with little to no training in Islam who prioritize materialist and secularized understandings over Islam's more spiritual and moral message. This notion of Islam being unremarkable with little or nothing to contribute to the betterment of the West fuels both conservative exclusion of Islam and the impulse among politically active Muslims to follow the dictates of the left only.

As stated before, the Qur'an says, "Let there be from among you a group calling to goodness..." How often do Muslim politicians and activists speak of their commitment to Islamic mores beyond vacuous calls to "fight injustice"? Islam calls to faith in God, personal discipline, strong families, the value of life, peace, and harmony. It also appeals to personal and public health, wellbeing, and the protection of private property. It calls to justice, mercy, wisdom, and the public good. And, while Islam grants people the right to exact vengeance by or for those who are wronged, it strongly emphasizes the higher value of forgiving wrongs done.

In other words, Islam shares many American values but also would contribute to making America a better place to live, if only Muslims would fully embrace their religious teachings and gain the courage to share them with the rest of the country. That's not an exercise in "Islamofascism." That's an attempt to contribute to greater harmony among people. Christians are completely comfortable with spreading the message of Jesus Christ. And, they should have every right to do so. Muslims should feel no different, especially in a country whose Constitution bars its leaders from elevating one religion over another. Muslims cannot afford to be used as a tool by either the left or right to shore up one or the other group's political power. Every Muslim requires an independent perspective on progressives, conservatives, Biden, Trump, or any other group or individual appealing for our support or antagonizing us and our religion.

Anti-Trumpism is not Enough

Trump is often called a racist and Islamophobe. His moral failings are also underscored as an excuse not to support him; His narcissism, self-promotion, and exaggeration of his political record are undeniable to any reasonable person. His combativeness towards the media and willingness to engage in tit for tat with common citizens trouble many. But an important question for Muslim leaders is whether or not these matters endanger Muslims or undermine our rights? More important than that is whether or not Trump possesses certain virtues that prime him for being a useful partner in realizing Muslim interests, whatever they are?

While campaigning for the Republican nomination, Trump said many negative things about Muslims and Islam. He further pushed for legislation to temporarily ban Muslim immigration from the Muslim world. He eventually succeeded in doing it to 7 out of 50 Muslim-majority countries under the pretext of them being "problem nations" and "terrorist breeding grounds." During his leadup to the Republican nomination, his rhetoric was even so extreme that he called for killing the families of terrorists, ordering a special Muslim registry (which functionally already existed in light of law enforcement investigative norms). He demonized Muslims by accusing them of being collectively responsible for 9/11. However, there was a significant change of tone once nominated for president. There was no more talk of assassinating the families of terrorists nor considering the possibility of interning Muslims.[17] Trump had, in many ways, become an anti-interventionist candidate.[18] And, to an extent, his presidency has been marked by efforts to scale back America's military imperialism,[19] end wars rather than expand them, make peace with America's former enemies,[20] and even resist the prodding of war hawks like John Bolton against invading Iran.[21] If anything, Trump so far has been far less harmful to the Muslim world than his predecessors.[22] During previous administrations, both Democrat and Republican, thousands of Muslims lost their lives, were rendered stateless, turned into refugees, asylum seekers, and citizens of highly destabilized environments.[23]

Trump's "by any means necessary" approach to winning the US presidency has offended and sickened a great many people around the world. The mere mention of his name and gaze upon him has created a type of unreasonableness in many people now termed 'Trump Derangement Syndrome.' The point from this is that many of Trump's wounds are self-inflicted. One must, however, not lose sight of the alternative being suggested for the world.

As already stated, Bernie lost to the establishment and then, unfortunately, endorsed one of the most establishment politicians we know, Joe Biden. Bernie had long stood out as a maverick who promoted himself as a non-establishment politician who could bring America real transformative change. It was, precisely, this persona that attracted me to Bernie in 2016. But, his refusal to stand up for himself after the apparent shenanigans played by the DNC caused me to lose respect for him.

While it is often said that the only reason so many whites voted for Trump in 2016 was racism and xenophobia, this opinion overlooks one important fact missed in the current climate: Americans were largely looking for significant change in the political establishment in 2016 and before. This is precisely what made it possible to have both Bernie and Trump in the lead running for president. They were both perceived as outsiders, and they both promised a new vision for America. Many were indeed less enthusiastic about Trump's presidency in 2016. Still, a significant number of voters were willing to give it a try, because how could it possibly be any worse than the status quo?

That is to say that the real problem with American politics is the neoliberal establishment. The neoliberal establishment is a bipartisan collection of career politicians who have served the interests of big corporations and the ultra-elite. They protected their criminal behavior and put America up for sale to the highest bidder. These are globalists who fight hard to keep the world open to cheap labor. This is precisely why the Mexican immigration issue still has not been resolved over multiple decades. Both democrats and republicans seek to keep the door open for major corporations to exploit cheap labor from developing countries, thereby hurting the least educated among us by giving jobs that would be available to Americans to Mexicans and others. This is no far-right conspiracy theory. Both Ross Perot in the '90s warned of this[24] as did Bernie[25] who changed his tune about it once it looked as if he was on the path to the nomination.

These same people are those who destroyed the American industry, shipped jobs overseas, sent our sons and daughters into harms-way based upon faulty information. They control our media and hold many key positions in government to ensure we never truly achieve the better society we all desire. This same establishment is also vindicating itself in the current crises by shoring up anti-Trumpism. If they can succeed at making everyone believe that all the world's ongoing suffering is due to poor decisions made by Trump, they can once again reclaim their past glory by presenting themselves as our saviors.

Apparently, the plan is working. How else would it be possible for someone like Joe Biden, who is being kept out of the public's eye due to being a serial-gaffer with an ailing mind leading in national polls? The media covers completely for Biden. They have defended his son's dealings with China and Ukraine despite no investigation ever being conducted, shields him from questions about his ailing health, his many lies and racist remarks, his wandering hands and groping of women, his crime bill which led to the mass incarceration of scores of racial minorities, his association with[26] and praise of known white racists,[27] his support for wars that destroyed countless Muslim lives, and even a credible accusation of sexual assault.[28]

Choose Your Favorite Criminal

Trump has done many things wrong. Watching the mainstream media, no one would know that he did anything right or of benefit. Even when he didn't clearly do wrong, he has provided his enemies in the media with plenty of fodder to paint him as a demon. He offended Mexicans with comments about criminality,[29] allegedly mocked a disabled man,[30] referred to certain African countries as "s-hole countries," [31] undermined the national anthem protests of police brutality, accused "Islam" of hating America, temporarily barred immigration from certain Muslim countries, and has maintained a very combative posture against reporters.

Many of these allegations are nothing more than media misrepresentations. Others are not. But, while there is much to criticize about Trump, let's remember that the mainstream media and Trump's political enemies have also been caught in multiple lies.[32] And, they regularly manipulate, brainwash, censor, and ban dissidents. The mainstream media represents the neoliberal establishment. Their bottom line is the bottom line, i.e. enriching themselves and their benefactors from our suffering. Biden is the perfect Manchurian candidate to reinstitute the status quo that Trump has "partially" disrupted. There is good reason to believe that with Biden, the war machine is coming back. And, jobs will continue to be sacrificed in pursuit of cheap wages without benefits.

Biden is clearly not competent enough to be president. Why would the democrats be so willing to put such a person into office when they could simply give the presidency to Bernie, whose chances they colluded to undermine? If Muslims and others are still willing to vote for Biden after all the corruption within the party has been exposed at this point, then we may deserve whatever hardship comes our way after this trying period. Remember that Trump did not cause the lockdown, didn't create the coronavirus, and doesn't control the media we watch so often, which fills us with so much hopelessness and anxiety. Trump is clearly the better candidate and the lesser of the two evils. He prides himself on being a deal maker. Why are Muslims so unwilling to offer him a deal?

What Should Our Interests Be?

Of course, the main reason Muslims are unwilling to work with Trump is that he has made so many of us feel unsafe. The other reason is that our democrat handlers don't allow us to maneuver beyond the limitations of current Democrat partisanship. However, we must ask ourselves whether it is prudent to make political decisions based on how a politician views us? Is it more important to feel embraced or to have our interests served? Are our interests being served now? And, what are those interests?

When I think of "interests," my first impulse as a legal scholar is to appeal to the "Stated Interests of Islam" (al-masalih al-mu'tabarah): protecting religion, life and bodily integrity, sanity, progeny, and wealth. Despite all things undesirable, Muslims have a choice to make: 1) don't vote; 2) vote for Biden and democrats; or 3) vote for Trump and republicans. Which of these decisions will cause us the most harm? And, which of them will cause us the greatest benefit? How significant will the harm or benefit be?

Clearly, in the current presidential and eventual congressional races, there are multiple challenges to parental, religious, property, and security rights. The first and second amendment rights are under threat. New gender ideas and norms are being thrust upon our population. Fascism, compelled speech, firings, and cancel culture are spreading far and wide from the progressive left. Parents are losing more rights over their children, such as the important life decision to utilize hormonal therapy, remove breasts, and carry out other invasive procedures pertaining to gender transition. Criminal behavior is being condoned, and chaos is ensuing in an attempt to overthrow the current system. Clearly, it is not Trump who is encouraging these reforms, causing so much suffering in our world. It is the progressive left and neoliberal establishment with all of its power being employed to vindicate itself once again in the eyes of the masses by focusing on the easy target for blame, i.e., Donald J. Trump.

Why wouldn't Muslims be interested in attempting to negotiate with Trump to overturn the Muslim ban? ISIS has been "decimated," and the source of the anxieties leading to the ban have been removed. Of course, the restrictions produced by fears of COVID-19 don't give much hope that more Muslims will be allowed to enter the country anytime soon. However, that still does not make it inopportune to plead our case with this administration to lift travel restrictions once we have a greater handle on the spread of the virus. If we genuinely care about those presently being barred entry, we should be able to set aside how we feel about Trump. Otherwise, it only proves how selfish and self-serving we are. That Trump prides himself on being a deal maker, especially during an election year, makes for a great political opportunity.

Another fertile ground for negotiation is the state of Uighur Muslims, especially with Trump already attempting to regain leverage over the Chinese. Muslims in politics appear much less passionate about the plight of the Uighurs than other international concerns even though it is hard to think of a people in a more desperate predicament due to government oppression. Neither democrats nor republicans are very incensed about China's internment of one million-plus people in this early 21st century. That they are not is partially the fault of Muslims.

Of course, not every Muslim faction believes that international or national concerns should be given that much priority. For many, like inner-city Imams, for example, more proximate concerns are tantamount: In what ways might political mobilization help the plight of inner-city mosques or schools? How might it repair our families and neighborhoods? Who in our local governments are the best to partner with to address such needs?

Returning our focus to national politics, certain direct potential benefits and harms have and may continue to affect inner-city life. Both men running for office have had histories in our communities. One of them has been a career politician, and the other, until recent years, was viewed as a model of financial success. It could be true that Trump doesn't like black people, but Biden's prison reform policy has actually harmed us. On the other hand, prior to the COVID-19 lockdown, Trump's policies, helped black Americans. The "first step" prison reform act he signed into law helped to undo some of the damage done by Biden.[33] Unemployment reached historic lows for blacks under Trump.[34] He increased funding to historically black colleges and universities (HBCU's). He introduced "opportunity zones" to keep businesses and development opportunities available in inner cities for employment and for wealthy blacks to take advantage of tax breaks to build and employ more blacks. In other words, if it is true that Trump "might" not truly like blacks, Muslims nor Islam, his actions have spoken a different language so far. Whether or not he likes us should be far less important than whether or not we can negotiate our interests with him. Protecting ourselves from harmful policies and decisions will take a lot of maturity and spiritual strength.

Concluding Thoughts

We were warned that reaching the door of the sultan would try us. It is precisely because politics is the realm of compromise, while religion is the realm of principle. And, when religion and politics meet on the same field, one will inevitably dominate the other. The risks are even far greater when religion plays a merely cosmetic role in one's political aspirations.

One may think because of living in a democracy where people vote for leaders that one is not taking a seat next to the sultan. The reality is that seeking office itself is even worse than being in proximity to the sultan. It is becoming the sultan. It is misleading to think that only autocratic regimes in the Muslim world are fertile for corruption and oppression. That Muslim politicians and national organizations have sacrificed so much of religious principle in order to achieve power indicates that the same dangers are inherent in a so-called democracy.

Time has proven that while democracy may seem to be the most sensible and just form of government, no form of government is incorruptible. The powerful elite will always find a way to cling to power and make systems do their bidding. Godless corporate feudalists and kleptocrats who dominate our politics and world represent the true danger to our freedoms and happiness. They are the gas that fuels the same “establishment” that antiwar advocates, tea partyers, “occupy” activists, and the middle class rebelled against in the recent past. Opposition to that establishment led to the victory of Donald J. Trump. The establishment, however, is ever crafty. They effectively refashion themselves as our Messianic saviors from the “anti-Christ” in the oval office.

Muslims in politics and participants in the political process should never allow their fear or hatred to dictate their interests. Politics is a nasty game. It takes a strong stomach and alligator skin to properly understand and navigate such an arena. In my estimation, Muslims have been largely ineffective in navigating it. We have failed to employ politics in the interest of preserving our faith and families. Rather, we have sacrificed our mores for the mere “feeling” of comfort and the fleeting experience of power. This is because we have allowed our interests to insufficiently emanate from the values of the Qur’an and Sunnah. We have believed in parts of the Book, rejected other parts, and then filled up the gaps with the moral priorities of others whose only objective is to achieve power by any means necessary. Power should never be sought simply for its own sake. If we truly believe that power corrupts, Muslims are not exempt from that rule. The proof is in the pudding as the saying goes. This is not to say that power is to be avoided at all costs. Rather, power should only be pursued by noble people to achieve noble ends.

“...Those who when given authority in the land establish the prayer, give charity, enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong.” (Q 22:41)

[1] Abdul-Malik Mujahid (no date) “Muslims in American Politics: The Beginning of a Long Process,” Allied Media Corp: Multicultural Communication: http://www.allied-media.com/muslim_americans/political.htm

[2] Paul Findlay (no date) “Why Muslims Should Vote for Bush in this Election,” Sound Vision: <https://www.soundvision.com/article/why-muslims-should-vote-for-bush-in-this-election>

[3] Displeased with Obama’s first term, I decided to support the candidacy of Senator Ron Paul in 2012, but Paul wasn’t favored to win the Republican nomination for president. So, I refrained from the 2012 vote.

[4] Niraj Warikoo (28 October 2019) “FBI’s killing of Detroit Muslim leader 10 years ago haunts communities”, Detroit Free Press: <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2019/10/28/ten-years-fbi-imam-luqman-abdullah-death-dearborn/2451750001/>

[5] Lauren Del Valle (24 August 2016) “Usaamah Rahim shooting by police yields no charges,” CNN: <https://www.cnn.com/2016/08/24/us/no-charges-usaamah-rahim-boston-terror-suspect/index.html>

[6] Gandhi said,

Islam’s distinctive contribution to India’s national culture is its unadulterated belief in the oneness of God and a practical application of the truth of the brotherhood of man for those who are nominally within its fold. I call these two distinctive contributions. For in Hinduism, the spirit of brotherhood has become too much philosophized. Similarly, though philosophical Hinduism has no other god but God, it cannot be denied that practical Hinduism is not so emphatically uncompromising as Islam.

Richard L. Johnson edition. *Gandhi's Experiments with Truth: Essential Writings by and about Mahatma Gandhi*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006, p. 116.

[7] Dr. Howard Thurman, the founder of the Church for the Fellowship of all Peoples in San Francisco, the first interracial, interdenominational Church in the United States, said while speaking of his meeting with Gandhi during a trip to India,

Gandhi wondered why the slaves did not become Muslims. It was a sheer speculation, but in theory, it was a sound idea. As he took pains to point out, the religion of Mohammed is the only world religion that does not practice discrimination within the faith itself. In the presence of Allah there is neither rich or poor, wise or foolish, black or white, brown or yellow—but all are one before Him. This means encompassing all diversity and all differences.

Howard Howard. *The Luminous Darkness*, Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press: 1989, p. 60.

[8] The full text of the hadith is, "There are seven who Allah will place in His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His shade: The just leader (Imam), a young man raised upon the worship of Allah, a man whose heart is attached to the mosque, two people who love one another for Allah's sake: they meet, and part company in light of it, a man who a beautiful and powerful woman invites him (to illicit sex) and he says: "I fear Allah!", a man who gives charity in a way that his left-hand doesn't know what his right hand spent, and a person who remembers Allah while in seclusion and his eyes overflow with tears." (Bukhari and Muslim)

[9] The full text of the hadith is, "There are three whose prayers are never rejected: the faster until he breaks fast, the just leader, and the prayer of the oppressed: He elevates it above the clouds, and the gates of Heaven are opened for it, and the Lord says: "By my might! I will come to your aid even if after a time." (Jami al-Tirmidhi)

[10] Pastor Bob Roberts Jr. (29 April 2019) "Why Evangelicals Hate Muslims: An Evangelical Minister's Perspective, Emir-Stein Center (Youtube Channel): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opcUsTBKlMA>

[11] Kayla Epstein (26 July 2017) "Trump's Stance of LGBT Rights Has Always Been Confusing," The Washington Post, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/07/26/trumps-stance-on-lgbt-rights-has-always-been-confusing/>

[12] According to Ibn 'Abbas, the Prophet "...cursed women who imitate men and men who imitate women." (Abu Dawud #4097)

[13] According to Abu Hurayrah, "The Messenger of Allah cursed the man who adorns women's attire and the woman who adorns men's attire." (Abu Dawud #4098)

[14] Interestingly, many Muslims pre-9/11 demanded the US Supreme Court remove its mural depiction of the Prophet Muhammad from its chamber, arguing that it was disrespectful. Today, no such cries are heard in light of the shift in Muslim understanding of citizenship and politics. Laurie Asseo (12 March 1997) "Supreme Court Won't Change Muhammad Sculpture," AP News: <https://apnews.com/da3b66f403786db16c9a630e88100012>

[15] Main Reading Room, Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/visit/online-tours/thomas-jefferson-building/main-reading-room/>

[16] According to the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, only 3% of Republican lawmakers have been involved in supporting anti-Shariah legislation. (See "Restrictive Legislation Hurts All," TheISPU (Youtube Channel): https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=w9ZBNLWhoQs&feature=emb_logo

[17] This critic predicted Trump's presidential bid against Clinton and offered a very insightful view of Trump and his strategy in the process. "Why Trump Will SMASH Hillary", Charisma on Command (Youtube Channel): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LibRNYJmZ-I>

[18] Edward-Isaac Doveve (6 December 2016), "Trump Pledges to Pull Back in Middle East, Lean in Against ISIS", Politico: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/trump-middle-east-isis-232291>

[19] J.D. Simkins (8 October 2019), "Trump on Pulling US Troops Out of Syria: "We're Not a Police Force." Military Times: <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2019/10/08/trump-on-pulling-us-troops-out-of-syria-were-not-a-police-force/>

[20] (29 February 2020) "Afghan Conflict: US and Taliban Sign Deal to End 18-year War", BBC News: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51689443>

[21] Trump successfully resisted pressure by war hawks like Bolton from invading or bombing Iran on multiple occasions. When Iran downed a US drone and Trump approved of a retaliatory operation against military targets, he abruptly called off the strike appealing to the lack of proportionality to justify his decision once informed that more than 100 people would lose their lives. See CBS News, "Trump Abruptly Cancels Military Strike Against Iran", (21 June 2019): <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/trump-abruptly-cancels-military-strike-against-iran/#x>

[22] Amnesty International, "The 'Arab Spring': Five Years On": <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/01/arab-spring-five-years-on/>

[23] (7 March 2017) "Remembering the Gulf War: The Key Facts and Figures", Forces Net: <https://www.forces.net/news/remembering-gulf-war-key-facts-figures>

[24] (10 April 2016) "Ross Perot in 1992 on NAFTA and the "Giant Sucking Sound," KramerDSP: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQ7kn2-GEMM>

[25] Ezra Klein (29 July 2015), "Bernie Sanders: "Open borders? That's a Koch brothers proposal", Vox News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf-k6qOfXz0>

[26] (20 June 2019) "Joe Biden's letters to segregationist Sen. James O. Eastland," The Washington Post: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/context/joe-biden-s-letters-to-segregationist-sen-james-o-eastland/705b015f-bd0a-4d7d-84e5-88960d5667a7/>

[27] Henry J. Gomez and Dannen Sands (17 February 2019), "Joe Biden Once Spoke At Strom Thurmond's Memorial Service. How Do People Feel About That Now?", BuzzFeed News: <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/henrygomez/joe-biden-strom-thurmond-eulogy>

[28] Interestingly, many of the Muslim activists and academics who accused Brett Kavanaugh without evidence of any wrongdoing are silent about the accusations against Biden.

[29] In a rare 2015 CNN fact check on Trump's comments about Mexicans, we find that there is far more nuance involved in the allegation that Trump called "Mexicans" criminals. Trump clearly made a distinction between law-abiding Mexicans, those who enter the country legally, and the criminal element among those who enter the country illegally. Whether or not Trump was right about the percentage of criminals entering the country from Mexico has been the subject of debate. What is clear is that the popular understanding about his comments are inaccurate. The following CNN report corroborates this: (2 July 2015) "Fact-Checking Donald Trump's Immigration Comments", CNN (Youtube Channel): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhbOEduvA9U>. Another false allegation made against Trump by the media was that he referred to illegal immigrants as "animals" when his actual comments were directed against the extremely violent gang known as MS-13. See the following video: (16 May 2018) "Trump Calls Some Illegal Immigrants "Animals" in Meeting with Sheriffs", CBS News (Youtube Channel): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tmT7-dhOWs>

[30] This is another false allegation. The following video shows that the hand movements made by Trump alleging to mock a disabled person is actually a normal way he mocked all of his adversaries. (14 September 2016) "Did Trump Really Mock Reporter's Disability?" Fox News (Youtube Channel): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CsaB3yniZH4>

[31] Another crass comment of Trump's also intentionally taken out of context for political purposes was his statement that certain countries was "s-hole countries." The reporting on this statement generally led with headlines stating that, "Trump Calls Haiti and African Countries S-Hole Countries," giving the impression that Trump hates black people. In reality, his remarks turned out to be a reference largely to merely four countries, two of which are in Latin America, not to the entire Africa continent. This was during deliberations over immigration bans from countries labeled as Temporary Protected Status (TPS) by the US Congress in 1990. Trump's apparent aim was to limit immigration from more "troubled" countries, especially Sudan, Haiti, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. This is consistent with his "America First" campaign calls to only allow immigrants who contribute to the American economy rather than those who would be a burden. Countries are given such status in light of major events like civil war and major natural disasters. (See Leighton Akio Woodhouse, "TRUMP'S "SHITHOLE COUNTRIES" REMARK IS AT THE CENTER OF A LAWSUIT TO REINSTATE PROTECTIONS FOR IMMIGRANTS," 28 June 2018, The Intercept: <https://theintercept.com/2018/06/28/trump-tps-shithole-countries-lawsuit/>). Even if it is true that Trump might be racist, there's sufficient information to argue that his major concern was with allowing immigration from countries whose citizens could create a major financial burden on the US, which Trump felt weakened America's ability to serve its own needy citizens. His detractors have, similarly, attempted to interpret his support for having those accused in the "Central Park Five" case in one way: 'Trump hates black people.' For such antagonists, that Trump might have simply been morally outraged by the fact that a gruesome crime was committed against an innocent woman by the accused is simply not possible. Had it not been for the perpetrator confessing, there's little reason to believe that the boys would've been exonerated.

[32] There are many examples of this. But, one of the most glaring examples which still has not been corrected by the media nor in the public consciousness is the claim that Trump called Neo-Nazis in Charlottesville "fine people." In the very speech often used an evidence one finds that at starting around the 0:19:00 minute mark Trump condemns the Neo-Nazis and White Nationalists. It is moments after this when he speaks about "fine people" being on both sides. (See "President Donald Trump full remarks at Trump Tower: Remarks on Charlottesville, Infrastructure," ABC News (Youtube Channel): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwIU7iUfhow>

[33] Erin Burnett Out Front, "Van Jones Praises Trump: This is History," CNN: <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2018/12/19/van-jones-praises-trump-criminal-justice-reform-ebof-vpx.cnn>

[34] Maggie Fitzgerald (4 October 2019), "Black and Hispanic Unemployment is at Record Low," CNBC: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/10/04/black-and-hispanic-unemployment-is-at-a-record-low.html>



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