

Islamofascism or Neocon-fascism?

[A briefing to assist Muslim students in exposing the propaganda techniques used by neo-conservatives to achieve and hold power by smearing Muslims. **Prepared by the Minaret of Freedom Institute**, Bethesda, MD. <http://www.minaret.org>]

In the 1946 essay “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell complained,

The word *Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies ‘something not desirable.’ The words *democracy*, *socialism*, *freedom*, *patriotic*, *realistic*, *justice* have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like *democracy*, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using that word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different.

Former Communists and statist liberals, pretending to have been born again as conservatives (therefore the appellation “neoconservative”) demonstrate Orwell’s point as they engage in a systematic smear campaign that blurs the distinctions between mainstream Muslims, extremists, militants, terrorists, and religious texts under the banner of “exposing Islamofascism.” This disinformation campaign takes place as the majority of Muslims are engaged in their own battle against authoritarian extremists of both the secular variety and those who employ the cloak of religiosity. The campaign only complicates our own Muslim struggle against the authoritarians among us. However, since the original definition of fascism fits the neoconservatives better than it fits even the terrorists, this attack provides an opportunity for us to unmask the neoconservative agenda to undermine the best elements of the American republic. We can refute the smear campaign against Islam and defend liberty in American from an internal attack at the same time.

Here follows a set of facts that may be helpful to students attempting to deal with the disinformation campaign.

What is fascism?

The simplest definition of fascism is the worship of the State. Fascism is political “religion” that attempts to regulate an individual’s entire way of life, including shaping one’s moral point of view through the power of the State. According to former Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini:

The Fascist conception of life is a religious one, in which man is viewed in his immanent relation to a higher law, endowed with an objective will transcending the individual and

raising him to conscious membership of a spiritual society. Those who perceive nothing beyond opportunistic considerations in the religious policy of the Fascist regime fail to realize that Fascism is not only a system of government but also and above all a system of thought

[...]

The Fascist conception of the State is all embracing; outside of it no human or spiritual values can exist, much less have value. Thus understood, Fascism, is totalitarian, and the Fascist State - a synthesis and a unit inclusive of all values - interprets, develops, and potentates the whole life of a people.¹

The name “fascism” comes from the *fasces*, the Roman symbol of authority consisting of a bundle of stocks tied together with a ribbon. (You will find the symbol at the center of the back of every American dime coin.) The fascists adopted the symbol because it represented unity in strength. The story goes that a dying man called his sons together and handed them sticks and asked them to break the sticks, which they easily did. He then bound the stick together in a single bundle and asked them to try now. They could not break the bundle. The old man advised them that if they would stay united like the *fasces* they would be strong against their enemies.

The fascists considered themselves national socialists, and the German fascists even adopted that name for their party (Nazi is the acronym for “National Socialists Workers Party” in German). They distinguished themselves from the international socialist movement by their nationalism. Yet, contrary to the defining factor of socialism, they did not call for the abolition of private property, only for its use to be directed towards the benefit of the national state. This resulted in the growth of a powerful military-industrial complex at the expense of small independent businesses that had no clout with the authoritarian state. Some fascists (like Hitler) were racist, while others (like Mussolini) were not. All put the national state and “the people” ahead of God (the Exalted), civil society, and the individual. All put faith in the living leader (*Il Duce, Der Fuhrer, Generalissimo*) ahead of any Prophet, religious text, or natural law.

Are the terrorists fascists?

Terrorists have one thing in common with fascists: the inexcusable use of acts of violence that do not discriminate between the guilty and the innocent, and that thus run contrary to the teachings of Islam. This single similarity cannot be used to define them as fascists, or one would have to insist their use of violence against innocents makes Stalin and Mao (not to mention Harry Truman who launched a nuclear weapon against Hiroshima and Nagasaki) fascists. This similarity is an incidental one, not a defining one. For all Muslims, ranging from mainstream to extremists, the objective of one’s life is to worship God (Qur’an 51:56). For extreme militants, indiscriminate violence accompanied by vague references to establishing an Islamic state are an immoral means of resisting foreign occupation and of rebellion against oppressive regimes. Injustice? Yes. Fascism? Hardly.

Any terrorist who worships the state instead of God, as fascists do by definition, ceases to fit the definition of a Muslim, one for whom there is no god but God (the Creator of the Universe, the God of Abraham, peace be upon him).

Terrorists of all stripes should be condemned for their attacks on innocent civilians, and if they share other attributes with fascists, they can and should be condemned for that too. What other attributes of fascism do we find among Muslim terrorists? A disregard for civil liberties of other religious or minority groups, nationalism, and the desire to establish a military-industrial complex are among the fascist traits that one finds among some terrorists. They must be condemned with the same fervor we condemn these traits in any other group, but do it in a way that does not savage the English language.

What are Islamic teachings about fascism (and terrorism)?

Islam rejects the teachings of fascism because it is idolatry. Instead of worshipping God and receiving one's moral guidance through the Qur'an and other revealed scriptures (the Torah, Psalms, Gospel, etc.), the fascist receives his or her moral guidance from the State and its leader. Furthermore, Islam opposes the oppression fascism imposes on people. The example of the Pharaoh's fate in the Qur'an is a sign of God's dislike toward those who oppress people. The Qur'an also specifically says:

God commands justice and doing good and giving to relatives. And He forbids indecency and doing wrong and tyranny. He warns you so that hopefully you will pay heed. (16:90)

While Islam rejects the State worship of fascism and its brutality, it also rejects the indiscriminate violence used by non-state terrorist groups in what might otherwise be a legitimate resistance against foreign occupation and domestic tyranny. The Qur'an teaches that no matter what kind of injustice has been committed against Muslims, Muslims are not to return bloody recklessness in kind. The following verses shed light on the Qur'an's teachings about war:

"Do not let your hatred of a people incite you to aggression." (5:2)

"And do not let ill-will towards any folk incite you so that you swerve from dealing justly. Be just; that is nearest to heedfulness" (5:8)

"...if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people." (5:32)

"...take not life, which God hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom." (6:151)

Muslims recognize these moral teachings, and while they may sympathize the goal of resisting foreign occupation and domestic tyranny, they do not support illegitimate means of doing so.²

Are Muslims fascists?

This is like asking if Christians are fascists. Muslims, like Christians, have varying points of view. Christians and Muslims who support fascism betray their respective religions. All too many “Christians” supported Hitler, Mussolini and Franco.

Nevertheless, it is true that there were a few Muslims who supported the fascists. However, the overwhelming majority of Muslims opposed fascism, and many fought against the fascists, and still others were involved in many heroic acts of saving Jewish lives. Some examples include:

- Omar Mukhtar led the resistance against the Italian occupation of Libya³
- Albania saved its Jewish population from the Nazis
- Bulgarian Muslims protected many Bulgarian Jews from being sent to concentration and death camps
- King Mohammed V saved Moroccan Jews from being deported to death camps in WWII
- Muslims and Jews fought together for the British in the “Palestine Regiment”
- Indian Muslim Noor Inayat Khan worked as wireless radio operator for the British, maintaining a critical link between London and the French underground forces
- Paris’ Central Mosque served as a shelter for hundreds of Jewish children fleeing from attempts to deport them to death camps
- Tens of thousands of Soviet Muslims fought against the Nazis, particularly at Stalingrad and Leningrad
- The majority of “Free French” that took part in the Allied offensive against Provence were Muslims from North and West Africa
- Thousands of Moroccan and Indian Muslims fought in Italy and were particularly distinguished by their bravery at Monte Casino⁴

Are the Neocons fascists?

Unlike Muslims, Christians, Jews, and other religious groups whose political views range over a wide spectrum, the neoconservatives have a relatively coherent political philosophy.⁵ To call it fascism would be as abusive of the English language as calling, say, Stalinists fascists. Yet, while the Neoconservatives do not have all the attributes of fascism, they share a number of them and their efforts to date have increased the size of government and its entwinement with certain wealthy interests who benefit from its intervention into the economy and its abridgement of the rights of American citizens. Their embrace of nationalism and the military industrial complex (think Halliburton and Blackwater), their disregard for the civil liberties of those who do not belong to their affinity group (think the PATRIOT Act, renditions, domestic spying), and the use of propaganda techniques refined by the fascists.

The Islamophobes use the propaganda techniques of the fascists. Their depictions of Islam and Muslim are striking in their parallels to the fascist representations of Jews. Some Jews,

like Baron Rothschild, did support Germany's enemies in World War I, but to question the loyalty of all Jews and to blame the Jewish religion for the acts of a few is an outrage against reason and common decency. So it is with the Islamophobic contention that Muslims are not to be trusted and that Islamic teachings are responsible for the acts of the violent few.

It is important to notice that their technique is not simply an attack on the acts or the pronouncements of Muslims, nor even a refutation of the teachings of Islam. It is rather a *demonization*. What distinguishes demonization from legitimate criticism is that demonization denies the humanity of the target, precluding any possibility of redemption. Islam is depicted as inherently evil and Muslims are thus inherently evil unless they abandon their adherence to Islam. Even when they speak of "reform" of Islam, what they really mean is negation.

Like the fascists, the Neocons are not driven by mere hatred, but by the lust for power. They desire America to become the new Rome. The fear of Muslims is their excuse for the dismantling of the Constitutional safeguards of American liberal society. Habeas corpus, privacy, presumption of innocence, the requirement that Congress formally declare war before the President can commit American forces to an invasion abroad and other protections of civil liberties are sacrificed to strengthen the corporate state that will define economic policies to benefit powerful corporations at the expense of American individuals, small businesses, and even those big businesses that will not climb into bed with the ever-expanding and ever-more-expensive government. The oppressive laws are used first against suspicious Muslims (like Jose Padilla), then against Muslims in general (Abdul Haleem Ashqar) and their defenders (like Lynne Stewart) and finally against the political enemies of the regime. But no one is spared if bills like the proposed national ID become law ("where are you papers?")

The most striking similarity between the neoconservatives and the fascists is the use of "the big lie."⁶ The theory is that if you repeat a lie often enough and brazenly enough people will believe it. The trickery used by the Islamophobes should be understood in order to be exposed. Here is a list of the kind of things to look for. (The list is not exhaustive because the whole point of the big lie is to never be deterred when you are shown up, but to come back with yet another variation of the same trick.)

Finally, it is telling to note that while it is much easier to find Muslims who have fought against actual fascist movements than for them, it is almost impossible to find a neoconservative who will condemn the only certifiable fascist movement in the Middle East, the Christian Phalange in Lebanon (allies of Israel during its 1980s invasion of Lebanon)⁷ for their slaughter of the Palestinians at Sabra and Shatilla. To the contrary, David Horowitz praised Israel's ethnic cleansing of southern Lebanon in 2006⁸ while Larry Kudlow sought to Christianize the slaughter by asserting that "Israel is doing the Lord's work."⁹

Images, videos, statements of Muslims and Islamic texts are decontextualized through selective use of sources and cut and paste analysis

Example 1: They take verse 191 of the second surah of the Qur'an out of context to argue that Islam is a warlike religion. But **in** context it is clearly part of the establishment of just war theory, a concept which later Christians obtained from the Muslims.

190. Fight in the cause of God those who fight you but do not aggress; for God loves not aggressors.
191. And slay them wherever you catch them and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.
192. But if they cease God is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.
193. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.

Example 2: Verse 5 of the ninth surah taken out of context can be made to appear to be an order to coerce other into Islam. In context it is clearly an order to give those who have violated a solemn truce with a four-month grace period to repent of their actions before taking retaliation for their treachery, and a warning not to retaliate against the innocent, but only against those responsible:

1. A (declaration) of immunity from God and His messenger to those of the polytheists with whom ye have contracted mutual alliances.
2. Go ye then for four months backwards and forwards (as ye will) throughout the land but know ye that ye cannot frustrate God (by your falsehood) but that God will cover with shame those who reject him.
3. And an announcement from God and His apostle to the people (assembled) on the day of the Great Pilgrimage that God and His apostle dissolve (treaty) obligations with the pagans. If then ye repent it were best for you; but if ye turn away know ye that ye cannot frustrate God. And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject faith.
4. (But the treaties are) not dissolved with those polytheists with whom you have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught nor aided anyone against you. So fulfill your engagements with them to the end of their term: for God loves the righteous.
5. But when the forbidden months are past then fight and slay the polytheists wherever ye find them and seize them beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity then open the way for them: for God is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.
6. If one amongst the polytheists ask thee for asylum grant it to him so that he may hear the word of God and then escort him to where he can be secure: that is because they are men without knowledge.

Example 3. The 29th verse of surah 9 should be seen in context with verses 9:1-15 above. It orders the collection of a tax from non-Muslims, which has been misrepresented as an attempt to force conversion to Islam. In fact, the tax was a fee in lieu of military service, from which non-Muslims were exempt. This fact is historically undeniable since the tax was levied only on able-bodied males of military age, and protected minorities who insisted on fighting alongside Muslim troops were exempt from the tax. Further, when in the early days of Islam a Muslim ruler was unable to defend some Christians from their fellow Byzantines, he refunded the tax money to them. Impressed by this demonstration of

fairness and the rule of law, the local Christian bishop offered a prayer for the success of Muslim forces against the Byzantines.

This same cut and paste methodology has been applied to attack Islam and Muslims on issues of apostasy, treatment of women, distorted or selective interpretations and citations of hadith (regardless of their authenticity), religious minorities and scurrilous accusations of pedophilia against the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Quoting former Muslims (converts to Christianity or atheism) and pseudo-scholars of Islam to confuse people who know nothing about Islam or Muslims and re-define a “moderate” Muslim:

Example 1 – Presenting Ayaan Hirsi Ali as a Muslim reformer: Ms. Hirsi Ali is currently a Resident Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a neo-conservative think-tank that has also been a key architect of the disastrous Iraq war. She claims to have run away from her family and sought asylum in the Netherlands to escape a forced marriage, a claim denied by her family.¹⁰ She describes herself as an atheist and routinely attacks the faith of the very Muslims says she is trying to help free from oppression:¹¹

Example 2 – Presenting Robert Spencer as a scholar of Islam: Robert Spencer is the director JihadWatch, a blog that is supposedly dedicated to monitoring the activities of radical Muslims but which is really focused in tarring the entire religion with the brush of extremism. Mr. Spencer has no specific academic background in Islamic studies, instead receiving his Master’s degree in religious studies focusing on early Christianity. His techniques go beyond the context-dropping described above to include cherry-picking from commentaries, hadith and other sources,¹² presenting a picture of Islam shared only by the so-called “jihadis” and directly opposed to the consensus of all other Muslims.¹³

Demonization of Islam and Muslim.

Example—Ayaan Hirsi Ali argues that young Muslims can only be redeemed if they are convinced that “what the Prophet Mohammed said is not right, that the Koran is a man-made brutal doctrine of death whose time has long passed.” To advance toward this goal she wants “to close down Islamic faith schools.”¹⁴

Conclusion

Neoconservatives misrepresent the views of Islam and Muslims through a systematic distortion of texts and facts and events. They often put forth as experts persons with no expertise who have pre-judged the issues so that any objective and informed individual would not deem them credible. Relying on the general ignorance of Islam in the West, they use a copy-and-paste analysis that constructs a picture that fits their own bias, but not reality. Important facts, including context of religious texts, history and current events are excluded when contradicting their neo-imperialist views. As this small primer demonstrates, by throwing out accusations of fascism and labeling as terrorists Muslims who challenge their imperial ambitions, it is actually the neo-cons who use fascist

propaganda techniques in support suppression of civil liberties, demonization of Muslims, and the imposition of their imperialist vision of an “end of history” in which the world is dominated by a single superpower, with them at the controls.

Endnotes

¹ Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, *The Doctrine of Fascism*. (Rome: Ardita Publishers, 1932) <http://www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Germany/mussolini.htm>. This and all other web references accessed 10/15/07.

² Dan Murphy, “Poll: Muslim Show Only Partial Support for Al Qaeda’s Agenda.” *Christian Science Monitor*. (April 25, 2007) <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0425/p01s04-wome.htm>; Kenneth Ballen, “The Myth of Muslim Support for Terror.” (Feb. 23, 2007) <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0223/p09s01-coop.html>; Worldpublicopinion.org, “Large and Growing Numbers of Muslims Reject Terrorism, Bin Laden.” (Oct. 15, 2007) http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/international_security_bt/221.php?nid=&id=&pnt=221&lb=brme.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omar_Mukhtar

⁴ Sheila Musaji, “Muslims Who Fought Against the ‘Real’ Fascists.” *The American Muslim*. (September 4, 2006) http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/muslims_who_fought_against_the_real_fascists/0010741.

⁵ See Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad, “The Role of Neoconservatives in Shaping U.S. Policy,” *American Muslim Magazine* (May 2003), 16. <http://www.minaret.org/Neoconservatives.htm>.

⁶ Eric S. Margolis, “The Big Lie About `Islamic Fascism,’” *Ericmargolis.com*. (Aug. 28, 2006) http://www.ericmargolis.com/archives/2006/08/the_big_lie_abo.php.

⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸ Paul Craig Roberts, “The Shame of Being an American,” *Antiwar.com*. (July 22, 2006) <http://www.antiwar.com/roberts/?articleid=9381>.

⁹ Larry Kudlow, “Israel’s Moment, the Free World’s Gain,” *National Review Online*. (July 17, 2006) <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZjM1OGMxZWU0YzQ4MTQwZGU5NGRkMzQzMzNzdiNDc=>

¹⁰ Isabel Conway, “MP may be Deported over Claims She Lied to Win Asylum,” *The Independent* (May 15, 2006) <http://news.independent.co.uk/europe/article484099.ece>.

¹¹ David Cohen, “Violence is Inherent in Islam – It is a Cult of Death.” *The Evening Standard*. (February 7, 2007) <http://www.lawcf.org/index.asp?page=Evening+Standard+article+on+Islam+in+Britain>.

¹² Robert Spencer, “What Americans Need To Know About Jihad.” (Los Angeles: David Horowitz Freedom Center, 2007) <http://www.terrorismawareness.org/files/WANTKAJ.pdf>.

¹³ Ali Eteraz, “The Myth of Muslim Condemnation of Terror.” *The Huffington Post*. (October 10, 2007), <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ali-eteraz/the-myth-of-muslim-condem_b_67904.html>; “The Amman Message.” *The Amman Message* (2005). <<http://www.ammanmessage.com/>>; Robert Pigott, “Emerging Voice of Mainstream Islam.” *BBC News*. (October 12, 2007) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7040774.stm>.

¹⁴ Cohen. *Op cit*.