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Leonard, Karen

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American Muslim politics

Discourses and practices

KAREN LEONARD

University of California, Irvine, USA

ABSTRACT This overview of American Muslim politics surveys the major communities and organizations of Muslims in the USA and their discourses before and after 11 September 2001. African Americans, Arab Americans and South Asian Americans are the three largest groups, and, after setting out their differences, the political discourses and practices drawing them together in American politics are analyzed. The important conflict between the many new, western-educated professional leaders of the Muslim political coalitions in the US, whose knowledge of classical Islamic civilization and law is not great, and the fewer numbers of classically-trained legal scholars is discussed, leading to a review of personal issues that are also intensely political, particularly those concerning gender roles. 11 September produced challenges to the new professional leadership from the mainstream American media and government officials, opening up the field of discourse about Muslims in America. This has led to a greater focus on US domestic issues and perhaps a larger role for the young generation of American Muslims. The overall trajectory is that of an evolving and distinctively American set of Muslim discourses and practices.

KEYWORDS identities ● Islam ● jurisprudence ● 11 September 2001

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

One finds little guidance in the growing literature on globalization and modernity about a place for religion in this brave new world,¹ yet questions concerning religion and migration, religion and citizenship, and religion and transnational processes seem increasingly important as the 21st century begins. Often these questions have been posed, albeit sweepingly and in essentializing ways, about Islam and Muslims, asking about 'Islamic

constructions of modernity' or what concepts of modernity might be termed 'Islamic'.² Such questions increased after 11 September 2001.³ Muslims themselves are answering these questions in many specific contexts around the globe, while some Islamists are theorizing a universal *umma* as an alternative to the 'western' democracies and capitalist economies assumed by most theorists of globalization (Halliday, 1996).

One way of exploring such questions is by examining Muslim political discourses and practices in the US, a modern nation state. Positioned as they are 'in the belly of the beast', how do Muslims in the US define, discuss and participate in processes generally seen as modernizing or globalizing? What is 'Islamic' and what is 'American' about the American Muslim discourses and practices slowly but surely being developed in the US? Putting it in a way less likely to be misunderstood as essentializing, in Charles Hirschkind's words (2000: 13), let us try to see 'the way longstanding [Islamic] traditions inform contemporary political actors' in the US. This article attempts a broad overview of how Muslims understand the American political landscape and participate in it, the issues and practices they introduce, discuss and refine. A final brief section delineates changes and continuities in these discourses and practices after 11 September.

To postulate an emerging American Islam or versions of it affirms that change is not new to Islam. There was, no doubt, an identifiably Islamic way of thinking and acting in 7th century Arabia, a core text, the *Qur'an*, an evolving set of collected traditions, the *hadith*, and an evolving body of law, the *shari'a*. However, those Arabian Islamic beliefs and practices have both influenced and been influenced by the places to which they were subsequently taken.⁴ Islam moved to new and different geopolitical spaces and economies and confronted older religions, conquering or coexisting with them and their non-Muslim adherents. Such situated interactions, in regions of the Middle East, Africa, Central, South and Southeast Asia and China, have shaped the ways in which this non-centralized and non-hierarchical religion is practiced throughout the world, since Islam has no centralized clergy and mosques operate independently of each other. In Saudi Arabia itself, Islam's birthplace, Islamic beliefs and practices have been reshaped over time (Asad, 1993: 208–14).

South Asian Islam, for example, is not monolithic either, nor was its 'colonial construction'. Interactions between Hindus and Muslims in South Asia have left lasting impressions on the form and content of both religions (Ahmad, 1964; Dallapiccola and Lallemand, 1993). Then, because of British rule, 'various schools of Anglo-Saxon philosophy became deeply entrenched', so that South Asian political and social Islamic reformers were 'much more concerned with philosophy in the Western sense of the term' than were reformers in the Arab world (Nasr, 1987: 195). Furthermore, 19th century Indian Muslims, a minority in a predominantly Hindu subcontinent under British colonial rule, were defined and redefined over time by voices

both internal and external to the ‘community’, reflecting the complex relations among members of the ruling class and those being ruled (Vatuk, 1999).

American versions of Islam are being formulated in an ongoing dialogue with members of the dominant culture and other cultures in the US. Some post-1965 immigrant Muslims had hoped to avoid an ‘Americanization’ of Islam (Afzal, 1991; Athar, 1994), such as had already occurred among earlier Muslim immigrants (Aswad and Bilge, 1996; Bozorgmehr and Feldman, 1996; Haddad and Smith, 1994; Waugh et al., 1991) and is now occurring among contemporary Muslim Americans (Haddad and Esposito, 1998; Smith, 1999). These ‘new’ versions of Islam are being constituted from ‘American’ ways of being Muslim and ‘immigrant’ ways of being Muslim.⁵

POLITICAL ISSUES

As American Muslims define themselves and build a public presence, they confront problems and opportunities on several levels. Their religion, rich in history but relatively new in the US, has always been pluralistic, and there are significant differences within the American Muslim community. Yet, over the last century, convergences are overtaking the differences and American Muslims are now working on coalition-building with each other and with other groups in the mainstream political arena. They must also deal with globalization – the ways in which Muslim countries and communities outside America shape their discourses and practices and American mainstream perceptions of these. Debate among American Muslims is lively, invoking time-honored principles and passions, but orienting itself increasingly to the American political and social landscape (Asad, 1996: 5).⁶

Differences among American Muslims

How is ‘the Muslim community’ in America structured and what differences or tensions within it will influence these emerging versions of Islam? Statistics are difficult to obtain, but the total population is thought to be between 3–8 million, and the three major groups are African American (indigenous) Muslims, Arab Muslims and South Asian Muslims. One estimate (Nu’man, 1992) puts African Americans at 42 percent, South Asians at 24.4 percent and Arabs at 12.4 percent (with smaller groups of Africans at 6.2 percent, Iranians 3.6 percent, Southeast Asians 2 percent, European Americans 1.6 percent and Others 5.4 percent). Another estimate (Ba-Yunus and Siddiqui, 1999) puts ‘Americans’ at 30 percent, Arabs at 33 percent and South Asians at 29 percent. There are other differences between the majority Sunni and minority Shia groups and among

smaller Shia groups like the Nizari Ismailis, Zaidis and Daudi Bohras; there are groups like the Ahmadiyyas and Druze, whose Islamic identity is contested (Fischer and Abedi, 1990; Haddad and Smith, 1994). Then there are the Sufis, whose charismatic Sunni and Shia leaders teach mystical strands of Islam; the Sufis in the US are from very diverse backgrounds and many are Euro-American converts (Hermansen, 1997; Smith, 1999: 72).

The three major American Muslim groups – African Americans, Arabs and South Asians – are very different from each other (see Table 1 which charts the major organizations). African American Muslims, driven by a history of slavery and oppression in the US, chose Islam as an alternative to Christianity and to white America; many of the movements were or are separatist.⁷ The fascinating intellectual history of these early 20th century African American Muslim movements is only now being set out clearly. They owe much to the dynamic pan-African movement at the turn of the century. The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 was also important, featuring mosques and practicing Muslims and including the Parliament of Religions which introduced Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic teachings and missionaries to the American religious scene. Furthermore, paralleling developments in Turkey and Iran which blended freemasonry with Islam, the early Moorish Science Temple (1913) and Nation of Islam (1930) drew on rituals, symbolism and members from the Masonic and Shriner orders (Allen, 1998; Rashid, 2000: 80–1; Schmidt, 1998: 37–40; Zarcone, 2000).

The long process of drawing these African American Islamic movements closer to dominant Sunni and non-American traditions was started by the Ahmadiyya (hereafter Ahmadi) movement from India in 1920, when its missionaries began providing English translations of the Qur'an and teaching about the five 'pillars' of Islam. Much remains distinctively American about these African American Muslim communities, however. Marked by a history of prejudice and exclusion, their inward focus often reflects ambivalent or antagonistic views towards the US government, Christianity and other racial or ethnic groups, including Muslim immigrants (Curtis IV, 2002; Dannin, 2002).⁸ Most African American Muslims argue that *asabiya* or group solidarity must be given priority over the umma or the universal Muslim community at this stage in African American Muslim life, and they do not accept the customs or authority of immigrant Muslims (McCloud, 1995; Turner, 1997). Some 'new Muslims' dislike being guided by the 'new Americans' (Dannin, 1996: 163) and take a more egalitarian stance towards women's public participation in the religion than has been characteristic of orthodox Islam, interpreting texts for themselves (McCloud, 1995: 146–7, 157, 164–5).

Arab and South Asian Muslims, the largest immigrant groups, contrast with each other as well as with African American Muslims. The Arabs are far more diverse in terms of national histories and colonial pasts, coming from Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco (and, in

Table 1 American Muslim organizations

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Founder(s)</i>	<i>Initial location</i>
African American Muslim organizations			
1913	Moorish Science Temple	Noble Drew Ali	East coast, midwest
1930	Nation of Islam	Wallace Fard Muhammad, Detroit, Chicago Elijah Muhammad	
1975	Nation of Islam	Leadership assumed by Warith Deen Mohammed, son of Elijah Muhammad	
1978	Nation of Islam	Louis Farrakhan splits away and resurrects NOI	
2000	Nation of Islam	Farrakhan reconciles partially with W.D. Mohammed	
1920	Ahmadiyyas	Missionaries from Indian (later Pakistani) sect	East coast
American Islamic organizations			
1953	FIA (Federation of Islamic Associations)	Lebanese immigrants	Midwest, Canada
1963	MSA (Muslim Students' Association)	Arabic-speaking foreign students	USA
1982	ISNA (Islamic Society of North America)	Grew out of MSA	Plainfield, IN
1971	ICNA (Islamic Circle of North America)	Pakistani Jamaat-i Islamic party ties	New York
American Muslim political organizations			
1989	AMA (American Muslim Alliance)	South Asian leaders	Fremont, CA
1988	MPAC (Muslim Public Affairs Council)	Multiethnic leaders	Los Angeles, CA
1990	AMC (American Muslim Council)	Arab leaders	Washington, DC
1994	CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations)	Arab leaders	Washington, DC
1999	AMPCC (American Muslim Political Coordinating Council)	By the four groups above	Youngstown, OH

smaller numbers, from other North African states, Saudi Arabia and various Persian Gulf states). South Asian Muslims are almost all from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, with a largely shared subcontinental history of British colonial rule until 1947. While the Arabic speakers often dominate in American mosques and educational settings, the South Asians have a higher socioeconomic profile and are arguably more privileged in American society (Leonard, 2002a). The discourses and practices brought by these and other immigrant Muslims to the effort to build community in the US can and often do differ sharply.

Convergences among American Muslims

It is the commonalities and convergences among American Muslims that are publicly stressed, and there were four significant shifts within the American Muslim community in the decades leading up to 11 September. Earliest came the evolution of a 'Muslim' category from within an 'Arab' one. Christian and Muslim Arab immigrants, arriving since the late 19th century, had at first been largely unremarked upon by wider society (Abraham and Shryock, 2000; Naber, 2000), viewed as a single Arab category or broken down by national origin groups like the Lebanese or the Syrian-Lebanese (Abraham and Abraham, 1983; Naff, 1985). Only in the 1970s and 1980s, as Muslims became the majority among Arabs following the 1965 changes in US immigration law and as media coverage negatively stereotyped Muslims (Haddad, 1991; Said, 1997), did the focus shift to Muslims.

The second, third and fourth shifts are very recent and concern changes in political goals and leadership within the emerging American Muslim community. The second came in the 1980s, as an inward focus on national origin communities gave way to an outward focus on reaching out to all Muslims and to the broader American public. As recently as 1986, Muslim leaders advocated residing only temporarily in *dar ul-kufr* or the place of unbelievers (i.e. the USA). But, by the end of that same year, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the leading North American Muslim activist association, took a position favoring citizenship and participation in mainstream politics in the US (Johnson, 1991: 111; Nyang, 1991: 247; Poston, 1992: 32). The third shift came in the 1990s, as South Asians assumed more leadership positions in the newly organized American Muslim political coalitions, taking over from Arab Americans (Leonard, 2002a). This political mobilization featured some efforts to bring indigenous and immigrant Muslims together as both groups recognized common interests: longstanding African American efforts to secure legal rights and access to societal resources have benefitted immigrant Muslims and helped Muslim identities become part of the range of American identities (Moore, 1995).

The fourth shift, in the late 1990s, was a growing move away from

non-American Islamic sources of funding and influence. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arabic-speaking countries such as Saudi Arabia and Persian Gulf states were the leading supporters of Islamic activity in America, although American Muslims were said not to be ‘dependent on external aid or . . . controlled by their foreign donors’ (Muhammad, 1984: 213). After the Gulf War of 1990–91 and rising Islamophobia in the US, foreign funding for American Muslim activities began to be seen as ‘outside interference’, at least occasionally unwelcome and resisted.⁹ Great pride was taken in the first mosque in southern California ‘to be built solely with local money’ (*India Journal*, 17 January 1997: B6).¹⁰ The remarks of a Saudi prince were noted, as he opened a splendid new Saudi-financed mosque in Los Angeles with unintended irony by praising the freedom of religion in the US that permitted its building.¹¹ This turn against outside influence also lay behind the resounding rejection of powerful but externally-based Sufi leaders, the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufis,¹² who strove for ascendancy in American Muslim politics in the late 1990s. Shaykh Hisham Kabbani may have successfully presented an individualistic and moderate form of Islam to some Americans, but he alienated Sunni mainstream immigrant leaders by branding 80 percent of the American Muslim population ‘extremists’ in a speech to the US secretary of state’s public forum in 1999.¹³ He was roundly condemned and has been boycotted ever since by major American Muslim groups (but has re-emerged since 11 September; see below).

As a result of these related changes, American Muslim politics began achieving national visibility. Leading political organizations like the MPAC (Muslim Public Affairs Council, whose logo features the American flag) and the AMC (American Muslim Council) had good contacts with the Clinton administration, which made conspicuous efforts to bring Muslims into US public life.¹⁴ This kind of identity politics – American style – indicated not just American accommodation of Muslims, but also Muslim accommodation of modern, democratic political processes within the US.¹⁵

Then, in 2000, a national Muslim coalition (AMPCC) backed George W. Bush for the presidency. Major American Muslim groups mounted a coalition effort to swing the ‘Muslim vote’ to the Republican presidential candidate, chiefly on the basis of foreign policy issues. Supposing that Bush and Cheney were more favorable towards Palestine and more negative towards the ‘secret evidence’ Act (provisions for the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, used primarily against Middle Easterners and Muslims; see Moore, 1995) than were the Democrats Gore and Lieberman, national Muslim leaders swung their support to the Republican ticket. The decisive meeting was the fifth annual national convention of the American Muslim Alliance, dominated by immigrant Muslims; very few African American Muslims were present and their interests were not really considered.¹⁶

Changing political discourses

These shifts in political leadership, coalitions and audiences produced changes in American Muslim discourses, changes that continue to develop. In the 1980s, discussions among and within developing Muslim organizations revolved around issues outside the US, and most American Muslim national leaders opposed Muslim participation in American politics or gave only qualified support for it. Reflecting the Middle Eastern origins of most leaders at that time, internal conflicts focused on Sunni-Shi'i differences heightened by the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war, or Salafiyya versus Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen (that is, Saudi Arabian reformists/fundamentalists versus the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) and intra-Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen differences linked primarily to politics in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Gulf states (Johnson, 1991). South Asian, and more particularly Indian, Muslim discourse has become increasingly relevant since, in both India and the US, Muslims are a minority in a secular state, concerned with secular pressures and interrelations among Muslims and among religions.

As a new consensus emerged in the 1990s among American Muslim leaders that political participation in the US was both desirable and necessary, problems of *fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence became important. As a minority living in a predominantly Christian country, American Muslims are employing traditional legal discourses to define the US and the position of Muslims in it (Abou El Fadl, 1998c: 57). If the US is no longer *dar ul-kufr* or *dar ul-harb* (a place of war), is it to be considered *dar ul-Islam* (the place or abode of Islam)? If not, must Muslims migrate from it and, if they remain, are they bound by the laws of the non-Muslim host state or not?

While Muslim scholar Bassam Tibi argues that globalization has already swept all Muslims into an international state system that renders discussion of *dar ul-Islam* obsolete,¹⁷ many Muslims continue to debate the role of Islam in modern politics and legal considerations related to *dar ul-Islam* or *dar ul-harb*. Some American Muslims propose other designations, such as *dar ul-aman* (place of order), *dar ul-'ahd* or *dar ul-sulh* (place of alliance or treaty). These terms reflect usages in South Asia and the new South Asian leadership, just as the older references invoked Islamic movements in the Arab world like the Salafiyya and the Ikhwan which were relatively unknown in South Asia. An American Muslim political scientist (Khan, 1998a), originally from India, explains that since there is no explicit declaration of war against Islam, the US cannot be *dar ul-harb*, and since there are no specific treaties with resident Muslims, it cannot be *dar ul-sulh*. Therefore, he concludes that most American Muslims believe the US to be *dar ul-aman* (as India, in fact, is categorized by Muslims there). This legitimates seeking a place in mainstream politics and becoming citizens.

American Muslim discourse now includes explicit discussions about the compatibility of Islam and democracy and Islam and human rights.¹⁸ Arguing that the selection of the *caliph* (the political head of the umma abolished by Turkey's Ataturk in 1924) was not based on hereditary principles, proponents of democracy promote the institution of the *shura* or 'mutual consultation' council as analogous to democratic institutions in the West. ISNA, the largest single umbrella organization of American Muslims, helped form a national Islamic shura or representative council on religious issues, and the presidency rotates annually between the heads of ISNA and ICNA (Islamic Council of North America) and two African American leaders (W.D. Mohammed of Chicago and Imam Jamil Al-Amin of Atlanta).¹⁹ There are also regional experiments with shuras, often focussing initially on practices. One formed in southern California in 1996 tried to set common dates for all mosques and Islamic centers for Ramadan (the month of fasting): South Asian and Arab-based congregations often differ on which day to offer the Id prayers ending Ramadan.²⁰

The new emphasis on Muslim mobilization in the US necessitated consideration of Islamic legal discourse and practices. The field of fiqh or Islamic jurisprudence is being developed in the American context, raising the important question of who should be authorized to develop it. According to Khaled Abou El Fadl, a leading fiqh scholar, 'In the United States the field of *sharia* is flooded with self-declared experts who inundate our discourses with self-indulgent babble and gibberish . . . those who are unable to differentiate between the fundamentals of Islam from its particulars'.²¹ While a National Fiqh Council has been set up by ISNA, it 'is overwhelmingly composed of naturalized Muslims', men who know little about US family law and inheritance rights according to an African American Muslim scholar (McCloud, 1995: 126–7), and the council is not accepted as authoritative by all American Muslims in any case.

Leading scholars like Abou El Fadl, Professor of Islamic Law at UCLA, and Taha Alalwani, President of the Fiqh Council of North America and head of the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences,²² urge that the context should strongly shape decisions about Muslim practices in America. Abou El Fadl, who has long written a column, 'Conference of the Books', for the *Minaret*,²³ stresses the search for authoritative findings, not the pronouncement of ahistorical authoritarian edicts (Abou El Fadl, 2001a, b, c):

This is an Islamic Conference for Islamic books. The proceedings of this Conference, the murmurings, the rumblings are all done in a language not of this place or age. The expressions, phrases, symbols and discourses have been immortalized by time in a book. But the book is a product of its age. Immortal yet contextual and simultaneously contextual, this is the inevitable dilemma of books . . . my books, in this context – you are so foreign, so marginal. . . . Here, in this time and place, you are fossilized showpieces. . . . Yet, I know that you

are eternal and immutable because you speak forever. But you are contextual because it is the people that read you who must speak to the age, the people that read you who must transform through you into a book for our new age and new place. (1996a: 23)

Both Abou El Fadl and Alalwani disapprove of the application of Islamic legal decisions made elsewhere to the contemporary American context. Alalwani rebuts the opinion of a scholar who maintains that it is unlawful for Muslims to hold citizenship in non-Muslim states by noting that this decision was specific to North Africa during Muslim struggles against French colonialism. He also rebuts an opinion holding that, since the US is *dar ul-kufr* and *dar ul-harb*, Muslims can disobey US laws and regulations, arguing that wherever Muslims find the freedom to practice Islam is *dar ul-Islam* and *dar ad-daw'a* (place of calling), a place where the laws must be obeyed and the message of Islam should be spread (Hadhrami, 2000). Abou El Fadl is particularly eloquent in a despairing critique of the pronouncements by *fiqh* specialists who met for three days in Detroit in November of 1999 as the Sharia Scholars Association of North America. Although 'Half of the thirty-eight or so scholars have never lived in the US, the vast majority have never stepped foot in an American court room, and at least half live under corrupt and oppressive governments', these men issued a double-spaced, 13-page set of opinions on major issues facing Muslims in North America. Their opinions are the product, he says, of 'oil-nourished plutocracy' (Abou El Fadl, 2000, pointing to the rising tensions between American and 'foreign' forms of Islam).

Competing spokesmen and discourses

The focus on a wider role and mainstream audience for Islam in America is reflected in the reinvigoration of Islamic discourse by a new kind of spokesman and new media (print, radio, TV, video cassettes and the Internet). While one study found that 80–90 percent of Muslims were 'unmosqued' (Haddad and Lummis, 1987: 8) and presumably beyond the reach of what some Muslims derisively call the 'idols in the mosques' (Abdullah, 2000: 48), these more numerous and less observant Muslims are perhaps being reached through the new political organizations and popular Muslim media by what some call 'boss Muslims' or 'professional Muslims' (Schmidt, 1998: 189–93). Who are these new spokesmen?

Reaching the masses means 'presenting Islamic doctrine and discourse in accessible, vernacular terms'; more specifically, Islamic discourse has 'become reframed in styles of reasoning and forms of argument that draw on wider, less exclusive or erudite bodies of knowledge' (Eickelman and Anderson, 1999: 12). This is clearly happening in the US, as men with educational qualifications in medicine, engineering, architecture and

business emerge as major spokesmen for and about Islam. These are the disciplines in which so many post-1965 South Asian and other Muslim immigrants to the US have been trained. While at least one institutional attempt to integrate ‘Islamic’ science and ‘modern’ science is being made in the US,²⁴ most of these spokesmen seem to be believers in a universal, ‘positivist’ modern science that they do not see as linked to religion.²⁵

These well-educated immigrants turn to their disciplines and professions when explicating Islam for themselves and others. Immigrant doctors and engineers publish short general books intended for English-reading Muslim and non-Muslim audiences (Athar, 1994; Hathout, 1995, 2002). A leading architect, remembering his student days at the University of Illinois, recalled a mathematician from Jordan giving a sermon as ‘imam of the week’, in which he audaciously presented Divine Unity as a sphere and Allah’s Beautiful Names as an ordered state of points defining that sphere (Haider, 1996: 37). A study of the Islamic reconfiguration of financial practices by professionals and academics emphasizes this new leadership (Maurer, forthcoming), and it is even a point of criticism with respect to leadership within mosques (Abdullah, 1998b). Modern technology has also reinforced the authority of new spokesmen and weakened that of the traditional ulama and imams.

Those Islamic scholars who are in many respects anti-modernists lament the rising popularity of these new spokesmen and interpretations that so often betray a lack of classical or traditional Islamic training. Thus Seyyed Hossain Nasr writes (1987: 299, 301–2):

[T]he intrusion of modernism into *dar al-islam* and the recent resurgence of forces associated in either name or reality with Islam, added to the global significance of events which have occurred in the Middle East during the past few years . . . all of these have helped to create, not a few, but a flood of works on Islam and its future, some of them by the very people who but a few years ago rejected the very possibility of Islam being a force to be reckoned with in the future. . . . The Muslim modernists . . . place value and some degree of trust in one aspect or another of that post-medieval development in the West which is called modernism; and also . . . they have tried and continue to try to interpret Islam, or some of its features, according to the ideas, values and norms drawn from the modern outlook, with its own wide range of diversity. The modernist schools range from those which wish to reinterpret Islam in the light of the humanistic and rationalistic trends of Western thought and which ally themselves with the prevailing paradigm of liberalism in the West, to those which are drawn to the Marxist world-view and which have become much more numerous during the decades following the Second World War.

Similarly, William Chittick (1994: 163–4) believes that the ‘highly visible’ movements represent ‘an intensified destruction of Islamic values. The Islamic concept of human perfection has been banished from the stage, to

be replaced by various types of outwardly orientated human endeavor borrowed from contemporary ideologies.'

Islamic scholars, termed 'modernizers' – men like Fazlur Rahman and Mohammed Arkoun, who envision a rethinking of Islam – often write of that rethinking best accomplished in the West (Arkoun, 1994; Rahman, 1982). Rahman was forced out of Pakistan by Islamic fundamentalists in the 1960s and found a home at the University of Chicago (where he died), while Arkoun, an Algerian educated and located in France, feels that a liberal redefinition of Islam depends upon the academic freedom presently found in the West. Such modernizers may see the West and its contemporary scholarly Islamic community as analogous to the 18th century Haramayn (Mecca and Medina), the cosmopolitan center of networks of scholars then developing and promoting hadith studies and neo-Sufi thought throughout the Islamic world. While challenging the prevalent single-minded definition of modernity and globalization through a market economy, liberal-democratic polity and empirical science, men like Rahman and Arkoun write about the need to reinterpret and contextualize Islam, stressing its close relationship to Judaism, Christianity and 'western science'.

Others, both non-modernizers and modernizers alike, also position Islam in the West, asserting that the three monotheistic 'religions of the book' share origins, prophets and foundational values. They draw on scholarly statements that Christians, Jews and Muslims are all three 'possessors of an autonomous history and inextricable partners in the creation of "European" civilization' (Akcalay, 1997: 331; Arkoun, 1994: 64–5). Thus, Asad (1986: 3) objects to the 'notion of Europe as the true locus of Christianity and the Middle East as the true locus of Islam' and the cleaving apart of their intertwined histories.

Other Muslim scholars and spokesmen, whom traditionalists might term 'ideologues', see the US as the site of leadership for a modernizing umma and some express hopes of converting it to Islam. Murad Wilfried Hofmann (a retired German diplomat to Algeria and Morocco with a Munich University doctorate in jurisprudence) writes that Muslims can make 'an essential contribution to the healing of America' by becoming more visible and ceasing to 'cast doubt on the compatibility of Islam, democracy and human rights'. He urges that 'merely local traditions derived from only partially Islamized societies' have led to the 'perceived treatment of Muslim women as second class citizens' and that now 'the Muslim Ummah must act on the proper understanding' of Qur'anic injunctions relating to women. Arguing that Muslims in North America have a 'head start' over those in Europe, since most already are or are becoming citizens and can therefore participate in public life, he says (1999: 20–2):

Muslims all over the world are looking with high expectations toward the Ummah in the United States and Canada. Its dynamism, fresh approach, enlightened scholarship and sheer growth is their hope for an Islamic

Renaissance worldwide. Perhaps the mujaddid of the 15th Islamic century and the second millennium of the common era will be an American Muslim, insha Allah.

A Pakistani American physician (then president of the Association of Pakistani Physicians in North America) strikes a similar note (Abdullah, 1995: 27):

the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights were knowingly or unknowingly based on the Islamic principles of equality and justice for all . . . [thus there is] a great similarity between the success of America, especially in science, medicine and technology, with the success that was achieved by the Muslims of Baghdad, Cordoba and Istanbul. . . . In this country, Muslims have the opportunity to practice Islam as it should be practiced because there is no government edict to restrict religion, nor is there sectarian control over belief. . . . All that we need is unity among Muslims.

Likewise, a young Indian American Muslim political scientist writes somewhat euphorically (Khan, 1998a: 68):

But internally, it [the US] is the most Islamic state that has been operational in the last three hundred years. Internally, it is genuinely seeking to aspire to its ideals and the growing cultural, material and religious health of American Muslims is the best testimony to my claim. This debate, the existence of a Muslim public sphere where Muslims can think freely to revive and practice Islam is its gift to Muslims. Something unavailable in most of the Muslim world.

Another physician from Pakistan, Shahid Athar, echoes these sentiments and implicitly goes further (1994: 7): ‘Muslims believe in the same values for which this country [the US] was founded. . . . They feel closer to the founding fathers than what America has become.’

Some of these discourses not only place Islam in the West, but come close to claiming leadership of it. This reflects a new confidence, a conviction on the part of some American (and other) Muslims that the West has failed and that a renewed Islam will rescue the civilization in whose development it has shared. Importantly, this Islamist discourse no longer accepts secularism as a necessary part of modernity. Muslims taking this position, in contrast to those arguing for Islam’s centrality to western civilization, make a distinction between westernization and modernization, discarding the first and embracing and expanding the second in their own way (Voll, 1987).

Scholars and modernizers of Islam agonize over the issue of secularism. Fred Halliday (1996: 155–6) points out that:

[T]he issue of secularism lies at the heart both of the justification of human rights and democracy, and of the difficulties that Islamic societies face in formulating and implementing policies in this regard. Secularism is part of, but conceptually distinct from, the issues of political culture and the relation

between state and society mentioned above: it involves not only the exclusion of religion, but a climate of tolerance of debate, and the application of reason to social and legal life. . . . The central issue is . . . of removing the discussion of rights from the claims of religion itself.

Among American Muslims who define themselves as secular, the politics of contemporary globalization and US identity politics have produced a heightened concern with Islam.²⁶ This concern, Akeel Bilgrami (Professor of Philosophy at Columbia, originally from India) explains, stems from a pro-reform position on behalf of believers, even if one is not a believer oneself. Bilgrami's argument, sketched here in brutally simplified fashion, is that both secular Muslims and devout Muslim moderates should oppose Islamists because of a fundamental commitment to an authentic self; that is, to an identity which he calls a 'surplus phenomenology of identity', an identity without a functional religious role or 'an experience without a point'. This identity now serves other functions such as a defense against the 'domineering colonial or post-colonial contempt for their [Muslim] culture'. Rather than simply react defensively, he urges moderate Muslims to become active agents in the reinterpretation of Islam, returning to the more universal Meccan verses of the Qur'an. He writes: 'it will prove to be the final victory for imperialism that after all the other humiliations it has visited upon Muslims, it lingered in our psyches in the form of *genuine self-understanding* to make self-criticism and free, unreactive agency impossible' (1993: 283, 286, 293; emphasis in original).

PERSONAL (POLITICAL) ISSUES

In examining American Islam anthropologically – that is, looking for Islamic discursive traditions closely related to the founding texts of the Qur'an and the hadith – we find discourses that instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of historical practices in domestic or personal domains. These include teachings about patriarchy, gender roles and sexuality. American Muslim discourse often stresses the significant contributions Muslims can make to American society, such as demonstrating the proper ways of bringing up children and caring for the elderly, contributions that involve conceptions of gender, the family and the individual based in Islamic rather than American traditions. It is here that issues of identity and individualism are addressed in domains that, while personal and private, invoke interpretations of Islamic and American Muslim history that are also profoundly social and public – that is, political.

Upholding patriarchy in family and community

Many immigrant Muslims and some African American ‘new Muslims’ uphold patriarchy (male authority) and ‘gender complementarity’ (different male and female roles) in both the family and the community (McCloud, 1995: 55ff.). They perceive the dominant American values of gender equality and freedom of sexual expression as serious threats to a Muslim way of life and indeed to all ordered social life. These views are centrally connected to a fear of ‘American individualism’, which is interpreted not as a moral ideal, but as egoism, an amoral phenomenon and a sign of family and societal breakdown (Taylor, 1999: 159). In these areas, what Taylor calls the background understanding, the context in which beliefs and practices are formulated, is clearly different, so that ‘American’ and what I am calling ‘Islamic’ understandings²⁷ of these significant and deeply personal issues come from different places.

The vigorous defense of gender complementarity within much of American Muslim culture disguises a deep fear of the loss of patriarchal privilege, I would argue. Manuel Castells (1997: 25–7) sees Christian fundamentalism in the US similarly as a response to a ‘crisis of patriarchalism’ brought on by the women’s movement, the gay and lesbian movement and the rising incidence of divorce, separation, family violence, children born out of wedlock and a general rejection of patriarchal authority. Tension assuredly comes from a reportedly high divorce rate among Muslims in North America – 33 percent of all marriages, third in the world behind the US as a whole (48.6 percent) and the UK (36 percent) (Ba-Yunus, 1999). There are also indications that Muslim women are willing to use the American legal system in other ways against Muslim men, for example by alleging job discrimination.

The reinforcement of patriarchy in the family and community influences marriage negotiations and gender relations within marriages. One man rejected a possible spouse by saying, ‘She had the seed of a traitor! . . . You know the problem in the Muslim community. I just didn’t like the way she talked to men, and then her lack of forthrightness about it.’ His listener asked if this wasn’t ‘the patriarchy of sexism that allows men what it will not allow women’ and went on to discuss understandings of betrayal and trust in Islam (Abou El Fadl, 1996b). When a Muslim women’s leader (daughter of an immigrant) at an international Islamic Unity conference advocated writing good Islamic marriage contracts before marriage to ensure a woman’s rights (such contracts are enforceable in American courts) and urged mutual respect and flexibility within the family unit regarding work and domestic roles, she was challenged from the floor by both older and younger Muslim men; they gave different advice and attributed Muslim family problems in the US to the larger society (personal observation, Los Angeles, 1996).

Support for 'family values' can lead Muslim organizations to support extremely conservative candidates and causes in the American political context. Muslim magazines have occasionally recognized a kinship with fundamentalist Christians, running sympathetic articles, for example, when the Southern Baptists re-emphasized patriarchal family values in an amended statement of belief passed in 1999. The Mormon community has also been held up as an example for Islamic community-building in America, admired for its family values, cooperative governing structures, tithing system and, apparently, its opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and influential role in 'foreign policy and domestic intelligence' (Abdullah, 1998a).

Opposition to state 'interference' in domestic affairs is another aspect of the reinforcement of patriarchy. Many Muslims oppose intervention by state agencies to prevent abuse of women and children or to remove children, for any reason, from their parents' custody. Cries of outrage result when Muslim children are put into Christian foster homes.²⁸ At a major Islamic conference, an African American Muslim woman observed that Muslim women should not be afraid to turn to mainstream institutions for help with domestic abuse, since the 'brothers' could not be counted on. She mentioned a recent instance in which a Muslim brother was honored in the mosque, although everyone knew he had recently beaten his wife senseless (personal observation, Los Angeles, 1996). Some imams advocate setting up Islamic arbitration committees to deal with disputes, thus avoiding mainstream institutions.

Sexual abuse and incest are almost never discussed in relation to Muslim families. Counselling a Muslim woman whose father had repeatedly sexually molested her, Abou El Fadl wrote (1997a: 43):

I open the books . . . and I find no mention of her or her suffering. The jurists were very reluctant to hold parents liable for offenses committed against their children. . . . The only place I can find a discourse about her is in the writings of non-Muslim authors. . . . Unfortunately, my sister you have not yet entered our consciousness.

In this instance, mainstream discourse and institutions seem to be the woman's only recourse.

The desire to uphold patriarchy and to put forward strong Muslim men as leaders in the US arguably contributes to immigrant Muslim eagerness to embrace African American Muslim charismatic leaders and personalities like Mohammad Ali, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Louis Farrakhan and Mike Tyson, despite their sometimes questionable Islamic credentials. In the case of Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam since the late 1970s, the most obvious problem has been the Nation's belief that its founder W.D. Fard was God, and that his successor Elijah Muhammad was prophet, messiah and mahdi. Some of the new spokesmen have interviewed

Farrakhan repeatedly, urging him to bring his community closer to Sunni Islam. Farrakhan's Million Man March on Washington, DC in 1995 was lauded in the Muslim American press as a triumph for Islam, and his recent reconciliation with Warith Deen Mohammed's Muslim American Society was enthusiastically welcomed.²⁹

Yet, in the same issue of *Islamic Horizons* (March/April 2000: 10), ISNA's official publication, which welcomed Louis Farrakhan and his Nation of Islam into 'the family' in early 2000, we have an historical irony, the decisive rejection of the Ahmadi movement.³⁰ The Ahmadis have been a crucial force in shaping African American Islam since 1920, moving it in the direction of Sunni orthodoxy and considered Muslims in 1960 (Lincoln, 1961: 221), but in Pakistan they were declared a non-Muslim sect in 1974 (although two earlier Supreme Court decisions had declined to take that position; see Mahmud, 1995). That disempowerment now follows them from South Asia (with fellow South Asians) to threaten the Ahmadis' foundational place in American Muslim history.

Boxing champion Mike Tyson, a convicted rapist, has also been conspicuously courted by ISNA leaders. Tyson converted to Islam in prison in 1994 and, when he was released in 1995, a special report to *Pakistan Link* by one of the new spokesmen revealingly stated (Athar, 1995):

Now, a week before Tyson's release and on the day of his release and his visit to the ISNA Mosque to pray (March 25), Islam and Muslims got millions of dollars worth of free publicity. The various media were present . . . from all over the USA and the world on this small town of Plainfield. . . . Dr Syeed, ISNA's Secretary-General, gave up to eight interviews per day prior to the release. God has strange ways of bestowing his favor . . . it was God who chose Plainfield as Headquarters of the ISNA, a mile away from which Mike Tyson, the youngest world heavyweight boxing champion, was to be imprisoned five years later. . . . When Mike Tyson entered the prison in 1992, he was a Christian . . . little did he know what God had planned for him. . . . Prison is an escape from social and peer pressures which lead to crime which sends one to prison. Thus, the Prophet Joseph (Yusuf) prayed to God . . . to send him to prison rather than be around the temptations of women who were after him. In the prison like other inmates, Mike had time to read and reflect . . . he met a Muslim . . . who taught him Islam. . . . Mike became a Muslim about a year before his release on his own convictions. . . . [After his release] Mike did come to the ISNA Mosque to offer prayers . . . including his friend, boxer Muhammad Ali, Rapper Hammer, ISNA's President Abdullah Idris Ali, TV cameras and reporters. . . . Yes, I prayed with Mike and Mohammad Ali in the first row, shook their hands and embraced them afterwards. They are the two most beautiful and peaceful people that I have seen. . . . After he left, reporters . . . asked many questions about him and Islam . . . [they] asked for some proof that he was actually a Muslim. The fact that Mike had declared on Larry King's live show that he was a Muslim, he was wearing a Muslim kufi. . . . He came to the mosque to pray and said words like Insha Allah, Allah o Akber and asalamualaikum, and he is

still learning. I am told by his teacher that he has been praying in the prison and did fast during the month of Ramadan. The only thing to observe now will be his behavior.

What makes these African American Muslim men attractive to the immigrant Muslim spokesmen is their strong masculine image and their leadership potential in the American context; an insistence on patriarchy that is arguably at the expense of both Islamic orthodoxy and of Muslim women.

Discourses and practices concerning women

There is an explicit debate within the American Muslim community about the place of women, with liberal or modernizing mosques, centers and associations integrating women into teaching and decision-making positions. Others minimize women's participation or are uncertain as to how to include them. A prominent American Muslim woman pointed sharply to women's lack of inclusion (Mattson, 1999) shortly before being asked to join ISNA's leadership as a vice president (their first female officer). Women in the Arab world and South Asia traditionally do not pray in mosques, and practices in the US vary (and depend partly upon the physical structures themselves). Women's access to mosques for meetings of their own is regulated by the imams, men who are usually immigrants trained outside the US and not necessarily sympathetic to meetings about, for example, family counselling or domestic abuse. National organizations like ISNA and ICNA restrict their leadership positions to men (with the recent ISNA exception just mentioned), and some, including ICNA, seat women separately at meetings (and in the rear during prayer), a practice debated in the American Muslim press. Muslim community events and weddings often try to regulate seating by gender.

Muslim women's clothing and the ways in which women should interact with men in the US provide sources of anxiety. The necessity of wearing a *hijab* (head scarf) or the *jilbab* or *chador* (cloak) is debated. Islamic organizations may invite women to events, but require them to wear 'Islamic attire', usually defined as the hijab.³¹ While many advisors routinely advocate donning the hijab, this can be a barrier to conversion or a site of generational struggle.³² Criticism of the ways in which Muslim women dress or greet men emphasize their status as symbols of sexual temptation (Abou El Fadl, 1997b).

Calls for revision of the shari'a with respect to women are few in number, but are increasingly being raised (Ali, 1999; Hathout, 1998). Scholars favoring more equality for women in American Islam cite historic examples of the non-seclusion of women or recognition of their scholarly capabilities (Abou El Fadl, 1995a, b). The Muslim Women's League of Los Angeles distributed a short bibliography of readings on women and Islam. Since this

list includes books by the scholars Leila Ahmed and Fatima Mernissi, the League was attacked publicly as ‘feminist’ and as trying ‘to change Islam’.³³

Such American Muslim women have supporters among scholars and laymen. Professor Khaled Abou El Fadl, commenting on legal decisions (in Pakistan) concerning the rights of Muslim women in marriage, wrote that despite

endless rhetoric about the rights of women in Islam . . . I fear that the seclusion of women has taught them [Muslim men] that what is secluded is to be possessed and owned . . . and used. . . . The fact is that those who ache to regulate women are those who invariably violate them, and, those who are obsessed with defining the limits for women are the ones who observe no limits with women. (1999: 41)

Others who press for changed practices concerning women are occasionally given space in the Muslim press, although this can lead to sanctions against them.³⁴

American Muslim women scholar activists, however, are establishing themselves in the field of fiqh or jurisprudence (Webb, 2000). Amina Wadud, an African American Muslim and a Professor of Islamic Studies,³⁵ calls for a radical and continual rethinking of the Qur’an and hadith, asserting that much now considered divine and immutable shari’a is the result of a long, male-dominated intellectual process. She argues that:

The attempts to address the question of Muslim women’s autonomous agency and authentic Islamic identity in the context of Islam and modernity can only be successful when a complete reexamination of the primary sources of Islamic thought, praxis, and worldview is made that intentionally includes female perspectives on these sources and that validates female experiences. (Wadud, 2000: 20)

Wadud’s book is a leading contribution to what she (and others) term the ‘gender *jihad*’ (Wadud, 1999: x).³⁶ Hers is a hermeneutic analysis, assessing what the Qur’an says, how it says it, what is said about it and by whom, and what is left unsaid. The book has been very widely read, generating reactions from ‘more conservative Muslims’ (1999: xii–xiii)³⁷ and support from other Muslim women scholars such as Amira El-Azhary Sonbol (an Egyptian-born Professor of Islamic History at Georgetown University’s Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding), Leila Ahmed (Egyptian-born and now at Harvard’s School of Divinity) and African American Muslim Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons. Simmons, a Sunni and a Sufi, came to Islam after participation in the civil rights and black power movements. She began identifying as a feminist while in Mississippi working for black civil rights. Learning that religion and culture ‘have been used historically to convince women of their inferiority and their second-class status just as it had been used to convince African Americans of the same’, she has ‘no desire to reoppress myself as a woman in the name of religion’ (2000: 200–1)

and has joined Muslim women scholars and activists working to separate the religious core of Islam from sociocultural traditions.

AFTER 11 SEPTEMBER 2001: VOICES OF THE FUTURE

In a detailed account of the immediate aftermath of the 11 September attacks on the US, I traced the opening up of American Muslim politics as the American media and public officials called upon a wide range of Muslim spokesmen, diminishing the dominance of those political leaders who had built a public presence for Muslims in the 1980s and 1990s in the US (Leonard, 2002b). To generalize, the popular voices were those of Muslim scholars more consonant with general American views of the attacks and inclined to call for introspection and strong Muslim self-criticism. These scholars included Shaykh Hamza Yusuf (a Euro-American convert and a Sufi), Professor Khaled Abou El Fadl (at UCLA's School of Law, from Kuwait, often critical of 'establishment' Muslim leaders), Professor Ali Asani (in Religious Studies at Harvard, from the minority Indian Shia Nizari Ismailis), Professor Muqtedar Khan (a young 'liberal' political scientist from India) and Shaykh Hissam Kabbani (a Naqshbandi Sufi, previously mentioned).

Despite this disruption and challenge to their leadership, the Muslim organizations have now rallied and declare themselves even more fervently to be American, democratic and supportive of civil liberties. Yet the wider range of Muslim spokesmen continues to be drawn upon by media commentators and government officials, and there have been political realignments among Muslims. I will conclude by pointing to several important trends evident by the late autumn of 2002. First, and despite prejudice and hate crimes, we hear the increasingly confident voices of American Muslims in the public sphere, joining in calls for adherence to the Constitution and civil rights. They are also beginning to again voice strong dissent towards current American Middle Eastern foreign policy. Second, political realignments underway show continuing divisions among Muslims, but perhaps less anxiety about that, and an increased level of comfort with pluralism in the community. Third, voices from within the Muslim community are speaking against militant Islamic ideologies and in favor of serious rethinking and reforms of Muslim discourse and practice in the US. Finally, there is the slow but sure emergence of a new, younger generation of leaders, Muslims brought up in the US.

After 11 September, hate crimes against Muslims did soar, and especially, due to general ignorance on the part of the American public, against South Asian Americans.³⁸ While national Muslim political organizations, notably CAIR and MPAC, regularly issue news bulletins

highlighting hate crimes and other anti-Muslim incidents, they also issue statements of loyalty to the US. Recently they have called upon President Bush and the Republican Party to respond better to the fears and desires of Muslim citizens.³⁹ The large national religious organizations, ISNA and ICNA, held their annual conventions in the summer of 2002, with many themes and presentations stressing that Muslims are part of America and ‘a blessing’ for it. A leading Pakistani American media commentator argued that America’s Arabs and Muslims should willingly stand up to greater scrutiny and assist US authorities as law enforcement agencies try to prevent terrorist activities in the country, and a leading Arab American wrote that, one year after 11 September, Arab American rights had been adequately defended by the Department of Justice and the FBI.⁴⁰

Despite the brave show of unity and support for the nation, there are signs that divisions among various African Americans, other converts and immigrant Muslim groups may be widening. Immigrant Muslims have expressed resentment at the attention given to the views of white American converts like Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, and Jesse Jackson is quoted as saying, ‘before September 11, you people thought you were white and thought you’re the elite, but now you too are black like us’ (Niaz, 2002: 32). There are signs of shifting organizational alliances, with a new group of African American Sunnis splitting off from the national, largely immigrant organizations.⁴¹ W. Deen Mohammed also remains separate and has again renamed his large following (as of October 2002) the American Society of Muslims instead of the Muslim American Society (he had previously changed the name to put Muslim first and now he has put American first).

Yet it seems to me that American Muslim media and organizations have become more open about divisions among Muslims and more comfortable with their own diversity and pluralism. *The Minaret*, a leading American Muslim periodical, ran a special feature story (Alibhai, 2002) praising Sufi thought and W.D. Mohammed’s African American Muslim community and advocating modern training for imams, including women imams (Sufis and African American Muslims are seldom featured or praised in mainstream immigrant Muslim publications). MPAC has reached out to Japanese Americans (who were among the first to reach out to Muslims after 11 September, recalling their Second World War experience of incarceration in camps shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor).⁴² Other new connections are being made between American Muslim and non-Muslim groups and organizations in local contexts.

At the same time, public distancing from violent or extremist ‘Islamic’ expressions has increased, and moderate or modernizing Muslims are speaking up more. This is not so much a change but a continuation of views voiced in the 1990s by some American Muslims, particularly scholars of Islamic jurisprudence and history.⁴³ Some of these scholars have enjoyed

mainstream media attention, giving their ideas wider circulation among Muslims as well as non-Muslims.

Islamic studies scholars had already been embracing new ways of thinking. Azim Nanji writes of the need to rethink the ways in which the Muslim world has been mapped geographically and intellectually and sees an increasingly cosmopolitan profile of scholars and methods in the field of Islamic studies, partly due to the migration of European scholars to the Americas and also the migration of Muslim world scholars to both Europe and America. Arguing that the concepts of dar ul-Islam and dar ul-harb are now irrelevant, as are western scholarly views of the Near or Middle East as the center of Islamic studies that marginalize large groups of Muslims, Nanji calls for vibrant, more diverse and encompassing humanistic scholarship, including focusing on the increasing public participation by women and the new interactions among Muslims living in the West. He also wants to resist a focus on 'fundamentalist' expressions of Islam, which he did not, in 1997, see as the primary expressions of Muslim identity in the modern world (Nanji, 1997: xix, xviii, xix). Muhammed Arkoun writes of the need to 'encourage and initiate audacious, free, productive thinking on Islam today', but, again, not on the 'revivalism' that has monopolized the discourse. He calls for Muslim thinkers and intellectuals to insert their critical approach into the social and cultural space presently dominated by militant ideologies (Arkoun, 1994: 220).

After 11 September, however, scholars have begun to confront those militant ideologies or fundamentalist expressions of Islam rather than ignore them. While an overview like that by Daniel Pipes and Khalid Duran (2002) overstates the Islamist threat, liberal and moderate Muslims in America are increasingly confronting their conservative co-believers since 11 September, as a close reading of the contemporary press and Internet sites shows. An Islamic website article (Caldwell, 2001) talks about Muslim activists embracing modern scientific and social changes, arguing for greater equality between men and women, interfaith dialogue, an emphasis on the arts, an end to anti-Jewish rhetoric, a less literal reading of the Qur'an and full acceptance of American ideals of freedom and tolerance. Abou El Fadl has proposed the name 'Salafabism' for the Wahhabi co-optation of Salafism which has proponents in the US and sees Islam as at odds with the West (2001d: 28-33). Ali Asani (2002) has published a passionate plea for tolerance of Islamic pluralism.

Finally, it seems that, just as new spokesmen for and about Islam emerged in the US in the 1980s and 1990s, still newer and younger spokesmen and women are now emerging. The older generations still control the leading institutions and organizations in American Islam, despite well-meaning advice from respected scholar John Esposito, who, just after 11 September, urged American Muslims to put forward more women and young people who spoke unaccented American English. These are men

with modern professional and academic degrees, but perhaps also a strong investment in patriarchy and a resistance to change.⁴⁴ Yet the intersection of public and personal experience is crucial for American Muslims, and many American Muslim youths are combining religious conviction with strongly individualistic choices.

Young people may or may not take over the leadership of existing American Muslim institutions and organizations soon, but their centrality and future dominance in the Muslim umma have been predicted by many. Furthermore, with tightened immigration restrictions and slower visa-granting processes now affecting the admission of Muslim foreign students, it is American-born Muslims who lead the campus Muslim student associations. (In earlier decades, foreign students were instrumental in founding the MSA, then the ISNA and the more explicitly political American Muslim organizations.) Also, young people are distinguished by their use of new technologies and new media to define themselves and their religion. Just as skilled speakers elsewhere in the Islamic world relate Islamic texts to the daily lives of their audiences, both in person and through cassettes and videos, young preachers like Shaykh Hamza Yusuf reach American Muslim college students through many media, citing texts used in academic contexts like Marshall Hodgson and Michel Foucault in their discourses.

Young people use the Internet, email, audio and video cassettes, and through these media they compete with the older fiqh specialists and advice columnists who use the press, radio and TV. As Professor Muqtedar Khan said (when still a graduate student, he became a ‘cyberspace *mufti*’): ‘The Internet has made everyone a mufti (legal advisor) . . . [opening up] a variety of opinion . . . [it is] the globalization of the *mufti*’ (Wax, 1999).⁴⁵ The ‘cyberspace mufti’ offered advice on the Internet, while the National Fiqh Council insisted on written letters until 2000 and older fiqh scholars tended to ridicule the new trends (Abou El Fadl, 1994; Hadhrami, 2000).

American Muslim youths are taking many paths and it remains to be seen how they will be trained, how they will interpret and practice their religion. Certainly many are moving from ethnic or national origin identities to a religious identity.⁴⁶ Their formulations of Islam may be ‘grassroots’ rather than guided by ISNA, the MSA or other organizations, and their religious identities are often distinctly American (Hasan, 2000; Khan, 2002). Open to the global flows of Islamic information, interpretation and activity, these young American Muslims are firmly grounded in the US, not in the diverse homelands that motivate much transnational activism among the older immigrant Muslims (Leonard, 2000; Werbner, 1998).

This article has reviewed the rapidly changing political orientations and activities developed by American Muslims, keeping in mind a loose distinction between discourses and practices that are more essentially ‘Islamic’ (that is, those related to the core tradition developed and elaborated outside of North America) and those that might be termed ‘American’

(those developed or emphasized in the American context). Many American Muslim spokesmen and women are newly arrived, while others come from communities long established in the country. It will take time for these diverse American Muslim views to achieve coherence and, as Talal Asad (1986: 17) writes, 'The coherence that each party finds, or fails to find in that [Islamic] tradition will depend on their particular historical position'. Whether broadly political or more personal, these discourses and practices are seen to be rooted in Islamic pasts, yet they have been changed by their development and presentation in the US. Even the American Muslim aspirations to leadership of the transglobal umma are arguably based in part on the freedoms and strengths derived from residence and citizenship in the US and on the US vision of itself as leader of the world.

Notes

- 1 As Candland (2000: 1) states, a major recent volume hardly mentioned religion and seemed to consider it a 'premodern' form of globalization (see Held et al., 1999: 316–17, 415–16; but see also Rudolph and Piscatori, 1997).
- 2 I thank the University of California Humanities Research Institute for a fellowship in 2000 devoted to the question of Islamic modernities and globalization, and I thank my colleagues and also Erica Bornstein, Syed Faiz Ali, Garbi Schmidt, Ivan Light and the anonymous reviewers of *Ethnicities* for helpful comments on earlier versions of this article.
- 3 Most of this article concerns developments before that event, but I conclude by summarizing the situation in 2002 (see Leonard, 2002b for details of the important changes that followed immediately after 11 September).
- 4 See Asad (1986: 7, 14) and Taylor (1999: 161–2), who says of Christianity: 'the starting point will leave its impress on the end product' and 'new differences will emerge from the old'.
- 5 Halliday (1996: 115) cautions against the use of 'Muslim' as a term of ethnic identity and, as I do, draws attention to social, ethnic, linguistic and national identities. Yet 'American Muslim' is acquiring a distinctive meaning, as I argue in Leonard (2003).
- 6 Bowen (1993) shows the movements of sacred texts across societal boundaries and the ways in which believers worked with texts and legal, moral and social applications for Indonesia.
- 7 Some African American Muslim leaders developed versions of Islam that were not only anti-Christian, but anti-white, such as Louis Farrakhan, whose Nation of Islam constitutes a small percentage of African American Muslims. Having long promised to join the Sunni mainstream, in 2000 Farrakhan did begin to reconcile with W.D. Mohammed's Muslim American Society (its name at the time), from which he had split following the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975.
- 8 There have been many attempts to bridge this gulf, but even the longstanding partnership between African American and South Asian Ahmadis has experienced major strains now that Pakistanis form the well-off majority. Walbridge and Haneef (1999) detail some of the problems.

- 9 This was a change because in 1978 the Gulf states of Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Qatar had named W.D. Mohammed their official receiver of funds for conversion efforts (Poston, 1991: 134), and others had accepted funds as well.
- 10 'We took no foreign money', a leader said, and the mosque won approval from the Granada Hills City Council only after presenting a plan for a domeless building with Spanish tile roof and stucco walls.
- 11 Located in Culver City, the King Fahd Mosque cost \$8.1m and was fully funded by the Saudi Arabian royal family. W.D. Mohammed of the Muslim American Society is quoted as criticizing Saudi Arabia's own rigid barring of all non-Muslim religious expressions (*Los Angeles Times*, 18 July 1998: B1, B8).
- 12 The order's Grand Mufti Shaykh Nazim al-Kibrisi is based in Cyprus. The Shaykh's son-in-law Shaykh Hisham Kabbani represents him in America. Kabbani is from Lebanon where his father is Grand Mufti. The Naqshbandis have been aggressively 'calling' people to Islam, from Euro-Americans to gang members in urban ghettos.
- 13 Kabbani alleged that 'many Muslim organizations . . . are not moderate, but extremist', that organizations are set up to collect money and send it to 'extremists outside the United States', that most leaders and most mosque boards of trustees are 'being run by the extremist ideology, but not acting as a militant movement' and that 'this extremist ideology is spreading into universities through national organizations, associations and clubs'.
- 14 Dr Laila Al-Marayati (of the Islamic Center of southern California and its Muslim Women's League) was the only woman from California picked for Hillary Clinton's US delegation to the 1995 International Women's Conference in Beijing. In 1996, the White House began a new tradition by hosting a celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the end of the holy month of fasting (with the help of the American Muslim Council in 1996 and, in 1998, of the Muslim Women's League and MPAC). In 1999, Secretary of State Madeline Albright hosted her department's first *iftar* (breaking the fast) dinner for Muslim American leaders and the Pentagon hosted an *iftar* for Muslims in the armed forces (*Islamic Horizons*, January/February 2000: 16; *Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 1998: B1, B8). A little known fact is that Chelsea Clinton took a high school class on Islam from Karima Alavi, director of Islamic World Educational Services in Abiqui, New Mexico (see Alavi, 'Clintons and Islam', *The Minaret*, January 2000: 7).
- 15 Khan (1998b: 108) discusses this, adding modern political identity to *asabiya* or ethnicity and the schools of *fiqh* or jurisprudence, the two traditional ingredients of Islamic pluralism. 'Muslim society has not escaped the effects of post-modernity', he says, so 'it too now manifests identity politics'.
- 16 CAIR reported that 80 percent of Muslims polled favored Nader (an Arab Christian of Lebanese descent), but, after Bush's debate with Gore in Michigan where Bush declared himself opposed to the use of secret evidence, there was a shift. I attended the crucial decision-making meeting of the AMA in Irvine, California (30 September 2000); Dr Agha Saeed, head of the AMA, also headed the AMPCC then.
- 17 Defining secularization as an inevitable part of social evolution towards functional differentiation in modern society, Tibi says it will not mean the extinction of Islam or the delegitimation of its cultural authenticity, but will allow for

its development as a religious ethic, a 'civil theology'. A political scientist born in Damascus and now living in Germany, Tibi takes cultural pluralism for granted, but argues against cultural relativity and for Enlightenment-based cultural comparisons. Using Middle Eastern and North African materials, he advocates a secularization of Islamic religion, theology and culture (Tibi, 1988: xiii–xiv, 130–1, 148).

- 18 A Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy (CSID) was formed in 2000 (see: <http://www.islam-democracy.org>). The Chair Ali Mazrui is also the Director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at New York's Binghamton University and the Vice-Chair John Esposito is a Director of the Center of Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University.
- 19 *The Minaret* (August 1995: 22) and *The Orange Crescent* (February/March 1993) report the 1993 forming of this council, which was thought to include 65 percent of all mosques in North America. Al-Amin's (the former H. Rap Brown's) arrest for murder in 2000 and subsequent conviction and W.D. Mohammed's reported withdrawal from the shura in 2000 put this arrangement in jeopardy.
- 20 Some use Saudi Arabian sightings of the moon to determine the timing of observances in North America, while others use local sightings; some set the prayers for the day after the day of Arafat, others set them by the sighting of the moon. Fifty-six member mosques and affiliated groups in southern California formed this shura in 1995 and 26 Islamic centers agreed on a common date for Id prayers in December of 1995 (see *Los Angeles Times*, 20 January 1996: B4). A common date for Id was still not being observed in 2002.
- 21 Abou El Fadl (1998a: 41) commented that, at a time when Serbian troops were massacring Muslims in Kosovo, a 'pressing issue' in 'our community' was whether to give Christian seminary students visiting a mosque for the first time Arab or Indo-Pakistani style hijabs as parting gifts!
- 22 Abou El Fadl, from Kuwait but educated in Egypt, is the Omar and Azmeralda Alfi Distinguished Fellow at UCLA's Law School. Alalwani, of Iraqi origin, has headed the Fiqh Council since 1986, when ISNA upgraded and expanded its 30-year-old Fiqh Council.
- 23 Published by the Islamic Center of southern California, this is one of the four leading American Muslim journals, according to Nyang (1998: 10–11).
- 24 This is the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences. Dr Ismail R. al-Faruqi and others established the International Institute of Islamic Thought in 1981 in Washington, DC and, in 1996, it moved to Herndon, West Virginia and was changed and renamed. It offers an MA in Islamic Studies (an American-style graduate program) and in Imamate Studies (Furlow, 1999). It trains imams for the US armed forces and has offered to train imams for Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam.
- 25 A statement praising 'science' and denigrating 'Islamic science' by a Pakistani physicist was circulated widely and with approval on email in the US in January 2000. Described as 'brilliant' and 'profound', it read:

Unremitting honesty and objectivity, and strict respect for law, is precisely why Science is so absurdly strong. A Deity is certainly free to violate any law of nature, but woe to the poor physicist who disrespects, for example, the law of conservation of energy. It was the uncompromising demand that this

law hold always and everywhere that made possible lathes and locomotives, lasers and lunar landings. The law-abiding nature of Science separates it from magic, which knows no limits, as well as the supernatural. Whether we like it or not, Science is getting not just stronger, but immensely stronger. Societies that refuse to concede this are fated for marginalization in the centuries to come. Darwin told us this a long time ago and it is time we listened carefully. (Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy, Professor of High Energy Physics at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad and featured writer on Chowk, a website popular in the US)

- 26 Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*, which led to the *fatwa* calling for his death in 1989, was one turning point for secular Muslims. Thus Sara Suleri (Professor of Literature at Yale, originally from Pakistan) wrote, commenting on Rushdie's sudden (and brief) embrace of Islam in an Afterword directed at him:

We . . . were equally impatient with your earlier claims that you were *not* a Muslim as with your current declaration that you *are*. . . . Perhaps you have not realized that the Rushdie crisis forced many cultural immigrants like yourself finally to claim that they were Muslim. I know I speak for both Akeel Bilgrami and myself when I assert that our new adoption of Islam had nothing to do with notions of family and love. As secular Muslims, we remain resolutely outside such conciliatory boundaries. (1992: 219; emphases in original)

- 27 'Islamic' here is not very accurate, as immigrants of other religions from patriarchal societies have similar beliefs and practices, but there is also an 'Islamic core' to them from what some would call instead 'old world' or 'heartland' Islam.
- 28 In the case of an Albanian American family in Texas, there were no Muslim foster parents on social service rosters ('Sinful Separation', *The Minaret*, October 1995: 24–32). A few months later, *The Minaret* ran a story, 'Child Abuse and Neglect', which was more broadly informative about the topic and American law (July 1996: 24–9). NISWA, a southern Californian Muslim women's organization, has responded by finding and listing Muslim foster parents.
- 29 While W.D. Mohammed intends to re-emphasize Saviour's Day among his followers, Farrakhan is enjoining his to observe the Ramadan fast and traditional beliefs, but structurally the groups remain separate.
- 30 Responding to a polite and well-reasoned letter of protest from one whose talk's title had been amended by the editorial insertion of 'non-Muslim' before 'Qadiyani', the editor replied that it had been done to inform readers that 'the Qadiyanis (variously also called "Ahmadis" and "Mirzais") are NOT a Muslim sect, but a cult of their own, misled by the imposter Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadiyan. The Qadiyani issue is not a sectarian divide but a matter of distinct and separate religious beliefs' (*Islamic Horizons*, March/April 2000: 8).
- 31 The Islamic Forum invited me to its annual conference in 1996, but asked that even I, a non-Muslim, wear hijab since 'it is an honor to all women'. I had to decline the invitation.
- 32 At one mosque, the members' consensus that a woman wanting to take the

Shahada (submission to Allah) should wear hijab or declare her intention to adopt it was preventing her from becoming a Muslim (Abou El Fadl, 1996c). In another case, a mother insisted that her daughter accept an arranged marriage and, as a first step, that she remove her hijab, asserting that obedience to parents took priority over modesty. Abou El Fadl (1997c) commented that the point here was that, 'if parents have the power to uncover their children's bodies, they also have the power to decide who these bodies enter into conjugal relations with'. He consoled the daughter and himself by asserting that 'respect and blind obedience are not synonymous and the authoritative and authoritarian are not the same. First and foremost the worth and dignity of a human being must be demonstrated and taught in the parent-child relationship. Even parents may not replace the Will of God with the authoritarianism of human will.'

33 The bibliography and most of the books on it are available at the Islamic Center of southern California book store. The president, a second-generation medical doctor of Arab ancestry, responded that they were simply Muslim women insisting on enjoying the rights guaranteed by Allah.

34 Dr Ausaf Ali was invited to write 'On Meeting the Challenges Facing the Muslims of America' for *The Orange Crescent*, published by the Islamic Society of Orange County (February/March 1993: 8-10). His strong stance in favor of adult female education and independence led to vociferous protests.

35 Wadud is at Virginia Commonwealth University; she taught in Kuala Lumpur's International Islamic University for three years and participated in the influential 'Sisters in Islam' group (for a brief biography, see Smith, 1999: 201-2).

36 First published in Malaysia in 1992, where Wadud has been active, it was then translated and published in Indonesian (1994) and Turkish (1997), evidencing the global reach of the gender jihad.

37 Wadud also writes (1999: xviii-xix):

as a woman, of African origin, and an American convert to Islam, I was not supposed to seek beyond what others hand down to me. . . . I used to think that 'Islam' and 'Muslim' were one and the same [but] situations may arise where one might be forced to choose between the two.

38 An FBI Hate Crimes Report shows a rise from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001; and see the March 2002 report of the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, 'Backlash? When America Turned on its Own' (*Los Angeles Times*, 11 March 2002: A18; *India-West*, 15 March 2002: A28), saying that 96 percent of the 243 incidents of violence in the first three months after 11 September targeted South Asians, more than half of them Sikhs (a Sikh and a Pakistani were killed).

39 'MPAC firmly supports the view that being a Muslim is fully compatible with being a loyal and patriotic American. American Muslims should find no contradiction between Islamic values and the American tradition of liberty and democracy enshrined in the Constitution', begins a press release of 23 September 2002; and for criticisms of and calls upon the Republican Party, see its email 'MPAC News' (4 November 2002) and CAIR's email 'ISLAM-INFONET' (2 April 2002) reprinting Eric Boehlert's Salon.com piece, 'Betrayed by Bush', of the same day.

40 Mansoor Ijaz, 'Citizenship before Civil Rights', *The Washington Post* (4 April

- 2002: A17); James Zogby, President of the Arab American Institute and eminent pollster, *Arab News* (Saudi Arabia's first English daily; 4 September 2002).
- 41 See Leonard (2003) for these developments and related data showing the structural differences between indigenous and immigrant American Muslim religious institutions.
- 42 *MPAC Report* (2002), reports that three of its southern California chapters held a family picnic to honor the Japanese American community on 19 May; I know of similar new connections in northern California.
- 43 Not only Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, but the other PICS ('public intellectual convert Sufis', a term coined by Marcia Hermansen) with large Internet and youthful followings exemplify this: Abdal-Hakim Murad, 'Recapturing Islam from the Terrorists' (see: <http://www.themodernreligion/terror/wtc-murad.html>); and see Shaikh Nuh Ha Mim Keller's homepage (<http://www.66.34.131.5/ISLAM/nuh/main.htm>).
- 44 Abou El Fadl (1998b) once heard a young man give a beautiful sermon in a mosque, speaking in meticulous English and Arabic, but on his next visit the young man was gone. When he asked about him, he was told, 'He does not fulfill the qualifications, brother; his appearance is not Islamic. . . . He does not wear a beard, he tucks his shirt in, and, in addition, he is not married.' Abou El Fadl comments:
- In all the years of studying *fiqh* you were not aware that these were prerequisites for leading prayer . . . at least these qualifications are novel and original, and after all, we have been calling for the rekindling of *ijtihad!* . . . They got their married imam with his beard and untucked shirt. They got their imam with the numbing rhetoric and incomprehensible broken English. But what they perpetuated is intellectual death.
- 45 This self-described 'more liberal voice' advised that, while there certainly cannot be gay pride parades in mosques, 'Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is a perfectly Islamic solution'. Concerning premarital sex, this mufti said, 'remember that Allah is all-forgiving, especially to those who repent sincerely (this is in case you have already been naughty)'.
- 46 See Leonard (2003), particularly the discussion of forthcoming work by Jamillah Karim, Nadine Naber, Lubna Chaudhry, Syed Ali and Denise Al Johar.

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KAREN LEONARD is based in the department of anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. She has published *Social History of an Indian Caste: The Kayasths of Hyderabad* (University of California Press, 1978); *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans* (Temple University Press, 1992); *The South Asian Americans* (Greenwood Press, 1997); and *Muslims in the United States: The State of Research* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2003). She is currently finishing a comparative study of emigrants from Hyderabad, India, settled in Pakistan, the UK, Australia, Canada, the US and the Gulf states of the Middle East. *Address:* School of Social Sciences, University of Irvine, Irvine, CA 92697, USA. [email: kbleonar@uci.edu]