

Islam, Muslims, and the 2012 Election

by David J. Rusin

Just as the 2012 elections maintained the status quo in Washington, D.C., so too did they reinforce decade-old trends concerning Muslims and the American political process: The Muslim population further solidified as a Democratic voting bloc, and parties' outreach efforts once again legitimized Islamists. However, 2012 was notable for Islam's impact as a political issue in the presidential primaries and several congressional races.

Whether or not Washington experiences a power shift in the years to come, it is likely that the current relationship between Muslims and American politics will hold for the foreseeable future. Avoiding the pitfalls of this reality begins with understanding it.

CLINTON, BUSH, AND OBAMA: A BRIEF HISTORY

Much has changed since this journal analyzed the 1996 and 2000 elections, both of which broke new ground in the political engagement of Muslims. Though Muslims at the time still debated whether they should take part in American democracy at all, Khalid Durán described the 1996 campaign as "the moment when the 'Muslim vote' first began to count in American politics. And Muslim Americans left no doubt that they hoped their involvement would be decisive for Islam in the United States." With quality data scarce in the contest between President Bill Clinton and Sen. Bob Dole, Durán concluded: "All that can be said with some certainty is that the 'Muslim vote,' such as it is, went more solidly for Clinton than did the nation as a whole."¹

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The question of participation having been settled, a number of Islamist groups launched the American Muslim Political Coordination Committee (AMPCC) in an attempt to speak with one voice. After an unprecedented level of outreach to Muslims, Republican presidential nominee George W. Bush earned AMPCC's endorsement in 2000. Islamists were quick to take credit for his razor-thin victory over Vice President Al Gore, with one poll reporting that 91 percent of Florida Muslims had backed Bush. In his postmortem for the *Quarterly*, Alexander Rose warned of "unscientific and dubious self-administered surveys" but conceded that "it can be said with reasonable certainty that the Texas governor did better among Muslims than Dole did four years earlier." However, he cautioned that "what tilt there was to Bush in 2000 was most likely a temporary aberration caused by the election's unique nature."²

Rose's prediction proved correct as the at-

1 Khalid Durán, "Muslims and the U.S. Election of '96," *Middle East Quarterly*, June 1997, pp. 3-13.

2 Alexander Rose, "How Did Muslims Vote in 2000?" *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2001, pp. 13-27.

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The 2012 elections reinforced the reality of the Muslim-American population as a solid Democratic voting bloc. A 2011 Pew study indicated that 70 percent of Muslims described themselves as Democrat or Democratic leaning while informal and less scientific polls had even higher numbers for Obama supporters.

tacks of September 11, 2001, catalyzed Muslim voters' return to the Democratic fold. While Bush kept meeting with Islamists and professed that "Islam is peace,"³ his military campaigns abroad and counterterrorism programs at home alienated many Muslims who had cheered his promises to conduct a humble foreign policy and end the use of secret evidence. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), an influential Islamist group, released an "exit poll" claiming that 93 percent of Muslims had voted for Sen. John Kerry in 2004.⁴ According to a 2007 study by the Pew Research Center, 71 percent voted for Kerry and 14 percent for Bush.⁵

Having increased their political footprint in subsequent years with the election of the first two Muslim congressmen—Keith Ellison (Democrat, Minn.) and André Carson (Democrat, Ind.), each of whom has exhibited Islamist tenden-

cies⁶—Muslims continued their move toward the Democrats in 2008 even though presidential nominee Barack Obama did not court them publicly. In one infamous gaffe, two hijab-wearing women were prevented from sitting behind the podium at an Obama campaign rally.⁷ A 2011 Pew survey found that 92 percent of Muslims had cast their votes for Obama nonetheless.⁸

As president, Obama shed his reluctance to embrace Islam. Efforts during his first term, which began with a prayer service featuring Ingrid Mattson of the Islamic Society of North America,⁹ included Obama's choosing al-Arabiya television network for his initial interview;¹⁰ erroneously labeling the United States "one of the largest Muslim countries";¹¹ lauding the

Muslim world in his June 2009 Cairo speech and declaring it "part of my responsibility as president of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam";¹² supporting the right to construct an Islamic center near Ground Zero;¹³ backing Hillary Clinton's aide Huma Abedin when she was accused of Muslim Brotherhood ties;¹⁴ pursuing policies that empowered Islamists in the Middle East;¹⁵ maintaining a chilly relationship with Israel;¹⁶ and stating that "the future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of

3 George W. Bush, "'Islam Is Peace' Says President," Islamic Center of Washington, Washington, D.C., Sept. 17, 2001.

4 *World Net Daily* (Washington, D.C.), Nov. 2, 2004.

5 *Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007), p. 7.

6 Denis MacEoin, "Keith Ellison's Stealth Jihad," *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer 2010, pp. 31-40; *The Huffington Post* (New York), July 6, 2012.

7 Agence France-Presse, June 19, 2008.

8 *Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, Aug. 30, 2011), p. 9.

9 Episcopal News Service (New York), Jan. 16, 2009.

10 *The Huffington Post*, Feb. 27, 2009.

11 *The New York Times*, June 2, 2009.

12 "A New Beginning," White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Cairo, June 4, 2009.

13 *Politico* (Arlington, Va.), Aug. 15, 2010.

14 *The New York Times*, Aug. 10, 2012.

15 *The Guardian* (London), Oct. 21, 2012.

16 *The Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 2012.

Islam.”¹⁷ Additionally, his administration placed several Muslims with Islamist backgrounds in key posts;¹⁸ refused to link Islam and terrorism;¹⁹ routinely met with Islamist groups;²⁰ purged training material deemed “Islamophobic”;²¹ sent an envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation²² and joined it in the “Istanbul process” to curb “defamation of religion”;²³ intervened in local disputes over mosque building;²⁴ and sued on behalf of a teacher who had been denied three weeks off to visit Mecca.²⁵

Obama’s time in office also saw significant evolution of Islam as a political issue, as highlighted by the Muslim Brotherhood’s becoming a household name and the rising danger of home-grown terrorism,²⁶ which was underlined by congressional hearings on Muslim radicalization that infuriated Islamists.²⁷ Fallout from the Holy Land Foundation (HLF) terrorism-funding trial,²⁸ which had concluded just months before Obama entered the White House, cast a long shadow over several U.S. Muslim groups implicated in the conspiracy to finance Hamas and gradually opened many eyes to the Brotherhood’s stealth jihad of “eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within.”²⁹ In addition, research documented deference to Shari‘a (Islamic law) in state courts,³⁰ sparking a legislative push to restrict

consideration of foreign law,³¹ and grassroots anti-jihad activism came into its own with opposition to the Ground Zero mosque.³²

Subjects such as jihad and Shari‘a influenced the 2012 political landscape, and Muslims, repeatedly told by Islamists that they were under attack, may have looked to Democrats for protection.

STATE OF THE MUSLIM POPULATION

The most comprehensive snapshot of the Muslim electorate heading into 2012 was a Pew Research Center study titled *Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism*. Based on a survey of 1,033 Muslims representing the 2.75 million estimated to live in the United States, it was published in August 2011.

The results assured Obama that he could count on Muslim votes. Muslims approved of his performance at a 76 percent rate, 30 points higher

than the general population; only 15 percent of Muslims had approved of Bush’s in 2007. Seventy percent of Muslims described themselves as Democrats or Democratic leaners with just 11 percent on the Republican side. Sixty-four percent reported seeing Obama as friendly to them; 46 percent said that of the Democratic Party and 15 percent of the Republicans.³³

In welcome news for any incumbent, 56 percent of Muslims positively viewed the direction of the United States, 33 points higher than Americans overall. Muslims also claimed more satisfac-

Bush’s military campaigns abroad and counterterrorism programs at home alienated many Muslims.

17 *Fox News*, Sept. 26, 2012.

18 Ryan Mauro, “Muslim Brotherhood’s Influence inside American Gov’t,” Clarion Project, New York, June 18, 2012.

19 *The Houston Chronicle*, July 12, 2010.

20 *The Daily Caller* (Washington, D.C.), June 8, 2012.

21 *Fox News*, Feb. 21, 2012.

22 “President Obama Announces Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference,” White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Feb. 13, 2010.

23 Adam Turner, “Have the Islamists Already Won on Defamation of Religion?” Legal Project, Dec. 20, 2012.

24 Associated Press, Dec. 8, 2012.

25 *The Washington Post*, Mar. 22, 2011.

26 *PJ Media* (Los Angeles), Dec. 31, 2009.

27 *The New York Times*, Mar. 10, 2011.

28 *Ibid.*, Nov. 24, 2008.

29 Mohamed Akram, “An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Brotherhood in North America,” May 19, 1991, posted by Investigative Project on Terrorism, Washington, D.C.

30 *Shariah Law and American State Courts* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Security Policy, May 20, 2011).

31 “American Laws for American Courts,” American Public Policy Alliance, Washington, D.C., accessed Apr. 5, 2013.

32 *CNN News*, June 7, 2010.

33 *Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism*, pp. 3, 9.

JUMAH AT THE 2012 DNC

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION
A MESSAGE TO THE GRASSROOTS



Aug. 31 - Sept. 1

SPECIAL INVITED GUEST



Controversy arose over an event listed on the DNC host committee's website and organized by the Bureau of Indigenous Muslim Affairs. It was to include discussions on "Islamophobia" and an appearance by a radical imam. Ultimately, the host committee deleted the listing. BIMA's Jibril Hough lamented, "This is about caving in to fear and ignorance."

tion with their lives and finances while expressing greater certainty that hard work leads to success. Demonstrating that their affinity for Democratic ideals ran deep, 68 percent of Muslims supported a bigger government providing more services, though they were less likely than the general public to believe that homosexuality should be accepted by society. Muslims were split on whether U.S. counterterrorism efforts have been "sincere," echoing the skepticism of Islamists. Most disturbing, 5 percent had favorable views of al-Qaeda with another 14 percent not offering an opinion.³⁴

Muslim Americans: Faith, Freedom, and the Future, a smaller survey released by the Abu Dhabi Gallup Center around the same time, also contained good tidings for the president. He won the approval of 80 percent of Muslims, who voiced higher-than-average optimism about economic conditions and life in America. Sixty per-

34 Ibid., pp. 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 37.

cent characterized themselves as "thriving," second only to Jews. However, reflecting the narratives of liberals and Islamists, Muslims had the least confidence in the military and FBI, were the most likely to call the war in Iraq a mistake, and overwhelmingly stated that one cannot define a profile for terrorists.³⁵

Prior to election day, two organizations, neither of which can be considered neutral, polled Muslims on the matchup between Obama and Republican nominee Mitt Romney. The

rightist website WorldNetDaily.com reported that "more than 72 percent said they are definitely supporting Obama, and another 8.5 percent are leaning that direction. Only 11 percent are for Romney."³⁶ It also indicated that radical views are widespread among American Muslims. CAIR published a poll announcing that 68 percent were planning to vote for Obama and 7 percent for Romney with the rest undecided. Sixty-six percent claimed affiliation with the Democrats, up from 49 percent in 2008; just 9 percent chose the Republicans. CAIR boasted that "when asked to name an organization that best represents the interests of American Muslims, 65 percent of those who responded named CAIR."³⁷ A fifth as many had done so in the Gallup survey.

35 *Muslim Americans: Faith, Freedom, and the Future* (Abu Dhabi: Gallup, Inc., Aug. 2011), pp. 2, 6, 7, 13, 14, 18, 23.

36 *World Net Daily*, Oct. 30, 2012.

37 "CAIR Releases Detailed Data from Muslim Voter Survey," Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Nov. 2, 2012.

Finally, the admiration between Muslims and Democrats was mutual in 2012. According to research carried out by the Arab American Institute, more than half of Republicans but only 29 percent of Democrats expressed unfavorable views of Muslims and Arabs. In contrast, 35 percent of Democrats saw Mormons unfavorably. Among younger Americans, a crucial Democratic constituency, Muslims had lower unfavorable ratings than both Mormons and evangelicals.³⁸

MUSLIM OUTREACH AND ISLAMIST EMPOWERMENT

Neither party emphasized Muslim outreach at the national level in 2012, but they still legitimized Islamists, with Democrats leading the way.

The most egregious event, which went unreported for nearly six months, was a fundraiser for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) in Washington, D.C., on May 16, 2012.³⁹ Sponsored by Reps. Ellison, Carson, and DCCC chairman Steve Israel (Democrat, N.Y.), it was headlined by Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (Democrat, Calif.) and featured senior Islamist figures, including CAIR executive director Nihad Awad.⁴⁰ Pelosi and the other Democrats railed against Republican “Islamophobia,”⁴¹ but they made no mention of their guests’ terrorist links, such as how prosecutors had designated CAIR as an unindicted co-conspirator in the HLF trial.⁴² An attendee revealed the creation of the National Muslim Democratic Council (NMDC), seeking to “maximize American Muslim support for Democratic candidates and policies.” A memo outlined plans to get involved in “key races where American Muslims can make a difference.”⁴³

38 “The American Divide: How We View Arabs and Muslims,” Arab American Institute, Washington, D.C., Aug. 23, 2012.

39 Invitation, Fourth Annual DC Leadership Summit, May 16-17, 2012, Washington, D.C.

40 *IPT News*, Investigative Project on Terrorism, Washington, D.C., Nov. 1, 2012.

41 *Ibid.*

42 *The New York Sun*, June 4, 2007.

The 2012 Democratic National Convention (DNC) was notable for its Muslim presence. CAIR claimed that more than one hundred Muslims were serving as delegates, quadruple the number in 2004.⁴⁴ One of them was Hussam Ayloush, executive director of CAIR’s Los Angeles chapter.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the initial decision to remove from the platform a statement that Jerusalem is Israel’s capital was widely seen as a sop to Muslims, with CAIR’s Awad celebrating how “this reflects a development in the ideology of the cadres of the Democratic Party.”⁴⁶ When the language was reinserted following a contested voice vote, the action was sharply criticized at the “Gala Reception/Luncheon for Muslim Delegates.”⁴⁷

Controversy also arose over an event coinciding with the run-up to the DNC and listed, like hundreds of others, on the host committee’s website.⁴⁸ Organized by the Bureau of Indigenous Muslim Affairs (BIMA), it would include discussions about “Islamophobia” and an appearance by Siraj Wahhaj, a radical imam named as a potential unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.⁴⁹ “If this was the KKK or the Nazi Party, would they allow them to use the DNC’s name on their brochures or on the website for the convention that announces this prayer?” asked moderate Muslim

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43 National Muslim Democratic Council memo, posted by Investigative Project on Terrorism, Washington, D.C., accessed May 5, 2013.

44 *The Washington Post*, Sept. 5, 2012.

45 “Arab Americans at the Conventions,” Arab American Institute, Washington, D.C., accessed Apr. 5, 2013.

46 Nihad Awad, interview, al-Jazeera TV (Doha), Sept. 5, 2012.

47 *The Washington Free Beacon*, Sept. 6, 2012; Samer Araabi, “Who’s to Blame for DNC Platform Amendment?” Arab American Institute, Washington, D.C., Sept. 6, 2012.

48 *The Charlotte Observer*, July 2, 2012.

49 *NBC News*, Aug. 31, 2012; “List of Unindicted Co-Conspirators in the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing,” *Militant Islam Monitor*, Dec. 6, 2005.

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Although nominee Barack Obama did not court Muslim Americans publicly, he quickly shed that image with a series of high-profile events including his June 2009 Cairo speech in which he declared it “part of [his] responsibility as president of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam.”

Zuhdi Jasser, perturbed that officials had dragged their feet in distancing the party from the gathering.⁵⁰ Ultimately, the host committee deleted the listing. “This is about caving in to fear and ignorance,” BIMA’s Jibril Hough lamented.⁵¹

Recalling the cold shoulder that Muslims had received in 2008, Islamists were not happy with the Obama team’s failure to sell merchandise for Muslims comparable to that targeting other minorities in 2012. “CAIR believes any campaign for public office should seek to be inclusive of all Americans,” CAIR’s Corey Saylor told *The Daily Caller*.⁵² Moreover, the Obama campaign’s Muslim outreach events were sufficiently infrequent that one in October 2012 with the chair of the Virginia Democratic Party was considered newsworthy.⁵³

In contrast to some previous election cycles, Republicans engaged in very little outreach to

Muslims, but the Romney campaign blundered into bolstering Islamists nonetheless. Promoting his education agenda in Philadelphia on May 24, 2012, the candidate visited a charter school run by Kenny Gamble (Luqman Abdul Haqq),⁵⁴ who has given indications of building a “black Muslim enclave”⁵⁵ in South Philadelphia and sits on the board of the Muslim Alliance in North America,⁵⁶ an Islamist group headed by Wahhaj. Romney praised Gamble that day⁵⁷ and applauded his work at an event in September.⁵⁸

Additionally, the leadership of Arab Americans for Romney included Muslims who should have raised concerns.

One of its national co-chairs was Samah Norquist,⁵⁹ wife of anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist, the chief conduit by which Islamists had gained influence in Republican circles before and after the 2000 election.⁶⁰ Samah Norquist herself has been linked to an organization arguing for the appeasement of Iran.⁶¹ Another co-chair was David Ramadan, a Grover Norquist protégé and member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Ramadan’s 2011 campaign was dogged by questions over his background. “How do you get to

54 *ABC News* (WPVI, Phila.), May 24, 2012.

55 Matthew Teague, “King Kenny,” *Philadelphia*, Dec. 2007.

56 Muslim Alliance in North America website, accessed Apr. 20, 2013.

57 “Mitt Romney, Kenny Gamble: Education Reform Round Table,” YouTube, May 25, 2012.

58 *The Washington Post*, Sept. 25, 2012.

59 “Romney Campaign Announces ‘Arab Americans for Romney,’” Arab American Institute, Washington, D.C., Oct. 15, 2012.

60 Frank J. Gaffney, Jr., “A Troubling Influence,” *FrontPage Magazine* (Sherman Oaks, Calif.), Dec. 9, 2003.

61 Clare M. Lopez and David Reaboi, “Grover Norquist and the Iran Lobby,” *The American Thinker* (El Cerrito, Calif.), Nov. 14, 2011.

50 *Fox News*, Aug. 29, 2012.

51 *NBC News*, Aug. 31, 2012.

52 *The Daily Caller*, July 25, 2012.

53 *Politico*, Oct. 12, 2012.

marry the daughter of a Shiite general in the Lebanese intelligence service, which has long been dominated by Iran's proxy, Hezbollah?" journalist Kenneth Timmerman asked. "Certainly not by being a secular Muslim."⁶²

Revealing another apparent misfire, Khalid Latif, the Muslim chaplain of New York University (NYU), noted in an essay for CNN.com that he "was asked to deliver an invocation at this year's Republican National Convention," but a hurricane precluded it.⁶³ Though expressing some commendable views, Latif speaks before Islamist groups⁶⁴ and hosted radical clerics at a 2010 NYU conference.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Latif wrote to NYU's president in 2006 requesting that students be barred from showing the Danish Muhammad cartoons at a free speech discussion; his letter contained threatening overtones.⁶⁶

Finally, to what extent did Muslims take the initiative in 2012? On the fundraising front, one Muslim mega-donor, Kareem Ahmed, bankrolled Obama and the Democrats to the tune of more than a million dollars,⁶⁷ but financial backing from the rank and file appeared weak. The Muslims for Obama website, for example, reports that it raised only \$60.⁶⁸ Islamist groups were relatively quiet as well. One of the few publicly coordinated projects involved the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) and CAIR collaborating on "voter empowerment efforts and election activities in the key swing states."⁶⁹ ADC launched its Voter Protection Unit as CAIR mailed

questionnaires to presidential candidates⁷⁰ and distributed voting guides for Muslims.⁷¹ However, Islamist organizations were most visible in their press statements decrying "Islamophobia" supposedly exhibited by Republicans.

ISLAM AND THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

Nowhere was the evolution of Islam as an issue more obvious than in the race for the Republican nomination, as hopefuls grappled with Shari'a, jihad, and other topics that had hardly been on the radar a decade ago. Some displayed sophisticated knowledge of these subjects and understood how to communicate it; others clearly did not.

Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House of Representatives, was the most vocal foe of Shari'a. He began to stake out his position by resisting the mosque near Ground Zero, noting that its public face, Feisal Abdul Rauf, is an apologist for Islamic law,⁷² and arguing in a July 2010 letter that "America is experiencing an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization."⁷³ Gingrich followed up with a policy speech at the American Enterprise Institute on July 29. "This is a struggle with radical Islamists in both their militant and their stealth form," he said, explaining that the latter "use political, cultural, societal, religious,

Republican hopefuls grappled with Shari'a, jihad, and other topics not on the radar a decade ago.

62 Kenneth R. Timmerman, "Grover Norquist's New Muslim Protégé," *FrontPage Magazine*, Sept. 26, 2011.

63 Khalid Latif, "My Take: Muslims Must Engage Politically, Look Outside Themselves," *Belief Blog*, CNN, Oct. 25, 2012.

64 "CAIR-OK to Host Symposium for Young Activists," Message of Islam website, July 11, 2012.

65 "NYPD's Muslim Chaplain Hosting Unindicted Co-conspirator to '93 WTC Bombing," *Creeping Sharia Blog*, Jan. 12, 2010.

66 "Khalil Gibran School Advisor Khalid Latif Threatened NYU with Jihad over Danish Cartoons," *Militant Islam Monitor*, May 17, 2007.

67 *The Washington Free Beacon*, Oct. 11, 2012.

68 Muslims for Obama website, accessed Apr. 8, 2013.

69 "ADC Announces National Partnership with CAIR to Empower Voters," American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Washington, D.C., Aug. 22, 2012.

70 "CAIR Launches 2012 'Muslims Vote' Campaign," Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Dec. 20, 2011.

71 "CAIR Distributes Muslim Voter Registration Toolkit, State Voting Guides," Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Aug. 22, 2012.

72 Newt Gingrich, "No Mosque at Ground Zero," *Human Events* (Washington, D.C.), July 28, 2010.

73 *U.S. News & World Report*, July 23, 2010.

intellectual tools” to implement Shari‘a, which he described as “a mortal threat to the survival of freedom in the United States and in the world as we know it.”⁷⁴ Gingrich suggested a federal law to prevent courts from considering Shari‘a,⁷⁵ an idea later reflected in a Republican platform plank about foreign law.⁷⁶

Congress members known for highlighting the Islamist threat came under fire from opponents for “Islamophobia.”

In addition, Gingrich defended four Christians who had been arrested after peacefully speaking with Muslims at an Arab festival in Dearborn, Michigan, pointing out that proselytizing is forbidden by Shari‘a.⁷⁷ Gingrich released a film on radical Islam, *America at Risk: The War with No*

Name, and repeatedly charged that the administration was unwilling to confront the danger.⁷⁸ In February 2011, Gingrich labeled the Muslim Brotherhood “a mortal enemy of our civilization” and slammed Obama for reaching out to it.⁷⁹ In September 2011, he became the first candidate to support investigations and potential prosecutions of Islamist groups named as co-conspirators in the HLF trial.⁸⁰ He later faced condemnation from CAIR for his January 2012 statement that he would endorse a Muslim for president only if the candidate would publicly “give up Shari‘a.”⁸¹ Gingrich’s focus on Islamic law won him heaps of scorn throughout the campaign.

Former Pennsylvania senator Rick Santorum also spoke out against Islamism. Like Gingrich, he opposed the Ground Zero mosque, saying that Abdul Rauf was “ignoring the will of the Ameri-

can public, as, by the way, Barack Obama is by siding with him.”⁸² Santorum used his speech at the 2011 Conservative Political Action Conference to accuse Obama of being reluctant to call jihad “evil.”⁸³ He built on this theme at a March dinner. “Jihadism is evil, and we need to say what it is,” he argued. The “vast majority” of American Muslims are against Shari‘a, he contended, and many had left other countries to escape it. Islamic law, he accurately noted, “is not just a religious code. It is also a governmental code ... incompatible with the civil code of the United States.”⁸⁴ Interviewed by the activist group United West later that year, Santorum described the Muslim Brotherhood as “the root of a lot of the modern radical Islamist thinking” and even mentioned Brotherhood ideologues Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Banna.⁸⁵ However, he provided a more general response than Gingrich to the question of prosecuting HLF co-conspirators. Santorum drew fire from CAIR in November 2011 when he advocated the profiling of Muslims at airports.⁸⁶ He also criticized the Obama administration for apologizing for the accidental burning of Qur’ans in Afghanistan.⁸⁷

Less inspiring was pizza magnate Herman Cain, who gave the impression of being eager to jump on the bandwagon without having thought through the issues. In March 2011, Cain declared that he would not appoint Muslims due to concerns about Shari‘a; CAIR admonished him for “bigoted speech.”⁸⁸ He made a similar statement in April, adding that “I have not found a Muslim that has said that they will denounce Shari‘a law.”⁸⁹ Two months later, Cain clarified that Muslims could serve in his administration if they offered proof of loyalty to the Constitution.⁹⁰ Mod-

74 Newt Gingrich, “America at Risk,” American Enterprise Institute, Washington, D.C., July 29, 2010.

75 *TPM* (New York), Sept. 18, 2010.

76 *Salon* (New York and San Francisco), Aug. 21, 2012.

77 *The Detroit News*, Aug. 4, 2010.

78 *Politico*, Mar. 25, 2011.

79 *Newsmax* (West Palm Beach), Feb. 7, 2011.

80 *FrontPage Magazine*, Sept. 19, 2011.

81 “CAIR Reminds Gingrich That All Faiths Are Equal in America,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Jan. 17, 2012.

82 *Fox News*, Aug. 14, 2010.

83 *TPM*, Feb. 10, 2011.

84 *Politico*, Mar. 11, 2011.

85 *FrontPage Magazine*, Sept. 30, 2011, p. 2.

86 *The Hill* (Washington, D.C.), Nov. 23, 2011.

87 *The Daily Mail* (London), Feb. 26, 2012.

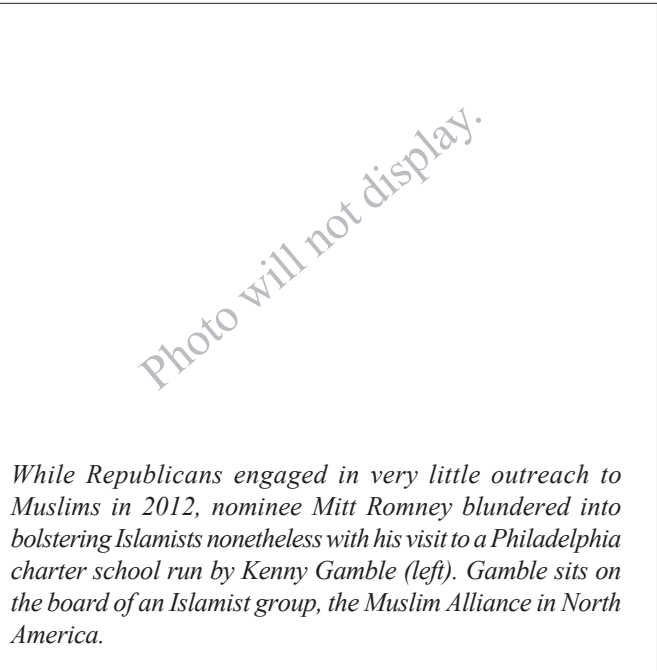
88 *Politico*, Mar. 29, 2011.

89 *The Washington Independent* (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 6, 2011.

90 *The Daily Caller*, June 8, 2011.

erate Muslim Jasser condemned Cain for painting all Muslims with a broad brush and referenced the Constitution's prohibition of religious tests.⁹¹ In July, Cain proclaimed that American communities "have the right" to ban mosques,⁹² prompting CAIR to demand that he apologize to Muslims. Remarkably, he obliged in a meeting with Muslim leaders at Virginia's Islamist-tied All Dulles Area Muslim Society,⁹³ likening stereotypes used against Muslims to those he suffered as a black youth.⁹⁴ Cain also appeared uninformed about the HLF case when asked whether he would pursue the prosecution of groups that had been designated. "As what?" he replied, before promising to go after them once the interviewer explained their connections to Hamas.⁹⁵ On the bright side, Cain seemed aware of creeping Shari'a in U.S. courts.⁹⁶

Islamic issues touched other primary campaigns. Rep. Michele Bachmann (Republican, Minn.) was notable for being the first to sign a values pledge that included rejecting Shari'a;⁹⁷ she maintained that it "must be resisted across the United States."⁹⁸ A conservative schism erupted over Rick Perry, as some bloggers savaged the Texas governor for his relationship with the Aga Khan, leader of the Nizari Ismaili sect,⁹⁹ a Texas curriculum on Islam produced in association with the Aga Khan Foundation, which they



said whitewashes the faith,¹⁰⁰ and Perry's ties to Grover Norquist, which evoked bad memories of his ushering Islamists into the last Republican administration.¹⁰¹ Others, however, saw the Perry controversy as blown out of proportion. As for Rep. Ron Paul (Republican, Tex.), he downplayed the threat of Shari'a,¹⁰² repeated al-Qaeda narratives about 9/11,¹⁰³ smeared Bachmann by insisting that "she hates Muslims,"¹⁰⁴ distributed fliers with an Arabic-language message about cutting off aid to Israel,¹⁰⁵ won the endorsement of *The Arab American News* in the Michigan primary,¹⁰⁶ and was re-

91 Ibid., June 9, 2011.

92 *Fox News*, July 17, 2011.

93 *Politico*, July 27, 2011.

94 *Slate* (Washington, D.C.), July 27, 2011.

95 *FrontPage Magazine*, Sept. 30, 2011.

96 *NewsBusters* (Alexandria, Va.), Oct. 7, 2011.

97 *The Des Moines Register*, July 7, 2011.

98 *The New York Times*, Dec. 21, 2011.

99 Pamela Geller, "Yes, Rick Perry Is the 5th Column Candidate," *World Net Daily*, Aug. 16, 2011.

100 Robert Spencer, "Here Is the Aga Khan/Rick Perry Curriculum," *Jihad Watch*, Aug. 30, 2011.

101 Robert Spencer, "Why Shouldn't Rick Perry's Islamic Ties Be Vetted?" *Jihad Watch*, Aug. 18, 2011.

102 *FrontPage Magazine*, Apr. 29, 2011.

103 CNN-Tea Party Republican debate transcript, CNN, Sept. 12, 2011.

104 *The Daily Caller*, Dec. 17, 2011.

105 Ben Shapiro, "Ron Paul Panders to Anti-Semitism in Michigan," *Breitbart News*, Feb. 29, 2012.

106 "Our Endorsement: Ron Paul Is the Right Man for the Job," *The Arab American News* (Dearborn, Mich.), Feb. 24, 2012.

puted to be Muslims' favorite Republican.¹⁰⁷

Eventual nominee Mitt Romney's performance was a mixed bag. During a June 2011 debate, he appeared to dismiss concerns about the application of Shari'a in U.S. courts, saying, "That's never going to happen."¹⁰⁸ However, Romney deserves credit for not caving to CAIR's pressure to disown his advisor Walid Phares,¹⁰⁹ accused by the organization of links to Lebanese death squads. Romney also withstood CAIR's demands to explain his meeting with retired lieutenant general Jerry Boykin, a critic of Islam,¹¹⁰

and Islamists' calls to denounce Bachmann¹¹¹ for requesting that government departments investigate possible infiltration by Muslim Brotherhood allies.¹¹² He likewise spoke with refreshing candor about how cultural differences account for the economic divergence of Israelis and Palestinians.¹¹³

Romney rebuked the administration after the deadly assault on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012, contending that an apologetic statement from the embassy in Egypt had demonstrated that the U.S. government's "first response was not to condemn attacks on our diplomatic missions, but to sympathize with those who waged the attacks."¹¹⁴ Though these remarks are remembered for their seemingly spirited defense of the First Amendment, largely overlooked are Romney's harsher observations on

how the makers of *Innocence of Muslims*, the anti-Islam video on which the violence initially was blamed, had exercised their rights. "The idea of using something that some people consider sacred and then parading that out in a negative way is simply inappropriate and wrong," Romney said.¹¹⁵ Finally, Romney earned praise for identifying the enemy as "jihadists" in the third presidential debate, referencing religious motives too often ignored. He also used the words "Islam," "Muslim," or their derivatives several times that night; such words had not been uttered during the 2008 debates.¹¹⁶

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the Obama-Romney contest was just how rarely radical Islam came up, given the tremendous gains made by the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world on Obama's watch and the Benghazi debacle in the campaign's home stretch. Romney voiced little opposition to Obama's backing the removal of secular Arab regimes and the subsequent ascendancy of Islamist forces. Without being prodded to defend himself, Obama hardly spoke of the matter.

Whether a more aggressive approach regarding radical Islam could have helped Romney among the general public is an open question. It certainly would not have done much to reduce his support among Muslims. According to CAIR's "informal exit poll" of Muslim voters, 86 percent chose Obama, down slightly from 2008.¹¹⁷

CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS

More so than previous years, 2012 saw Islam-related issues shape congressional races in an intriguing variety of ways. With House Republicans providing the only real resistance to the Obama administration's agenda, including its

115 *CBS News*, Sept. 14, 2012.

116 Transcript, Commission on Presidential Debates, Boca Raton, Oct. 22, 2012.

117 "Poll: 85 Percent of Muslim Voters Picked President Obama," Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Nov. 9, 2012.

In a release after the election, CAIR "welcomed the rejection of Islamophobic candidates by voters nationwide."

107 *The Huffington Post*, Jan. 17, 2012.

108 *The New York Times*, Dec. 21, 2011.

109 *The Daily Beast* (New York), Oct. 12, 2011.

110 "CAIR Asks Romney to Explain Meeting with Infamous Islamophobe," Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Aug. 9, 2012.

111 Breitbart News, Aug. 6, 2012.

112 Mauro, "Muslim Brotherhood's Influence inside American Gov't."

113 *The New York Times*, July 30, 2012.

114 *The Huffington Post*, Sept. 11, 2012.

controversial Muslim outreach efforts, it is not surprising that members of Congress known for highlighting the Islamist threat came under fire from opponents looking to make hay out of the “Islamophobia” narrative.

Bachmann, who was running for reelection in Minnesota’s sixth district, placed herself in the crosshairs by leading a call to investigate Muslim Brotherhood infiltration of the U.S. government, in letters that named specific Muslims with troubling connections.¹¹⁸ CAIR likened her to Sen. Joseph McCarthy, with Nihad Awad adding, “Your letters challenging the loyalty of patriotic American Muslims based on discredited anti-

Muslim conspiracy theories can only be described as devoid of a sense of decency.”¹¹⁹ Jim Graves, Bachmann’s Democratic opponent, sought to capitalize, penning an op-ed and launching a web campaign “demanding that she end these McCarthy-style attacks.”¹²⁰ When the issue came up in their debates, Bachmann defended her actions while Graves stated, “I’ll stand with John McCain and Speaker [John] Boehner and Lindsey Graham,” Republicans who had censured Bachmann.¹²¹ She edged Graves by one point.

Another target was Republican Allen West, the freshman representative for Florida’s twenty-second district and a critic of Islam. During his time in office, he had a heated exchange with CAIR-Florida’s Nezar Hamze over justifications



A decision to remove a statement from the Democratic National Convention platform confirming that Jerusalem is Israel’s capital was widely seen as a sop to Muslims. Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa found himself at the center of the controversy when the language was reinserted following a contested voice vote. The action was sharply criticized at the “Gala Reception/Luncheon for Muslim Delegates.”

of violence in the Qur’an,¹²² blew off CAIR-Florida’s insistence that he disassociate himself from “Islamophobes” with a one-word reply (“NUTS!”),¹²³ and hosted a screening of a film opposing the Ground Zero mosque.¹²⁴ After congressional boundaries were redrawn, West ran in the eighteenth district where he faced Democrat Patrick Murphy. Muslims played a major role in the campaign. The NMDC memo listed West’s ouster among its top priorities.¹²⁵ Ahmed Bedier, former director of CAIR’s Tampa chapter, sent an e-mail soliciting donations for Murphy and accusing West of having “made Muslims and Islam the target of hate attacks.”¹²⁶ According to a report by Nadia Hussain in *Hyphen* magazine, “The Florida race worked both ways, with Murphy reaching out to the Muslim community even before his run and maintaining that relationship throughout his campaign. Muslims came out and

118 Mauro, “Muslim Brotherhood’s Influence inside American Gov’t.”

119 “CAIR ‘Grateful’ Constitution Limits Michele Bachmann’s McCarthyism,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., July 19, 2012.

120 Jim Graves, “It’s Time for Ms. Bachmann to Leave Washington,” *The Huffington Post*, July 19, 2012.

121 *Salon*, Nov. 5, 2012.

122 *The Huffington Post*, Feb. 22, 2011.

123 *The Broward-Palm Beach New Times*, Aug. 15, 2011.

124 *The Sun Sentinel* (Fort Lauderdale), Sept. 7, 2011.

125 National Muslim Democratic Council memo.

126 Ahmed Bedier e-mail, Yahoo! Groups, Oct. 30, 2012.

organized, with 36 of the 38 mosques in Southern Florida actively engaging in the campaign”¹²⁷—a statement that raises questions of legality. Murphy defeated West by fewer than 2,000 votes.

Joe Walsh, a first-term Republican congressman serving Illinois’ eighth district, upset Islamists by meeting with anti-Islam French politician Marine Le Pen¹²⁸ and supporting a visa for controversial Indian politician Narendra Modi,¹²⁹ but he truly riled them with his comments of August 8, 2012: “There is a radical strain of Islam in this country—it’s not just

over there—trying to kill Americans every week,” Walsh said. “It is a real threat, and it is a threat that is much more at home now than it was after 9/11.”¹³⁰ He then cited several municipalities near Chicago. CAIR-Chicago executive director Ahmed Rehab pounced on Walsh’s “indiscriminate vilification,” asserting that such talk provokes hate crimes.¹³¹ However, Walsh stood his ground in a get-together with Muslims¹³² and during a debate with Democrat Tammy Duckworth, who claimed that his mentioning of specific towns “puts a lot of Americans at risk.”¹³³ Also of note, businessman Shalli Kumar formed a political action committee (PAC), Indian Americans for Freedom, which produced ads criticizing Duckworth’s coziness with CAIR. One showed a hijab-clad Duckworth at an Islamic center with Rehab, where she declared herself “absolutely horrified” by Walsh’s remarks and posited that “he put entire populations of Americans at risk.”¹³⁴

Duckworth defeated Walsh by nine points.

Rep. Bill Pascrell’s support for and from Islamists likewise caused a stir. Reapportionment forced the New Jersey Democrat into a primary against another sitting Democratic representative, Steve Rothman, in the ninth district. Concerns about Pascrell included his close relationship with CAIR, his lobbying for Hamas-linked New Jersey imam Mohammad Qatanani as he fought deportation, his criticism of the New York Police Department for its “religious profiling” of Muslims, and his downplaying of Islamic terror.¹³⁵ Most disturbing, in 2012, was the anti-Semitism displayed by Pascrell’s Arab and Muslim backers, who smeared the Jewish, pro-Israel Rothman as someone who has exhibited “loyalty to a foreign flag”;¹³⁶ Pascrell refused to condemn such slurs. Keith Ellison campaigned for Pascrell at a mosque, and an Arabic-language flier urged locals to “elect the friend of the Arabs.”¹³⁷ Though hundreds of Orthodox Jewish Republicans had switched their registrations to vote for Rothman, Pascrell prevailed.¹³⁸ Republican nominee Shmuley Boteach, a prominent Orthodox rabbi, called on Pascrell to disavow Qatanani, referencing a litany of his radical words.¹³⁹ Pascrell had no reason to fear Boteach in a heavily Democratic district and won in a landslide.

In another interesting primary battle, Diane Black, a first-term Republican congresswoman serving Tennessee’s sixth district, was accused by challenger Lou Ann Zelenik of being insufficiently critical of the Murfreesboro mosque project. “I will work to stop the Islamization of our society,” Zelenik promised. Black’s spokeswoman responded by announcing that “no one is more opposed to Shari’a law, radical Islam, and terrorism than Diane Black, but unlike her opponent,

Muslims have overwhelmingly backed Democrats in three consecutive presidential elections.

127 *Hyphen* (San Francisco), Dec. 26, 2012.

128 Associated Press, Nov. 2, 2011.

129 *The Daily Herald* (Arlington Heights, Ill.), June 3, 2012.

130 *CBS News* (Chicago), Aug. 10, 2012.

131 “Press Conference on Rep. Joe Walsh’s Anti-Muslim Statements,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, Chicago, Aug. 9, 2012.

132 *The Chicago Sun-Times*, Aug. 24, 2012.

133 *The Daily Herald*, Sept. 14, 2012.

134 *Ibid.*, Oct. 31, 2012.

135 Steven Emerson, “Islamist Fellow Traveler: Rep. Bill Pascrell,” *The Jewish Voice and Opinion* (Englewood, N.J.), May 2012.

136 Aref Assaf, “Rothman Is Israel’s Man in District 9,” *NJ.com*, Feb. 19, 2012.

137 *The Washington Free Beacon*, June 1, 2012.

138 *Ibid.*, June 6, 2012.

139 *The Record* (Woodland Park, N.J.), Oct. 7, 2012.

Diane Black respects our Constitution.” CAIR’s Ibrahim Hooper classified Zelenik among those people who “live in their own bubble of anti-Islam hate.”¹⁴⁰ Black defeated Zelenik and was re-elected in November.

Syed Taj gained attention as a rare Muslim candidate for Congress. Running as a Democrat in Michigan’s eleventh district, Taj spoke of anti-Muslim sentiment and adopted policy positions consistent with those of Islamist groups.¹⁴¹ Moreover, he participated in a forum hosted by CAIR-California’s PAC,¹⁴² which raised money for Taj.¹⁴³ Freedom’s Defense Fund, a PAC operated by conservative commentator and conspiracy theorist Jerome Corsi, ran a controversial ad charging that Taj “wants to advance Muslim power in America”; the spot took out of context a quote by Taj about potentially forming a Muslim caucus in Congress.¹⁴⁴ Taj lost to Republican Kerry Bentivolio by six points.

Finally, one race that might have been expected to witness sparring over Islam—Republican Adam Hasner’s contest with Democrat Lois Frankel over West’s old seat in Florida’s twenty-second district—was rather quiet. CAIR had asked Hasner to step down as majority leader in the Florida House after he co-hosted a 2009 event with anti-Islam Dutch parliamentarian Geert Wilders.¹⁴⁵ A day later, he skipped out on a state-house prayer by an imam.¹⁴⁶ Hasner also attempted to undermine Florida Muslim Capitol Day in 2009,¹⁴⁷ warned of “progressive Shari’a-compliant Islam” in 2011,¹⁴⁸ and played a role in the formation of the Florida Security Council, an anti-Shari’a group that became the United West.¹⁴⁹

Yet besides an op-ed by CAIR-Florida’s Hassan Shibly in October 2011 when Hasner was still planning a U.S. Senate run,¹⁵⁰ his positions on Islam did not shape the campaign. Frankel beat Hasner by nine points.

ASSESSING THE AFTERMATH

CAIR wasted no time gloating over the defeats of West, Walsh, Hasner, and others. In a press release one day after the election, it “welcomed the rejection of Islamophobic candidates by voters nationwide.” Awad stated, “These encouraging results clearly show that mainstream Americans reject anti-Muslim bigotry by candidates for public office and will demonstrate that rejection at the polls.” It was, he said, “a major blow to the Islamophobia machine.”¹⁵¹

CAIR led a coalition of Islamist organizations that “called on the Republican Party to reach out to Muslim voters.”

CAIR led a coalition of Islamist organizations at a December 5 press conference that “called on the Republican Party to reach out to Muslim voters.”¹⁵² In a full-page ad aimed at Republicans and published in *The Washington Times*, the groups pronounced, “We believe that November 6 presented an opportunity to distance your party from anti-Muslim bias and place the voices of bias on the fringe where they belong.” Among the steps outlined to build trust with Muslims: “speak out strongly against biased speech within

140 Reuters, Aug. 1, 2012.

141 *The Arab American News*, Oct. 5, 2012.

142 “Candidate and Policy Forum,” CAIR-CA (Calif.) PAC, Oct. 15, 2012.

143 *The Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 4, 2012.

144 *The New Republic* (Washington, D.C.), Nov. 1, 2012.

145 *The Tampa Bay Times*, Apr. 26, 2009.

146 *The Miami New Times*, Apr. 27, 2009.

147 *The Tampa Bay Times*, Feb. 26, 2009.

148 *The Florida Independent* (Washington, D.C.), Apr. 8, 2011.

149 Tim Murphy, “Running on Fear of Shariah,” *Mother Jones*, Nov. 3, 2011.

150 Hassan Shibly, “Extremists Must Not Hijack Our Political Discourse,” *The Tampa Tribune*, Oct. 28, 2011.

151 “CAIR Welcomes Voters’ Rejection of Islamophobic Candidates,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Nov. 7, 2012.

152 “CAIR: GOP Asked to Reach Out to Muslim Voters, Reject Anti-Islam Bias,” Council on American-Islamic Relations, Washington, D.C., Dec. 5, 2012.

[Republican] ranks,” that is, against telling the truth about radical Islam; “oppose efforts to pass discriminatory legislation,” namely bills curbing foreign law in courts; “reject any member’s effort to use official public forums to smear a minority,” such as the hearings on Muslim radicalization; and “end the persistent witch-hunt targeting legally operating Muslim institutions,” like CAIR itself.¹⁵³ Interestingly, the letter cited New Jersey governor and potential 2016 presidential candidate Chris Christie, whose “tin ear for radical Islam” has been thoroughly documented,¹⁵⁴ as an example for Republicans to emulate.

Islamist groups attempt to manipulate politicians by asserting that the tiny Muslim population handed Bush the presidency.

Islamists demanded more from the president as well. When the Religion News Service invited figures from various faiths to discuss what they wanted from Obama’s second term, Awad had the longest wish list. It included repealing provisions for indefinite detention of terror suspects, closing

Guantánamo Bay, reassessing the drone warfare campaign, preventing border agents from asking Muslims religion-based questions when reentering the United States, and “end[ing] the CIA’s relationship with the New York Police Department to spy on American Muslims,”¹⁵⁵ a reference to the surveillance program that Obama administration officials had backed following its exposure.¹⁵⁶

Some Muslims drew less positive conclusions about the election, but not due to the results. Writing in *Hyphen* magazine, Nadia Hussain argued that “although Muslims are voting, they are not organized to the degree in which their own issues reach a level of national prominence.

... There are immense hurdles within the community itself that Muslims need to overcome in order to become an influential political entity in this country”¹⁵⁷—concerns expressed since the 1996¹⁵⁸ and 2000¹⁵⁹ elections. Furthermore, some are worried that Muslims’ lopsided support for Democrats may dilute their political clout. “Maintaining bi-partisanship is important in the long run,” said Imran Siddiqui of Emerge, a Florida-based organization that worked against Allen West. “We don’t want the community to be exclusively with one party, because ... your vote can get taken for granted.”¹⁶⁰

However, winning more Muslim votes will be an uphill battle for Republicans. Muslims have overwhelmingly backed Democrats in three consecutive presidential elections, making the campaign of 2000, in which the Muslim vote was more closely contested, a distant memory. Muslims’ views of Islam-related issues—foreign affairs, counterterrorism, Shari’a in the courts, etc.—continue to be molded by Islamist pressure groups, and Awad’s post-election remarks illustrate that Islamist positions are to the left of those championed by the Islam-friendly Obama administration, meaning that tremendous movement on the part of Republicans would be necessary to gain their favor. At the same time, Muslims’ attraction to Democrats goes beyond issues directly linked to Islam, as seen in their previously cited preference for big government.

Many Muslims are also members of racial or ethnic minority groups that strongly lean Democrat, thus presenting another obstacle for Republicans. Pew found that 23 percent of U.S. Muslims are black and 21 percent are Asian;¹⁶¹ exit polls determined that black voters of all religions had supported Obama at a rate of 93 percent in 2012 while 73 percent of Asian voters had cast their ballots for him.¹⁶² A calculation shows that

153 *The Washington Times*, accessed Apr. 9, 2013.

154 “Gov. Christie’s Strange Relationship with Radical Islam,” Investigative Project on Terrorism, Washington, D.C., Jan. 19, 2011.

155 *The Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 2012, pp. 3-4.

156 Associated Press, Apr. 20, 2012.

157 *Hyphen*, Dec. 26, 2012.

158 Durán, “Muslims and the U.S. Election of ‘96.”

159 Rose, “How Did Muslims Vote in 2000?”

160 *Hyphen*, Dec. 26, 2012.

161 *Muslim Americans: No Signs of Growth in Alienation or Support for Extremism*, p. 16.

162 “2012 Fox News Exit Polls,” accessed Apr. 9, 2013.

a racial and ethnic mix consistent with that of the Muslim population but extending across all faith groups would have given Obama nearly two-thirds of its vote. Therefore, even if the Republican Party could neutralize Islam-specific factors that currently hinder its Muslim support, Muslims would still be disposed toward the Democrats.

The good news for Republicans is that Muslims comprise only about 1 percent of the U.S. population and are expected to reach just 1.7 percent in 2030¹⁶³—far smaller than the sizes of other minority groups that offer many more votes to cultivate and less anti-Republican sentiment to conquer. Setting aside Islamist-generated hype, the reality is that getting 10 percent of Hispanics to change their votes could turn an election, but even substantially increasing a party’s share of the Muslim vote would be unlikely to accomplish much. This, along with the fact that they do not rank among the major donors of money, explains why Muslims are not “an influential political entity”; they simply lack the numbers.

Nonetheless, Islamist groups such as CAIR attempt to manipulate politicians by asserting that this tiny Muslim population handed Bush the presidency in 2000 and ejected Allen West from Congress in 2012. Yet even if true, these results are by no means typical of the last several decades. National elections close enough to be swayed by 1 percent of the population are rare, and whatever Muslims’ impact on West’s reelection bid actually was, it still leaves 434 House seats whose 2012 outcomes are not being credited to any sort of Muslim bloc. Indeed, despite CAIR’s insistence that speaking frankly about

radical Islam cost Republicans in 2012, all five congressmen who had signed letters requesting probes of possible Muslim Brotherhood operatives in the government were returned to Washington by those they represent.¹⁶⁴

Islamists will keep dangling the carrot of a socially conservative Muslim population that allegedly would flock to Republicans if only they caved to Islamists on a few key issues, but polling data and demographics suggest otherwise. Muslims are not likely to shift toward the Republicans anytime soon. Islamist-pleasing policies could even lose Republicans more votes from their national security-conscious base than they would gain from Muslims.

In short, the 2012 election underscored that Muslims are a natural Democratic constituency and almost certainly will remain so for the near future. However, though Islam will continue to be an important political issue, the Muslim electorate is of marginal significance. Democrats can look forward to counting on solid support from this 1 percent of the population, but Republicans may choose to look past it and focus on more promising sectors of the voting public—ones whose gatekeepers, in exchange for their blessing, do not require concessions that would advance a malignant dream of “eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within.”

Though Islam will continue to be an important political issue, the Muslim electorate is of marginal significance.



163 “The Future of the Global Muslim Population: Projections for 2010-2030,” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., Jan. 27, 2011.

164 Mauro, “Muslim Brotherhood’s Influence inside American Gov’t.”