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### Donald Trump, Twitter, and Islamophobia: The End of Dignity in Presidential Rhetoric about Terrorism

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## Chapter Four

### Donald Trump, Twitter, and Islamophobia: The End of Dignity in Presidential Rhetoric about Terrorism

Presidential rhetoric is critically important in guiding American foreign and domestic policy as well as in determining which threats are pursued by the U.S. government<sup>1</sup>. After the September 11 attacks, terrorism was touted as a threat that would “never again” be ignored. This threat was repeatedly harped on by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. After Bush set the agenda for an expansive terror war and a presidential rhetoric replete with fear, Obama attempted to recalibrate and narrow the war on terror but ended up largely maintaining Bush’s policies and falling into some of Bush’s rhetoric regarding the terror threat.

President Donald Trump, who campaigned viciously against Obama’s legacy, also did not change much in terms of terrorism policy. Even so, the rhetoric adopted by Trump has upended decades of presidential decorum and dignity in the way he speaks about terrorists and the brazen way he links terrorism to the negatives he attaches to immigration. President Trump is unscrupulous in his open dislike of Muslims and readily equates them with terrorists. Of a “caravan” of immigrants coming from Central America through Mexico to the United States in October and November 2018, President Trump made sure to emphasize, with no evidence whatsoever, that there were “Middle Easterners” among them<sup>2</sup>. During a Republican Party Presidential Primary Debate candidate Donald Trump, the future President of the United States, repeatedly declared “Islam hates us”<sup>3</sup>. On January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Trump related the following incendiary tweet: “Border rancher: ‘We’ve found prayer rugs out here. It’s unreal.’ -Washington Examiner. People coming across the Southern Border from many countries, some of which would be a big surprise”<sup>4</sup>.

President Trump, unlike his predecessors, brazenly linked the Muslim religion to terrorism. He also linked counterterrorism and Islamophobia to his anti-immigration stance. To this end, Trump unjustifiably merged the “threats” of immigration and of terrorism.

President Trump has chosen terrorism, and laws and regulations meant to stop terrorism, as a central plank in his campaign and presidency. Yet he has focused almost exclusively on threats emanating from Muslim sources, which he has claimed need to be “looked into,” while ignoring terrorist attacks orchestrated by non-Muslims in

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<sup>1</sup> Rubin, Gabriel. *Freedom and Order: How Democratic Governments Restrict Civil Liberties after Terrorist Attacks—and Why Sometimes They Don’t*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Rubin, Jennifer, “Demonizing Muslims and immigrants leads to predictable results,” *The Washington Post*, 15 March 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/15/demonizing-muslims-immigrants-leads-predictable-results/?utm\\_term=.057484695382](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/15/demonizing-muslims-immigrants-leads-predictable-results/?utm_term=.057484695382).

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, Jenna and Abigail Hauslohner, “‘I think Islam hates us’: A timeline of Trump’s comments about Islam and Muslims,” *The Washington Post*, 20 May 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/05/20/i-think-islam-hates-us-a-timeline-of-trumps-comments-about-islam-and-muslims/?utm\\_term=.f86c54c048f9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/05/20/i-think-islam-hates-us-a-timeline-of-trumps-comments-about-islam-and-muslims/?utm_term=.f86c54c048f9).

<sup>4</sup> @realdonaldtrump, Twitter, 18 January 2019.

America and abroad including the spate of attacks by far-right white extremists that occurred under his watch.

This chapter shows how President Trump's words about national security threats, when critically examined, serve to marginalize Muslim and immigrant populations. In order to better understand how the terror threat, and its definition, has evolved since 9/11 this chapter will compare Trump's statements with Obama's and George W. Bush's using the content analysis database of presidential speeches on terrorism gathered by the author and his research team. Since the focus of Trump's rhetoric will be on terrorism, more attention will be paid to his anti-Muslim statements, though, because Trump links terrorism to immigration, some of his statements against immigrants will be covered as well. Here it is important to note that to President Trump a reason to fear immigrants is that they could be terrorists, particularly if they are Muslims. In this way, Trump merges the terror threat with his xenophobic platform.

So far we have seen that terrorism is repeatedly brought up as a primary concern in presidential speeches when leaders are trying to sell a specific policy or (re-)set the political agenda, such as when the Iraq War or troop surges in Iraq and Afghanistan were successfully sold to the public and Congress. Presidential rhetoric shapes the terror threat, giving everyday Americans an image of who to fear and an idea of how concerned they should be with the goal of affecting legislative and regulatory change. But, with President Trump, it does this at the grave expense of the rights of American Muslims.

## **Trump and the End of Dignity**

The President, of course, can use his or her rhetorical might to unite or divide the country. In this respect, President Trump is a great outlier in American history. Trump began his term by speaking of "American carnage" at his inauguration, describing the most powerful and richest country in the world as a dilapidated wasteland where political elites benefit at the expense of the "forgotten" man and woman<sup>5</sup>. This populist speech, after a decidedly populist campaign marked by themes of xenophobia and anti-establishment politics, began a presidency like none other.

When one speaks of dignity, human rights immediately come to mind. The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that the, "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"<sup>6</sup>. Thomas Pogge writes that dignity is an attribute of something but not a thing that exists on its

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<sup>5</sup> Blake, Aaron, "Trump's Full Inauguration Speech, Annotated," *The Washington Post*, 20 January 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/20/donald-trumps-full-inauguration-speech-transcript-annotated/?utm\\_term=.40d0fdf0ba70](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/20/donald-trumps-full-inauguration-speech-transcript-annotated/?utm_term=.40d0fdf0ba70).

<sup>6</sup> The United Nations, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

own. In one sense, it is an inalienable attribute of human beings. In another, it is something that needs to be protected<sup>7</sup>. Dignity confers a right. The right to be valued. The right to be treated with honor and respect. The concept of dignity forms the basis of our fundamental human rights, which, invented though some believe them to be<sup>8</sup>, endow our social world with the human values of respect, compassion, and pride.

President Donald Trump's rhetoric, particularly when directed against Muslims, demarcates a new era in presidential speech-making. An era where Muslims and immigrants are not treated with the requisite dignity afforded them by their human and domestic rights and by the values the United States claims to uphold. As Jeffrey Tulis writes, "Before Donald Trump, America had never elected a demagogue." Andrew Johnson serves as the only exception – yet he was not elected, having come to power after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln – and Johnson "served in a political order that opposed every one of his important initiatives, overruled his vetoes, impeached him, and drove him from office in disgrace"<sup>9</sup>. Tulis' description of Johnson's oratory eerily conjures Trump: "In the typical speech, Johnson would begin by disclaiming an intention to speak, proceed to invoke the spirits of Washington and Jackson, claim his own devotion to the principles of the Union, deny that he was a traitor as others alleged, attack some part of the audience (depending on the kinds of heckles he received), defend his use of the veto, attack Congress as a body and single out particular congressmen (occasionally denouncing them as traitors for not supporting his policies), compare himself to Christ and offer himself as a martyr, and finally conclude by declaring his closeness to the people and appealing for their support"<sup>10</sup>. "Nothing could be further" from the vision the Founders had for the presidency than to have a leader whose power derives from "the interplay of orator and crowd." "This interplay," Tulis states, "may or may not persuade the immediate audience, but the effect of such activity upon the president's office, upon his dignity, upon his future ability to persuade, and upon the deliberative process as a whole is likely to be deleterious"<sup>11</sup>. One of Johnson's charges for impeachment was, after all, "bad and improper rhetoric"<sup>12</sup>. While Johnson's purpose of rousing public opinion is commonplace today, his inflammatory rhetoric still is not totally accepted – albeit with the dramatic exception of Donald Trump<sup>13</sup>.

Donald Trump overturns centuries of American Presidential norms. He does not "toggle" between going public and the traditional bargaining presidential role. Instead, he permanently campaigns. As Trump said one month into his tenure, "For me, [the

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<sup>7</sup> Pogge, Thomas, "Dignity and Global Justice" in Duwell, Marcus, Jens Braarvig, Roger Brownsword, and Bietmar Mieth eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Dignity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2014), pgs. 477-483.

<sup>8</sup> To wit, Jeremy Bentham calls them "nonsense on stilts" (see Bentham, Jeremy. *Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and other Writings on the French Revolution*, Schofield, Philip, Catherine Pease-Watkin and Cyprian Blamires eds. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2002), pg. 330.

<sup>9</sup> Tulis, Jeffrey K. *The Rhetorical Presidency*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2017), pg. 224.

<sup>10</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 88.

<sup>11</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 91.

<sup>13</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 93.

presidency] is a campaign”<sup>14</sup>. “Trump did not simply import techniques of campaigning into the governing phase,” Tulis writes, “he continued the actual campaign past inauguration as he continued to attack his former opponent and repeatedly lectured audiences, ranging from foreign leaders to the career staff of the CIA, on the details of his electoral college victory”<sup>15</sup>. In the first year of his presidency, he had his campaign operatives, such as Stephen Bannon and Stephen Miller, craft policy<sup>16</sup> – a practice he continues. Trump turned his inaugural address into a campaign rally<sup>17</sup>. Instead of deferring to the Constitution, which he didn’t mention at all, Trump referred to the people who support him – “a subset of the American people...that he invests with the authority of the whole people” as demagogues do.

Additionally, Trump vilifies the media (calling it “the enemy of the people”) and “pledges his allegiance to the people directly”<sup>18</sup>. Twitter enables the President to speak to the public directly, effectively going “over the heads” of his political opponents and the mainstream media<sup>19</sup>. This direct line is deeply corrosive to the institution of democracy as it creates a scenario where a demagogic leader and his direct followers rule in opposition to the so-called Washington elites. This quest has been explicitly outlined by Stephen Bannon in his goal of dismantling the so-called “deep state”<sup>20</sup>.

### **Trump and Going Public: A Tweetstorm against Muslims and Immigrants**

At a conference after I presented work on this project, a co-panelist commented that Donald Trump’s speech cannot be evaluated in the same way as previous presidents since he speaks off the cuff so frequently and uses social media so heavily<sup>21</sup>. While other presidents have been informal in their speech and have spoken directly to their bases at times, Donald Trump has taken informality and speaking to his most loyal followers to new heights. In particular, Trump shrewdly (some might say haphazardly, but the method seems to be effective) uses Twitter to rile up his most ardent supporters and to let them know his feelings and intentions outside of his formal speech-making. These tweets have the same effect on his followers as social media posts by celebrities have on their fans, they create a deeper bond between leader and follower as they provide a window into the “real,” “behind the scenes” world of the President. This informal, highly personal connection drives Trump’s popularity among his supporters. Yet, he uses this connection to make highly incendiary comments. Trump, moreso than

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<sup>14</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 226.

<sup>15</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pgs. 229-230.

<sup>16</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 231.

<sup>17</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 232.

<sup>18</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 233.

<sup>19</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 234.

<sup>20</sup> Osnos, Evan, “Trump vs. ‘The Deep State,’” *The New Yorker*, 14 May 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/05/21/trump-vs-the-deep-state>.

<sup>21</sup> This comment was made by Jesse Norris at the Law and Society Association’s 2018 Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada.

even Bush with his connection of bin Laden and Saddam, frequently constructs an alternate reality from his words that has no grounding in fact or empirics.

Jeffrey Tulis emphasizes the importance of Twitter and loose, informal speech to Trump's presidency. Trump's norm-breaking, Tulis argues, is without precedent – he, for instance, is not concerned with sounding “presidential” or modelling good behavior for others<sup>22</sup>. To this end, as the conference co-panelist rightfully averred, Trump's political communication needs to be examined differently than that of others since he communicates with his supporters directly through tweets and rallies. President Trump exemplifies the greatest fear of the Founders: “a corrosive leader posing an existential threat to the constitutional order”<sup>23</sup>. The rise of Twitter as a quasi-official form of presidential pronouncement, Tulis contends, is “evidence of constitutional decay”<sup>24</sup>.

The content of Trump's speech, not just his delivery method, is much different than that of his predecessors. President Trump famously does not apologize for gaffes or misstatements<sup>25</sup>. Instead, he charges his accusers of employing “fake news,” or doubles down on his words, or “counter punches” by going on the offensive against his accusers. Samuel Kernell worried that modern presidents might mistake bad news for bias and seek public relations success rather than problem solving<sup>26</sup>. He was also concerned about presidents pandering to the public<sup>27</sup>. Trump goes much further than these concerns. He panders directly to his base and calls the media “the enemy of the people”<sup>28</sup>.

Trump's use of Twitter is deeply connected to his political outsider status. The rise of the “outsider” President, today exemplified by Donald Trump but earlier epitomized by Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, has made going public a more popular choice as the intricacies of bargaining with elites are less attractive to leaders who view themselves as outsiders<sup>29</sup>. A central problem with “going public,” Kernell argues, is that a government predicated on bargaining relies upon trust and reciprocity for accomplishing its tasks<sup>30</sup>. Going public erodes that trust and reciprocity. We see this erosion of the bargaining process under Trump, who is more than willing to berate his opponents publicly.

Tulis concludes that Trump “demonstrat[es] no understanding of governance other than a personal communion between the leader and his followers”<sup>31</sup>. He further notes that Trump fulfills Michael Signer's four criteria of a demagogue: (1) he fashions himself as a man of the people opposed to elites; (2) his politics depend upon “a powerful, visceral connection with the people”; (3) he manipulates this connection for

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<sup>22</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pgs. 225, 228.

<sup>23</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 224.

<sup>24</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 234.

<sup>25</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 229.

<sup>26</sup> Kernell, Samuel. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, DC: CQ Press 2007), pg. 228.

<sup>27</sup> Kernell, *Going Public*, pg. 229.

<sup>28</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 230.

<sup>29</sup> Kernell, *Going Public*, pg. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Kernell, *Going Public*, pg. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 226.

his own gain; and (4) he does not respect established rules of conduct. Through this process the demagogue presents “the enthusiasm of a faction” as “the will of the people”<sup>32</sup>.

Donald Trump weaves Islamophobia with anti-immigrant invective in his tweets. For instance, on October 22, 2018 he tweeted: “You’re going to find MS-13, you’re going to find Middle Eastern, you’re going to find everything. And guess what, we’re not allowing them in our country. We want safety, we want safety”<sup>33</sup>. That same day he posted the following: “Sadly, it looks like Mexico’s Police and Military are unable to stop the Caravan heading to the Southern Border of the United States. Criminals and unknown Middle Easterners are mixed in. I have alerted Border Patrol and Military that this is a National [Emergency]. Must change laws!”<sup>34</sup>. In April of 2019, Trump targeted US Representative Ilhan Omar with an image of the twin towers burning<sup>35</sup>. In August of 2017, he tweeted suggesting that a General Pershing’s tactics against terrorists would be effective. The apocryphal tale holds that Pershing dipped bullets in pig’s blood or perhaps buried those his unit killed with pig remains to insult the sensibilities and religious values of his Muslim enemies<sup>36</sup>. Finally, on July 14, 2019 he directed his Islamophobia at four first-year congresswomen (two of whom are Muslim) in the following tweet, “So interesting to see ‘Progressive’ Democrat Congresswomen, who originally came from countries whose governments are a complete and total catastrophe, the worst, most corrupt and inept anywhere in the world (if they even have a functioning government at all).... and viciously telling the people of the United States, the greatest and most powerful Nation on earth, how our government is to be run. Why don’t they go back and help fix the totally broken and crime infested places from which they came. Then come back and show us how.... it is done. These places need your help badly, you can’t leave fast enough. I’m sure that Nancy Pelosi would be very happy to quickly work out free travel arrangements!”<sup>37</sup>. Here the President of the United States is essentially telling members of Congress, three of whom were born in the U.S. all of whom are citizens, to “go back” to where they came from.

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<sup>32</sup> Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency*, pg. 229; Signer, Michael. *Demagogue: The Fight to Save Democracy from Its Worst Enemies*. (New York: St. Martin’s 2009).

<sup>33</sup> @realdonaldtrump, Twitter, 22 October 2018a.

<sup>34</sup> @realdonaldtrump, Twitter, 22 October 2018b.

<sup>35</sup> Rosenberg, Eli and Kayla Epstein, “President Trump targets Rep. Ilhan Omar with a video of twin towers burning,” *The Washington Post*, 13 April 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/13/president-trump-targets-rep-ilhan-omar-with-video-twin-towers-burning/?utm\\_term=.6157a00af16b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/04/13/president-trump-targets-rep-ilhan-omar-with-video-twin-towers-burning/?utm_term=.6157a00af16b).

<sup>36</sup> Qiu, Linda, “Study Pershing, Trump Said. But the Story Doesn’t Add Up,” *The New York Times*, 17 August 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/17/us/politics/trump-tweet-pershing-fact-check.html>.

<sup>37</sup> @realdonaldtrump, Twitter, 14 July 2019.

## How Trump Employs Presidential Rhetoric: Islamophobia and Demagoguery

Donald Trump began his anti-Muslim stance well before he even campaigned for President. Brian Klass in *The Washington Post* notes that, "In 2011 and 2012, Trump insinuated that President Barack Obama was secretly a Muslim"<sup>38</sup>. For instance, on March 30, 2011, Trump said the following about Barack Obama in a radio interview: "he doesn't have a birth certificate, or if he does, there's something on that certificate that is very bad for him. Now, somebody told me – and I have no idea if this is bad for him or not, but perhaps it would be – that where it says 'religion,'<sup>39</sup> it might have 'Muslim'"<sup>40</sup>. Here Trump trades in the terribly racist "birther" conspiracy theory, adding an Islamophobic dimension. Trump's equivocations as to whether being Muslim would be "a bad thing or not" simply add an element of plausible deniability lest he be challenged on a statement that is obviously anti-Muslim. Implying that the President is a Muslim and that that is a bad thing is tantamount to bigotry toward Muslims.

On the campaign trail, Trump's Islamophobia continued. On November 21, 2015, Trump claimed that he "watched when the World Trade Center came tumbling down [on 9/11]. And I watched in Jersey City, New Jersey, where thousands and thousands of people were cheering as that building came down." When he was challenged by ABC News regarding that statement the next day, Trump did not relent, saying, "It was well covered at the time. There were people over in New Jersey that were watching it, a heavy Arab population, that were cheering as the buildings came down. Not good"<sup>41</sup>. On March 9, 2016, Trump declared the following: "I think Islam hates us... There's a tremendous hatred. We have to get to the bottom of it"<sup>42</sup>. When asked on March 29, 2016 whether he trusts American Muslims Trump said, "Many of them I do, and some, I guess, we don't"<sup>43</sup>. On April 28, 2016, echoing the language of President George W. Bush before him, Trump stated that, "'Radical Islamic Terrorism' has inherited the title of the 'threat (that) challenges our world' from 'Fascism, Nazism and Communism'"<sup>44</sup>. This is obviously a false equivalency, Nazis and Communist totalitarians killed millions

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<sup>38</sup> Klass, Brian. "A short history of President Trump's anti-Muslim bigotry," *The Washington Post*, 15 March 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/15/short-history-president-trumps-anti-muslim-bigotry/?utm\\_term=.75dc4467b0c7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/15/short-history-president-trumps-anti-muslim-bigotry/?utm_term=.75dc4467b0c7).

<sup>39</sup> Needless to say, developed countries such as America, Canada and those in the European Union do not list "religion" on birth certificates.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson and Hauslohner, "I think Islam hates us."

<sup>41</sup> Johnson and Hauslohner, "I think Islam hates us."

<sup>42</sup> Johnson and Hauslohner, "I think Islam hates us."

<sup>43</sup> Johnson and Hauslohner, "I think Islam hates us."

<sup>44</sup> Waikar, Prashant, "Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Narratives," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38: 2, pg. 165.

of people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, terrorist non-state actors or even state-supported terrorists have killed a few orders of magnitude fewer people. On June 15, 2016, contra to very strong evidence to the contrary, Trump stated that Muslims who immigrate to the United States do not assimilate saying: “Assimilation has been very hard. It’s almost—I won’t say nonexistent, but it gets to be pretty close”<sup>45</sup>. On August 15, 2016, Trump declared “radical Islamic terrorism” an existential threat. He went on to say that the media ignores or “doesn’t want to report” on this matter because it is “very, very dishonest”<sup>46</sup>—and also presumably because it is pro-Muslim.

Khan, et al. note that Trump’s Islamophobia did not occur in a bubble. Other Republican candidates got in on the act. Dr. Ben Carson called Islam “inconsistent” with the American Constitution. Ted Cruz echoed Trump’s call for an immigration ban on Muslims<sup>47</sup>. Going further back, the 2012 election saw the Democrats pitted against a Republican party that was decidedly Islamophobic. Mitt Romney suggested that Islam may not be compatible with democracy, Herman Cain said he would feel uncomfortable appointing a Muslim to his cabinet and suggested that communities may have the right to oppose the building of mosques, and Michele Bachmann (previewing the rise of Donald Trump) accused American officials, including Representative Keith Ellison and Hillary Clinton’s aide Huma Abedin, of being Islamic radicals<sup>48</sup>.

Trump plays with numbers and sources—as seen with the Jersey City example—sometimes inventing them completely. For instance, on March 13, 2016 he claimed that “27 percent of Muslims around the world are very militant,” a “fact” that is unverifiable given the vagaries of defining the term “very militant”<sup>49</sup>. Trump quotes a poll run by the Islamophobic and tiny Center for Security Policy which found, in an online survey of 600 supposed Muslims, that 25% of Muslim-Americans believe that violence is justified as a part of a global jihad. Trump quoted the same poll finding that 51% of American Muslims “agreed that Muslims in America should have the choice of being governed according to Shariah”<sup>50</sup>. The numbers Trump quotes are correct. It is the source that is spurious. The Southern Poverty Law Center states the following:

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<sup>45</sup> As Juan Cole writes, “In reality, Muslim-Americans are remarkably well integrated into this country and have committed little terrorism here” (Cole, “Hating Muslims in the Age of Trump”). Marc Sageman finds the same in his review of jihadist terrorism (Sageman, Marc. *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 2008), chapter 5).

<sup>46</sup> Waikar, “Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump’s Narratives,” pg. 164.

<sup>47</sup> Khan, Mohsin Hassan, Hamedia Mohd Adnan, Surinderpal Kaur, Rashid Ali Khuhro, Rohail Asghar, and Sahira Jabeen, “Muslims’ representation in Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim-Islam Statement: A Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Religions* 10: 2 (February 2019), pg. 7.

<sup>48</sup> DiMaggio, Anthony R. *Selling War, Selling Hope: Presidential Rhetoric, the News Media, and U.S. Foreign Policy since 9/11*. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press 2015), pgs. 196-197.

<sup>49</sup> Khan, et al., “Muslims’ representation in Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim-Islam Statement,” pg. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Khan, et al., “Muslims’ representation in Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim-Islam Statement,” pg. 17.

“Founded in 1988 by former Reagan administration official Frank Gaffney, Jr., The Center for Security Policy (CSP) has gone from a respected hawkish think tank focused on foreign affairs to a conspiracy-oriented mouthpiece for the growing anti-Muslim movement in the United States”<sup>51</sup>.

As Prashant Waikar writes, Trump repeatedly implies that the source of terrorism has never been fully understood, saying, for instance, after the Orlando nightclub attack in 2016 “we must find out what is going on”<sup>52</sup>. By examining Trump’s statements, Waikar finds the obvious answer: “Trump believes that radical Islam is the sole cause of terrorism,” he even goes so far as to call it a “sickness”<sup>53</sup>. Such a view ignores any structural factors behind terrorism and, in fact, my data on presidential speeches on terrorism shows that Trump links terrorism to other issues or conflicts worldwide less than half the time – less than Bush and Obama did<sup>54</sup>. When Trump does link the terror threat to other issues or conflicts he is almost always invoking immigration or refugees as a threat to America, once again showing how Trump combines the threats of terrorism and immigration. Of the 36 speeches made where Donald Trump links terrorism to another issue or conflict, eleven explicitly link the terror threat to immigration.

#### **[Insert Table 4.1 Here]**

In his first two years in office (data runs until February 2019), Trump dramatically raised the number of annual speeches about the terror threat when compared to his predecessor. President Trump made 39 such speeches in 2017 and 43 in 2018/9. As a point of comparison, Obama made 135 total terrorism speeches (by the definition used here of a formal speech where “terror-” is used three times) in his eight years in office. In two years, Trump had made 82 such speeches. Trump also reintroduced the rhetoric of fear that Bush had established, but added to it an additionally anti-immigrant element. In 2017, other than using the generic term “terrorist,” Trump was most likely to call America’s adversaries “radical Islamic

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<sup>51</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, “Center for Security Policy,” <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/center-security-policy>.

<sup>52</sup> Waikar, “Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump’s Narratives,” pg. 163.

<sup>53</sup> Waikar, “Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump’s Narratives,” pg. 163.

<sup>54</sup> The database consists of all presidential speeches about terrorism since 9/11. It looks to see which themes are present in each speech. The database was compiled by the author and his research assistants. A speech is counted as being about terrorism if it includes some variation on the word “terror” three times. The database does not include all statements by these presidents—only formal speeches delivered while the person was in power. That said, other speeches are examined here as case studies.

terrorists” (he did so in 6 speeches), “evil doers” (he did so 3 speeches), or to link them to immigrants and immigrant-linked gangs such as MS-13 (he did so in 6 speeches). Notably, Trump reintroduced the term “evil” when discussing terrorists. As seen in the last two chapters, George W. Bush had emphasized the term early in his tenure while Barack Obama had completely abandoned it. In 2018, Trump continued the same trend calling America’s terrorist opponents “radical Islamic terrorists” in six speeches and referring to them in connection to immigrants or immigrant gangs such as MS-13 in eleven speeches. The only mention of evil came in the phrase “evil gangs.”

Trump is rarely tolerant toward Muslims. His predecessors made overtures to Muslim-Americans and the wider Muslim *umma* much more regularly in their speeches on terrorism as Table 4.2 shows. In 29% of his speeches on terrorism, Barack Obama expressed some form of tolerance toward Muslims or Muslim-Americans. George W. Bush did so in 13.5% of his speeches about terrorism after 9/11. Yet Trump only expressed tolerance towards Muslims or Muslim-Americans in 5% of his formal speeches on terrorism. It should be noted that one of the four speeches where Trump extends some version of tolerance to Muslims was delivered to a Muslim audience in Riyadh<sup>55</sup>. As Moustafa Bayoumi put it, “The very idea of Trump visiting a mosque seems ludicrous. Why? Because unlike his predecessors, Trump is best understood not as a regular politician but as a fundamentally sectarian demagogue. And like sectarian demagogues everywhere, he aspires not to unity but to division”<sup>56</sup>. While perhaps too much has been made of George W. Bush’s visit to a mosque and call for tolerance toward Muslims six days after 9/11, especially in light of the wars Bush conducted, Bayoumi is right. Trump is virulently anti-Muslim. Apropos of visiting mosques, Trump tweeted the following anti-Obama comment after the nation’s first African-American President missed the funeral of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia: “I wonder if President Obama would have attended the funeral of Justice Scalia if it were held in a Mosque?”<sup>57</sup> Trump has also proposed that America close down mosques and monitor Muslims<sup>58</sup>. After a mass shooting attack in two New Zealand mosques, Trump refused to use the words “Islam” or “Muslim” in his prepared response instead “offering condolences to the nation of New Zealand”<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Hassan, Oz, “Trump, Islamophobia and US-Middle East relations,” *Critical Studies on Security* 5: 2 (July 2017), pg. 189.

<sup>56</sup> Bayoumi, Moustafa, “The Drowning Years: to be Muslim and American in the Age of Trump is to live in a state of constant dread,” *The Nation*, January 2018, pg. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Johnson and Hauslohner, “I think Islam hates us.”

<sup>58</sup> Klass, “A short history of President Trump’s anti-Muslim bigotry”; Bayoumi, “The Drowning Years”; Johnson and Hauslohner, “I think Islam hates us.”

<sup>59</sup> Timmons, Heather, “Trump’s New Zealand Shooting Response Doesn’t Use the Word Muslim,” *Quartz*, 15 March 2019, <https://qz.com/1574282/trumps-new-zealand-shooting-response-doesnt-use-the-word-muslim/>.

**[Insert Table 4.2 Here]**

## Islamophobic Actions

Trump's antipathy to Muslims has had real effects. As Oz Hassan writes, "Once in office, Trump attempted to actualize these concerns [about Muslims] through the active securitization of Islam"<sup>60</sup>. One of the main planks of this strategy was a ban on immigration from Muslim countries. Trump justified such a ban for security purposes given the recent bombings and attacks in Europe as well as in San Bernardino, California among other places. Trump held that Muslim refugees or immigrants could be a "Trojan horse" and that what was necessary was to "suspend immigration from regions" that had historically exported terrorism<sup>61</sup>. Trump proposed that once such a suspension ended, America should begin "implementing an 'ideological screening test' for people applying to move to the US in order to 'screen out any who have hostile attitudes' towards the US" and "'because you don't know who is who'" when dealing with Muslim immigrants and refugees<sup>62</sup>.

Trump sought to set an anti-immigrant agenda with his rhetoric, linking the threat of terrorism to immigration, thus producing the threat of the terrorist migrant. As Waikar traces, Trump sought to link a few key themes to deliver his desired policy goal of suspending the entry of Muslim refugees into the United States. The themes he employed were that "radical Islam is the sole cause of terrorism," that "radical Islamic terrorism is a global existential threat," and that "the entry of Muslim refugees and immigrants to the U.S. is a threat to American security"<sup>63</sup>. The first Muslim ban targeted Muslims from seven countries – Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, and Syria – "banning citizens from these countries for 90 days." The executive order also "indefinitely banned Syrian refugees." The ban "exempted religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries" making its intent obvious<sup>64</sup>. After several court challenges, Trump released a second Muslim ban this time banning Muslims from five countries for

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<sup>60</sup> Hassan, "Trump, Islamophobia and US-Middle East relations," pg. 188.

<sup>61</sup> Waikar, "Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Narratives," pg. 167.

<sup>62</sup> Waikar, "Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Narratives," pg. 167.

<sup>63</sup> Waikar, "Reading Islamophobia in Hegemonic Neoliberalism Through a Discourse Analysis of Donald Trump's Narratives," pg. 154.

<sup>64</sup> Hilal, Maha, "Trump's Year in Islamophobia: Five ways the administration has waged war on Muslims at home and abroad in its first year," Institute for Policy Studies, 21 December 2017, <https://ips-dc.org/trumps-year-islamophobia/>.

90 days and Syrian refugees for 120 days<sup>65</sup>. Trump's second Muslim ban was "largely symbolic" as it targeted five countries (Iran, Syria, Libya, Yemen and Somalia) from which few immigrants come to the United States<sup>66</sup>. The current version, upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2018, restricts the migration into the United States of nationals from Chad, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, North Korea, and Venezuela. President George W. Bush, it should be noted, instituted the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System a year after the 9/11 attacks. The system applied extra scrutiny to nationals from 24 Muslim-majority countries and North Korea<sup>67</sup>. Trump's ban is more onerous and, with its strange patchwork of countries included, more an Islamophobic symbol than an effective national security strategy. Further, Trump's "extreme vetting" program coupled with a lack of resources given to the FBI to meet his demands has marooned many Syrian refugees in camps in the Middle East. The Trump administration admitted less than half as many refugees in 2018 (a little over 22,000) as had been admitted the year before (45,000)<sup>68</sup>.

In terms of violence abroad, Trump's supposedly isolationist "America First" strategy has not paid dividends. Trump's use of drones has increased "over the already prolific Obama administration,"<sup>69</sup> though how much so is not fully known as Trump has done away with the need to report on such matters<sup>70</sup>. It is known that the Trump administration "carried out 176 strikes in Yemen in just two years, compared with 154 there during all eight years of Obama's tenure, according to a count by The Associated Press and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism." Trump's drone strikes also killed 14 people in Somalia in 2018, 150 people in Afghanistan in the first nine months of 2018, and between 1,257 and an astounding 7,500 people in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria in just one year<sup>71</sup>. Trump also dropped "the most powerful non-nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal" on an ISIS base in Afghanistan<sup>72</sup>. Trump's cynical dealing with the

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<sup>65</sup> Hilal, "Trump's Year in Islamophobia."

<sup>66</sup> Cole, Juan, "Hating Muslims in the Age of Trump," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, 37: 2 (November/December 2018), pgs. 53-70.

<sup>67</sup> Muaddi, Nadeem, "The Bush-era Muslim registry failed. Yet the US could be trying it again," CNN.com, 22 December 2016, <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/18/politics/nseers-muslim-database-qa-trnd/index.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Cole, "Hating Muslims in the Age of Trump"; Rush, Nayla, "Refugee Resettlement Admissions in FY 2018," Center for Immigration Studies, 1 October 2018, <https://cis.org/Rush/Refugee-Resettlement-Admissions-FY-2018>.

<sup>69</sup> Hilal, "Trump's Year in Islamophobia."

<sup>70</sup> Pillar, Paul R., "Drone Damage: Why Trump's Terror Tactics Could Be Costly," *The National Interest* blog, 14 March 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/drone-damage-why-trumps-terror-tactics-could-be-costly-47522>. Note: Maha Hilal cites a "fivefold" increase in drone strikes under Trump which available data could not verify.

<sup>71</sup> Cupp, S.E., "Turns out, Trump loves drones: And too few Americans are focused in the least on his administration's escalation of Obama's shadow war," *Tribune News Agency*, 8 May 2019, <https://tribunecontentagency.com/article/turns-out-trump-loves-drones-and-too-few-americans-are-focused-in-the-least-on-his-administrations-escalation-of-obamas-shadow-war/>.

<sup>72</sup> Hilal, "Trump's Year in Islamophobia."

Saudis – he agreed to a \$350 billion arms deal with them, the largest in U.S. history, despite their human rights record – facilitated the bombing and siege of Yemen<sup>73</sup>.

President Trump’s focus on Muslim terrorists has created a huge blind spot for far-right white extremists to goose-step through. Trump sought to “rename the Countering Violent Extremism program to Countering Islamic Extremism – thus excluding white extremists and solidifying the ‘Muslim threat’”<sup>74</sup>. This attempted move previewed a trend. As Moustafa Bayoumi writes, “[Trump] has doubled down on his double standard of demonizing Muslim extremists but not white extremists. He has remained silent on Muslim victims of hatred”<sup>75</sup>. Bayoumi goes on, “He retweeted three incredibly incendiary anti-Muslim videos from the extreme right-wing fringe group Britain First, solidifying his credentials...as the chief propagandist for the international anti-Muslim movement”<sup>76</sup>.

The President’s anti-Muslim rhetoric has had a real effect on the body politic as well. Muller and Schwarz report that, “the number of weekly hate crimes committed against Muslims under Trump is twice as high as under Obama and 50% higher than under Bush.” The authors rightfully note that, “this is particularly striking because Bush’s term included a temporary 10-fold increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes following the 9/11 terror attacks – the largest spike since the beginning of the FBI records in 1990”<sup>77</sup>. As Rep. Ilhan Omar noted, in a statement that led to Donald Trump tweeting at her an image of the burning twin towers, “[The Council on American-Islamic Relations] was founded after 9/11 because they recognized that some people did something and that all of us were starting to lose access to our civil liberties”<sup>78</sup>. Here Rep. Omar is stating that not all Muslims are to blame for 9/11, a rather obvious point that unfortunately led the President of the United States to attack her in an Islamophobic tweet.

Hate crimes against Muslims may be on the rise due to Trump’s permanent campaign stance. As Dalia Mogahed finds, Islamophobic hate crimes spike during election campaigns as “bigoted” electioneering rhetoric activates certain elements of the

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<sup>73</sup> Hilal, “Trump’s Year in Islamophobia.”

<sup>74</sup> Hilal, “Trump’s Year in Islamophobia.”

<sup>75</sup> This statement is largely true. Though Trump has, on very rare occasions, including on May 21, 2017 noted the plight of Muslim victims of terrorism.

<sup>76</sup> Bayoumi, “The Drowning Years,” pg. 14.

<sup>77</sup> Muller, Karsten and Carlo Schwarz. “Making America Hate Again? Twitter and Hate Crime Under Trump,” March 30, 2018, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3149103> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3149103>, pg 2.

<sup>78</sup> Rosenberg and Epstein, “President Trump targets Rep. Ilhan Omar with a video of twin towers burning.”

public<sup>79</sup>. Donald Trump's demagoguery and tweets provide constant fodder for his supporters who, it can be surmised, have remained in a "riled up" state due to his permanent campaign. To wit, Trump has reveled in his supporters calling for him to "lock up" his political opponent Hillary Clinton, to "send back" (presumably to Africa) Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, and to "knock the crap" out of protestors at his rallies<sup>80</sup>.

Troublingly, Juan Cole notes that, "A recent poll found that some 16 percent of Americans want to deny the vote to Muslim-Americans, 47 percent support Trump's visa restrictions, and a majority would like all mosques to be under surveillance"<sup>81</sup>. President Trump has chosen terrorism, and laws and regulations meant to stop it, as a central plank in his campaign and presidency. Yet he has focused almost exclusively on threats emanating from Muslim sources, which he has claimed need to be "looked into," while ignoring terrorist attacks orchestrated by non-Muslim Americans including far-right white extremists. While his statements certainly do not endow Muslims with dignity, it must be emphasized that his actions are equally malicious.

### **Rhetoric in Context: Comparing Trump to Obama and Bush**

Much has been made of George W. Bush's olive branch to Muslim-Americans in the wake of 9/11 – specifically a speech he made six days after 9/11 preaching tolerance toward Muslim-Americans<sup>82</sup>. Bush also was careful to separate moderate Muslims from extremists in his speeches. That said, President Bush also sold a hugely ambitious "with us or against" war against terrorism that effectively made most of the world's Muslims into potential targets<sup>83</sup>. George W. Bush spoke by far the most about terrorism of the modern presidents, emphasizing the threat repeatedly. He also fomented fears of nuclear terrorism that exacerbated public fears arguably unnecessarily<sup>84</sup>. His war in Iraq alone killed about a million people<sup>85</sup> – and his torture campaigns broke U.S. laws, ruined the reputation of America and permanently injured (and, in some cases, killed)

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<sup>79</sup> Hussayn, Murtaza and Maryam Saleh, "Bigoted Election Campaigns, Not Terror Attacks, Drive Anti-Muslim Activities," *The Intercept*, 11 March 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/11/anti-muslim-activities-politics-terrorism-islamophobia/>.

<sup>80</sup> Orr, Gabby and Burgess Everett, "Trump's Field-Tested Strategy: Whip Up a Frenzy, Then Disavow," *Politico*, 18 July 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/07/18/trumps-rally-send-her-back-1422348>.

<sup>81</sup> Cole, "Hating Muslims in the Age of Trump."

<sup>82</sup> Bayoumi, "The Drowning Years," pg. 15.

<sup>83</sup> Kelley, Colleen Elizabeth. *Post-9/11 American Presidential Rhetoric: A Study of Protofascist Discourse*. (Landham, MD: Lexington Books 2007), pg. 160.

<sup>84</sup> Hodges, *The "War on Terror" Narrative*, pgs. 77 and 79.

<sup>85</sup> Tirman, John, "In the Bush Presidency: How Many Died?,"

<https://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/HOW%20MANY%20DIED,%20BUSH.html> (a version of this article appeared in *The Nation* in 16 February 2009).

detainees<sup>86</sup>. Obama spoke less often about terrorism, as he was mandated to wind down the policies of 9/11, and did so with much greater tolerance towards Muslims--reaching out to Muslims, for instance, in a major speech in Cairo in 2009 and at the White House-hosted 2015 Iftar dinner<sup>87</sup>. However, Obama certainly did not conduct an ACLU-sanctioned counterterrorism campaign. Obama's drone strike campaign killed hundreds of Muslims, including U.S. citizens.

Chart 4.1 displays the frequency of formal presidential speeches about terrorism after 9/11 (it is the same as Chart 1.1), exhibiting the fact that President George W. Bush was much more active in selling terrorism policies than Barack Obama was after him. Despite this fact, as Klaidman emphasizes, Obama conducted a similarly aggressive counter-terrorism policy to that of George W. Bush albeit with different emphases—drones over “enhanced interrogation,” Afghanistan prioritized over Iraq, less talk of “terrorism” or “terrorists” and more covert action.

**[Insert Chart 4.1 Here]**

To this end, George W. Bush was invested in setting the government's agenda on terrorism as the utmost priority and on selling policies such as the Iraq War. Chart 4.2 summarizes data on whether presidents invoked the theme of a worldwide terrorist conspiracy in their speeches after 9/11. As can be seen below, President George W. Bush employed this theme with much more regularity than did his successors. He particularly did so in 2002 when he was selling the Iraq War and, to a lesser extent, in 2006 when he was selling the surge of troops to Iraq at a time when Americans were growing increasingly weary of the war there<sup>88</sup>. Trump and Obama, on the other hand, did not make the same links as the agenda was already set for them. They could continue with the policies of their predecessor without having to rally the public, albeit for Obama with some blowback from his supporters. The worldwide conspiracy theme faded after Bush 43 left office, but the policies tied to it—such as covert drone strikes and the global war on terror—remained.

**[Insert Chart 4.2 Here]**

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<sup>86</sup> Klaidman, Daniel. *Kill or Capture: The War on Terrorism and the Soul of the Obama Presidency* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin 2012), pgs. 74-75.

<sup>87</sup> Obama, Barack, “Remarks by the President at the 2015 Iftar Dinner,” 22 June 2015 and Obama, Barack, “Remarks by the President at Cairo University, 06-04-09,” 4 June 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-cairo-university-6-04-09>.

<sup>88</sup> See DiMaggio, *Selling War, Selling Hope*, chapter 3.

As exemplified in Chart 4.3, in President Trump's first year he harped with great frequency on the resilience of America's terrorist adversaries. This theme has waxed and waned since the 9/11 attacks, but it has been largely present when presidents have sought to sell counterterror policies such as the troop surge in Iraq and the Muslim ban.

[Insert Chart 4.3 Here]

Chart 4.4 displays the frequency and percentage of terrorism speeches wherein the theme that the war on terror is a war unlike any other is present. Here we see evidence of Trump moving away from speech that ratchets up the terror threat. Interestingly, Trump does not hit with much frequency on many of Bush's threat inflationary themes, perhaps due to his "America First" allegedly isolationist stance. Instead, Trump has been consistent in his coupling of Islamophobia and xenophobia.

[Insert Chart 4.4 Here]

### **Conclusion: A More Overtly Prejudiced War on Terror**

Trump's agenda is an Islamophobic one. He sells Islamophobic policies. Trump's national security policies and the way he talks about them are decidedly Islamophobic. As Tables 4.1 and 4.2 showed, Trump has been markedly less tolerant toward Muslims in his speeches about terrorism and has sought to link the conflict against terrorists to immigration. The link to immigration is an important one as Trump uses the terror threat to reinforce his xenophobic stance. With terrorism, Trump not only links violence to refugees and migrants from majority-Muslim countries but also discusses Salvadoran gangs in the same light. While Trump does discuss the pitfalls of immigration in non-terrorism themed speeches, in his terrorism-themed speeches the immigrant and the terrorist are frequently blurred together into one form.

As Charts 4.1 and 4.2 show, Trump speaks more about terrorism than did Obama and mostly does not link terrorism to any larger conspiracy – seeing it instead as a curious sickness indigenous to the Muslim world. The Muslim immigration ban, the so-called extreme vetting of refugees from Syria, wanton drone strikes, and even calls for harming the family members of terrorists and of destroying Iran provide additional evidence of Trump's Islamophobia and tearing down of the dignity of Muslims at home and abroad<sup>89</sup>. At the same time, as Charts 4.3 and 4.4 exhibit, Trump sees America's

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<sup>89</sup> LoBianco, Tom, "Donald Trump on Terrorists: Take out their families," CNN.com, 3 December 2015, <https://www.cnn.com/2015/12/02/politics/donald-trump-terrorists-families/index.html> and Danner, Chas, "Trump

terrorist adversaries as resilient but does not seek out a wider-scale war with them. Trump's blind spot (maybe a soft spot?) for far-right extremist violence, not to mention mass shootings, which could be equated with terrorism show the folly of his ways.

An argument could be made that the "end of dignity" outlined here is not important. After all, hundreds of thousands of Muslims were killed by the administration of George W. Bush despite his alleged decorum. President Barack Obama, in a way, one-upped his predecessor by cloaking himself in the Nobel Peace Prize while murdering hundreds of terror suspects along with innocent civilians in targeted assassinations – Obama even joked about these policies<sup>90</sup>. One might argue that Trump fits neatly among this pantheon of human rights abusers – with the caveat, of course, that national security justifies certain military practices.

Yet, Trump's rhetoric is so corrosive that its effect goes beyond the lies or excesses of Obama and Bush. Donald Trump speaks freely of his antipathy toward Muslims and, unlike John McCain who famously corrected a supporter who called Barack Obama a Muslim<sup>91</sup>, Trump trades in the most malicious anti-Muslim conspiracies including the Obama "birther" myth. Such divisive and hateful rhetoric tears at America's social fabric, justifies the hate of the far-right ("very fine people" according to Trump)<sup>92</sup>, and validates the excesses of dictators and oppressors worldwide. This illiberal turn may not be so different from the "evil versus good" world dynamic that George W. Bush cynically framed whilst he gathered power for the executive branch<sup>93</sup>. While hate crimes against Muslim-Americans were also rampant under Bush, amazingly they are higher under Trump<sup>94</sup>.

Presidential rhetoric shapes the terror threat, giving everyday Americans an image of who to fear and an idea of how concerned they should be, with the goal of affecting legislative and regulatory change. But, under Trump, it does this at the expense of the rights of American Muslims. President Trump's rhetoric is certainly beyond the pale and it is scary for a sitting U.S. President to dissociate himself from a large ethnic minority group in the country and one of the world's largest religious groups. From a national security perspective, this is a conundrum, as U.S. Muslims have been an asset to the country. Injecting suspicion into their communities could certainly backfire. There is also certainly no decorum in any of these statements. The only utility they have is in showing support for anti-Muslim portions of the electorate

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makes needless threat to 'end' Iran," NYmag.com, 19 May 2019, <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/05/trump-makes-needless-threat-to-end-iran.html>.

<sup>90</sup> Ahmed, Akbar. *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam*. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), pg. 1.

<sup>91</sup> Segarra, Lisa Marie, "Watch John McCain Strongly Defend Barack Obama During the 2008 Campaign," Time.com, 25 August 2018, <http://time.com/4866404/john-mccain-barack-obama-arab-cancer/>.

<sup>92</sup> Rubin, "Demonizing Muslims and immigrants leads to predictable results."

<sup>93</sup> Rubin, *Freedom and Order*.

<sup>94</sup> Muller and Schwarz, "Making America Hate Again?," pg 2.

and perhaps in projecting “toughness” as one of Trump’s platforms is not to be cowed by political correctness or by the world’s various bad actors.

President Donald Trump’s rhetoric is disconcerting for many reasons. It moves the far-right toward ever-more brazen violence while ignoring their rise. It substitutes the domestic terrorist enemy with the nearly-nonexistent Muslim foreign terrorist-enemy<sup>95</sup>. It erodes ties with countries that might otherwise be helpful in the fight against terrorism and does the same with American communities and people that might be essential in that fight. It vilifies a vulnerable minority in America and plays into the worst stereotypes of the Muslim world. And it does all this in the wake of no great terrorist threat – ISIS was already on the wane when Trump took office.

Trump’s divisiveness and demagoguery are unparalleled in American history. While the policies of other modern presidents are not without fault, Trump’s rhetoric is brazenly anti-Muslim and erodes the values and equality of Americans. His xenophobic speech has led to an atmosphere where anti-immigrant violence is, if not condoned by the leader, then at least passively accepted<sup>96</sup>. Dignity is what needs to be reestablished and fought for. A return to presidential rhetoric that acknowledges the dignity of all Americans would not erase the excesses of the interminable war on terror, but it would reverse some of the corrosive trends Trump has exacerbated.

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<sup>95</sup> The Economist, “Learning to Live With It,” *The Economist*, 3 September 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21706250-people-are-surprisingly-good-coping-repeated-terrorist-attacks-america-and>.

<sup>96</sup> Rucker, Philip, “‘How do you stop these people?’: Trump’s anti-immigrant rhetoric looms over El Paso massacre,” *Washington Post*, 4 August 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-do-you-stop-these-people-trumps-anti-immigrant-rhetoric-looms-over-el-paso-massacre/2019/08/04/62d0435a-b6ce-11e9-a091-6a96e67d9cce\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.463373803145&wpisrc=nl\\_most&wpmm=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-do-you-stop-these-people-trumps-anti-immigrant-rhetoric-looms-over-el-paso-massacre/2019/08/04/62d0435a-b6ce-11e9-a091-6a96e67d9cce_story.html?utm_term=.463373803145&wpisrc=nl_most&wpmm=1).