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‘The struggle for the future of the Arab and Muslim worlds that is being fought now will be won or lost not on the battlefield, but in the classroom’ (Paul Salem 2009).

INTRODUCTION

In *Civilization*, right-wing imperial establishment historian Niall Ferguson (2012) unravels the hidden talisman of the rise and triumph of the West. In what is unreflexive an apologia for Western hegemony of the last 500 years, Ferguson eagerly assembles the six ‘killer applications’ that catapulted Western civilization to global dominance. These ‘killer Apps’, according to the historian of ‘Lagado’, were the brainchildren of capitalist modernity: competition, science, private property, medicine, consumerism and the work ethic. The other literal ‘killer Apps’—war, plunder, disease, colonialism — are of course too inconsequential to merit due consideration. ‘There is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism’, writes Walter Benjamin in the shadow of WWII. That truism extends in time and space far beyond Benjamin’s preoccupation with barbarism perpetrated in Europe in the twentieth century. Indeed, the history of ‘civilization’ and brutality are so intertwined that ‘war, savagery and the savagery of war are virtually impossible to disentangle from the march of civilization’ (Bowden 2011, 125). The political implications of this point are eloquently captured by the legendary Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish in his farewell poem to Edward Said: ‘So let us advance—for progress could be a bridge leading back to barbarism’. Recent history in the Middle East resonates quite frighteningly with these insights, starkly so in the Frankensteinian post-September 11 world.

Perched atop the civilizational evolutionary scale and unencumbered by the above-mentioned moral trivialities, Ferguson delivers his final blow on ‘history’ and exhorts ‘the rest’ to embrace the virtues of the ‘last civilization’. ‘The Western package’ he eggs on, ‘still seems to offer human societies the best available set of economic, social and political institutions—the ones that are most likely to unleash the individual human creativity capable of solving the problems the twenty-first century faces’ (2012, 324). The parochial western-centrism and outright cultural/civilizational racism/Darwinism underlying such admonitions can be dismissed as hubristic and morally questionable. But such logic, not unlike its predecessors of the previous half millennium, is not without moment in the current scramble for world domination and does indeed square in with established doctrine both in respectable academic circles and centers of power. This neo-white-man’s burden acquires a particular ideological urgency in America’s global, neoliberal ‘war on terror’. It gives

credence to unleashing wars at will and transmogrifying the world into a boundless, constantly shifting battlefield. It equally lends justification for waging ideological and cultural warfare to spread the ‘habits of liberty’ and progress in the Muslim world. In this battle for Muslim hearts and minds, education becomes the ideological nexus where Islamophobia and neoliberalism interlock in upholding and consolidating American imperialism. Echoing the view in Washington, Paul Salem (2009), Director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, writes with apparent enthusiasm that ‘the struggle for the future of the Arab and Muslim worlds that is being fought now will be won or lost not on the battlefield, but in the classroom.’ The ‘Killer Apps’ are indeed ‘weapons of mass instruction’.

Amidst the deafening clamor for defeating ‘Islamic terrorism’, one distinctly boisterous demand has been to overhaul educational systems in the Muslim world. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, whose membership included leading figures in the current administration such as Obama, Kerry and Hagel, laments that the Muslim world is plagued with an ‘educational deficit’ which ‘has contributed to the rise of extremist ideologies that have provided fertile ground for terrorist recruitment’ (2005, 1). One major focus of this educational enterprise is to purge curricula of ‘bigotry’, ‘intolerance’ and material liable to nurture ‘terrorist’ inclinations. Another emphasis is on the inculcation of civic values likely to have a liberal *civilizing* effect on Muslims. Part of this program is also the proliferation of proposals exhorting Muslim countries to subordinate educational systems to purely market exigencies and global economic interest. This is vehicled through a new discourse centered around employability, skills and the knowledge economy. The National Endowment for Democracy, for instance, stresses the need for ‘fundamental institutional reforms that will ... foster entrepreneurship, and promote changes in the educational system to raise labor productivity and provide young people with the skills needed to compete in a global economy’ (2012, 8). These acts of educational, cultural and economic violence betray an unattractive mix of Islamophobia and neoliberalism with significant implications for the cultural and political future of Muslims. Through the examination of Western projects of educational reform, this paper will thus attempt to disentangle the connections between Islamophobia as both a racialized and a neo-orientalist discourse and neoliberalism as an economic and ideological orthodoxy in the service of Western designs for domination over the Middle East.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AND THE NEW RACIALIZED GLOBAL HIERARCHY

Islamophobia is not merely emblematic of a psychopathology of fear of the category of Muslim and Islam. Neither is it only reflective of a social psychology encompassing ‘indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions’ (Bleich 2012, 182), visceral, uninformed ignorance of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims. This parochial rendering of Islamophobia as a phenomenological reality that exists primarily in the minds of Islamophobes obscures its embeddedness in political and cultural structures. It removes from view the fundamental fact that Islamophobia, as a discourse and an experiential reality, is systemic and ingrained in the deep structure of contemporary Western ideological culture.

Islamophobia does not, however, exist in a form of structural stasis, merely providing the conditions of possibility for the maintenance of a particular cultural, political and legal structure. Islamophobia does, more crucially, interlock with broader designs of domination and global control. It constitutes an ‘ideological formation’ sustaining both America’s politics of control internally and its political and economic interests abroad (Sheehi 2011, 31-32). In

the post-Cold War era, Islamophobia emerged as a new totalizing ideological framework for the reconfiguration of American/western power and new geopolitical priorities in the Muslim world. Its significance has taken on remarkable dimensions as it has become the foundation of a new racialized, globalized hierarchy in the age of terror. It is a functionally useful logic that legitimates neo-colonial expansion and violence as part of the post-cold war neo-white-man's burden. Islamophobia is the Last Man's ideological resurrection of the 'end of history'.

Naked power and war-mongering are conventionally cloaked in the garb of noble intent and lofty ideals. But they are also executed in the psychotic shadow of the deployment of fear and demonization of constructed or imagined others, the hordes at 'our' door. The past few centuries are replete with an assortment of myriad variations on that same theme. Beginning with the Crusades, through the Inquisition, the annihilation of the 'New World', global colonial subjugation, 'postcolonial' neocolonialism, the Cold War and more recently the 'war of terror', these projects, essential constituents of what Ramon Grosfoguel (2012) calls the 'Westernized/Christianized modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system', are carefully administered with the indispensable aid of the self-serving liberatory rhetoric of Christianity, civilization, development, modernization, liberal capitalist democracy and, now, neoliberal utopia. Thus, 'the fundamentally racist and culturally chauvinistic dimensions of the new world system ushered in by the United States during the postwar period' (Churchill 2011, 26) perpetuates an enduring formidable combination of racialized hierarchies and civilizing ideologies.

In the post-cold war era, as argued, these global designs coalesced around the imperial project of capitalist democracy. In the age of terror, neoliberalism has occupied center stage in the neo-imperial discourses and projects targeting the Muslim world. The Islamophobic/neoliberal program is multifaceted and encapsulates a huge array of social, cultural, political and economic schemes. One significant field of operation in this global Islamophobic/neoliberal crusade is education, forming what I call the 'Islamophobic-Neoliberal-Educational Complex'.

ISLAMOPHOBIC-NEOLIBERAL-EDUCATIONAL COMPLEX

The Islamophobic-Neoliberal-Educational Complex epitomizes the ideological site in which American neo-imperial designs in the Muslim world are enacted. It rests on the Islamophobic instrumentalization of education and reform to institute a wide-ranging cultural and conceptual reconfiguration of the Muslim world for global hegemony. This Complex operates at the intersection of American educational imperialism, Islamophobic securitization and neoliberalization. One of the very early instances of this project was the White Revolution devised by the Kennedy administration for the Shah of Iran to counteract the threat of a 'red' revolution in the country. The 'Revolution' was meant to strengthen secularism, garner support for the Pahlavi regime and also importantly weaken the clerical class. This benevolent educational 'aid' was conditioned on economic 'modernization' and the privatization of national assets (Dorn and Ghodsee 2012, 387-388). These schemes of liberal-capitalist-oriented education were integral to the global scheme of the production of liberal-capitalist Last Man in the third world. This cultural reconversion has transmuted into the more gigantic project of producing the 'Neoliberal Man', to which we shall now turn.

The Islamophobic-Neoliberal-Educational Complex is hinged on two broad packages of neoliberalization as antidotes to the 'Muslim Threat': neoliberalization from above and neoliberalization from below. The nexus of the 'war on terror' and neoliberalization from

above is epitomized in Bush I's National Security Strategy. One fundamental fulcrum of the war on terror is to 'ignite a new era of global economic growth through free markets and free trade' (White House 2002). A necessary prelude to such free market ignition is a global conflagration of violence, as Afghanistan and Iraq amply show in addition to the numerous 'invisible' small wars around the globe (Scahill 2013). Embracing free trade and free markets holds magnificent things in store for humanity, so we are promised. They generate prosperity and growth, a necessary endeavor for imprinting the 'habits of liberty' (White House 2002, 17). Shrouding imperial ambitions in the thick veil of high-sounding moral ideals is not an entirely novel colonial ploy.

In tandem with global neoliberal restructuring, neoliberalization from below forms the centerpiece of the ideological war for hearts and minds (and pockets) to de-radicalize young Muslims. Neoliberalization in this context takes on a vast social and cultural dimension. It is not simply an economic dogma concerned with the reshuffling of economic structures. It is a full-blown social program predicated on a set of 'values' and predispositions congruent with the broader neoliberal project. The discourses and policy packages imposing 'free trade', privatization, deregulation, the slashing of public spending, free market legal infrastructures at the top dovetail with the 'grassroots' social programs foisting a slew of values smacking of a neoliberal ideology. These mainly concern individual choice, individual responsibility, initiative, entrepreneurship, skills and freedom.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS COMMODIFICATION

Education then becomes the site where these laboratory experiments in neoliberal engineering are carried out. The aim of education in the neoliberal age is to improve the skills of the 'labor force and the population as a whole' and enhance the propagation of ideas that boost 'productivity and opportunity' (National Endowment for Democracy 2012, 17). In the same vein, the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), launched in the same spirit as the NSS, subsumes among its goals 'the development of skills that lead to job and opportunity' and 'promote entrepreneurship' (US Department of State 2008, 2). This should not be taken lightly as 'economic populism', so admonishes the National Endowment for Democracy. This necessitates 'fundamental institutional reforms that will ... foster entrepreneurship, and promote changes in the educational system to raise labor productivity and provide young people with the skills needed to compete in a global economy'. The strategic significance of these neoliberal professions is not limited to the economic transformation they are meant to effect. Their centrality lies precisely in the capacity to instigate a wider and long-term ideological revolution against 'Islamic terrorism'. In this regard, neoliberal 'Education is the best hope of turning young people away from violence and extremism' (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2007, 37). Neoliberal education thus functions as a bulwark against the 'Islamic threat', domesticating the minds of young Muslims and inoculating their propensity for extremism. Neoliberalism meets education meets Islamophobia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS DISNEYIFICATION

Educational systems in the Muslim world are generally portrayed as hotbeds for extremism and terrorism. One report denounces Pakistani education as a hub for breeding bigoted fundamentalists and terrorists. It concludes that the Pakistani curriculum comprises 'outdated and incoherent pedagogical practices that hinder the development of interest and insight', which 'makes it impossible to develop critical and analytical skills' (Nayyar and Salim

2003, 24). The authors make it clear that Pakistani education should emphasize usable skills rather than knowledge. The ‘subtle subversion’, the authors propose, combines ‘peace education’ with a ‘neoliberal manifesto’ for Pakistani education: ‘to teach children to love and trust humanity’ (128) sits comfortably along with ‘to be able to transform available raw materials into useful goods and services’, ‘to be able to adopt a vocation or a professional one desires to espouse’, and ‘to offer marketable human resources acquired through education’ (131-132). Neoliberal education holds humanizing potentialities in store for these youths, as does Disney.

A potent mix of neoliberal and Islamophobic thinking then undergirds the *civilizing* calculus of the educational ‘subtle subversion’. The panacea for inoculating the fundamentalist inclinations of Muslims is educational Disneyfication. The subtle neoliberal reconversion to prod Muslim children away from fundamentalist habits and to entice them to imbibe the magic of consumerist, neoliberal wonderland can be effectively implemented through *Sesame Street*, finely tailored to local taste. The ‘initiative’ builds on the alleged success of a similar program designed for Egyptian school children choreographed by USAID, interestingly, with corporate sponsorship from Americana Foods and Unilever (USAID 2004). *Alam Simsim* is an ambitious cultural re-engineering project aimed at marketing ‘civic’ values and ‘improving’ the nutrition and hygiene habits of Egyptian children, a blueprint for promoting Western lifestyles and consumerism, as expected by the program’s corporate sponsors. According to Corporate Watch, Unilever is at the forefront of the neoliberal global apartheid agenda. It expends huge amounts of money and effort to promote consumerism in the South targeting the poor and children to alter their eating habits and adopt western lifestyles. The company’s health campaigns are hypocritical and are largely driven by pure self-interest and corporate bottom-line: profitability. This is Islamophobic Disneyfication as commercialism.

In Pakistan, the financing of *Sesame Street* is ensured by USAID to offer ‘fun’ education for Pakistani Children in order to stall ‘descent into religious conservatism and economic stagnation’ (Shah, 2011). ‘Fun’ education ‘will have the capacity to encourage tolerance, which is so key to what we’re trying to do here’, boasts Larry Dolan, Director of the USAID education office in Pakistan. The overarching approach adopted is centered around ‘greater secularization of Pakistan’s various educational institutions’, with a view to ‘de-Islamize’ the educational system, which is official US goal, according to a RAND insider (Fair, 2006, 94, 98). In this respect, Republican Senator Bill Nelson acknowledges with great self-adulation: ‘it is one of the greatest benefits to the free world to elevate the educational awareness and attainment of people in that part of the world’ (2006). Baudrillard (1983) once caustically observed that Disney represents the only authentic reality in America. At least, in our case, Disney does seem to offer one essential element of the authentic reality of the Islamophobic-educational-neoliberal dystopia in the simulacrum of the American imperial theatre.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS LIBERAL CIVILIZATION

Similar trepidations are raised regarding the ubiquity of illiberal fanaticism in Muslim education. Purging curricula of intolerance and bigotry has therefore been a trope much bandied about in proposals for educational reform in the Muslim world. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Stuart Levey (2010), Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, urges that ‘we must focus on educational reform in key locations to ensure that intolerance has no place in curricula and textbooks. There is still much to be done in this

area, but unless the next generation of children is taught to reject violent extremism, we will forever be faced with the challenge of disrupting the next group of terrorist facilitators and supporters.’ This is part of an educational preemptive strategy aiming to inject fine doses of liberal civilization in the minds of young Muslims to quarantine their proclivity for narrow-mindedness and prejudice.

The Saudi textbook promotion of anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism is a prime target of Islamophobic liberal civilization. What emerges is a bleak record of intolerance and bigotry deserving of scorn and condemnation. Accordingly, one report by the Hudson Institute alarmingly concludes that ‘Rank anti-Semitism saturates the curriculum. Repeatedly, Jews are demonized, dehumanized, and targeted for violence. The existence of an Israeli state is de-legitimized and the texts are aimed at mentally preparing the students for eventual war, not peace’ (The Hudson Institute 2011, 10). In the same vein, a policy document by the Council on Foreign Relations, hastily hatched out a little less than two months after 9/11 by a group of former high-ranking officials including Kissinger and Holbrooke, academics and corporate Moguls of the likes of George Soros, bluntly acknowledges that ‘changing the "hearts and minds" of the people of the region is going to be a monumental task that will require tremendous effort from the U.S’. But that should not deter ‘us’ from ‘our’ noble mission to ‘take education out of the hands of the fundamentalists and help extirpate the anti-American and anti-Semitic bile that plagues their educational systems’ (2001). These magnanimous gestures find resonance in intellectual circles as well.

Fareed Zakaria lambasts educational systems in the Middle East for fomenting anti-Americanism: ‘Saudi funded madrasas have churned out tens of thousands of half-educated, fanatical Muslims who view the modern world and non-Muslims with great suspicion. America in this world-view is almost always uniquely evil’ (2004, p. 14). The reasons why ‘they hate us’ should become obvious. Following on the footsteps of his intellectual mentor Bernard Lewis, Zakaria opines that these enraged creatures ‘come out of a culture that reinforces their hostility, distrust and hatred of the West--and of America in particular’ (2007). This visceral hatred has spread deadly fundamentalist contagion elsewhere in the Muslim world, which calls for immediate action.

Neoliberal education reform becomes imperative in order to confront the obscurantist forces of Islamic intolerance. Isobel Coleman (2006), of the Council on Foreign Relations, ruefully asserts that the curriculum monitored by Islamists and education across the region have ‘resulted in an inordinate emphasis on rote memorization of religious texts... turning out paper-pushing bureaucrats’, which does not meet the ‘needs of private industry’. The overemphasis on fundamentalist-churning education systems based on rote learning and ‘insufficient development of marketable, practical skills’ among young people shows the ‘dire mismatch between the skill sets companies are seeking and what most regional high schools and colleges are producing’. She proscribes the remedy: ‘All governments must make educational reform one of their top priorities and work closely with the private sector to develop programs and curricula that will better meet companies’ needs’ and ‘produce graduates with more marketable skill sets’. All these schemes demonstrate the centrality of educational neoliberalization (from below) in the attempt to combat intolerance and bigotry, thus attesting to the tight connections between neoliberalism, educational reform and Islamophobia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS A FLOATING SIGNIFIER

The Islamophobic ideological subtext of these neoliberal educational recipes resides in the intimation that such hatred is incorrigibly engrained in the Muslim psyche, a product of a primeval penchant for prejudice, illiberalism and moral backwardness. The dogged refusal to treat these phenomena in their 'worldliness' and the corresponding persistence to cast them in the mold of a culturalist deficit discourse are informed by calcified Islamophobia. Treating these sentiments as floating phenomenological entities thus brackets off any attempt to study them in their relevant context and ultimately annuls any careful consideration of causality. There is no awareness to attribute negative perceptions or prejudice to the long-standing American military, political and economic dominance or relentless American cultural imperialism or US collusion in supporting repressive regimes and shielding them from local pressures for reform (Khalidi 2005, 178).

There is no apparent urgency, for example, to entertain the possibility that these 'primitive' sentiments may be the result of US and Israel's policies in the region, or of hubristic and contemptuous condescension with which Muslims and their aspirations are treated (see the interesting case studies collected in Lacorne and Judt 2005). The long-standing grievances over the occupation of Palestine and collective punishment of Palestinians seem irrelevant. Gause (2005), for one, attributes part of Saudi popular anti-Americanism to US unconditional support for Israel, Israeli terror and continued occupation. Writing before the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, Edward Said argues that it is the US and Israel's belligerent policies in the region and their utter contempt for the aspirations and needs of local peoples that have 'created an understandable sense of Arab-Islamic grievance against powers ... who proclaim that they are liberal democracies but act against lesser peoples according to quite contrary norms of self-interest and cruelty' (1997, xxii). Needless to say that forms of hostility and prejudice should not be condoned under any circumstance, but elementary understanding of the context that enables them is imperative if we are to build a decent future. It takes scrupulous Islamophobic rigor not to observe the evident elements of causality in this respect.

Islamophobic reality-principle flouting also flies in the face of geopolitical actualities. The opprobrium against anti-Semitism in Saudi textbooks ignores the very special bond that is gradually bringing Saudi Arabia and Israel together. The *Nation*, for example, comments that 'it's utterly accurate to say that Israel and Saudi Arabia are happily traveling together along the same path... and have worked as a sort of "tag team" in regional affairs, agreeing to disagree (mostly) on the Palestinian issue but collaborating on many other subjects' (Dreyfus 2013). One object of this close collaboration is the potential sabotaging of Iran's nuclear program, with the Saudis reportedly possibly bankrolling the Mossad's systematic assassination campaign against Iranian nuclear scientists (Lando, 2012). *Haaretz* can thus gleefully exalt in the fact that 'For Saudi Arabia, Israel is turning from foe to friend' (Orin 2012), and a very dependable one at that.

These instances of ideological myopia are instructive and reveal the reality of Islamophobia as a hermeneutic category. The prejudiced Islamophobic hermeneutics should not be construed on depoliticized, individualized grounds or on the basis of moral deficiencies. What the consistent pattern of Islamophobic conceptual myopia reveals is a systemic, racist epistemic economy.

ISLAMOPHOBIC SELECTIVE ATTENTION AS INSTITUTIONALIZED RACISM

Selective attention is a normal human processing mechanism. It helps us navigate the deluge of stimuli that compete for our attention and impose some order on a chaotic reality. And it crucially provides us with a sense of existential control and security. All this is obvious and natural. But what is not so readily recognized is the fact that the focus of attention is anything but natural and that what we choose to zero in on is colored by our socially constructed mental and ideological predispositions. In many instances, perception is determined *apriori*, a result of wired-in ideological fossilization. Islamophobic selective attention is no exception. The regular fixation on the political, cultural et al. maladies of Islam and Muslims is not therefore the result of a normal process of perceiving a given, 'objective' reality of Islam and the Muslim world. Moralizing critiques of it as an illustration of hypocrisy are patently off the mark. The problem is not some moral failing to see reality for what it is. The fixation has roots in a collective Islamophobic structure that has solidified into a narrow ideological filter. It is institutionalized racism.

The selective outrage directed against intolerance and the violent anti-American and anti-Semitic content of Saudi textbooks is a telling example of this. The vehement condemnation does not extend to Israeli textbooks where the incitement to and legitimation of violence against Palestinians is widespread nor is there any apparent effort to produce a balanced, comparative and critical account of these phenomena in a broader frame of analysis and understanding. Gor (2003) documents the active militarization of education in Israel which is designed to prepare children to 'accept war as a natural factor of life'. More specifically, in a careful study of Israeli history textbooks, Israeli scholar Peled-Elhanan concludes that 'Israeli mainstream school books implicitly legitimate the killing of Palestinians as an effective tool to preserve a secure Jewish state with a Jewish majority, and ... that this legitimation prepares Israeli youth to be good soldiers and to carry on the practices of occupation in the Palestinian Occupied Territories' (2010, 377). In the US, Michael Apple (2006) has documented the right wing takeover of US education central to which is a curriculum shot through with bigotry and intolerance; not to mention the systemic racist sanitization of American history and the invisibilization of the historical plight of Native Americans, Afro-Americans and Hispanics. The erasure of these last instances (and the parallel incessant zooming in on Saudi textbooks) is not a question of oversight, ignorance or hypocrisy. It is ingrained in mainstream intellectual and political culture. In his analysis of journalistic and intellectual commentary on Islam in the US, Said concludes that 'covering Islam is a one-sided activity that obscures what *'we'* do, and highlights instead what Muslims and Arabs by their very flawed nature *are'* (1997, xxii, original emphasis). This is deep-seated institutionalized epistemic racism.

But Saudis are not alone in their predisposition to the incurable malady of anti-Americanism. Tony Judt argues that the enduring legacy of the Cold War and US military entanglements are 'the source of an unprecedented level of popular anti-Americanism' worldwide (2008, p. 380). According to the latest Gallup annual global survey (2013), the United States is considered to be the greatest threat to peace in the world, surpassing other contenders by a significant margin. This corroborates previous findings from the Pew Research Global Attitudes Survey which indicate that anti-Americanism is 'a global phenomenon', covering also Asia and Western Europe. To be sure, widespread hatred of America does exist among pupils. Consider this sample:

‘America is an extreme country, a new country, where the reality is often cruel and hard for more than half the population. It is the most powerful country [in the world], but it is also the most dangerous.

America wants to look like God because they [the US government] want to decide who must die or not.

George Bush wants to control the world. He is not a good president. . . . There is very much racism because the society is controlled by the WASPs . . . It’s not a democratic country.

I just hate the politics in the United States. The United States is great, without the Americans . . .

I hate their president because he abuses his power, and makes war everywhere.

I hate America, because it makes war in Iraq for its oil’.

The venomous ‘rage’ expressed in these testimonies does not emanate from those ‘half-educated, fanatical Muslims coming out of a culture that reinforces their hostility, distrust and hatred of the West—and of America in particular’. The anti-American venom is spewed by no other than French seniors in a highly regarded French *Lycée* (Lacorne and Judt 2005, p. 3). This sample represents only a small portion of a larger phenomenon: the prevalence of anti-Americanism in French textbooks and curriculum (Cahen 2008). But Islamophobic doctrinal rigor requires that these are exempted from denunciation, and therefore no equivalent civilizing educational proposals are envisaged.

There are graver omissions in this process of Islamophobic selective attention. The coverage does not encompass America’s own record of sponsoring terroristic education and fomenting intolerance and violence. America’s crafting of international terrorism during the Cold War (Cooley 1999; Gerges 2011) comprised a substantial educational component: the militarization of curricula and education in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which has had deleterious effects on the entire society. It has irreversibly shattered the fabric of Afghani and Pakistani society and condemned a whole generation to a future of violence, death, displacement and misery. The ‘war curriculum’ developed to teach Afghani children basic ‘literacy’ and ‘numeracy’ ‘skills’ is suffused with activities, images and text that drill a psychology of violence and militarization. It stands in monumental contrast to the current promotion of the ideals of respect for life and the love and trust of humanity reviewed above. This is a sample numerical ‘reasoning’ activity:

A group of Mujahiddin attacked 28 Russian tanks of which they burned 15 tanks. How many Russian tanks did escape?

There is more to kindle the mathematical reasoning fire in the impressionable minds, perhaps as a preliminary step to the spread of freedom and democratic attitudes:

‘The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian’s head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead’ (Davis 2002, 92-93).

The textbooks were underwritten by the University of Nebraska under a grant from USAID (Ibid). The rest should become painfully clear and does not warrant any elaborate comment. Islamophobic blinders are thick indeed.

ISLAMOPHOBIA AS EDUCIDE

To Iraqis, 2003 was indeed an *annus horribilis*. It was the year civilizational apocalypse fatefully descended on this much injured country. From the war crimes in Fallujah to targeted assassinations, from the thuggery of mercenaries to the torture and rape chambers of Abu Ghraib, Iraqis saw their lives, histories, dignity and indeed their humanity lurch from disaster to disaster as a new chapter of colonial history was beginning to unfold. But soon, Iraqis would be subjected to assault on a grand scale when their country became the object of an experiment in social, economic, political, cultural and –as we shall see presently– educational annihilation.

This experiment was accurately dubbed by Paul Wolfowitz as an instance of ‘state-ending’ (Baker, Ismael and Ismael 2011, p. 3), a confession of the *intent* of the invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. Wolfowitz’s prescription for state destruction in Iraq is all-encompassing; it ‘entailed more than regime change and more than political and economic restructuring’, as some astute analysts have argued (i.e. Klein 2007). ‘It also required cultural cleansing, [...] the degrading of a unifying culture and the depletion of an intelligentsia tied to the old order’ (Baker, Ismael and Ismael 2010, 6). The damage that has been inflicted on almost every facet of Iraqi existence is tantamount to ‘the death of history’ (Fisk 2007) or, more forthrightly, ‘the rape of Mesopotamia’ (Rothfield 2009). In an epithet, journalist Nir Rosen mourns the disappearing of Iraq: ‘there is only ignominy left for the Americans, and slaughter for the Iraqis’. ‘Iraq has been killed and will never rise again’ (2007, 409), he concludes. The experiment is one of *civildicide*, *tout court*.

In the minds of Iraqis these scenes of *civildicide* perpetrated by Western occupiers conjure up images of the Mongol invasion when Genghis Khan’s grandson torched the city of Baghdad and wreaked havoc on its libraries in the 13th century, which, for many astute students of Muslim history, constituted the beginning of the decline of Islamic civilization, to be later expedited with the fall of Granada. The horror of what beset the city has been kept alive in the popular legend that during that Mongol invasion that ‘the Tigris River ran red with blood, then black from the ink of books’ (Knuth 2003, 197). Parallel to *culturicide*, *memoricide* and *historicide* is *educide*, with its implications for *epistemicide* and *linguicide*.

Total destruction created a vast opportunity for redrawing the Iraqi educational terrain. This was an essential ingredient of the dreadful recipe that Bremer concocted for the neoliberalization of Iraq. *Educide*, *epistemicide* and *linguistic neoimperialism* cannot be adequately comprehended without taking stock of the neoliberal assault on the country as Paul Bremer’s obsessive scheme to ‘teach influential Iraqis the basics of a free market economy’ (2006, 63) neatly squares in with his design to draw up the legal infrastructure for

the neoliberalization of the country and revamp the educational system (through proposed privatization/corporatization). Bremer was an ardent champion of corporatizing Iraqi education and opening up educational ‘reconstruction’ for profiteering by US companies and organizations as part of his global neoliberal bonanza. Education thus became the locus of a neoliberal economic revolution and the Islamophobic remaking of Iraqi education and minds.

The destruction of Iraq created an educational *terra nullius* primed for neoliberalization, Americanization, epistemicide and linguicide undergirded by Islamophobia. This is patently illustrated in the stints of two Coalition Provisional Authority education advisors, Erdmann (a fresh Harvard graduate) and the more flamboyant John Agresto (later to become the chancellor and provost of the American University of Iraq in Suleimania). The Erdmann and Agresto schemes were devised with the express purpose of politically/epistemically domesticating and Americanizing Iraqi higher education. John Agresto who ‘arrived in Iraq with two suitcases, a feather pillow, and a profusion of optimism [and unbridled hubris][...], envisioned the job in grander terms’. His brief was not merely ‘to oversee but to overhaul the country’s university system’. For him, culturicide was a blessing in disguise. ‘He regarded the postwar looting [...] as a benefit. It provided “the opportunity for a clean start”’ (Chandrasekaran 2006, 184). And it really did.

The clean start heralded the organizational dismantling of universities. Erdmann’s first accomplishment was the dismissal of all university presidents as a prelude to effective change. His blueprint consisted of establishing a corporatized university system, de-Baathification, employing universities as sites for US cultural propaganda (public diplomacy) and the ‘normalization’ of the Iraqi academic and scientific community (Watenpaugh, Méténierm, Hanssen, and Fattah 2003, 27). John Agresto’s scheme had grander ideological ambitions. Its pivot was a civilizing higher educational policy hinged on the imposition of an Americanized liberal arts model and university structure (Chandrasekaran 2006, 184) and the intellectual improvement of Iraqis (Agresto’s interview in Iannone 2006, 37-38). Educational vassalage was also high on his agenda: ‘it’s not so much partnering as adoption that Iraqi universities need’ (ibid). The blueprint is no less than the dismantling and the complete neoliberal and epistemic colonization of Iraqi education.

These projects appear to be redolent with Islamophobic edicide and epistemicide. Their open secrets are combatting anti-Americanism and ‘terrorism’ and establishing firm control on the knowledge economy in Iraq, especially in disciplines with implications for ‘security’, all bearing the traces of Islamophobic anxieties. As Watenpaugh et al. argue, Islamophobic considerations such as ‘counter-terrorism and non-proliferation [thus] drive American [educational] efforts’ (2003, 26). The physical liquidation of the intellectual class in Iraq was one of the most horrifying episodes of epistemicide. The systematic assassination and terror campaign targeting academics and scientists were meant to obliterate an intellectual and academic culture and establish a new one on its ruins. The claim that the purpose of the academic purge was ‘deBaathification’ ‘was a war slogan used by the US and its allies in a bid to destroy’ and ‘render null and void’ what Iraq stood for, including its educational culture (Adriaensens 2010, 136-137). ‘Wiping the slate clean’ which involves the decimation of the Iraqi intelligentsia has far-reaching political consequences. It ‘ensures that the country remains dependent on US and other foreign expertise, providing a powerful means of political leverage’, including the establishment of American-style universities charged with producing a new class of loyal administrators and professionals (Fuller and Adriaensens 2010, 184), as pointed out above. The forced exodus and displacement of Iraqi academics and professionals produced damage that is nearly absolute, which further

exacerbates the state of educational tutelage. The dismemberment of the Iraqi intellectual and professional body 'will have permanent consequences as the spiral of dependence reinforces itself with the passage of time, exponentially deepening Iraq's inability for autonomy and self-rule' (Jamail 2010, 209-210). These factors combine to produce a severely impoverished and subordinated educational and intellectual culture. In short, this borders on epistemicide.

Manifestations of Educide also comprise the severing of Iraqi academia from its local context and its subordination to foreign control and oversight by design. The goal is to 'reinforce and perpetuate the subordinate condition of Iraqi higher education. Further, the US is placing itself, with planned USAID higher education subcontracts to American universities, in a position to dominate Iraqi educational structures for the foreseeable future' (Watenpugh, et al. 2003, 27). This therefore condemns Iraqi institutions to a state of permanent academic dependency on American/British universities. The recruitment of Iraqi students and academics for pursuing higher education and 'professional development' or for research projects in America/Britain handsomely services the lucrative priorities of universities in those countries and the teaching, testing and publishing industries in an era of harsh neoliberal educational regimes 'at home'. These schemes can also be a subtle conduit for brain drain, the free movement of ideas from the South to the North. This is 'aid' with a brown face. 'Soft power' considerations also oblige: creating a class of western-educated Iraqis acutely attuned to Western interests, which will facilitate strategic geopolitical domination of the region. One of the major areas in which long-term domination has been achieved is the establishment of the Americanized/Anglicized University.

The Americanized/Anglicized university as a potential conduit for epistemicide is manifested in the imposition of the Westernized canon and in the linguistic (geo)politics of knowledge production and consumption. The imposition of the Anglicized/Americanized canon also entails the institution of Westernized epistemic traditions. This leads to the naturalization of Western knowledge and canon as a universal norm and the relational devaluation and ultimate demise of local forms of knowledge. These processes have a long-standing history. Epistemicide has been a perennial defining feature of the Westernized University. And the whole edifice of modern Western knowledge and canon is founded on the combined physical and symbolic obliteration of the other. Ramon Grosfoguel (2013) forcefully argues that the structures of western knowledge are predicated on the four genocides/epistemicides perpetrated in the long 16th century against Moriscos and Marranos in al-Andalus, indigenous peoples and slaves in the Americas and Indo-European women in Europe. Epistemicide is constitutive of genocide. The educational *terra nullius* which allowed for the 'clean start' to plant Americanized structures of knowledge in Iraq represents potential continuities with that long-standing historical pattern. Constitutive of the intersection of epistemicide and genocide is also linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) and linguicide (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). The dominance of western epistemologies and the relational pauperization and obliteration of other traditions of knowledge had respective implications for western and non-western languages. The linguistic politics of the Americanized/Anglicized University in Iraq exhibits the same entanglement of epistemicide, linguistic imperialism and linguicide.

The institution of English as a language of instruction and publication leads to the ghettoization of Arabic and to the isolation of learning and knowledge production and academics from their societies (Hanafi 2011). The increasing commodification of knowledge vehicled through the English language undercuts the organic function of education systems to actively contribute to the public good of local communities and generate knowledge

geared towards solving local problems rather than be subordinated to irrelevant (and sometimes detrimental) global academic/(geo)political agendas. Scholars are subtly coerced by the morbid language economy of scientific production: publish globally and perish locally or publish locally and perish globally (Hanafi 2011); the balance seems to tilt towards the former, with self-evident consequences for globalized knowledge feudalism and epistemic alienation.

There are other bleak portrayals of the nefarious effects of English on Arabic and local Muslim identity and culture (Al-Issa and Dahan 2011), also likely to effect various degrees of epistemicide in the long run. English is aggressively altering communication patterns, cultural schemas and perceptions of identity in the Arab world. The effective domain displacement/amputation of Arabic coupled with relentless westernization and consumerism raises grave concerns about the future sustainability of Arabic language and cultural identity in the region. English and ELT thus become agents in the dissemination of American communicative patterns along with American consumerist ‘values’. Beyond this, the relentless promotion of English is intended to have a deeper civilizing impact on the mental habits of Muslims. It is meant to neutralize them against religious fanaticism and intolerance produced by Arabic-medium and Islamic education, a view widely held in Islamophobic circles (i.e. Pipes 2007). In this respect, Susan Glasser (2003) praises Qatar for its educational revolution: putting English over Islam in its school curriculum. This, along with establishing English-medium universities, is a ‘salutary’ ‘extension of US influence in the region’ (ibid), which acts as a remedy against the rise of anti-Americanism and intolerance in Qatar and potentially in the entire region. Linguistic and educational violence are tantamount to epistemicide.

In Iraq, experiments in Educide also interlock with a potential Islamophobic *civilizing* mission. Educational colonialism is not limited to just fashioning Iraqi institutions of higher learning on the image of American universities. It equally includes a profound *civilizing* element likely to elevate Iraqis to the status of the human, for, in the words of the sublime John Agresto, ‘[t]here is no political liberation without the liberation of the mind’ (2006, 48). This is hinged on a cultural ‘flattening’ that will rescue Iraqis from such ravages of Islam as passivity, intellectual backwardness, gullibility and fatalism. The Islamophobic/Orientalist subtext of such statements is unmistakable. Commenting on Iraqi’s fatalistic culture with bland sarcasm, Agresto fantasizes that ‘[i]f we could get Allah to tell the Iraqis to submit to a new way of life, all would yet be well’ (ibid, 43). His cultural reconversion scheme would ‘help with the opening, or re-opening, of the Iraqi mind’. He claims that ‘the dominance of Islam obstructs liberal arts. Unlike Christianity, he explained, Islam has no recent tradition of analysis or intellectual debate.... Liberal arts incorporate a method of inquiry—discussion, questions, reasoned argument. In Iraq, that is missing (cited in Show 2013) (37-38). For Agresto’s Liberal Arts formula to take root, Islam has to give way.

The contract offered to Creative Associates International equally smacks of combination of neoliberal educational speak and Islamophobic, orientalist thinking. The contract states that the purpose of education reconstruction is to focus ‘on quality and access.’ To provide that “quality,” the contract says, schools will incorporate “democratic practices in the classroom” and develop students’ learning and critical-thinking skills’ (Zehr 2004). Robert Gordon, Director of Operations at CAI, crows over their pedagogical rehabilitation mission in Iraq: ‘We want them to get away from rote learning. We want students to be able to ask questions’ (Spinner 2003). This rhymes splendidly with Agresto’s Islamophobic ruminations previously cited.

A central focus of the Islamophobic/epistemic assault on Iraqi education was curriculum. The revision of the curriculum and textbook development rested on the ideological reengineering of Iraqi education: the Islamophobic and epistemic sanitization of the curriculum disguised as ‘de-Baathification’. The soaring rhetoric extolling the noble intentions of the occupiers is evident in the parameters designed to revamp Iraqi education (see UNESCO 2004, 21). In practice, however, the lofty ideals translated into a number of actions aimed at purging the curriculum of highly politicized content (see examples in UNESCO 2004, p. 22). The purge was also meant to domesticate and hollow out the curriculum of any subversive content likely to foment resistance to US and Israeli policies (ibid, 58). UNESCO reports that ‘all processes of revision were based on the elimination of everything in the texts that had a link to political material[...]or statements which promoted fighting, for example, against the USA or against Israel’ (ibid, 26). In addition to the political cleansing of the curriculum, ideological reconversion required that the curriculum be secularized. One of the parameters decreed that the textbooks ‘be free from any religious references in order to comply with the American constitution’. This was a ploy to cleanse the curriculum of religious references likely to fuel resistance. The ‘secularization’ of textbook material ‘served as basis for progressive communication between donors and UNESCO principles of universal values’ (ibid, 23), as clearly dictated by the major architect of the project, USAID. It follows then that Islamophobia acts as the ideological repository for the rationalization of secularizing efforts and political sanitization in the process of curricular epistemic decontamination.

After Bush declared ‘mission accomplished’, Tony Blair (2004), in his address to the Coalition Forces in Iraq, prophesied that “in years to come, people here in this country (Iraq), and I believe around the world, will look back on what you have done and give thanks and recognize that they owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude”. Iraqis should be grateful for the six ‘killer apps’: civilicide, culturicide, historicide, educide, epistemicide and linguicide, not to mention the horrific descent into the cauldron of sectarian violence the occupation has bequeathed them. It is one of the ironies of history that occupiers may surrender to the temptations of therapeutic amnesia. Victims rarely afford that luxury.

CONCLUSION

In the era of the empire of terror, to neoliberalize is to racialize. Neoliberalization and Islamophobia are two interlocking projects in America’s quest for hegemony in the Muslim world. This is pivotal to the sustenance of the neo-white-man’s burden to produce ‘Neoliberal Man’. This totalizing experiment finds clear expression in the mutually reinforcing dynamics of Islamophobia and neoliberalism as they play out in American projects of educational reform in Muslim countries. Educational interventions such as Disneyfication, liberal civilization, commodification, educide, culturicide, epistemicide and linguicide are given substance in the configuration linking full spectrum neoliberalization and Islamophobia. The consequences are dire for Muslim peoples. The relentless Islamophobic-neoliberal-educational flattening and homogenization jeopardize their cultural uniqueness and security and act in concert as an impediment to pursuing emancipatory courses of cultural and civilizational autonomy. Muslim education is in need of decolonization. A de-Centred, decolonial, liberatory, locally accountable, historically grounded, culturally relevant and epistemically responsive educational/civilizational project is not only desirable, but an existential necessity.

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