

# **ISLAM IN THE CLASSROOM**

**WHAT THE TEXTBOOKS TELL US**

**GILBERT T. SEWALL**



**JUNE 2008**

**AMERICAN TEXTBOOK COUNCIL  
475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, ROOM 1948  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10115  
(212) 870-2760  
[WWW.HISTORYTEXTBOOKS.ORG](http://WWW.HISTORYTEXTBOOKS.ORG)**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The American Textbook Council was established in 1989 as an independent national research organization to review social studies textbooks and advance the quality of instructional materials in history. The council endorses the production of textbooks that embody vivid narrative style, stress significant people and events, and promote better understanding of all cultures, including our own, on the principle that improved textbooks will advance the curriculum, stimulate student learning, and encourage educational achievement for children of all backgrounds. The council acts as a clearinghouse for information about social studies textbooks and educational publishing in general. It has published numerous history textbook reviews and other curriculum studies. Consulted by educators and policymakers at all levels, it provides detailed information and textbook reviews for individuals and groups interested in improving educational materials. The American Textbook Council thanks the Searle Freedom Foundation, Achelis Foundation, Stuart Family Foundation, and other funders for their support in this two-year project. The report is indebted to Janie White and other parents who first called attention to the problem. I thank Daniel M. Bessner, Gary Pennell and Thomas L. Madden in particular for their early reviews. The inquiry and report benefit from the insights of Alexander Joffe and Susan Goldsmith as well as from the suggestions of Victor Porlier, Polly Kummel, and Stapley Emberling. Any claims made or conclusions drawn from many internal and external reviews are my own.

G.T.S.

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American Textbook Council  
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1948  
New York, New York 10115  
(212) 870-2760  
email: [atc@columbia.edu](mailto:atc@columbia.edu)  
website: [www.historytextbooks.org](http://www.historytextbooks.org)

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## SUMMARY

ISLAM IN THE CLASSROOM: WHAT THE TEXTBOOKS TELL US samples ten widely adopted junior and senior high school history textbooks. The review asks

- How do today's history textbooks characterize Islam's foundations and creeds?
- What changes have occurred in textbook material written before 2001? What additions have been made?
- What do textbooks say about terrorism? What do they say about the September 11 air attack on the United States? About weapons of mass destruction? Do textbooks outline Islamic challenges to global security? Do they describe and explain looming dangers to the United States and world?

The review concludes that

- Many political and religious groups try to use the textbook process to their advantage, but the deficiencies in Islam-related lessons are uniquely disturbing. History textbooks present an incomplete and conflicted view of Islam that misrepresents its foundations and challenges to international security.
- Misinformation about Islam is more pronounced in junior high school textbooks than high school textbooks.
- Outright textbook errors about Islam are not the main problem. The more serious failure is the presence of disputed definitions and claims that are presented as established facts.
- Deficiencies about Islam in textbooks copyrighted before 2001 persist and in some cases have grown worse. Instead of making corrections or adjusting contested facts, publishers and editors defend misinformation and content evasions against the record. Biases persist. Silences are profound and intentional.
  - Islamic activists use multiculturalism and ready-made American political movements, especially those on campus, to advance and justify the makeover of Islam-related textbook content.
- Particular fault rests with the publishing corporations, boards of directors, and executives who decide what editorial policies their companies will pursue.

Publishers have developed new world and U.S. history textbooks at three different grade levels. Errors about Islam that occurred in older textbooks have not been corrected but reiterated. Publishers have learned of contested facts and have had the time to correct imbalances. But instead of making changes, they have sustained errors or, in deliberate acts of self-censorship, have removed controversial material.

## TEXTBOOKS REVIEWED

*This review samples ten of the nation's most widely used junior and senior high school history textbooks. Seventh-grade world histories cover the centuries from the fall of the Roman Empire to the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century. High school world histories feature times since 1800, with lengthy sections on events and conflicts worldwide since 1945. U.S. histories for high school students focus on the twentieth century. The junior high school textbooks examined are designed for seventh-graders using multigrade social studies programs in California and other states. These volumes cover Islam's foundations and history before 1800. The high school world history and U.S. history editions examined are those tailored to California standards. They contain or originate text that is repeated in national editions. Next to no text variations exist between the volumes reviewed and other recently copyrighted editions of the same titles. In the last five years, since the American Textbook Council last appraised how textbooks treat Islam, a new generation of textbooks has been written and published. The findings here draw on multiple internal and external reviews commissioned by the American Textbook Council from historians, teachers, and international relations experts. They compare what respected historians say about Islam in authoritative histories to what is being said in textbooks. The review relies in several places on the Middle East expert Bernard Lewis for authoritative definitions. For an acute account of Islam-related historiographic controversies, including where Lewis stands within them, see Robert Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and Its Discontents* (Overlook, 2006).*

### JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (World History)

- Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Glencoe, 2006).  
 Stanley M. Bernstein and Richard Shek, *Medieval to Early Modern Times* (Holt Rinehart Winston, 2006).  
 Douglas Carmine, Carlos Cortés, Kenneth R. Curtis, and Anita T. Robinson, *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times* (McDougal Littell, 2006).  
 Dianne Hart, *Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Prentice Hall, 2006).  
 Bert Bower and Jim Lobdell, *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond* (Teachers' Curriculum Institute, 2005).

### HIGH SCHOOL (World and American History)

- Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, *World History: The Modern World* (Prentice Hall, 2007).  
 Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History: Modern Times* (Glencoe, 2006).  
 Andrew Cayton, Elisabeth Israels Perry, Linda Reed, and Allan M. Winkler, *America: Pathways to the Present* (Prentice Hall, 2003, 2005, 2007).  
 Joyce Appelby, Alan Brinkley, Albert S. Broussard, James M. McPherson, and Donald A. Ritchie, *The American Vision: Modern Times* (Glencoe, 2006).  
 Gerald A. Danzer, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, Larry S. Krieger, Louis E. Wilson, and Nancy Woloch, *The Americans: Reconstruction to the Twenty-first Century* (McDougal Littell, 2006).

## INTRODUCTION

AT THE END OF 2005 a major publishing event occurred in California. After a lengthy process the state adopted newly developed—not merely revised—world history textbooks. California has unique power to shape the content of textbooks across the country, and publishers make every effort to join its state-approved list of books for grades kindergarten through eight. Publishers Prentice Hall (Pearson), Glencoe (McGraw-Hill), Holt Rinehart (then an imprint of Reed Elsevier, now of Houghton Mifflin), McDougal Littell (Houghton Mifflin), and Teachers' Curriculum Institute all received approval. The next year, local school districts across the state, selecting from this list, bought and put new social studies books into classrooms.

Not everybody was happy with the new books. Parents in Lodi, California, complained to school officials about the brightly titled volume *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond* that had been purchased for seventh-grade classrooms. This book is produced by the Teachers' Curriculum Institute—despite its name, an aggressive privately held California-based educational publisher—noteworthy for its rapidly expanding popularity among textbook buyers. (The company claims that its books are adopted in one-third of California's almost one thousand school districts.) For TCI “diversity” is the sell, and it is a good one. Curriculum supervisors at the district level rarely apply any other criterion in textbook selection. In recasting world history TCI pushes the boundaries of multiculturalism to a degree the larger publishers do not.

The Lodi parents were not objecting to a word or two that they took out of context but to a textbook long on chapters filled with adulatory lessons on Islam. In a passage meant to explain jihad, they encountered this: “Muslims should fulfill jihad with the heart, tongue, and hand. Muslims use the heart in their struggle to resist evil. The tongue may convince others to take up worthy causes, such as funding medical research. Hands may perform good works and correct wrongs.” There was puffery and misinformation. Muhammad “taught equality,” said one chapter summary. “He told followers to share their wealth and to care for the less fortunate in society.”

In Lodi some of the parents objected on religious grounds, motivated by their awareness that educators and courts have minimized the story of Christianity in the curriculum. Others had different reasons. One thoughtful parent was disturbed by the “unrestrained admiration” that the textbook lavished on Islam in contrast to a sketchy and unsympathetic view of Europe and Western civilization. By late 2007 a heated community controversy had developed, fanned by an Associated Press report and Fox News national television feature on the uproar.

This was not the first time TCI had encountered local resistance and parental objections. In the academic year 2004–2005, *History Alive!* had been piloted in Scottsdale, Arizona, before the high-stakes California adoption. When parents complained about coverage of Islam—six months before California approved the textbook—Scottsdale officials pulled the book from local schools. They did not do so willingly. In Arizona, as in California, district administrators had selected the textbook for piloting and classroom use. The curriculum specialists who made the textbook selections had known little about Islam, but they were committed to “diversity education” and had bought TCI’s promises that it delivered a better curriculum.

It is not surprising that Arizona and California administrators would resist criticism of the books that they had selected. Long before the textbooks had arrived in Lodi classrooms, layer after layer of the local education bureaucracy had invested in *History Alive!* The Lodi Unified School District had formed a local selection committee, urged by the San Joaquin County Department of Education to use a “rubric” of “content assessment, differentiation for special populations, and peripheral materials.” (Peripheral materials are the CDs and lesson supplements that accompany student textbooks and teachers’ editions.)

This committee sent a recommendation to the local social studies “articulation committee,” made up of secondary school social studies teachers, and to secondary school principals. Then a curriculum council of teachers, site administrators, district administrators, and selected parents gave their approval to the choice. Finally, the local board of education approved it. According to parents who complained about the textbook, each group pointed to the other as

the deciding agent, and one principal thanked the unhappy parents for their support. School districts receive all kinds of complaints about textbooks, of course, some of them “fringy” along those of merit. So in Lodi and Scottsdale official indifference and hostility to parental complaints prevailed. Parents claim the school districts brushed them off or labeled them as racists.

In Lodi some unhappy parents sought relief by bringing their complaints to the attention of national television news reporters; others were just trying to get local educators to recognize there was a problem. While some parent protests were ill informed or self-promotional, by no means all of them were. The complaints were not confined to Lodi. “I am concerned at the subtle hostility being directed my way now from officials at the school and school district, and am also afraid that it is creating an adversarial situation that will negatively impact my own child,” said a parent in Marin County, California, who objected to the content of lessons on Islam in the seventh-grade Houghton Mifflin volume.

To what extent were these parents justified in their concerns, not about one book but several? To answer this question it is necessary to review a new generation of textbooks purchased by junior and senior high schools since 2003, asking these questions:

- How do today’s history textbooks characterize Islam’s foundations and creeds?
- What changes have occurred in textbook material written before 2001? What additions have been made?
- What do the textbooks say about terrorism? What do they say about the September 11 air attack on the United States? About weapons of mass destruction? Do textbooks highlight Islamic challenges to global security? Do they describe and explain looming dangers to the United States and world?

There is surely no more perplexing an aspect of the history curriculum than Islam. For good reason. Views and definitions clash as in no other textbook subject. The propositions that

inform the work of John Esposito, Albert Hourani, Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Daniel Pipes, and Edward Said, some of the most prominent Middle East historians and experts of our age—constitute an oeuvre of stunning, often hostile, polarities. Crafting accurate and meaningful lessons for teenagers and their teachers in a few words is a daunting task for editors, especially when political differences run high. California’s guidelines for evaluating instructional materials for social content forbid “adverse reflection” on religion as well as many other aspects of human life.<sup>1</sup> Whatever “adverse reflection” is, such a mandate may be conceptually at odds with historical and geopolitical actuality.

Textbook editors try to avoid any subject that could turn into a political grenade. Willingly, they adjust the definition of *jihad* and *sharia* or remove these words from lessons to avoid inconvenient truths that the editors fear activists will contest. Explicit facts that non-Muslims might find disturbing are varnished or deleted. Textbooks pare to a minimum such touchy subjects as Israel and oil as agents of change in the Middle East since 1945. Terrorism and Islam are uncoupled and the ultimate dangers of Islamic militancy hidden from view.

None of this is accidental. Islamic organizations, willing to sow misinformation, are active in curriculum politics. These activists are eager to expunge any critical thought about Islam from textbooks and all public discourse. They are succeeding, assisted by partisan scholars and associations. It is not remarkable that Islamic organizations would try to use ready-made American political movements such as multiculturalism to adjust the history curriculum to their advantage. It is alarming that so many individuals with the power to shape the curriculum are willfully blind to or openly sympathetic with these efforts.

These distortions and biases about Islam in history textbooks could not prevail were it not for the all-important bridge between Islamist activists and multicultural organizations on and off campus. Both are eager to restrict what textbooks say about Islam. Multiculturalists are determined that social studies curricula do not transmit “Eurocentric” or “triumphalist” presuppositions about Western history and society. Middle East centers on campuses promote an

uncritical view of Islam, often with a caustic anti-Western spin. Historians actively interested in taking world history curricula in this direction are prominent in textbook authorship. Encouraged to do so by reputable authorities, textbook publishers court the Council on Islamic Education and other Muslim organizations—or at least try to appease them. This legitimacy is bestowed in spite of longstanding questions about sources of funding and degree of control over publishers.



There are differences among the textbooks reviewed. Among the five mass-market seventh-grade world histories adopted by California and examined here, the Prentice Hall volume is easily the best designed and most visually coherent. That does not mean its content on Islam is somehow superior. To describe medieval Spain, in a glaring and anachronistic modern construct, the book labels Islamic Andalusia a “multicultural society.” The Glencoe volume’s comic book–like graphics and abbreviated content make it a substandard text overall, but its relatively neutral treatment of Islam does not fall into the fawning excesses of the Teachers’ Curriculum Institute’s *History Alive!*

On terrorism and U.S. foreign policy, American history textbooks for high school students exhibit less variation than world history texts. All the texts reviewed cover September 11 and U.S. policy in the Middle East more sharply than world history textbooks do. When it comes to high school world history textbooks, McGraw-Hill’s *Modern Times*—the California version of the flagship high school world history text, *World History*—is better organized than Pearson Prentice Hall’s *The Modern World*, which itself is a spin-off of *World History: Connections to Today*, the dominant world history textbook for high school students nationwide. Each textbook covers terrorism and Middle Eastern conflict. Major variations of quality are apparent in both texts, and general appraisal is impossible: some passages are solid and others unacceptable.

Even under the best circumstances, compressing and simplifying complicated content for students and their instructors in world history courses is a challenge. The results are often a disaster. *The Modern World*, for example, describes the Wahhabi sect in one word, “strict.” Take the complexities that lie at the center of the Sunni and Shiite schism. Textbooks cannot convey the subject in a sentence or two, and even if they could, the student audience does not have the background or maturity to grasp the significance of the split.<sup>2</sup>

But even when all this is taken into account, the misinformation surrounding Islam in textbooks is disturbing, more so because much of it is intentional. Although publishers have developed new world and U.S. history textbooks at three different grade levels since 2003, they did not use the intervening five years to correct factual information or right the imbalances. They have allowed the errors to remain or have removed controversial material. Instead of making changes, they have sustained errors or, in deliberate acts of self-censorship, have removed controversial material. Deficiencies are more evident at the seventh-grade level than at the high school level. Why?

### **ISLAM’S FOUNDATIONS AND PAST**

Seventh-grade world history textbooks introduce Islam’s origins, creeds, and core beliefs as a blend of history and scripture, weaving together revelation, legend, and fact. “Muslims believe that God had spoken to Muhammad through the angel,” says the Holt book before going on to explain that “Muhammad reported new revelations about rules for Muslim government, society, and worship. God told Muhammad that Muslims should face Mecca when they pray.” Teachers’ Curriculum Institute’s *History Alive!* features a passage set off in large print and italics, a Muslim prayer from the Qur’an:

Recite—in the name of thy Lord!

Who created man from blood coagulated.  
 Recite! Thy Lord is wondrous kind,  
 Who by the pen has taught mankind things they knew not.

In its narration of Islam's foundation story, the Prentice Hall volume concludes with a variant translation of the same extract, this time set off in heavy boldface type:

Seeking peace of mind, Muhammad retreated to a cave to think and reflect. One night in 610, according to Islamic beliefs, Muhammad had a vision and began to receive revelations. The angel Gabriel appeared before him and told him to spread God's word:

Proclaim in the name of your Lord who *created!*  
 Created man from a clot of blood.  
 Proclaim: Your Lord is the Most Generous,  
 Who teaches by the pen;  
 Teaches man what he knew not. (Qur'an 96:1-3)

To set the scene of the origins of Islam and the teachings of Muhammad, the McDougal Littell volume features a lavishly illustrated page. Its central organizing motif is an inspirational but *fictionalized* tale about a seventh-century Muslim family traveling on the first *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca and the religious experience of two seventh-century children, Ayesha and Yazid. It states, "Nearly 100,000 have gathered for the journey." The very size of the pilgrimage is a gross exaggeration. "Ayesha and Yazid stand with their parents for hours, praying in the blistering sun. But that memory soon fades when the sister and brother learn that they will spend the evening camping under the stars." Ayesha and Yazid camping under the stars, under the watchful eye of the Prophet. The children later "agree with their parents that being near Muhammad was especially meaningful." The enthusiasm of this invented story contrasts with standard textbook diction, which rarely expresses much emotion.

TCI's lessons on Islam's foundations are more wordy, detailed, and complex, containing stilted language that seem scripted or borrowed from devotional, not historical, material. The

chapter entitled “The Prophet Muhammad” begins with the story of Abraham and Hagar in the desert:

Makkah (Mecca) was an ancient place of worship. According to Arab and Muslim tradition, many centuries before Muhammad was born, it was here that God tested the faith of the prophet Abraham by commanding that he leave his wife Hagar and baby Ishmael in a desolate valley. As Abraham’s wife desperately searched for water, a miracle happened. A spring bubbled up at her son’s feet. The spring became known as Zamzam. Over time, people settled near it, and Abraham built a house of worship called the Ka’ba.

Such detail runs through entire chapters of *History Alive!* Seventeen pages after this passage, the book reminds students of this foundation story in an extensive section on the Five Pillars. It continues its storytelling in ornate, enthusiastic language:

The Fifth Pillar of Faith is hajj, the pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah. . . . Upon arrival, Muslims announce their presence with these words: “Here I am, O God, at thy command!” They go to the great Mosque, which houses the Ka’ba. . . . Muslims believe that Abraham built the Ka’ba as a shrine to honor God. The pilgrims circle the Ka’ba seven times, which is a ritual mentioned in the Qur’an. Next, they run along a passage between two small hills, as did Hagar, Abraham’s wife, when she searched for water for her baby Ishmael. As you may remember, Muslims believe that a spring called Zamzam miraculously appeared at Hagar’s feet. The pilgrims drink from the Zamzam well.

In the Holt seventh-grade volume two pages highlight a long prayer from the Qur’an to Allah “the Merciful.” The format is identical to that used on pages in the Holt sixth-grade volume that cover the Bible.<sup>3</sup> This device typifies the ruling editorial principle of cultural equivalency: equal time for equal faiths, two pages each, using the same layout. One aspect of the scriptural quotations is strikingly different. The biblical passages are ethical teachings canonical in the Western tradition. The Qur’anic passage is poetic and devotional, more like the Lord’s Prayer or Apostles Creed. It begins:

In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur’an.  
He created man and taught him articulate speech.

The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. The plants and the trees bow down in adoration.

In Islam this prayer serves a purpose different from ethical teaching—veneration and adoration of the Prophet—a difference that textbooks leave unexamined and unstated.

Among the textbooks examined, the editorial caution that marks coverage of Christian and Jewish beliefs vanishes in presenting Islam’s foundations. With material laden with angels, revelations, miracles, prayers, and sacred exclamations; the story of the Zamzam well; and the titles “Messenger of God” and “Prophet of Islam,” the seventh-grade textbooks cross the line into something other than history, that is, scripture or myth.

Lavish textbook praise of Islam continues after the presentation of these foundation stories. Some textbooks provide glowing declarations of Muslim social conscience. The Holt volume, trying to summarize Islam’s organizing principle, says: “People should help the poor.” It adds: “Helping and caring for others is important in Islam.” Muhammad “taught equality,” says Teachers’ Curriculum Institute’s *History Alive!* “He told followers to share their wealth and to care for the less fortunate in society.” The Holt seventh-grade volume says, “Fasting also reminds Muslims of people in the world who struggle to get enough food.” TCI says, “Muhammad told his followers to make sure their guests never left a table hungry.” The textbook continues, noting that Muhammad learned “about Arab traditions, such as being kind to strangers and helping orphans, widows, and other needy members of society.” These effusive formulations stop just short of invention and raise questions about the sources of information.

The textbooks feature manifold contributions of Islam to the arts and science, expanding coverage to a degree that seems out of proportion to the relative slimness of the material that the same volumes dedicate to European achievements. TCI devotes *thirteen* text-heavy pages to textiles, calligraphy, design, books, city building, architecture, mathematics, medicine, polo, and chess, some of it spun like cotton candy:

Singing was an essential part of Muslim Spain's musical culture. Musicians and poets worked together to create songs about love, nature, and the glory of the empire. Vocalists performed the songs accompanied by such instruments as drums, flutes, and lutes. Although this music is lost today, it undoubtedly influenced later musical forms in Europe and North Africa.

*Undoubtedly*, the TCI volume declares. Yet the book acknowledges that the music is lost and the claims are speculative. Empty text dilates Islamic achievements.

The seventh-grade world history textbooks reviewed avoid all conflict and bloodshed in describing Islam's push out of Arabia and rapid conquest of most of the Mediterranean world. They fail to explain *how* Islam spread in the seventh and eighth centuries. Islam appears out of nowhere, spreads smoothly and by implication without conflict. Once it was common to state that Islam was spread by the sword. Now, textbooks imply, it moves peacefully with traders. Islam is "brought" to apparently willing populations. People adopt it freely. TCI says, "An Arab man named Muhammad introduced Islam to the people of the Arabian peninsula." The book continues, "Although the first Muslims lived in Arabia, Islam spread through the Middle East." But non-Arabs did not passively "become" Muslim. They were conquered. Islam did not just spread. The Arab-Islamic conquest ended many centuries of Greek culture and Christian worship in the eastern Mediterranean. Sudden Muslim control of Syria, Egypt, and Persia was followed by the Muslim conquest of western Africa, Spain, and the Indus Valley.

Textbooks are trying, perhaps, to correct a misconception. Historically, as a conqueror, Islam was no crueller than its many adversaries. The notion that Mohammedanism was a "religion of the sword" forced upon the masses by bloodthirsty fanatics is based on a false reading of history that was discredited fifty years ago and is a view rejected by contemporary specialists. Michel Gurfinkiel of the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Institute notes that the Islamic empire that swept beyond Arabia and quickly overran the mightiest powers of the day, Byzantium (Greece) and Persia, did so through alliances with religious rebels and internal political factions that did not share the beliefs of the regime. In Islam's history the slaughter of conquered infidels was

discouraged. Sometimes the fate of the conquered was slavery. Sometimes it was limited tolerance by the Islamic regime. In Islam's early conquests Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians were to be the tax base of the state. One reason that conquered non-Arabic people became Muslims was to avoid being taken as slaves or to have preferential rights under Muslim law. Conversion gradually became a problem for the state as its tax base declined. Yet the idea of Islamic belligerence has lingering currency, not without reason. Efraim Karsh of King's College London documents the long history of warring inclination and territorial ambition that makes Islam unique among the world's major faiths, and the *Economist* magazine wonders, "Why is Islam involved in quite so many modern wars of religion?"<sup>4</sup>

Students receive a different message from textbooks, one that points in another direction. As in the McDougal Littell volume, they read, "There was much blending of cultures under Muslim rule. Over time, many peoples in Muslim-ruled territories converted to Islam. They were attracted by Islam's message of equality and hope for salvation." McDougal Littell's Teacher's Annotated Edition reiterates this theme, telling instructors to stress that "many conquered people became Muslims [because] they found Islam's message of equality and hope attractive." What, exactly, was this "message of equality" and hope that teachers are told to stress?

In explaining *jihad*, several textbooks make an effort to cleanse it of belligerence. Defining *jihad* is admittedly difficult, as definitions in circulation vary radically. The common assertion now is that translating jihad as "holy war" is entirely wrong and that old translations are incorrect. But in fact, authorities and scholarship of varying perspectives conceive jihad to be a sacred obligation to extend Islam's power—religious and territorial—by persuasion or force.

Jihad is "sacred" or "holy" struggle. Jihad is also a "just struggle" against the disbeliever. It is a religious struggle. A religion professor and college textbook author, Jamal J. Elias, says, "The concept of jihad covers all activities that either defend Islam or else further its cause." Jihad is constructed as a "holy war" in much Muslim scripture. Historically, jihad involves efforts to subjugate or convert, impose sharia, and take political and military control over non-Muslim

territory. Today, in government circles, in the foreign policy establishment, in the international community, among newswriters and editorialists and academics, that is how the word *jihad* is used. It is how Middle Eastern terrorists and Al Qaeda use the term. When Saddam Hussein was executed in 2006, his final words were: “I am a militant and I have no fear for myself. I have spent my life in jihad and fighting aggression.”<sup>5</sup>

Islamic scripture is inconsistent toward infidels, but a harsh, punitive, and aggressive voice, not a charitable or kindly one, prevails. Sam Harris, author of *The End of Faith*, observes that punishment and humiliation are leitmotifs in Qur’anic scripture. Given radical Islam’s mindset, and observing the contemporary clash of the Sunni and Shia sects, Harris wonders why U.S. religious moderates and cultural leaders refuse to look critically at the element of violence inherent in the Islamic project.<sup>6</sup> The idea that Islam is a peaceful religion merely hijacked by a few extremists, Harris and others warn, is a dangerous fantasy. “Fighting is prescribed for you” (2:216) and “Slay the infidel wherever you find them” (4:89) are only two of many *suras* that suggest a degree of intolerance and aggression.<sup>7</sup> Yet the Islamic organizations that act as academic reviewers for textbook publishers assure editors that jihad is something entirely different. It is a struggle against evil impulses, they say, misunderstood by the rest of us and in no way bellicose. To characterize jihad as holy war, they insist, would be a grave textbook error, yet a 2007 Pentagon-based study shows almost conclusively that Islamic law sanctions violence and that the Islamist threat to world security has a doctrinal basis.<sup>8</sup>

New definitions of *jihad* started to circulate in U.S. history textbooks and classrooms in the 1990s. The engine was a 1994 Council on Islamic Education “guide” for publishers that maintained *jihad* meant “‘to exert oneself’ or ‘to strive.’ Other meanings include ‘endeavor, strain, effort, diligence, struggle. . . .’ It should not be understood to mean ‘holy war,’ a common misrepresentation.” Soon, *jihad* underwent a definitional overhaul. In this amazing cultural reorchestration, the pioneer was a Houghton Mifflin world history textbook, *Across the Centuries*, still firmly established in junior high schools. *Across the Centuries* said jihad is a

struggle “to do one’s best to resist temptation and overcome evil.” Jihad was reimagined as an “inner struggle” and element of Muslim self-improvement. These changes reflected the intersection of multiculturalism, suddenly a trendy social studies construct, and Houghton Mifflin’s commercial ambitions in social studies. Then and later, appearing from nowhere, the California-based Council on Islamic Education would become a fixture on the textbook scene.

Change was soon evident as well among high school textbooks. From 2001 on, *Connections to Today*, Prentice Hall’s market-dominant high school world history then and now, and several spin-off versions customized for California and other states, listed Shabbir Mansuri and Susan Douglass of the Council on Islamic Education as academic reviewers. The textbook says: “Some Muslims look on *jihad*, or effort in God’s service, as another duty. Jihad has often been mistakenly translated simply as ‘holy war.’ In fact, it may include acts of charity or an inner struggle to achieve spiritual peace, as well as any battle in defense of Islam.” As early as 2002 another high-profile textbook, *Patterns of Interaction*, a high school world history textbook published by Houghton Mifflin under the McDougal Littell imprint, did not mention jihad. Houghton Mifflin’s multigrade series then dropped jihad from textbooks; by 2005 Houghton Mifflin had apparently removed jihad from its entire series of social studies textbooks. The advisory role of the Council on Islamic Education in making these editorial decisions remains unclear.

But this was only the beginning. Among the history textbooks adopted by California in 2005, some definitions of *jihad* are more extreme and less valid. *History Alive*, the TCI textbook that Lodi and Scottsdale parents so objected to, provides the most detailed—and misleading—definition of *jihad* among seventh-grade textbooks reviewed:

The word *jihad* means “to strive.” Jihad represents the human struggle to overcome difficulties and do things that are pleasing to God. Muslims strive to respond positively to personal difficulties as well as worldly challenges. For instance, they might work to become better people, reform society, or correct injustice.

Then, in the next paragraph, which differentiates the “lesser” and “greater” jihad, the textbook tangles the subject and also seems slightly deceptive:

Jihad has always been an important Islamic concept. One hadith, or account of Muhammad, tells about the prophet’s return from a battle. He declared that he and his men had carried out the “lesser jihad,” the external struggle against oppression. The “greater jihad,” he said, was the fight against evil within oneself. Examples of the greater jihad include working hard for a goal, giving up a bad habit, getting an education, or obeying your parents when you may not want to.

Continuing the definition, TCI lapses into florid prose that invites questions about textual sources and scripting:

Another hadith says that Muslims should fulfill jihad with the heart, tongue, and hand. Muslims use the heart in their struggle to resist evil. The tongue may convince others to take up worthy causes, such as funding medical research. Hands may perform good works and correct wrongs.

Then it continues:

Sometimes, however, jihad becomes a physical struggle. The Qur’an tells Muslims to fight to protect themselves from those who would do them harm or to right a terrible wrong.

TCI leaves “those who would do them harm” and “right a terrible wrong” to the reader’s imagination. The textbook’s chapter summary reads: “Muslims also have the duty of jihad, or striving to overcome challenges as they strive to please God.” Since TCI describes jihad as being “the struggle against oppression,” students who hear of repeated Islamic calls to jihad against Christians and Jews that include the destruction of the United States and Israel must wonder who and what is at fault.

Other seventh-grade textbook definitions of *jihad* are ambivalent. The Holt volume defines *jihad* most accurately among the textbooks reviewed as “to make an effort, or to struggle. Jihad refers to the inner struggle people go through in their effort to obey God and behave according to Islamic ways. Jihad can also mean the struggle to defend the Muslim community, or,

historically, to convert people to Islam. The word has also been translated as holy war.” The Prentice Hall volume offers a more acceptable and informative passage despite the unadorned declaration of Islamic tolerance:

The successful spread of Islam and Muslim rule was based on several factors. One was the decline of the Byzantine and Persian empires. Years of warfare had left these empires weak and vulnerable.

A second factor in the Muslims’ success was the skill of Arab armies. They were expert in the use of soldiers on horseback. They struck quickly and with deadly force in harsh desert environments.

A third factor was the energy and religious zeal of Arab warriors. They fought under the banner of *jihad* or “holy struggle.” In Arabic, *jihad* refers to striving hard in God’s cause. Sometimes it means a person’s internal struggle to live by Muslim principles. But it can also mean waging war to spread the Islamic faith.

Another factor helping the Arabs was their tolerance for other religions.

A final factor in the Muslim’s success was the rapid appeal of Islam itself. Islam offered followers a direct path to God and salvation.

The Holt and Prentice Hall definitions of *jihad* may be imperfect, yet they provide essential definitions that the Glencoe and McDougal Littell seventh-grade volumes do not. These two latter volumes fail to acknowledge jihad. The material has simply been deleted. This deliberate omission required editorial self-censorship at McGraw-Hill, and at Houghton Mifflin, where editors had previously whitewashed the definition of *jihad* in *Across the Centuries*.

After jihad, in some textbooks, comes Islamic law, shariah, which textbooks spell in a variety of ways. In their definitions, some textbooks lapse into intentional vagueness. The Holt seventh-grade volume says Islamic law “makes no distinction between religious beliefs and daily life.” This is absolutely correct, but the textbook does not explain what this statement means. Shariah is a “law” very different from the one that Americans understand. Separation of church and state is an alien concept to most Muslims. The struggle against the infidel (*jihad*) is rooted in theological law (*shariah*). “Shari’ah sets rewards for good behavior and punishments for crimes,” the Holt book says. What are “good behavior” and “crimes”? The volume does not explain, for example, that apostasy is officially a capital crime. Renunciation of Islam may be regarded as

treason, not an act of conscience or personal choice. Nor does it explain, for example, that Saudi Arabia and Iran today exact the death penalty for homosexuality. It does not point out that freedom of religion is forbidden in nations throughout the Muslim world.

“The primary source of Islamic law is the Qur’an. Rules and precepts that are clearly stated in the Qur’an are not open to debate and must be accepted at face value,” Jamal J. Elias says. “The system of Islamic law, or *Shari’a*, attempts to regulate all aspects of human life.”

Bernard Lewis concurs in several passages:

- In an Islamic state, there is in principle no law other than the shar’ia, the Holy Law of Islam.
- There is, for example, no distinction between canon law and civil law, between the law of the church and the law of the state, crucial in Christian history. There is only a single law, the shari’a, accepted by Muslims as of divine origin and regulating all aspects of human life: civil, commercial, criminal, constitutional, as well as matters more specifically concerned with religion in the limited, Christian sense of that word.
- The principal function of the Islamic state and society was to maintain and enforce these rules.
- . . . the idea that any group of persons, any kind of activities, or any part of human life is in any sense outside the scope of religious law and jurisdiction is alien to Muslim thought.<sup>9</sup>

Any number of important study points thus cry for attention. Islamic law does not have much capacity *or desire* to promote freedom of religion. It is not “tolerant” by nature. The idea of Islamic coexistence with other systems of belief is at odds with foundational beliefs as prescribed in the Qur’an (a revelation) and the Hadiths (commentary on Muhammad). Sharia sanctions violence against nonbelievers. Deviations from any Qur’anic declaration may be risky. They may be judged as violations of the faith and subject to worldly punishment. Students learn none of this. What do they read instead? The Prentice Hall seventh-grade volume states:

Muhammad taught that there was no difference between everyday life and religious life. Living a proper life meant following God’s laws as revealed in the Qur’an and the Sunnah. These laws are collected in the Islamic law known as the *Sharia*. *Sharia* is an Arabic word meaning “the way that leads to God.”

The Sharia was based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. But those sources could not cover every situation that might come up. When in doubt, Muslims turned to religious scholars. Their judgments also made up part of the Sharia.

Muhammad himself saw the need for such judgments. In an account from the Hadith, or written record of the Sunnah, Muhammad asked a governor by what law he would rule. The governor answered:

“‘by the law of the Qur’an.’ ‘But if you do not find any direction therein,’ asked the Prophet. ‘Then I will act according to the Sunnah of the Prophet,’ was the reply. ‘But if you do not find direction in the Sunnah,’ he was asked again. ‘Then I will exercise my judgment and act on that,’ came the reply. The Prophet raised his hands and said: ‘Praise be to Allah.’”

What does Prentice Hall mean when it says, “Muhammad taught that there was no difference between everyday life and religious life?” Doesn’t a tale from the Hadith, which is sacred commentary on Muhammad’s revelation, scripture that ends with the declaration “Praise be to Allah,” carry a decidedly devotional finish? What is the Sunnah? Have Islamic content providers prompted the editors here? Do the tone and diction suggest an element of scripting? *History Alive!* contains detailed, arcane information on Islamic schools of jurisprudence and legal viewpoints that for thirteen-year-olds is conspicuously age-inappropriate. Of shariah and Islamic law, the volume says:

Shari’ah covers Muslims’ duties toward God. It guides them in their personal behavior and relationships with others. Shari’ah promotes obedience to the Qur’an and respect for others. . . . Islamic law helped Muslims live by the rules of the Qur’an. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, many Muslim regions had come under European rule. Western codes of law soon replaced the Shari’ah except in matters of family law. Today, most Muslim countries apply only some parts of Islamic law. But Shari’ah continues to develop in response to modern ways of life and its challenges.

The last sentence is ambiguous, and, as in many other textbooks, such vapid phrases as “continues to develop in response to modern ways of life and its challenges” substitute for insight and information. Some passages are meaningless. The chapter summary concludes: “Shari’ah, or Islamic law, helps Muslims live by the teachings of the Qur’an. It includes practices of daily life as well as the duty to respect others.” As in the case of jihad, the Glencoe and the McDougal

Littell seventh-grade volumes do not mention shariah, omitting the topic in acts of deliberate self-censorship, fearing Islamist pressure, more eager to avoid controversy than to complete the narrative or teach students.

History textbooks highlight the theme of Islamic tolerance, celebrating what the Prentice Hall volume ludicrously calls a “multicultural society.” Once non-Arabs have been conquered, students learn, those societies and civilizations with non-Islamic systems of belief live in a wonderland of interreligious cooperation. TCI describes how “a unique culture flourished in cities like Cordoba and Toledo, where Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived together in peace.” In the McDougal Littell volume, lesson titles include the “Magic of Baghdad,” “The Glory of Cordoba,” “A Golden Age in the East,” “The Legacy of the Muslim Golden Age,” and “A Golden Age for Jews.”

The accompanying Teacher’s Annotated Edition includes a catechistic set of questions and answers that it labels an “Essential Question”:

Q: How did the caliphs who expanded the Muslim Empire treat those they conquered?

A: They treated them with tolerance.

*Review:*

Q: Why were the caliphs tolerant of the people they conquered?

A: Because the Qur’an did not allow Muslims to force people to convert to Islam.

At a time when intolerance marks Islamic cultures worldwide and multiculturalism is a ruling idea in U.S. schools, these “wonderland-of-tolerance” tropes constitute a major content distortion. To present Islam’s past exclusively through the lens of “tolerance” and “equality,” indeed, as a unique triumph of interreligious harmony, is seriously misleading. The McDougal Littell volume broadly states: “Muslim law requires that Muslim leaders offer religious toleration.” When the Prentice Hall volume proclaims medieval Spain to be a “multicultural

society,” it illustrates the promiscuous application of the multicultural label by and in school curriculums.

While seventh-grade textbooks describe Islam in glowing language, they portray Christianity in harsh light. Students encounter a startling contrast. Islam is featured as a model of interfaith tolerance; Christians wage wars of aggression and kill Jews. Islam provides models of harmony and civilization. Anti-Semitism, the Inquisition, and wars of religion bespot the Christian record. Textbooks do not lament the West’s loss of control of three sides of the Mediterranean and Islam’s subsequent European incursions for nearly a thousand years. Charles Martel is no longer a legend. The Reconquest and the Siege of Vienna are no longer landmark events. In some cases textbook carelessness with European history—matched by enthusiasm for non-Western history—is staggering. To illustrate medieval domestic life in Europe, for example, TCI’s *History Alive!* chooses a seventeenth-century Italian baroque painting by Saraceni, one that illustrates an obscure moral allegory of a legendary fifth-century B.C. Roman king. Compounding the offense, the textbook labels the painting a Caravaggio.

The Crusades, students learn from TCI, were “a terrible ordeal for many Muslims. An unknown number of Muslims lost their lives in battles and massacres. Crusaders also destroyed Muslim property.” TCI is correct to say the Crusades “began as a response to the threat posed by the Seljuks.” But then the book contradicts itself. It describes the Crusades as “religious wars launched against Muslims by European Christians.” When the Seljuks or other Muslim groups attack Christian peoples, kill them, and take their lands, the process is referred to as “building” an empire. Christian attempts to restore those lands are labeled as “violent attacks” or “massacres.” A passage about the Second Crusade characterizes Christians as “invaders”—something they would have denied—while the Seljuks are simply “migrating” into Christian territories.

The treatment of the Crusades by *History Alive!* is riddled with major and minor errors, according to the historian Thomas F. Madden. The pope “promised entry to heaven to all who joined the fight.” Not so. The Crusaders wore red crosses, the book says. No, only Templars did.

Richard spent the majority of his reign on crusade. Again, incorrect. Muslims “like Europeans, began to adopt a standing army,” the book states. There was no such thing in the Middle Ages. Standing armies were a product of the seventeenth century. In 1099 Jerusalem was captured; it did not surrender. “The victorious crusaders massacred Muslims and Jews throughout the city. The survivors were sold into slavery,” the book proclaims. In the eleventh century enslavement was a Muslim custom, not a Christian one. The Children’s Crusade was not a march of “tens of thousands of peasant children,” as TCI claims, nor a crusade. It was made up of adults, mostly poor. The story about Marseilles merchants’ selling these people into slavery is a story, a tale. No historian accepts its historicity.

TCI’s suggestion that the European economy developed liquid capital, banking, and taxation on account of the Crusades is ridiculous, Madden continues. It is equally absurd, he points out, to suggest that monarchs grew in power because nobles were frequently away on crusade. The narrative is biased. For example, Saladin is praised for not killing his prisoners in Jerusalem in 1187. What is left out is that Saladin had planned to massacre the entire city, but the defenders threatened to destroy the Muslim holy sites unless he agreed to allow the city to peacefully surrender to him.

The McDougal Littell textbook goes one step further than TCI in its revisionism. It contains a section titled “Defending Muslim Spain,” forgetting that Muslims encroached upon Christian territory, and not the other way around.<sup>10</sup> “Christians are trounced and portrayed as murderers of the Muslim and Jewish people,” one parent complained of *History Alive*, objecting to bias. The Jews are “victimized, persecuted and murdered by the Christians. All the while, Islam builds great and grand new empires, has many great and wonderful achievements in architecture, education, science, geography, mathematics, medicine, literature, art and music, and ultimately rules benevolently over the Jewish and Christian people.”

In recasting the Crusades seventh-grade textbooks highlight Christian oppression of the Jews. Textbooks give the impression of unadulterated and unrelenting, centuries-long Christian

anti-Semitism, and they put the subject into the center of the Middle Ages. This is not an area of history with settled claims and agreement among historians. Equally authoritative references exist to which historians and others point for verification. But a number of textbook passages, reviewers found, were exaggerated and disproportionate—and, in places, inaccurate. “Mobs of peasants turned on Jews who would not instantly convert to Christianity. Thousands of Jews killed themselves and their families in order to escape the Crusaders’ knives,” says the Glencoe text, for example, combining sharp language with disputed fact. The McDougal Littell volume claims that “Jews who faced persecution in Christian lands flocked to al-Andalus to enjoy this freedom.” No, in fact, Jews who migrated (not “flocked”) to Andalusia did so to escape persecution in Muslim lands. Seventh-grade textbooks also focus on anti-Semitism in lessons on medieval trade and commerce. From the unrelieved picture, a student or teacher would never know that few Jews lived in medieval Europe, that Christians and European Jews could interact in mutual interest and even amity, especially in trade and banking, or that Jews were not doomed to virulent Christian hatred.

*History Alive!* declares in bold strokes: “The violence unleashed by the Crusades caused great suffering for the Jews. Crusaders in the Holy Land slaughtered Jews as well as Muslims. Other Jews became slaves.” But when, precisely, did this general slaughtering and enslaving occur? The short of it is that this didn’t really happen, or relies entirely on slender, often contested sources. This passage, entitled “Impact on Jews as a Group,” continues:

During the First Crusade, European Jews suffered a series of violent persecutions. As Crusaders crossed northern France and Germany, some of them murdered whole communities of Jews. They destroyed synagogues and holy books. They looted homes and businesses. Some Crusaders tortured Jews to make them accept Christianity.

Anti-Semitism, or prejudice against Jews, spread among non-crusaders as well. Religious prejudice combined with envy of Jews who had become prosperous bankers and traders. Riots and massacres broke out in a number of cities in Europe.

The point of the Crusades was not to massacre Jews but to confront Islam, which had conquered Christian lands. The TCI volume, *History Alive!*, says Madden in his review, leaves the impression that killing Jews was a regular part of crusading. It was not. The killing of Jews was forbidden by church law, and those who engaged in it were considered criminals. The Crusades were a response to jihad and the loss of Christian territory. The history of the Jews and anti-Semitism is peripheral to the Crusades. There is no doubt that the position of the Jews in Europe deteriorated sharply from the twelfth century. Massacres occurred, and anti-Semitism was in certain times and locations intense. But that is a different story, and the result is textbook distortion.

While Christian belligerence is magnified, Islamic inequality, subjugation, and enslavement get the airbrush. Required to cover the status of women in the Islamic world, history textbooks find themselves in a muddle. In a failed effort to cover two troubling subjects—Islamic slavery and the subjugation of women—very quickly and as one, the Holt seventh-grade volume lapses into incoherence:

Before Muhammad's time many Arabs owned slaves. Although slavery didn't disappear among Muslims, the Qur'an encourages Muslims to free slaves. Also, women in Arabia had few rights. The Qur'an describes rights of women, including rights to own property, earn money, and get an education. However, many Muslim women have fewer rights than men.

The seventh-grade Prentice Hall volume introduces a section entitled "Men and Women" with two paragraphs and a long set-off quotation in bold, not from a document or highly authoritative source but from an extract from an otherwise unknown 1990 guide published by the defunct Middle East Editorial Associates and written by someone named John Sabini:

The Qur'an and the Sharia laid out clear roles for men and women. Men were expected to support their families and to represent them in the world. Women generally stayed at home, although some women rose to important positions. In general, however, women had fewer rights than men and occupied an inferior position. For example, a woman's share of an inheritance was only half that of a man's.

Nevertheless, in many ways Islam improved conditions for women. Before the development of Islam, Arabic women had virtually no rights. Under the Sharia, women and men had religious equality.

“As Muhammad once said: “All people are equal as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a white over a black, or of a male over a female. Only God-fearing people will merit a preference with God.” —John Sabini, *Islam, A Primer*

Who Sabini is, what he is trying to convey, and the relationship of the Sabini material to the text immediately preceding it remain entirely unclear. Prentice Hall then features a sidebar that runs for two-thirds of a page in high color with 111 words of text on (as the book spells it) hijab, the Islamic veiling of women—material expressly designed to link past and present:

PAST: The teachings of Muhammad state that women’s garments should not attract attention. The female Muslim custom of hijab—wearing garments that cover the head and body—was followed only by upper-class women during the first few hundred years of Islam. In the Middle Ages hijab became more common.

PRESENT: Hijab today ranges from colorful scarves to black robes. Some women wear hijab, and some do not. Many wear hijab to follow Muslim tradition. Others think it allows them to be judged for themselves and not their bodies. In certain countries, the government requires women to wear hijab. *Why do you think only upper-class women wore hijab in the early centuries of Islam?*

This exercise is a total instructional failure. It contains vast misinformation in a few words. It makes no sense. There is no subject, no connection between past and present. It is vague. It does not begin to examine the emotional or psychological dimensions of the veil or, for that matter, why the veil is of abiding interest in the West. How can any student or teacher deduce an answer to the concluding study question?

At the high school level textbooks deal directly with the status of women in the contemporary Islamic world. Starting with a misleading headline, “Women’s Options Vary,” Prentice Hall’s *The Modern World* states:

Conditions for women vary greatly from country to country in the modern Middle East. Women in most countries have won equality before the law. Some

women have entered professions such as law and medicine. In Turkey, Syria, and Egypt, many urban women gave up the tradition of hejab, or wearing the traditional Muslim headscarves and loose-fitting, ankle-length garments meant to conceal.

On the other hand, religiously conservative Saudi Arabia and Iran require women to wear hejab. In Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive. In many Islamic countries, girls are less likely to attend school than boys. This is because of a traditional belief that girls do not need an education for their expected role as wives and mothers. Muslim women have begun to challenge this belief.

Yes and no, mainly no, as retrograde cultural forces in Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan have in recent years discredited any embrace of Western ideas and social practices. What does “challenge this belief” mean? How and to what degree? Textbooks are not telling the truth if they fuzz the widespread gender-based subjugation that marks Islamic societies. What does it mean to be forbidden by law to drive a car on account of sex? Women in some Muslim countries who do not conform to strict social norms of gender separation and housebound seclusion may be shunned, oppressed, or punished, sometimes with quasi-legal sanction.

Instead of calling attention to these conditions and conventions, textbooks blur the subject and as a result make no sense. Glencoe’s *Modern Times* says that “in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Muslim scholars began debating women’s roles. Many argued that Muslims needed to rethink outdated interpretations that narrowed the lives of women. In nations like Turkey and Iran, these debates led to an expansion of women’s rights and freedoms.” The text concludes: “There has been a shift toward more traditional roles for women. This trend is especially noticeable in Iran,” a gross understatement that typifies textbook language designed to circumvent harsh truths. Textbooks fail to register any objections to conditions of segregation, isolation, or enforced gender-based inferiority in the Muslim world that may have its roots in religion.

Social studies textbooks do not raise the issue of homosexuality in the Muslim world. As a matter of civil liberties, freedom, and due process, the subject is illustrative, contrasting Islamic culture with one aspect of Western modernity. Most high school students are not so sheltered that

the subject needs to remain off-limits. The gruesome video-recorded 2005 execution of two Iranian teenagers, Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, put to death for homosexual acts, is widely available on the Web and might chill the heart of every U.S. progressive, educator or not. Classroom silence about this kind of punishment, cruelty, and intolerance involves an element of cowardice. “One of the most disgraceful developments of our time is that many Western authors and intellectuals who pride themselves on being liberals have effectively aligned themselves with an outrageously illiberal movement,” the cultural critic Bruce Bawer has asserted.<sup>11</sup>

Textbooks mention Islamic slavery only obliquely, as with the janissary soldiers, or not at all. Enslaved Africans and Slavs were transported to Muslim lands from the eighth century on. Slaves were accumulated through conquest, tribute, and sale. In contrast to slavery in the Western Hemisphere, Islamic slavery did not have a racial dimension and slaves could and did achieve a variety of social stations, some of them of considerable power. Muslim enslavement went on from the Balkans to Africa and Central Asia, and the estimated fourteen million slaves taken captive by Muslim rulers all over the world was a larger population than the eleven million Africans exported to the New World before 1850.

In the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, in the late nineteenth century, an estimated twenty-five thousand slaves were traded annually. Vestiges of Islamic slavery persist worldwide. Despite the Qur’anic virtue of manumission, Islam “accepted slavery,” says the *Columbia History of the World*. “This institution left its mark on Islamic society more than in the West—economically, through the profitable slave trade, socially, through the institution of concubinage and the harem, and politically, as individual slaves gained power as favorites, bodyguards, and rulers.”<sup>12</sup> Islamic scripture and doctrine do not condemn slavery or subjection.

If slavery looms large in Islam’s history, textbooks should highlight it as they do slavery in the Western Hemisphere after 1500. World history textbooks describe in agonizing detail the export of slaves from Africa to North America, the Caribbean, and Brazil, and the history of slavery in the New World; slavery in the far-flung Islamic world on several continents over the

course of a millennium gets the airbrush. This glaring imbalance reflects a prevailing editorial mind-set that is often more sensitive to “cultural differences” than to accurate but disturbing perspectives that might elicit the protests of Islamist activists and watchdogs.

## **ISLAM, TERRORISM AND GLOBAL SECURITY**

### *Terrorism*

The labels “terrorism” and “terrorist” are vague but pejorative. They are terms that are affixed to violence aimed at civilians or civil security and directed against a regime. Whether a nation can fight a “war against terrorism” is an open question, but politically the United States is stuck with the phrase. Terrorist groups do not describe themselves as terrorists. They see themselves as freedom fighters, guerrillas, paramilitaries, or as “martyrs” carrying out God’s will. Organized terrorism requires cover, arms, and money. Terrorists operate without a traditional military force.

These would seem to be essential starting points for any textbook discussion of what terrorism is. But the central point that high school world history textbooks try to make is that terrorism comes in many forms. Worldwide, in Ireland, Japan, Italy, among the Basques, the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka, and Shining Path of Peru, students learn from *The Modern World*, terrorists threaten different societies. This is not helpful for students trying to grasp the geopolitical design of the twenty-first century, since intranational and often nonreligious forms of terrorism differ from—they do not correspond to—Islamic jihad, something that is transnational in scope and that occurs on a global scale. History textbooks would do better to explain how Shining Path or the Irish Republican Army is *different* from jihad.

In a section titled “Modern Terrorism,” *Modern Times* features a short, none-too-illustrative quotation from an eyewitness of carnage at the 2002 bombings of tourists in Bali, Indonesia, providing the entire contextual backup with the following text:

In the deadly Bali bombings, 200 people died. Similar events have filled news reports in recent years. What is it that terrorists of recent decades want? Some are militant nationalists who want to create their own state or expand national territory. The goal of the *Irish Republican Army (IRA)*, for example, is to unite Northern Ireland, which is now governed by Great Britain, with the Irish Republic. Since the 1970s, thousands of people have died at the hands of IRA terrorists.

Other terrorists work for one nation to undermine the government of another. This kind of terrorism is called *state-sponsored terrorism*. Militant governments in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, and North Korea have sponsored terrorist acts. There are also states that secretly finance, train, or hide terrorists.

*Modern Times* fails to identify what complaints gave rise to this incidence of Islamic terrorism. If *Modern Times* is going to focus on Balinese terrorism, it needs to explain that a relatively small number of Indonesian Islamists want to overthrow the current Muslim regime, turn Indonesia into an Islamic state, and terrify Australia. As it stands, this passage adds up to nothing. It is a poor choice for a defining example of Islamic terrorism. The 1997 massacre of tourists in Egypt or 2004 massacre of Beslan schoolchildren by jihadi are better study examples of Islamic terrorism directed at innocent civilians.

Having made a valuable point about state-sponsored terrorism, Glencoe's *Modern Times* broadens the subject, switching to a new section entitled "Islamic Militants: A Clash of Cultures." "Terrorist acts became more frequent in the later twentieth century," the text begins, abandoning the stated subject from the start. "Acts of terror have become a regular aspect of modern society around the globe." Then the book continues:

Terrorism has been practiced since ancient times. In the modern period, one example occurred in Russia in the late 1800s, when radical reformers bombed trains or assassinated officials to fight the czar's repression.

The causes of recent world terrorism are complex. Some analysts say this terrorism is rooted in the clash of modern and Islamic cultures. They argue that because many states in the former Ottoman Empire did not modernize along Western lines, Muslims have not accommodated their religious beliefs to the modern world. Other analysts note that the Christians and Muslims have viewed each other with hostility since at least the time of the Crusades. Others suggest that poverty and ignorance lie at the root of the problem—extremists find it easy to stir up resentment against wealthy Western societies. Finally, some say terrorism would be rare if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be solved.

The reference to “recent world terrorism”—editors do not want to label it “Islamic terrorism”—lists views outsourced to unnamed “analysts,” letting *Modern Times*’s editors off the hook. The text never clarifies what it means when it says, “Muslims have not accommodated their religious beliefs to the modern world.” The idea that “poverty and ignorance lie at the root of the problem” sounds plausible but is not true. Terrorists are rarely poor or ignorant. Who really believes that terrorism would go away if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict were resolved? Who pretends that this resolution is an immediate possibility?

Neither Prentice Hall’s *The Modern World* nor Glencoe’s *Modern Times* explains that Islamic terrorism is a worldwide event or that jihad is vivid reality in Africa (Algeria, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt), the Middle East (Palestine, Lebanon, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Iran, the Caucasus), and Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Indonesia), with terrorism a fact of life in the Balkans and Europe and in the United States: it’s quite a list, and global. It would help if textbooks explained that Islamic fundamentalists see jihad as a sacred struggle against occupiers (Russia, the United States, India, Israel) and apostates (Saudi Arabia, Pakistan). It would be correct for textbooks to emphasize that plenty of jihadi exist worldwide, that their zeal is religion based, and that religious fundamentalism is mainstream, not peripheral, to the Muslim faith.

In the section entitled “Modern Terrorism,” *Modern Times* insists, “Most Muslims around the world do not share this vision nor do they agree with the use of terrorism.” *The Modern World* says, “The Islamist movement appeals to many Muslims. Some have used violence to pursue their goals. However, many Muslims oppose the extremism of the Islamists.” U.S. histories may say, as, for example, does Glencoe’s *American Vision*, “Although the vast majority of Muslims believe terrorism is *contrary* to their faith, militants began using terrorism to achieve their goals.” Such statements demand qualification, given the many strands of Islamic revivalism, some of them highly toxic. For students and teachers to be told otherwise is dangerous wishful thinking. Although some Muslims—mostly Western-educated Muslim elites—vocally oppose violence, in many Muslim countries—including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and

Pakistan—wide and vocal support for extremist groups is unremitting. The fact is, remarkable silence and qualified condemnation of Islamic illiberalities prevail throughout the Muslim world, on account of fear or assent.

*Modern Times* asserts, “TV has encouraged global terrorism to some extent because terrorists know that newscasts create instant publicity.” The text leaves to the imagination the identity of the terrorists. “TV images of American jetliners flying into the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001, for example, created immediate awareness of the goals of Islamic fundamentalist militants,” it adds. This is also incorrect and misleading. This explanation points away from, not toward, the root causes of radical Islam. Television does not encourage violence. What encourages Islamic terrorism is something different: religion-fueled zeal to sow fear and insecurity among infidels, destabilize non-Islamic governments, and expand control of non-Muslim territories.

In a unit called “Terrorism Threatens Global Security,” *The Modern World* ascribes Middle East terrorism to Western colonial domination and the creation of Israel, giving no hint of the role of Islamic fundamentalism itself as a leading edge of contemporary events:

The use of violence, especially against civilians, by groups of extremists—sometimes sponsored by governments that protect and fund them—to achieve political goals is called terrorism. . . . Increasingly, the Middle East has become a training ground and source for terrorism. One historical reason for this has been Western colonial domination in the region. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 helped focus anti-Western resentment among many Arabs.

This too-fast, facile explanation of “colonial domination” and Israel does not convey that religion is a driving force of almost all Middle Eastern violence or try to explain why this is so. *The Modern World* does acknowledge the uneasy relationship between Islamic fundamentalists and their governments:

Many governments have been heavily influenced by Islamic fundamentalism, including Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both of these nations have provided financial support for terrorist organizations. In other nations, such as Libya, Algeria,

Egypt, and Turkey, Islamic fundamentalist groups have used violence in an attempt to gain power and take over the government.

In fact, the politics of each of these countries could provide an illustrative case study in the textbooks. The ongoing tension between secular government and Islamic religious factions throughout the Muslim world demands amplification.

### *Islamic Fundamentalism*

What do world history textbooks say about terrorism and its connections to Islamic faith? Prentice Hall's *The Modern World* mentions the Wahhabi sect of Islam, describing Wahhabi as "strict" but otherwise failing to explain what it is, what it wants, or how it has become a global force inside and outside the Arab world. "Islamic fundamentalism" is mentioned but in many different places and passages; because the concept is never explained, it is hard to discern any core idea or threat. *The Modern World* says:

Islamic fundamentalism refers to the religious belief that society should be governed by Islamic law. A historical precedent for it was the Arab nationalism that helped nations in the Middle East come together after a history of European colonialism. This nationalism was strengthened by the creation of Israel as well as by a backlash against the presence of foreign powers in the oil-rich region. Socially, Islamic fundamentalism was encouraged by a lack of basic resources in many Arab nations. Islamic fundamentalists found it easy to make Israel or Western nations scapegoats for their problems. In the past few decades, terrorist attacks have increased against these scapegoats.

This is a difficult passage to unpack. While it makes some solid points, it is headed in different directions, makes questionable claims, and traffics in puzzling generalities such as "Islamic fundamentalists found it easy to make Israel or Western nations scapegoats for their problems. In the past few decades, terrorist attacks have increased against these scapegoats." *Scapegoat* is a problem word to begin with. The declaration that "a historical precedent for

[Islamic terrorism] was the Arab nationalism that helped nations in the Middle East come together after a history of European colonialism” is simplistic.

Textbooks present Western economic interest in Middle Eastern oil as a central cause of militant Islamic fundamentalism. In the passage that follows, *The Modern World* tries to convey an immense amount of information in a few words. The one-paragraph overview is so vague that it is meaningless. The statement that “Muslim Middle Easterners have disagreed over the role of Islam in a modern economy” simply fails to convey the reality of the matter. The passage moves so quickly and is so mixed that the book cannot claim that it has done anything more than mention a few key facts. Some of them, focused on the 1970s, seem out of date, providing striking examples of poorly integrated background material:

Parts of the Middle East sit atop the world’s largest oil and gas reserves. Oil-rich nations have prospered, but other Middle Eastern nations have struggled economically. Meanwhile, Muslim Middle Easterners have disagreed over the role of Islam in a modern economy.

*Supplying the World with Oil* Because the Middle East commands vital oil resources, it has strategic importance to the United States and other powers. Nations with large oil reserves are Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and the Arab Emirates (UAE). These nations are all members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) [*sic*], founded in 1960. In 1973, OPEC’s Arab members blocked oil shipments to the United States to protest U.S. support for Israel. This oil embargo contributed to a worldwide recession. Since the 1970s, OPEC has focused on regulating the price of oil rather than on taking political stands.

*Modern Times* links oil to Islamic fundamentalism, then fails to explain what a “vision of what a pure Islamic society should be.”

The oil business soon increased Middle Eastern contact with the West. Some Muslims began to fear that this contact would weaken their religion and their way of life. Some Muslims began organizing movements to overthrow their pro-Western governments. Muslims who support these movements are called fundamentalist militants. They promote their own vision of what a pure Islamic society should be.

*Modern Times* also suggests the United States is paying a price for past alliances with Middle Eastern potentates and financial elites:

Many terrorist attacks since World War II have been carried out by Middle Eastern groups against Western countries. One reason Middle Eastern terrorists have targeted Americans can be traced to developments in the 1900s. As oil became important to the American economy in the 1920s, the United States invested heavily in the Middle East oil industry. This industry brought great wealth to the ruling families in some Middle Eastern kingdoms, but most ordinary citizens remained poor. Some became angry at the United States for supporting the wealthy kingdoms and families.

Both Prentice Hall's *The Modern World* and Glencoe's *Modern Times* try to address the tension between Islam and modernity, a topic essential to understanding a clash of values and cultures going on worldwide. In a section called "Islam Confronts Modernization," *The Modern World* states:

Some Middle Eastern nations adopted Western forms of secular, or nonreligious, government and law, keeping religion and government separate. Many Middle Eastern leaders also adopted Western economic models in a quest for progress. In the growing cities, people wore Western-style clothing, watched American television programs, and bought foreign products. Yet life improved very little for many people.

The notice of television programs in this passage contradicts the final statement, at least from the perspective that popular access to electrical power—televisions, refrigerators, lighting, computers—reflects a revolutionary break with Middle Eastern economic history and the past. The text identifies an Islamic "return to Sharia" but frames the issue so vaguely that it is instructionally meaningless:

By the 1970s, some Muslim leaders were calling for a return to Sharia, or Islamic law. These conservative reformers, often called Islamists, blame social and economic ills on the following of Western models. Islamists argue that a renewed commitment to Islamic doctrine is the only way to solve the region's problems.

What are these “Western models”? What is “renewed commitment to Islamic doctrine”? The language is constructed so broadly that any genuine insight for students or instructors is impossible; once again, the textbooks sidestep the reality of the matter. At the bottom of the same page, in a confusing graphic called “Islam and the Modern World” that the editors label an “infograph,” *The Modern World* adds:

Like other religions, Islam faces the challenge of adapting its traditions to a changing modern world. While religious traditions remain important to Muslims, Western culture has gained influence. Traditionally, in Islamic countries women are not expected to read or write. Today, Muslim women are pursuing educations and new career opportunities. While Islamists call for a return to tradition, many Muslims embrace a mixture of traditional and modern ways.

At the very least, textbooks owe it to their users to then specify which Islamic countries allow women to pursue literacy, vote in elections, drive a car, go to college, or have a “career”—and which do not. The tinny phrase “career opportunities” aside, it is revealing that this passage uses the word *tradition* or a variation of it five times but never gives readers the slightest idea of what these “traditions” are or what “return to tradition” actually means. *Modern Times* first declares awkwardly that few Muslims are extremists, then segues incoherently into the status of women in modern Islamic societies:

Because militants have received so much media attention, some believed that most Muslims were extremists. They are in a minority, however, especially in their view toward women. In the early 1900s, many Middle Eastern women had few rights. This situation had existed for centuries, but it was not seen in the earliest Islamic societies. In Muhammad’s time, Muslim women had extensive political and social rights. Restrictions on women came later.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Muslim scholars began debating women’s roles. Many argued that Muslims needed to rethink outdated interpretations that narrowed the lives of women. In nations like Turkey and Iran, these debates led to an expansion of women’s rights and freedoms.

This trend continued, especially in urban areas of many Islamic societies, until the 1970s. Since that time, however, there has been a shift toward more traditional roles for women. This trend was especially noticeable in Iran.

Once again, a textbook seems obliged to remind student readers that few Muslims are extremists and that Islamic militancy is a fringe element in the religion, a declaration that is open to question and at the least requires qualification.

### *September 11*

September 11, 2001, is a landmark moment in contemporary U.S. history and in the history of contemporary geopolitics. Here is the entire discussion in Prentice Hall's *The Modern World*:

On the morning of September 11, 2001, teams of terrorists hijacked four airplanes on the East Coast. Passengers challenged the hijackers on one flight, which they crashed on the way to its target. But one plane plunged into the Pentagon in Virginia, and two others slammed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. More than 2,500 people were killed in the attacks.

The flatness and brevity of this passage are dismaying. In terms of content, so much is left unanswered. Who were the teams of terrorists and what did they want to do? What were their political ends? Since *The Modern World* avoids any hint of the connection between this unnamed terrorism and jihad, why September 11 happened is hard to understand. Glencoe's *Modern Times* summarizes September 11 with more detail and insight. But here too terrorism goes unlabeled and unexplained:

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were acts of terrorism. Terrorism is the use of violence by nongovernmental groups against civilians to achieve a political goal. Terrorist acts are intended to instill fear in people and to frighten their governments into changing their policies. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, killed all 266 passengers and crewmembers on the four hijacked planes. Another 125 people died in the Pentagon. In New York City, nearly 3,000 people died. More Americans were killed in the attacks than died at Pearl Harbor or on D-Day in World War II.

The context of Islamic terrorism is likewise hard to discern in U.S. history textbooks, even though the September 11 narratives are fuller and the examination of U.S. foreign policy less superficial than in world history textbooks. McDougal Littell's *The Americans* says:

On the morning of September 11, 2001, two airlines crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City and a third smashed into a section of the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. A fourth airliner crashed in a field in the Pennsylvania countryside. Nineteen Arab terrorists had hijacked the four planes and then used them as missiles in an attempt to destroy predetermined targets. The first three planes hit their targets. In the fourth plane, passengers fought the hijackers and the plane went down short of its target.

Explosions and raging fire severely weakened the twin towers. Within two hours of the attacks, both skyscrapers had tumbled to the ground. One wing of the Pentagon was extensively damaged. About 3,000 people were killed in the attacks. They included all the passengers on the four planes, workers and visitors in the World Trade Center and Pentagon, and about 300 firefighters and 40 police officers who rushed into the twin towers to rescue people. The attacks of September 11 were the most destructive acts of terrorism in modern history.

This description of September 11 is sharply drawn, on its face more informative than the texts of competing textbooks, but the book goes on to say:

The reasons for terrorist attacks vary. Traditional motives include gaining independence, expelling foreigners, or changing society. These reasons often give rise to domestic terrorism—violence used by people to change the policies of their own government or to overthrow their government.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, another type of terrorism began to emerge. Terrorists who carried out this type of terrorism wanted to achieve political ends or destroy what they considered to be the forces of evil. They attacked targets not just in their own country, but anywhere in the world. These terrorists were willing to use any type of weapon to kill their enemy. They were even willing to die to ensure the success of their attacks.

While the language and explanations in *The Americans* are more illuminating than those in high school world histories, what the textbook says is also artful in what it avoids. A student will be hard pressed to identify religion and, more specifically, radical Islam as the enemy and source of the terrorist attacks. Is the textbook losing sight of that fact? Where does the finger point? Who and what are “the forces of evil”? Why do these vaguely described terrorists consider them so? In this case what does “changing society” mean? No student can possibly deduce from this passage the nature of the Islamic complaints, who the new terrorists might actually be, or what they want to do.

Prentice Hall's *America: Pathways to the Present*, a well-regarded high school history textbook, says:

On September 11, 2001, Americans reacted with horror when terrorists struck at targets in New York City and just outside Washington, D.C. Using hijacked commercial airlines as their weapons, the terrorists crashed into both towers of New York's World Trade Center and plowed into part of the Pentagon. A fourth plane crashed in a field near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A total of 266 passengers and crew on the four planes lost their lives.

The attack on the Pentagon took place less than an hour after the first plane hit New York. Damage was contained to a newly renovated section of the building, but fires raged for hours, preventing emergency workers from entering the wreckage. More than 180 people in the Pentagon were killed.<sup>13</sup>

*Pathways to the Present* continues, giving additional detail and introducing Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda as "Muslim extremists":

In New York, the impact of the fully fueled jets caused both towers to burst into flames. Debris rained down on employees evacuating the buildings and on emergency workers rushing to respond to the scene. The fires led to the catastrophic collapse of both 110-story buildings as well as other buildings in the World Trade Center complex. Emergency workers battled fires and began a search-and-rescue operation. Tragically, the speedy response to the disaster led to the deaths of hundreds of firefighters and police officers who were in and around the buildings when they collapsed. The number of people missing and presumed dead after the assault was estimated to be 2,800.

Law-enforcement agencies immediately began an intensive investigation. Countries around the world pledged to support efforts to hunt down the criminals responsible for the attacks. Within days, government officials named Osama bin Laden, a wealthy Saudi dissident, as "a prime suspect" for masterminding the plot. Bin Laden, the head of a terrorist network of Muslim extremists known as Al Qaeda, was believed to be hiding in Afghanistan.

Glencoe's standard high school U.S. history textbook, *American Vision*, adds a passage titled "Middle East Terrorism" that explains conflict between Islam and the United States and West as a function of oil, Western ideas, and Israel. It begins, "Although there have been many acts of terrorism in American history, most terrorist attacks on Americans since World War II have been carried out by Middle Eastern groups. The reason Middle Eastern terrorists have targeted Americans can be traced back to events early in the twentieth century." *American Vision*,

as do other textbooks, points to poverty and cultural imperialism as root causes of Islamic terrorism. To reiterate, it concludes with the standard textbook disclaimer, highlighting the word *contrary*:

The rise of the oil industry increased the Middle East's contact with Western society. As Western ideas spread through the region, many Muslims—followers of the region's dominant religion—feared that their traditional values and beliefs were being weakened. New movements arose calling for a strict interpretation of the Quran—the Muslim holy book—and a return to traditional Muslim religious laws.

These Muslim movements wanted to overthrow pro-Western governments in the Middle East and create a pure Islamic society. Muslims who support these movements are referred to as fundamentalist militants. Although the vast majority of Muslims believe terrorism is *contrary* to their faith, militants began using terrorism to achieve their goals.

What are these “traditional values and beliefs”? What does “calling for a strict interpretation of the Quran” mean? What is a “pure Islamic society”?

High school world history textbooks, which focus on world history since 1945, cannot ignore terrorism or the Middle East. *The Modern World* explains the rise of Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden in lucid prose. “Bin Laden had helped the warlords of Afghanistan drive the Soviets out of their country in the 1980s. In the 1990s, he mobilized al Qaeda to expel American business interests from his own country, Saudi Arabia,” the textbook says in clear language. “By the new millennium, he was providing aid, training, or money to scattered terrorist groups from Morocco to Indonesia.” *Modern Times* describes bin Laden as believing that “Western ideas had contaminated Muslim societies.” What ideas are those? What does *contaminated* mean? Bin Laden “dedicated himself to driving Westerners out of countries with a largely Muslim population.” What countries? Saudi Arabia? The textbook does not mention bin Laden's agenda to destroy the United States and Israel, nor does it explain his essential complaint against Saudi Arabia's alliance with the infidel. It says: “Bin Laden called on Muslims to kill Americans.” Such a declaration requires real amplification. Why did bin Laden call on Muslims to kill Americans?

*Israel and the Middle East*

In covering the Middle East since World War II, history textbooks cannot ignore Israel. Its past and future are intertwined regionally with Islam, a religion with elements that are resolutely hostile to its existence and people. Religious tensions in the Middle East since the creation of Israel in 1947 are unresolved. They are at the center of the most significant and intractable geopolitical confrontation in the world today. Editors try to be evenhanded, with mixed results.

In *The Modern World* a chapter called “The Modern Middle East” is badly organized. It tries to cover an immense amount of information, starting with a weakly titled section called “Diversity Brings Challenges.” The text begins inexplicably, almost deceptively, with a section called “Kurds Seek Freedom” before it switches topics, without any logic or bridge, to the foundation of Israel—covered in three paragraphs. The chapter then moves on to equally brief coverage of Middle Eastern oil, Islam and modernization, and the status of women in Islamic nations today.

Some reviewers for this report believed that *The Modern World* showed bias against Israel, when the textbook said, “However, the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948 forced 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homes in Israeli territory. The UN set up camps in neighboring areas to house Palestinian refugees. Generations of Palestinians grew up bitter about the loss of their homes. The conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians continues today.” An equivalent number of Jews were expelled from Arab countries during the same period, they point out. Textbooks do not explain that Israelis did not expel Palestinians in 1947 or that refugees remained refugees on account of Israel’s Arab neighbors. *The Modern World* states in a later passage, “Israel’s government took land from Palestinians and helped Jewish settlers build homes in the occupied territories, displacing more Palestinians.” Some reviewers objected to repeated use of the word “occupied” in *The Modern World* and in *Modern Times* as well as to loaded words such as “forced” and “displaced.” Textbooks talk about “fighting” in a neutral way rather

than emphasizing decades of repeated Arab attacks on Israel. They fail to note that the Palestine Liberation Organization does not simply want a Palestinian state. Its intent is to destroy Israel.

*The Modern World* features a detailed two-page review of “The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” with more impressive results. *Modern Times* provides a two-page set of sources and document-based questions, using three well-chosen extracts that are long enough to make sense. The first comes from the Jewish claim to Palestine from the May 1948 proclamation of the state; the second from an Arab claim to Israel from the 1968 charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization; and the third comes from 2002 commentary by Ariel Sharon, then prime minister of Israel, in the *New York Times*. Together they add up to an instructionally effective, document-based exercise the level of which is rarely seen in standard high school textbooks.

Some reviewers thought *The Modern World* and *Modern Times* contain a pro-Arab subtext and place blame on Israel for Middle East conflict. Other reviewers suggested that textbook editors deliberately avoid criticism of Israel and avoid widely circulated counterexamples about U.S. foreign policy, quoting Robert Kagan’s observation that “critics from World War I onward warned that American support for a Jewish state would produce unending war, severely damage America’s otherwise amicable relations with the Muslim world, and after the discovery of massive deposits of Middle Eastern oil in the 1930s, endanger access to this vital commodity.”<sup>14</sup>

In one American history textbook the treatment of Israel and the Middle East since 1945 puts the situation into perspective as to U.S. world policy and interests. Glencoe’s *American Vision* states:

American support of Israel also angered many in the Middle East. In 1947 the UN divided British-controlled Palestine into two territories to provide a home for Jews. One part became Israel. The other part was to become a Palestinian state, but fighting between Israel and the Arab states in 1948 left this territory under the control of Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.

The Palestinians wanted their own nation. In the 1950s, they began staging guerrilla raids and terrorist attacks against Israel. Since the United States gave military and economic aid to Israel, it became the target of Muslim hostility.

In the 1970s several Middle Eastern nations realized they could fight Israel and the United States by providing terrorist groups with money, weapons, and training. When a government secretly supports terrorism, this is called state-sponsored terrorism. The governments of Libya, Iraq, and Iran have all sponsored terrorism.

Textbooks are evasive about Islamic terrorism as an immediate threat to Israel. In its explanation of Hezbollah, Prentice Hall's *The Modern World* does not explain that Hezbollah means Party of God or that it is a guerrilla army with Shiite roots, financed by Iran. The book does not say that Hezbollah seeks to destroy Israel. It fails to note that hostile Shiite forces from Iran and Syria are behind the "party." Instead it says, "The Lebanese political party Hezbollah formed after Israel invaded Lebanon. Originally its goal was to oust Israel from Lebanon and assert Lebanese power. It remains a strong party today. In recent years, however, factions of Hezbollah have increasingly been suspected of using terrorist tactics to attain its goals."

World and U.S. history textbooks need to summarize U.S. policy in the Middle East and outline the war against Iraq, delineating what elements of policy and war are related to Islamic fundamentalism and what elements are not. In a brief passage that telescopes the subject, Prentice Hall's *The Modern World* says:

President Bush asked Congress to declare war on Iraq, arguing that Saddam was secretly producing WMDs. The war was bitterly debated among Americans and around the world, because no WMDs were found. However, most in the global community welcomed the holding of free democratic elections in Iraq in early 2005, hoping that a democratic Iraq might positively influence the largely authoritarian Middle East.

The text and lesson would have been clearer if the textbook had pointed out that the prospect of Iraqi WMDs alarmed international intelligence agencies and most members of Congress as much as the president. Mentioning the failure to find WMDs and the U.S. pursuit of war demands much more narrative and detail. Bringing up 2005 elections and hopes for a democratic Iraq makes the passage even more confusing.

Glencoe's *Modern Times* gives a fuller picture of what WMDs are and the lead-up to the war, but the section loses coherence entirely when it folds events in 2003 and 2004 into copy from earlier editions, events on which the editors had no perspective and that seem entirely dated now, for example, the name Iyad Allawi featured in bold type, and a concluding paragraph that says with risible understatement:

Some Iraqi citizens seemed willing to support their new government, but a difficult road lay ahead. First the new government must succeed in keeping order and rebuilding the country's infrastructure. An even greater challenge was to create a national consensus among groups that disagreed about the role of religion in society and the kinds of government they would accept.

Textbooks that cover geopolitics today have an obligation to convey the life-and-death issue of nuclear terrorism and the destructive ambitions of Islamic militants. Fissile material is loosely or secretly held throughout Central Asia. Pakistan already has obtained the atomic bomb; radical Islamists in Pakistan want control of these weapons. Iran and other countries actively seek nuclear weaponry. The technology to build and explode an atomic bomb is widely known to radical Islamic scientists. Islamic militants worldwide are trying to obtain or construct a nuclear or radiological weapon. The advantage of a radiological bomb is the ability to explode it easily. Americans and Europeans are ambivalent about the use of nuclear weapons in the past and fearful of their use in the future. Islamic militants are not. Al Qaeda seeks to accomplish a nuclear attack on U.S. soil. "They are not in a hurry. Time is on their side," the Pakistani nuclear physicist Pervez Hoodbhoy warned in 2005.<sup>15</sup>

U.S. history textbooks are considerably more detailed about what has happened in Iraq than are world histories, although they too hedge nuclear terrorism and underplay the significance of never-found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In a serious two-page account of U.S. intervention and war in Iraq, one that includes a clear timeline of Saddam Hussein's regime, for example, *The Americans* repeatedly displays detail, detachment, and balance. In late 2004

weapons of mass destruction “had not been found,” the book says, reflecting its press date but adds that, despite this, George W. Bush was reelected president.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although some bright spots can be found among textbook lessons, serious omissions and misrepresentations in Islam-related chapters are apparent, and not in just one or two textbooks. To understand how this happened, it is important to take into account the system that oversees the textbook adoption process. State departments of education are usually eager to quiet the unquiet. Boards of education may take sides on content for political reasons. The system encourages pressure groups to do what they do. For simple economic reasons, not on account of ideology, publishers allow partisan participation in editing and writing. Editors make changes in response to detailed lists and objections submitted by recognized religious and nonreligious lobbies. Local panels want to minimize friction. Whether the subject is abstinence or Islam, religion-based groups are easily upset when textbooks don't go their way.

Flexibility of taste and, on matters of content, an element of nihilism are essentials for textbook publishing executives and editors. Top editors—who in the case of social studies publishing are indistinguishable from marketing executives—make a business of appeasing pressure groups. Islamic activists, some with no academic credentials or background, are listed as academic reviewers in major textbooks from several companies and imprints. The Council on Islamic Education and other Islamic education organizations are secretive and easily agitated. Their links and consulting activities with publishers raise unanswered questions and merit further scrutiny.

The contest over textbook content increasingly pits evidence-based scholarship against political partisanship, and the victory of scholarship is far from assured. One stratum of U.S. thought—one that is influential in school publishing today—resists ugly facts about Islam that

involve violations of liberal ideals and dangers to international security. To worry about Islamic revivalism or to object to a controlling Islamic “voice” in the nation’s history textbooks, no matter the reason or argument, violates multicultural convention and is thus politically risky. Epithets such as “Islamophobia” deaden the debate.

Ready-made political movements, especially those on campus, allow Islamist organizations and allied scholars to game textbook content. Islamists use the rhetoric of diversity, rights, tolerance, and democracy to conduct a cultural struggle over history textbook content to their advantage. In 2008, the Council on Islamic Education, trading on its influence with textbook publishers, opened a website for the entirely spectral Institute for Religion and Civic Values. It offered “consulting, training and resources pertaining to issues of religion, identity, freedom, and pluralism to policymakers, educators, the media, organizations and communities, in order to strengthen civil society.” In the case of Islamic activism, theological aims are often concealed in familiar, appealing civic language.

Few publishers or editors understand history textbooks for what they are: instruments of civic education that have among their responsibilities the obligation to alert the young to threats to American ideals and security. Editors mistakenly depend on highly biased sources for trustworthy, impartial information about Islam, a subject about which they probably know little or nothing. Admittedly, the gulf of opinion in today’s Islamic and Middle East studies is hard to bridge.



Islam-related content has expanded in world history textbooks. This in itself is not a problem and, in fact, could have been a gain. But it is not. Reverential treatment of Islamic history is accompanied by lost reverence for—or even interest in—Western achievement and influence. Europeans and Americans respond to religion-based cultural differences with “what is

variously known as multiculturalism and political correctness,” Bernard Lewis observed in 2007. “In the Muslim world there are no such inhibitions. They are very conscious of their identity. They know who they are and what they are and what they want, a quality which we seem to have lost to a very large extent. This is a source of strength in the one, of weakness in the other.”<sup>16</sup>

This review finds:

- Many political and religious groups try to use the textbook process to their advantage, but the deficiencies in Islam-related lessons are uniquely disturbing. History textbooks present an incomplete and confected view of Islam that misrepresents its foundations and challenges to international security.

- Misinformation and bias about Islam are more pronounced in junior high school textbooks than high school textbooks.

- Outright errors are not the main problem in textbooks, although in certain subject areas they are plentiful. The more serious failure is the presence of disputed definitions and tenuous claims that are presented as established facts. Careful wording hides more than it explains. Euphemisms and artful phrases abound. When textbooks write of the “vision of a pure Islamic society” or Islamic “tradition,” what do they mean?

- Deficiencies about Islam in textbooks copyrighted before 2001 persist and in some cases have grown worse. Textbook coverage of jihad and sharia are cases in point. Instead of making corrections or acknowledging contested facts, publishers and their editors defend misinformation and content evasions against the record. Bias persists. Silences are profound and intentional. These omissions exist in volumes that have been written from scratch and introduced into classrooms since 2005.

- Islamic activists use multiculturalism and ready-made American political movements, especially those on campus, to advance and justify the makeover of Islam-related content in history textbooks.

- Particular fault rests with the publishing corporations, the boards of directors, and executives who decide what editorial policies their companies will pursue.

History textbooks should stress that:

- *The Islamic conquest of the Mediterranean defined the Middle Ages and Europe.* Arabic conquests and expansion occurred in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Turks who conquered the Balkans and Asia Minor, the Mongols in Central Asia, and the Delhi Sultanate in South Asia were Islamic expansionists who were not Arabic, and their conquests occurred centuries after the Arabs took control of what today is called the Middle East.

- *Containment of Islam was European policy from Tours to Vienna.* Landmark encounters occurred between Europe and Islam from the early Middle Ages to modern times: Battle of Tours (732), First Crusade (1095), fall of Constantinople (1453), and Battle of Vienna (1683). In each case textbooks should explain how and why the West was threatened. Likewise, textbooks should explain that the so-called age of discovery and the voyages of Columbus to the New World in fact were a European search for maritime trade routes to Asia designed to circumvent Muslim territories.

- *Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 began the push of "the West" into Islamic lands, for strategic and, later, economic reasons.* In the nineteenth century European imperial powers took sovereign control of Islamic territories and introduced laws, political values, and educational systems into colonies with varying responses. From the 1920s economic imperialism prevailed. The presence of oil in Islamic lands has uniquely affected geopolitics and global transportation ever since. Additionally, the influence of Western entertainment carries an aspect of cultural imperialism.

When textbooks cover Islam as a geopolitical and cultural force in the world today, they should explain:

- *Islam is aggressive in a postcolonial world.* The Arabic union against Israel since 1948 and the creation of Pakistan after World War II provide vivid historical illustrations. In today's

world Islam has several power centers: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Indonesia. The idea of Islamic unity is constrained by the vicious division and power struggles of Sunni and Shia sects, as contemporary Iraq makes clear. Muslims include the Taliban of Afghanistan and the bankers of Abu Dhabi.

Yet Islam sees a world split into *dar al-harb* and *dar al-islam*. *Dar al-harb* (territory of war or chaos) is its term for the regions where Islam does not dominate, where divine will is not observed, and therefore where continuing strife is the norm. By contrast, *dar al-islam* (territory of peace) is Islam's term for those territories where Islam does dominate, where submission to God is observed, and where peace and tranquility reign. This ideation constitutes—to what extent, experts disagree—a rivalry of alternative worldviews, metaphysical ideas, and conceptions of evil. But these ideas, if acted upon by the Islamic revivalists who are rapidly growing in number, might constitute a clear and present danger to global security, particularly in the West. Al Qaeda is the orchestrated global effort to re-establish Islam's historical and mythic supremacy worldwide through jihad. The international community has immense collective self-interest and incentive to avoid nuclear terrorism as a holy struggle.

- *Islam's ability to embrace modernity and secular society remains an open question.*

Many leaders in Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan—and many more than in the recent past—are ambivalent about or reacting to twentieth-century secularism. Almost a century ago the eminent medieval historian Ferdinand Lot concluded that Islam's legal and political outlook made a *modus vivendi* with the West unlikely. Specialists today point out that Islam has no real institutional or theological mechanism to facilitate religious liberty. It has no element that allows the individual or society to explore, criticize or deny doctrine without fear of punishment or reprisal. At its extremes, it raises the prospect of thought control.

There are contradictions. There are the Afghani Taliban on one hand, the United Arab Emirates and Dubai on the other. It would be correct to call Islamic nations worldwide—not only Saudi Arabia—the oil and banking partners of the United States. Much Islamic migration to the

West is for economic improvement and individual freedom. Islamists worldwide do not reject Western medicine or sanitation. They accept the global financial system. They accept the Internet and air transport. Yet can Islam reconcile itself to modernity with its emphasis on the individual and freedom, equality and materialism, entertainment, and limited authority for religion? The economist Stefan Voigt concludes from extensive comparative research: “Most Muslim countries do not fare well with regard to a number of indicators that serve as proxies for the three institutions at the core of free societies: the rule of law, constitutional democracy, and a market economy. Islamic values are not conducive to the establishment and maintenance of these institutions.” The more hopeful views of *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman cannot mask his recognition of retrograde forces within Islam and a resultant “war of ideas,” one that can be resolved only by Muslims themselves and one that “politically correct” Americans refuse—or fear—to acknowledge.<sup>17</sup>



From what they read in history textbooks, students and teachers are not likely to grasp why the United States and its allies consider militant Islam an enemy. Students will not learn that broadly based Islamist factions sanction violence in countries all over the world. They will not grasp the connection between jihad and September 11. Students may read of extremists, militants, and “anti-coalition forces.” They will not realize that the “coalition” is in fact their nation, the United States, and its allies (notably the United Kingdom), and that “anti-coalition forces” are also known as Al Qaeda, insurgents, and suicide bombers. These labels make no connection to radical Islam. Even when textbooks link Islam directly to terrorism, the ways in which Islam is extreme or militant—and thereby of peril to the United States and West—remain unexplained and off the table.

Whether they are thirteen or eighteen, students studying the features of contemporary Islam should pause to consider why they might abhor living in a country like Iran or Saudi Arabia—and why theocracy would be at the root of their discomfort. They are old enough to recognize manifold differences between the United States and the Islamic world. They can realize that religion-based customs and laws proscribe personal choices and civil rights that Americans of all ages take for granted. Social studies textbooks have a civic obligation to emphasize why inhibitions and limitations on the political power of religion—separation of church and state—are central to the modern Western tradition. They should compare the political rights and civil liberties of U.S. citizens to those of non-Western nations, Islamic and not. They don't. Far from it.

It is impossible today for American teachers and students not to be exposed to a belligerent dimension of Islam. On television and the news students see Muslims celebrate September 11, cheer the London subway bombings, and burn effigies of Western political leaders. Some must wonder why what they hear about Islam inside classrooms and what they observe outside classrooms so clash. Isn't this state of affairs ironic when New York City and Washington, London and Amsterdam, Madrid and Tel Aviv, Moscow and New Delhi have been on the receiving end of Islamic terrorism? Even more so when this civic failure occurs in tax-purchased instructional materials that are used in tax-supported public institutions?

Well-conceived, informed guides and supplementary instructional materials do exist, such as the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation's "Terrorists, Despots and Democracy: What Our Children Need to Know" (2003), or the Watson Institute for International Studies's "Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy" (2003). For high school classrooms, "Fighting for the Soul of Islam" (April 18, 2007), an analytical summary from *U.S. News and World Report*, provides a short, sharp-edged summary of Islam's variations and the contemporary global challenges posed by radical Islam.

For textbook content reform, a beginning would be using classic source books such as the *Columbia History of the World* as benchmarks and filters for reliable history content. Widely known texts, not partisan historians or activist groups, could provide a center of gravity for textbook writers and editors.

In the end the blame for textbook deficiencies rests with the publishers and their governing boards. School publishing is organized in such ways that its managers cannot think about anything other than wide penetration of the mass market, high unit sales, district enrollments, and major state adoptions. Houghton Mifflin and Teachers' Curriculum Institute are privately held corporations, complicating scrutiny and accountability. Editorial content strategies are designed to deflect protests and to please any number of prickly textbook pressure groups. Reform requires more than the adjustment of a few textbook passages. It requires that school boards, educational administrators, state departments of education, and elected officials at all levels of government take notice of content problems and serve notice to publishers of public objections. Textbook production involves a certain public trust. Therefore, textbook lapses such as these should stir public disrespect and outrage. Parents and civic groups can only complain. Change requires the action of the corporations, boards of directors, and executives who decide what editorial policies these companies will pursue.

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**REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup> California Department of Education, “Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content. (2000), 7 [*Education Code* Section 60044(a) and subsection (b)].”

<sup>2</sup> Damien Cave, “For Congress: Telling Sunni from Shiite,” *New York Times*, December 17, 2006. The article suggests the complexity of the schism and the difficulties it presents for experts and the nation’s elected leaders.

<sup>3</sup> The Holt program—like other world history textbooks used in California—covers Christianity’s foundations and the life of Jesus for sixth-graders, as state curriculum content standards mandate. The Holt sixth-grade volume contains two short passages from the Bible, the Sermon on the Mount and the Good Samaritan.

<sup>4</sup> See Carl Stephenson and Bryce Lyon, *Medieval History* (Harper and Row, 1962), 124; John A. Garraty and Peter Gay, eds., *Columbia History of the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 270 ff.; Michel Gurfinkiel, *Weekly Standard*, November 7, 2006, 34-36; Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism* (Yale, 2006); Hugh Kennedy, *The Great Arab Conquests* (DaCapo, 2007); “Back to the Ottomans,” *Economist*, November 3, 2007, 17.

<sup>5</sup> A survey widely used in selective colleges, Jamal J. Elias’s *Islam* (Prentice Hall, 1999) takes an uncritical but intelligent, open view of the religion. Bernard Lewis, writing in *The Middle East* (Touchstone, 1997), states in an extended passage: “The term ‘*jihad*’, conventionally translated ‘holy war’, has the literal meaning of striving, more specifically, in the Qur’anic phrase ‘striving in the path of God’ (*fi sabil Allah*). Some Muslim theologians, particularly in more modern times, have interpreted the duty of ‘striving in the path of God’ in a spiritual and moral sense. The overwhelming majority of early authorities, however, citing relevant passages in the Qur’an and in the tradition, discuss *jihad* in military terms. Virtually every manual of *shari’a* law has a chapter on *jihad*, which regulates in minute detail such matters as the opening, conduct, interruption and cessation of hostilities, and the allocation and division of booty.” He continues: “The Christian crusade, often compared with the Muslim *jihad*, was itself a delayed and limited response to the *jihad* and in part also an imitation. But unlike the *jihad* it was concerned primarily with the defence or reconquest of threatened or lost Christian territory. . . . The Muslim *jihad*, in contrast, was perceived as unlimited, as a religious obligation that would continue until all the world had either adopted the Muslim faith or submitted to Muslim rule. In the latter case, those who professed what Muslims recognized as a revealed religion were allowed to continue the practice of that religion, subject to the acceptance of certain fiscal and other disabilities. Those who did not, that is to say idolaters and polytheists, were given the choice of conversion, death or slavery.” Lewis concludes: “The object of *jihad* is to bring the whole world under Islamic law. It is not to convert by force, but to remove obstacles to conversion” (233–34). A subtle but generous discussion of “lesser” and “greater” *jihad* can be found in Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (Random House, 2003), 54–55. For the argument that such distinctions are designed to obscure *jihad* and its ambitions, see Walid Phares, *The War of Ideas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 33–38, 199–206.

<sup>6</sup> “Sam Harris on the Reality of Islam,” February 7, 2006, [www.truthdig.com](http://www.truthdig.com); see also Sam Harris, *The End of Faith* (Norton, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> “The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His apostle and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement” (5:33) [used widely to justify harsh penalties for apostasy and homosexuality]; “Fight those who do not believe in Allah . . . until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection” (9:29); “Therefore we will most certainly make those who disbelieve taste a severe punishment” (41:27).

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Collins Coughlin, “To Our Great Detriment’: Ignoring What Extremists Say about *Jihad*,” National Defense Intelligence College, December 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Elias, *Islam*, 50; Lewis, *The Middle East*, 224; Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* (Oxford, 2002), 53, 100.

<sup>10</sup> “Even the Christian crusade, often compared with the Muslim *jihad*, was itself a delayed and limited response to the *jihad* and in part also an imitation. But unlike the *jihad*, it was concerned primarily with the

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defense or reconquest of threatened or lost Christian territory,” says Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East*, 233–34.

<sup>11</sup> Bawer, quoted in the *New York Times*, February 8, 2007, on reaction to his book, *While Europe Slept* (Doubleday, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> *Columbia History of the World*, 271.

<sup>13</sup> This passage comes from the 2005 edition, a variant of the earlier 2003 edition. Between 2003 and 2007, *Pathway to the Present*'s variations are few, with updating and correcting only, changes confined to a few paragraphs, grafted onto existing copyrighted text and page templates.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Kagan, “How America Met the Mideast,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 21, 2007, BW1, a review of Michael B. Oren's *Power, Faith and Fantasy* (Norton, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> “When?” *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 2005; see also Noah Feldman, “Islam, Terror and the Second Nuclear Age,” *New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 29, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Lewis, Irving Kristol Lecture, American Enterprise Institute, March 7, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Stefan Voigt, “Islam and the Institutions of a Free Society,” *Independent Review*, Summer 2005, 59–82; Thomas L. Friedman, “Islam and the Pope,” *New York Times*, September 29, 2006.