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Title: American Muslim perception on America's Middle East foreign policy

About the Author:

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Abstract: How do Muslims in America feel about the Middle East foreign policy that America maintains? More specifically, how do Muslims in the States feel about relationship between Israel and America?

With the recent conflict in Gaza, the unwavering US support to Israel has come under scrutiny. How did this recent conflict affect Muslims in America?

There have been several discussions on Muslims in American, and whether or not they can readily identify themselves as Americans, or as Muslims. It is important to research how the government's actions influence the identity of Muslims in America. Did this recent conflict further deepen the barrier between Americans and Muslim Americans? Did Muslims support, protest, or feel indifferent toward the conflict? These questions can reveal how Muslims shape their identity in the US.

The pool of interviewees will come from Muslims on campus that attend the Friday prayer at CIMIC (the local mosque on campus). As they leave the prayer I will hold friendly conversations for those who remain in the parking lot after prayer, and from there I will hopefully develop an opportunity to schedule interviews with my new acquaintances.

Question: Do Muslims in America find it harder to identify themselves as American because of the US foreign policy on the Middle East?

Data (Field Notes): Shaheer Completely absurd, save the US and only part of Israeli media it was a widely seen as a siege and not a war where both sides engage in balanced battle. The death toll ratios speak volumes as to the injustice and false pretenses to the further sieges and attacks on infrastructure and homes. It was a unjustified as the pretenses was that Hamas broke the peace with rockets but it was actually broken earlier by Israel. And then during the attacks on mostly civilians it was blind attacks under

the blanket of defense against the imminent attacks from Hamas and further supported by misleading slogans and propaganda that was amplified by media that changed the rhetoric of the conflict and in turn the view of Americans on the siege. Completely absurd, foreign policy has not only turned their face away from the conflict and injustices but supported the acts and condemned Hamas as oppose to Israel. Their common interest in the situation rather than supporting truth and justice was obvious in press statements, monetary and weaponry support, and press conferences. It is a blind support of Israel because of common interest and influential lobbyists that steer their relationship and drive the unbelievable unwavering support of Israel. It is beneficial for the US and Israel only and not the rest of the world. All about political and monetary interest, it is not the clash of civilizations but rather the clash of interests. No, I feel completely apart and distanced as a American because of the foreign policy and the way other countries and conflicts are dealt with by the Americans. It definitely makes me have that much more interest in the situation but any injustice or veiled genocide and ethnic cleansing is a red flag for anyone open to reason and determined to fight oppression and injustices around the world. –absolutely it makes it impossible to identify myself as American because in other countries we are judged by our foreign policy and it has historically been driven by interests, unjust dealings, and a “bully” method if negotiating. I generally avoid CNN and Fox news for many reasons but the two major ones is they have interests and stakes in a lot of of the worlds issues. Rupert Murdoch is a huge conglomerate that is influential and a huge supporter of Israel and it becomes obvious in their tactics. Also, CNN has shifted towards an entertainment channel as oppose to news and reporting which is obvious in their reporting and methods. I generally look to news organizations for updates such as BBC, aljazeera, and non-for-profit organizations and humanitarian organizations in Israel and Palestinians. – Implementation of socialization of medicine, open negotiations and talks with polarized nations. absolutely it makes it impossible to identify myself as American because in other countries we are judged by our foreign policy and it has historically been driven by interests, unjust dealings, and a “bully” method if negotiating. Common interests and influence from lobbyists AIPAC, it comes down to the dollar. How does it affect Muslims in the states? Not necessarily subject it but allow and support it. Foreign policy is huge because US has a lot of interests in the regions and for that reason how they deal and

what happens affects the US greatly. Open negotiations and talks with former polarized nations yes, because my ideals and morals don't match the general population, I only feel included when I am around those who are also muslim but in general I feel uncomfortable around non muslims. Elicit in both frustration and misunderstanding as to why US takes certain positions on conflicts because of their common interests. Boycott, trade embargos, estrangement from the US Muslims in America are living in a hostile and unwelcoming environment where the clash of ideals and morals cause problems and is fuelled by misconceptions pushed by the media. Ramsey – It saddens me to hear about the recent conflict. The killing of innocent civilians is completely unacceptable. The number of Palestinian Women and Children that have been killed makes me extremely angry. – I have a lot of trouble understanding why the United States of America gives so much money to Israel every year. I recently learned, in my international health class, that The United States gives more money to Israel than they do to all the sub-saharan African countries combined. That is an absolutely ridiculous statistic. The worst part of it all is that this money goes to killing innocent people. The money that could be used to help many unfortunate people is being used, instead, to kill innocent people and it just doesn't make sense to me. – I fail to see how it is beneficial for anyone except Israel. The United States continues to give Israel money that is in turned used to bomb the Palestinian people. – It is a disgrace, In my opinion, the U.S.A should not choose sides like it seemingly has. It should be completely uninvolved or in the support of both sides. Throwing all support to one side just makes things worse for everyone involved. – Yes it does, I am from the middle east, so the way that America handles affairs in the middle east does relate to me. – It does, Islam teaches us to treat all other Muslims like brothers and sisters. It is hard for me to think about the fact that America throws so much support to Israel which in turn results in the death of many of my "brothers" and "sisters" – – It really is. It's times like these where I find it almost impossible to be "proud to be an American" How can I be proud to be a part of a country that indirectly massacres innocent civilians. It's times like these where I do not want to call myself an American. I use a variety of different sources to get my information from. I have used CNN, Fox, MSNBC, Al-Jazeera and many other sources. I try to expose myself to as many different sources as possible so that I can have an unbiased approach to the issues. Unfortunatly some of

the sources, such as Fox News, are so overtly bias that it boggles my mind. – I do not associate myself with any political party. I reject America's Foreign policy 10.) Does America's foreign policy make you, as a Muslim in America feel alienated compared to other Americans? Do any policies make you feel this way? I feel as though many Americans are blind to the issues because of the lack of proper portrayal by many different news outlets. America's foreign policy does make me feel alienated to other Americans because of this. It is hard to associate myself with other Americans when they have been brainwashed to believe that my religion, ethnicity, and culture are all about violence and terrorism. Attitudes like this are not only a result of biased news outlets but also America's Foreign policy. 11.) – It's a question I have asked myself so many times and I honestly do not have an answer. 12.) – I think it affects all Muslims, domestically and abroad, negatively. 13.) What changes would you make to the foreign policy? I would either withdraw all aid, or support all nations involved equally. 14.) – Yes, I have personally been subject to minor hate crimes following 9/11. I saw my mother and sister be mocked at in public for wearing the head scarf and have witnessed my father verbally disrespected. I myself was also the victim of verbal abuse from ignorant individuals who choose to believe that because of my ethnic background, I am in support of murder. The saddest part is that my religion preaches the complete opposite of this. As a matter of fact the Quran states: "to kill one man is the same as killing all of humanity" 15.) – I am certain that Muslims overseas and in the United States are all objective to the current Foreign Policy 16.) – How about in the states? Protest, rallies, letters. Anyway that we can be heard. Muslims are trying to crush the false beliefs that many Americans have about the religion and the people and have attempted to do this through many different peaceful methods. Osama Questions – Um, the Palestine conflict I think was terrible, obviously. Any time innocent people die, or suffer even, it's unacceptable. It's a complex issue, I'm sure, but that's why we have government, we expect them, we give them the responsibility to, like, protect us, you know? I mean, I guess, my thoughts? There is need, definitely for some form of engagement, the issues are there, and they will always be there, but that engagement can not be military. It must be political, it must be verbal; neither group, the Israelis or the Palestinians, are going to leave and whether its suicide attacks on Israel or military attacks against Palestine, physical attacks will only increase the problem.

– I think there's a lot to consider. Like I said it's a very complex situation. Globalism is a real phenomenon and you got mega-powers and the game is played so that they have to preserve their power. I'm not saying it's right, it's just how the world works, it's one group pitted against another. The balance, though, comes from the expectation that everyone plays fair. It is clear that the United States has a great amount of influence not just in the middle east but around the world. I think their role should be, if not someone who helps mediate the conflict, which is in their own interest, because if the middle east is stable, so will be oil prices, terrorism will be decreased, etc. Anyway, with all that in mind, they should either be like mediators or just be neutral. If they choose sides, they will be playing with millions of lives, and that is a very dangerous prospect. – I'm under the impression that the US has a strong relationship with Israel. Some would say that Israel is a proxy for the US in the middle east to protect their interests there. There's other ways to do that, when you create a proxy like that and then it is set against the rest in that region, the situation can get very explosive, something we've seen in the recent past. – I don't think I know enough about the subject to answer that. Like I said, it is a very complex issue. – Of course, if Muslims are suffering, I am suffering. So if the US foreign policy is causing that suffering, and I am an American, it is my duty to change that. More than that, as a Muslim, I have the duty to be an agent of peace and justice, and if either of those things are being jeopardized, it is my problem. – Religiously, any injustice or suffering anywhere across the world, in the middle east or tibet or central Illinois, is my problem, and being a Muslim shapes my concern regarding any of those issues. I think most Muslims are especially sensitive to problems in the middle east because we all have or know people who have family in the region and so it hits a little closer to home. – – I am an American. I have freedoms, resources, and other privileges here in the US that I probably would not have anywhere else in the world. Part of being a citizen is recognizing that you have an obligation to loyalty to the country that you're a citizen of. I know that is kind of controversial but that is how I feel. The caveat is that as an American if I do not agree to some action, it is also my responsibility to ensure that the government is acting in a fair and just manner. – – International sources are the best, BBC, various European news services, etc. Domestic services are sometimes biased with a certain point of view, some more than others. Most people would agree Fox news is very biased toward the conservative right. Most of the sources

I read are sanctioned in America, which may mean that they also offer some sort of bias, and none of them have ever been labeled as un-American. I do want to say, though, that the great thing about journalism is speaking truth to power, and some organizations really do live up to that ideal: New York Times, and the Economist for example, in my opinion. But in the end, every source will be biased one way or another – at some point it just comes down to our own judgement. – I don't really have a political affiliation. I support any policy that supports responsible development, and just mediation. It's important for any nation to protect its own interests, but it must be done responsibly; when that is not the case – those are the policies that I reject. 10.)

Does America's foreign policy make you, as a Muslim in America feel alienated compared to other Americans? Do any policies make you feel this way? If I do, then it is my own fault. As a Muslim, and I think this is true of most Muslims, I feel more comfortable around other Muslims, simply because of an image I have of non-Muslims: that they do not share the level of morality, they enjoy activities that are damaging to the self. Thus, with other Muslims I feel that I can share a sense of brotherhood as well as a similar worldview. Many non-Muslims that I have met, however, have a world view very similar to Muslims and it's important for Islam to reach out. It is not policies but dialogues that make me feel alienation, however. As a Muslim I believe in certain things, and subscribe to certain perspectives. A lot of non-Muslims frame dialogues in a way that automatically dismisses the Muslim perspective. For example, gay rights. While the jury is still out in the policy sector, the dialogue automatically assumes that homosexuality is an acceptable behavior. Muslims do not agree. A related issue: freedom of speech sort of illustrates this problem. While freedom of speech is celebrated in this country, any Muslim making comments that may be deemed even slightly off the mainstream can land them in jail, or worse. Yet publications may publish all the inflammatory anti-Muslim material they wish, it is a double standard. 11.) – I think that each administration takes a unique look at the foreign policy, but they maintain some consistencies. 12.) – This war on terror was lunged into without much long-term thinking. It's caused innumerable Muslims and non-Muslims (entire cities at times) to suffer and die. In the same vein, there hasn't been much visible US involvement in developing said communities. There's an imbalance there that creates undue suffering on the part of the Muslims that not many other communities have to face from the

United States, all because they are caught in the center of a battle over oil. It hurts and damages Muslims, in the middle east where they see the economic effects, the physical damage, and etc. It also affects Muslims here, hearing from their families, seeing the inability of a group of countries totally unable to lift themselves out of poverty because of an unending conflict. It also affects Non-Muslims here when they have to pay taxes to combat the deleterious effects of the US' actions and the constant risk of terrorism. 13.) – Like I mentioned earlier, less combative and violent actions against the middle east and more development would allow an entirely new paradigm and era to begin. If the US engaged in more development and less in destruction and offered these countries in the Middle east and elsewhere a place at the international table along with the United States, Europe, and Russia, those who shape the future of the world, if they gave them a voice, peace would not be imminent but would be tremendously easier to accomplish. 14.) – I have. At times when people recognize you as a Muslim, they tend to isolate themselves from you and not treat you the same way as they would a non Muslim. The same is also true of Muslims, however, they also treat Non Muslims as outsiders. 15.) – Anger, of course. It is their country. While we may have the choice to leave the states if we want to, they have nowhere to go. Their only outlet is emotion, something that sometimes manifests itself in dialogue, sometimes in physical action. 16.) – How about in the states? Speeches, rallies, severe dialogue in religious sermons, also physical attacks. The few that do engage politically, I feel leave and get disillusioned because there is no one listening to them in that arena. IN the US there are also speeches and rallies as well as educational dialogue. 17.) What kind of atmosphere are Muslims in America living in? Why does this atmosphere exist? Do you want to change it? How can it be changed? THE atmosphere is undefined right now. We're post war on terror. Many non-Muslims know and appreciate so much more about Muslims because the war on terror forced them to educate themselves. The blind anti-Muslim agenda that some have pushed in the past is not effective anymore. The public has been even more critical of seemingly anti Muslim policies such as their support for Israel, something that has not occurred to this point in the past. People are listening, and that is important. But the relationship is fragile, while people are listening, Islam is still considered something exotic – a feature that allows people in the main stream to judge and to isolate. The doors are open, however. I think people are

tired of terms like islamic fundamentalism, militant islam, and muslim terrorism, they see past that. But the ball is in the Muslims' court, if they reach out and build relationships with non Muslims, if they engage the political process, they realize their civic duties, strive to be an integral part of their communities, which they have done in large part, we can really enter a new age where Islam is a beautiful religion, a way of life, not a word cleverly suffixed for some FoxNews segment. Everyone wants to change the past climate, i think, and it can be changed by the way above as well as an openness of mind by both sides.

Additional comments from Osama: The media is an important vehicle for social change. If the media were to realize its mission to offer the news without bias or strings attached, then we could accomplish a much more comprehensive world view, something that would improve Muslim American relations as well as Global American relations. Likewise, Americans, muslims and non alike should be critical of what they hear on the news, or from others, they should make their own judgment with an open fram of mind.

Hasan 1. I don't think what took place in Gaza was a conflict. It was a brutal massacre then should have been prevented by the rest of the world. But i guess we learned now that we cant rely on the rest of the world, it's everyone for themselves. 2. I think America was a direct partner of Israel in the conflict. It did NOTHING to stop the atrocities, and only voiced its opinion half-heartedly in wake of the events. 3. I dont think America's relationship with Israel is at all beneficial. There is absolutely NOTHING to gain. They have NOTHING to offer us, except an ethnic lobby that won't shut the fuck up. 4. I can sum up American foreign policy in a few, simple words. Imperialistic, xenophobic, unnecessarily involved. 5. Of course it does. My family back home is affected, my fellow Muslims across the Middle East are played with like pawns on a keyboard. Lives are worthless. For the sake of western imperialism, these people's livelihoods are so mitigated. 6. Yes most definitely. As a Muslim, i hate to see the turmoil other Muslims go through, often times on sheer suspicions of things. Take a look at Iraq. What the fuck did Iraq do to the United States? I hate to see other people's lives, especially Muslims, so aimlessly thrown away. 7. I always am angered with American foreign policy, especially towards the middle east. It intensifies my anger towards politicians and the bi-partisan bull shit that makes this country's foreign policy so ridiculous every four years. they always try to out-do eachother at the sake of the American people. 8. I generally pick and choose

my sources carefully. I will read different versions of the same headline on different websites and newspapers to see what facts are left out/included. I avoid far-right and far-left sources, because they are ridiculously biased. 9. I don't affiliate myself with any party at all. I tend to have more conservative views on certain issues, but i never ever want to be associated with the GOP. they are a pack of racist, old white, xenophobic idiots who do this country no good. 10. I do, to a certain extent, feel alienated in America as a Muslim, because that is what the media does. they do a great job of instilling fear and hate in the minds of Americans, and they constantly work to make this country a living hell for someone... i.e. Native Americans, the Irish, the Blacks and now Muslims. 11. The lobbyists in D.C. and those in power behind the scenes. 12. It affects Muslims overseas directly, especially those living in conflict zones. Overseas, there is also growing anti-American sentiment amongst Muslims, which is definitely warranted. 13. there are a number of changes i would make. First, i would end this parasitic relationship with Israel, and then everything else will fall into place 14. Not necessarily felt like an outsider, but that i wasn't liked definitely. 15. Definite growth in anti-american sentiment both overseas and here at home as well. 16. I really don't see much from Muslims overseas actually. they need to protest their tyrannical rulers to stand up to the hate and unwarranted attacks. Muslims need to however, work on themselves first and then start ordering action on the outside. 17. Muslims in AMerica are living in an atomosphere of estrangement. They feel like they don't belong, but dont know how to work themselves back into society in an acceptable manner. over-assimilation is not the answer, it is to endure and peacefully protest to being such a target. Amer Questions – I don't know what to say. Obviously I'm against it. I feel Israel had no right to do what it did, and that it did not have good intentions. – I'm not sure what role America played in the conflict. I'm very annoyed at America's reluctance to condemn anything Israel does. The blind support America gives Israel kind of freaks me out. It makes no sense to me. – Like I said, I feel America supports Israel unconditionally. I don't know what you mean by beneficial. If beneficial to humanity, obviously supporting a country even while that country is committing evil actions is not beneficial. If by beneficial to America, I don't know. I hear things about there being a strong Israeli lobby. I think the former ambassador to Saudi Arabia said the Israeli lobby is too strong to allow American officials to properly make decisions in the best

interest of America when it comes to issues concerning the Middle East. I think it's something we should be aware of. Honestly, as much as that sounds like a conspiracy theory, the unconditional support that politicians have that freaks me out makes me feel like it's very possible. – I think America is just looking out for its best interest, disregarding the pain that wars cause families. To be honest though, I'm not surprised. In fact, I'd be surprised if it was any other way. I think any country would do the same. I don't hold America to any exceptionally high moral standard. That being said, I think it's very possible the decisions they made ended up not being in their best interest. – It probably should, but I don't feel I'm educated or knowledgeable enough to pass judgement, so I don't think about it much. Though when it comes to policies, I tend to favor those that seem to be more or less anti-war. – I think what I just said kind of answers that. I'll add though that as a Muslim I value civilian life and I feel that Islam makes me anti-war in general. Being Muslim also makes me more aware of what's going on in Palestine, and makes me annoyed at America's support for Israel. – – The only thing that would affect how American I feel is by how other Americans treat me I guess. Truth be told, I'm never conscious about things like this. I don't really care. – – Well I don't really differentiate between sources, I don't know what to trust. I tend to believe statistics given by human rights groups. Otherwise, I pretty much listen to anything, CNN, Al-Jazeera, whatever Yahoo news puts up. I don't know, I guess I listen to everything then make my own judgement at the end, not sure which sources I value more though. – Are we only talking about foreign policy? I don't really have a political affiliation. I tend to be more pro-government control, so I'm liberal when it comes to the economy. I'm still torn on moral issues. I don't know, I feel I don't have enough knowledge to take a confident stand on any policy. 10.) Does America's foreign policy make you, as a Muslim in America feel alienated compared to other Americans? Do any policies make you feel this way? I never feel alienated really. 11.) – I really don't know. 12.) – Obviously it's affecting the Iraqis. Also obviously affecting the Palestinians. I know in Syria, a bunch of Iraqis came in there and it had a negative effect somehow. But besides the conflict areas, I don't know how much of an impact America has on the Muslims overseas. At home.... I guess a lot of Muslims here have family back there. Also Muslims are afraid that they're being given a bad name... I guess that has nothing to do with America's foreign policy though. I don't know. I guess it's made us more politically

active. 13.) What changes would you make to the foreign policy? Well I'd be much more reluctant to go to war. I'd stop supporting Israel, and may go as far as condemning what it's done. I don't know what to do about Iraq, and to be honest I don't even know what our current foreign policy is now. But yea I'd be anti-war and not supports Israel. I'd also be adamant that Palestinians get their land back. But that being said, I'd prioritize domestic policies over foreign policy. 14.) – Again I really don't notice these things. 15.) – Well Muslims overseas are going to view America as a country thats willing to kill Muslims as long as it benefits America in the end. Here in the states, same thing. 16.) – How about in the states? I don't think Muslims overseas will do much. Here in the states I see more Muslims getting politically active. 17.) What kind of atmosphere are Muslims in America living in? Why does this atmosphere exist? Do you want to change it? How can it be changed? I think we live in a great atmosphere. I wouldn't want to change it, given the realistic alternatives. We live in the same atmosphere as any other American, except, as we believe, we're blessed with God given knowledge on how to approach life. Here, we're allowed to practice that lifestyle. I never felt any discrimination or anything else that would contribute to a negative atmosphere. I dont know, maybe I'm just lucky (laughs). Munther Questions – I was honestly disgusted with what occurred. The massacring of defenseless civilians by the Israel military was terrible and very sad. It reminded me of the Nazis actions against the Jews. It's like, how could you oppress and brutalize an entire population when those same actions were done to you. People say, “but Hamas needs to stop firing rockets” and give other weak excuses for Israel, but the reality is that the Palestinians in Gaza have been held in an open-air prison, without basic necessities. Should they just sit there and starve to death? Its disheartening to know these war criminals in Israel can get away with such actions. It was nice to see the massive protests and demonstrations throughout the entire world, including here in America, and maybe signals a shift in public opinion. – I think America played a large role in the conflict. Since we give billions of dollars per year to Israel in foreign aid, and supply them with the strongest weapons imaginable, some used in the killing of Palestinians, I feel we are largely responsible for the tragedies in Gaza. We did not do enough to stop the conflict and even gave Israel the thumbs up to keep doing what they were doing. Not to mention that America continually vetoed many of the resolutions created to put an end

to the conflict. So I think America definitely had a negative role on the conflict. – America’s relationship with Israel is one of undying and unconditional support. We are hardly ever critical of Israel and continue to give them way more aid and weapons than necessary. I feel it is detrimental to just about everybody. America’s constant support of Israel basically alienates the Palestinians and shows we don’t care about them. We’ve also drawn international ire because other nations see the extreme bias in favor of Israel. Much of the animosity from countries in middle east pertains to America’s relationship with Israel. If you could sum up America’s overall foreign policy in the middle East, what would you say about it? America’s foreign policy is very unbalanced. It is way too critical and attacking of Arab and Muslim countries, and much too supportive of Israel, which creates animosity towards it. There’s no question it needs to be more balanced and objective – I feel like our foreign policy kind of isolates Muslims and alienates them from the rest of the population. Muslims always seem to be singled out and as a Muslim it sometimes seems like we’re not really wanted. – Naturally, it does shape my concern, because being Muslim makes the issue more personal. However, I still feel like I would be concerned if I wasn’t Muslim, because I am concerned with other issues that do not directly relate or affect me. – I would not say it’s harder for me to identify as American, but it makes it harder to feel proud when it’s clear we are the source of many of the problems in the middle east. There are a lot of great things about this country for which I am happy to be American, but our actions abroad are definitely not one of them – I get most of my information from Al-Jazeera, as well as BBC. Both are very reputable sources and are much less biased than American media. I also read Haaretz, an Israeli paper and some other sources here and there. I avoid Fox, unless I’m in the mood for comedy. – I support policies that foster dialogue with other countries. Policies that support the development and well-being of nations. I’m against policies that take money out of taxpayers’ pockets to fund unnecessary wars. I’m against the notion that we shouldn’t talk to our “enemies” because how exactly is not talking going to solve anything. 10.) Does America’s foreign policy make you, as a Muslim in America feel alienated compared to other Americans? Do any policies make you feel this way? I do at times feel alienated. The patriot act 11.) – I think a lot of it has to do with who is on power and who has a lot of influence. It’s no secret that Jews take up many of the highest positions in government,

as well as in corporations. Not to mention AIPAC, which might have the largest influence of any lobby group. 12.) – If you just look at Iraq, I think the answer is clearly yes. Muslims are dying everyday because of our foreign policy. Not only in Iraq, but in Palestine, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Guantanamo Bay is another example. Many Muslims here have family overseas so it directly affects them. 13.) What changes would you make to the foreign policy? I would be more balanced, and reduce aid to Israel, especially since we need that money in our own country more than ever. I would take actions to restore relations with Muslim nations 14.) – I would say in the time right after September 11th 2001. That was really the first and only time I truly felt like an outsider. There have been other instance where I may have felt that way, but 9/11 was a clear moment when I felt like an outsider, mainly due to the threats and harassments I faced at the time as a Muslim. 15.) – As I said before, the current foreign policy is the source of middle eastern animosity. Its not hard to see why Muslims in other countries do not like our government. It's important to distinguish that Muslims in other countries have no problem with the people of America, just their government and foreign policy, and I think any educated person can understand why. 16.) – How about in the states? We've already seen many protests and demonstrations in response to the Iraq war, Afghanistan war, and Israel's war on the Palestinians. I think we'll see more of that until things change. 17.) What kind of atmosphere are Muslims in America living in? Why does this atmosphere exist? Do you want to change it? How can it be changed? I think the atmosphere for Muslims in America is alright. More and more people are learning about Islam and trying to educate themselves, which creates a relationship of understanding. There is still racism and prejudice out there, and I think a lot of it has to do with our foreign policy and media coverage. I would just like to see more balanced media coverage that doesn't single out Muslims. And also try to educate Americans better.

Discuss (Final Paper): The American foreign policy has been a hot button issue for decades. It has had profound effects on different peoples in different regions all over the globe. But what sort of impact has it had on Americans? The American foreign policy in the Middle East has been a controversial issue since September 11th. American involvement in the Middle East dramatically increased as opposed to its previous, already active, interference as a result

of 9/11. As troops began landing in predominantly Muslim countries, questions were posed on how this would affect the future relationship between the Muslim world and the Western world. It is no secret that there is a strong anti-American sentiment prevalent among Muslims overseas. Which begs the question, what about Muslims in America? How do they feel? The recent Palestinian-Israeli conflict in December highlighted the American foreign policy in the Middle East. As the death toll rose, so did the impatience among Muslims worldwide. I chose to investigate if this impatience and frustration was observable among Muslims in America. This research is not the first of its kind. Since 9/11, US intelligence agencies have vigorously sought to further their knowledge regarding Muslims in America. In the most recent Republican National Convention Dr. Ron Paul cited research that the CIA had been conducting in regards to American foreign policy. The CIA developed the blowback principle based on the research. Essentially, the blowback principle implies that there is a direct relationship between the degree of influence America has overseas and the potential threat America could face at home. They found that the blowback principle holds especially true in regions densely populated with Muslims. Newer research has focused on Muslims in America, and their possible affiliation with Muslims overseas. Although the purpose of their research was to improve national security and to detect potential threats, it still provided a foundation in studies exploring Muslims in America. My hypothesis is that Muslims in America find the current US foreign policy quite troubling because of its heavy presence in the Muslim world. It is my opinion that the foreign policy troubles Muslims in America to the extent that it impedes on their ability to fully identify themselves as Americans. Instead, Muslims more readily associate themselves as outsiders in America. The pool of my interviewees consisted of Muslims who were students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As a Muslim and a member of the Muslim Students Association, I had several acquaintances with whom I may interview. Every Friday the local mosque (CIMIC) holds a congregational prayer. A significant portion of the Muslim student population attends this prayer. As the prayer finished, I stood outside of the exit and approached some of the acquaintances I knew. After re-introducing myself, I gave some brief background information on my research and proceeded to schedule interviews. Altogether there was six people that I conducted interviews with. Hasan Hasan is a second generation Sudanese-

American Muslim. He is a junior at UIUC, and graduated from a private Islamic school near his home in the south suburb of Chicago. Hasan lives on campus in an apartment adjacent to the local mosque. Hasan is an executive member of a couple of Muslim registered student associations, and was very interested in the research. After the Friday prayer, we scheduled to have the interview over lunch at the university union. The first question I asked Hasan was regarding his feelings about the recent Palestinian–Israeli conflict. He responded in an intense and passionate manner. Calling the conflict a massacre that should have been prevented by the world, he went on saying, “But I guess we learned now that we can’t rely on the rest of the world, it’s everyone for themselves”. Hasan was livid about the recent conflict; he even suggested that it wasn’t a conflict at all. He seemed incredibly disturbed at the unevenness of causalities when comparing both sides. Hasan described America’s role in the conflict as a partner to Israel, and characterized the relationship between American and Israel is not beneficial, and that “they have nothing to offer us, except an ethnic lobby that won’t shut the f*** up”. Hasan was obviously dissatisfied with the US foreign policy. Hasan thought the US foreign policy could be summed up in “a few, simple words; Imperialistic, xenophobic, unnecessarily involved.” Hasan feels that the US foreign policy towards the Middle East facilitates anti–American sentiment among Muslims overseas. He showed confusion towards America’s presence in Iraq, asking what did Iraq do to Americans. Hasan suggests that America’s foreign policy wreaks havoc in the Middle East. He says that Muslims overseas suffer, and that bothers him because he sympathizes with them. American action overseas, specifically in the Middle East, affects because he worries about his family overseas, as well as his “fellow Muslims”. Hasan admitted that he does, “to a certain extent, feel alienated in America as a Muslim, because that is what the media does. They do a great job of instilling fear and hate in the minds of Americans, and they constantly work to make this country a living hell for someone... i.e. Native Americans, the Irish, the Blacks and now Muslims.” Hasan mentions that he tends to “avoid far–left or far–right sources because they are ridiculously biased”. Hasan says that he hasn’t “necessarily felt like an outsider, just that I wasn’t liked”. Hasan feels that Muslims in America “live in an atmosphere of estrangement”. He implies that they don’t have a sense of belonging, and that finding acceptable ways to work themselves back into society are often shadowed by attempts of

“over-assimilation”. Hasan feels that America should end its “parasitic relationship with Israel”, and that this would certainly help deflate some of the issues Muslims have with the foreign policy. During Hasan’s interview it was apparent that Hasan still identified himself as an American. There were several times during the interview that he used words like “us” and “we” in regards to America, or Americans. It is obvious that he views himself and other Muslims as Americans, but feels that there is animosity in the US against Muslims. He attributes most of the animosity towards the media, but suggests that the foreign policy contributes to his sense of alienation. Despite his ability to identify as an American, Hasan still recognizes that the foreign policy, media, and other forces like racism play a role in making it difficult for him to make this identification, but nonetheless, he still makes the identification. Shaheer Shaheer is a second generation Egyptian-American Muslim senior on campus. Next semester he plans on attending medical school. Shaheer also lives near the local mosque on campus, and as a frequent visitor to the mosque elected to have the interview in the mosque after the evening congregational prayer. Shaheer, like Hasan, was very passionate about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He thought the conflict, as well as American involvement, was “completely absurd”. And that “the death toll ratio speaks volumes as to the injustice and false pretenses to the further sieges and attacks on infrastructure and homes”. Shaheer felt that the US foreign policy in the Middle East “turned its face towards the injustices”, and that instead of using peace and justice as its foundation, it used common interest. Unlike Hasan, Shaheer felt that the US and Israel stand to benefit from the foreign policy, but this beneficial relationship is at the expense of the Muslim world. Shaheer suggests that the foreign policy is all about monetary gain, and that this common perception of the Muslim world and the Western world at odds because of differing beliefs and values is incorrect, stating, “It’s not the clash of civilizations, rather it’s the clash of interests.” Shaheer feels that the US foreign policy distances himself from other Americans. Shaheer deems it impossible to identify himself as an American because of the foreign policy. In regards to whether it was his Muslim identity that made him feel this way about the foreign policy, he admitted that it does, but also that any person who is aware of some of the actions that are taken under this foreign policy would also throw up a “red flag”. Shaheer also stated that he avoids CNN and FOX news as sources of information, Shaheer believes there are many reasons

to avoid the channels but cites that “the two major ones is that they have interests and stakes in a lot of the world’s issues.” Shaheer claims that “CNN has shifted towards an entertainment channel” rather than a news channel, and that this is obvious in their reporting and methods. Shaheer suggests that the foreign policy modifies some of its principles and allow open talks with polarized nations. This modification will help reduce the isolation of Muslim nations and their people. Shaheer mentioned that it was much easier for him to identify and relate to other Muslims, while it was uncomfortable for him to surround himself with non-Muslims. Shaheer explains saying “because my ideals and morals don’t match the general population”, and proposes that this could be in part because of the atmosphere Muslims live in, which he explains as, “Muslims in America are living in a hostile and unwelcoming environment where the clash of ideals and morals cause problems and is fueled by misconceptions pushed by the media”. Shaheer, like Hasan, states that the media plays a role in determining the atmosphere and environment that Muslims are placed in America. Shaheer is critical of the foreign policy’s seclusion of Muslim nations. Shaheer considers that the foreign policy is a source of frustration and confusion for Muslims in America and in the Middle East. Shaheer also claims that there is a difference in morals and values between Muslim Americans and other Americans that divides the too, and makes it hard for one to relate to the other.

Ramsey Ramsey is a second generation Syrian-American Muslim junior. Ramsey recently became a US citizen despite living in the US for the majority of his life. Ramsey is a resident advisor for a student-housing dormitory on campus. Ramsey chose to meet at the engineering library. Ramsey expresses anger and discontent with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He finds the number of dead women and children particularly troubling. Ramsey says that the participation of America in the recent conflict was problematic for him, he goes on saying, “I recently learned, in my international health class, that The United States gives more money to Israel than they do to all the sub-Saharan African countries combined. That is an absolutely ridiculous statistic. The worst part of it all is that this money goes to killing innocent people.” Overall, Ramsey felt that the American foreign policy “is a disgrace”. He was most upset with the US “taking sides”. Ramsey says his interest in the Middle East foreign policy comes from the fact that he is Middle Eastern, and that “Islam teaches us to treat all other Muslims like brothers and sisters.” Ramsey declares that it is harder to identify himself

as an American because of the foreign policy and states, "It's times like these where I find it almost impossible to be proud to be an American. How can I be proud to be a part of a country that indirectly massacres innocent civilians? It's times like these where I do not want to call myself an American. Ramsey reiterates what the other interviewees have already stated in regards to the media, but Ramsey doesn't necessarily avoid the sources he feels are unfair. Instead, Ramsey prefers to take in as many sources as possible in order to obtain an "unbiased", objective understanding. Ramsey does admit that, "unfortunately, some of the sources, such as Fox News, are so overtly biased that it boggles my mind". Ramsey insists that his sense of alienation stems from the foreign policy, various media outlets, and racism. Ramsey pointed out how after 9/11 all of his immediate family members were subject to hate crimes. Ramsey constantly references misunderstandings that most Americans have in regards to Muslims and Islam. Ramsey articulates "it is hard to associate myself with other Americans when they have been brainwashed to believe that my religion, ethnicity, and culture are all about violence and terrorism." Ramsey also responds that "the saddest part is that my religion preaches the opposite", and proceeds to cite a Quranic verse that equates the killing of one soul to the killing of all humanity. Ramsey reinforces the theme that the foreign policy contributes to the sentiment of alienation, as well as the inability to identify as an American. But Ramsey also cites the influence of the media. Ramsey also mentions the function of knowledge regarding Islam and how it relates to Muslims in America. Ramsey feels that the lack of knowledge among Americans is a causative agent of alienation. Osama Osama is a second generation Indian-Pakistani American Muslim junior. He lives off campus and is an executive member of one of the biggest student-university organizations on campus. When asked about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Osama was one of the few interviewees that did not express visible distaste, or a pro-Palestinian position. Instead, Osama proposed that all parties involved should engage in political talks rather than military combat. Osama asserted that the US should be careful in the Middle East when it comes to conflicts, saying choosing a side "is a very dangerous prospect". Osama thinks the US will benefit the most out of playing the role of the mediator, or moderator. Osama thought that US involvement in the most recent conflict reflected the increased presence of the globalization phenomenon. Unlike the previous interviewees, Osama thought

that Israel served as a proxy for the United States in the Middle East, and that the US stood to gain from this relationship. Osama acknowledged that he is not entirely familiar with the Middle East foreign policy, but did admit that he was sure that Muslims, as a result of the foreign policy, were suffering. Osama says, “if Muslims are suffering, I am suffering”, and that “religiously any injustice across the world is my problem... as a Muslim, I have the duty to be an agent for peace and justice”. Osama also found no issue identifying as an American, “I am an American. I have freedoms, resources, and other privileges here in the US that I probably would not have anywhere else in the world. Part of being a citizen is recognizing that you have an obligation to loyalty to the country that you're a citizen of. I know that is kind of controversial but that is how I feel. The caveat is that as an American if I do not agree to some action, it is also my responsibility to ensure that the government is acting in a fair and just manner.” But Osama did not fail to point out that “most domestic [sources of information] are biased” and that “international sources are the best”. Rather than list the news organizations he felt were biased, or slanted in some way, he cited the New York Times, and the Economist as true journalism. He did confess that no matter what source you use, you will occasionally run into some biased position, “at some point it just comes down our own judgment”. Osama added that the “media is an important vehicle for social change”, and upon this realization “a more comprehensive worldview” can be established. He continues on to say if the media realizes this, American–Muslim relations, as well as Global–American relations will inevitably improve. Osama addressed the issue of alienation as a problem that could be attributed to Muslims themselves, rather than the government. Like Shaheer, Osama expressed that he is “more comfortable around Muslims” because of differences in morality. However he did specify that many American Muslims and non–Muslims share the same worldview, so if alienation does arise “it is not policies, but dialogue” that makes him feel this way. Osama explained that many “dialogues are framed in a way that automatically dismisses the Muslim perspective”. And that “while freedom of speech is celebrated in this country, any Muslim making comments that may be deemed even slightly off the mainstream can land them in jail, or worse. Yet publications may publish all the inflammatory anti–Muslim material they wish, it is a double standard.” Osama did mention that isolation of Muslims by non–Muslims upon recognition is met with Muslims

isolating non-Muslims, implying a reciprocal relationship. Osama goes on to declare that Muslims overseas see “the deleterious effects” of the foreign policy on their country’s economy, stability, and well-being. Notwithstanding the evident issues that the Muslim world and the Western world have with each other, Osama feels that “the current atmosphere is undefined”, and that “the previous anti-Muslim agenda has been pushed to the past”. This is an era of learning and knowledge, and that the future looks bright for American-Muslim relations. Osama’s unique take on several points of this research reflected his understanding that he is an American citizen, thereby making him apart of the decisions this government takes. Rather than just be upset with some of the decision-making this government makes, Osama believes he should change that. Despite being readily able to identify himself as an American, feelings of alienation are not unknown to Osama. Osama suggests that differing morality, lack of dialogue, and media portrayal are all factors to this sense of estrangement. However, Osama places blame on both American Muslims and non-Muslims for the distance they put between themselves. Amer Amer is a second generation Jordanian-American Muslim senior who will attend law school next semester. As an active member in the Students for Justice in Palestine organization, Amer was unhappy with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Amer was “very annoyed at America’s reluctance to condemn anything Israel does. The blind support America gives Israel kind of freaks me out. It makes no sense to me.” Amer thinks we should be aware of the strength of the Israeli lobby and how the lobby influences politicians and decision-making. Amer believes that the foreign policy that America, like all countries, maintains is motivated by America’s will to serve its own best interest. Despite this intention, Amer indicates, that he is sure the best interest is not always served in some decisions. Amer specified that he never really felt alienated, and to feel alienated it would have to do more with how other Americans treat you, rather than decisions made at the federal level. Amer also disclosed that his lack of knowledge was part of the reason why he wasn’t very involved in the effects of the foreign policy, but that it didn’t stop him from realizing how it impacted Muslims in America, and overseas. He believes that “Muslims overseas are going to view America as a country that’s willing to kill Muslims as long as it benefits America in the end. Here in the states, same thing”. Amer said that the foreign policy should discourage war, and that the aid to Israel should stop. Amer described the atmosphere in

the states for Muslims as “great... I wouldn't want to change it, given the realistic alternatives. We live in the same atmosphere as any other American, except, as we believe, we're blessed with God given knowledge on how to approach life. Here, we're allowed to practice that lifestyle. I never felt any discrimination or anything else that would contribute to a negative atmosphere.” Amer is very comfortable in the states; he doesn't distinguish himself from other Americans. He identifies as a Muslim, and supports Muslim issues overseas, and recognizes that there are decisions made in the states that Muslims will object to, but does not seem to take these decisions personal. However, he does believe in political activism among Muslims, and does exhibit a desire to change the policies in place. Munther Munther is a second generation Palestinian-American Muslim junior who is in the College of Business at UIUC. Munther is an active member in many Palestinian advocacy groups. Munther was just as upset about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the other interviewees. Munther said, “Since we give billions of dollars per year to Israel...I feel that we are largely responsible for the tragedies in Gaza”. Munther also attributes the animosity many Muslim and Arab nations feel is a result of the foreign policy's favoring of Israel. He also claimed that the foreign policy isolates Muslims and makes them “feel like we're not really wanted.” Munther wishes the foreign policy were more balanced, and open to dialogue with all countries. Munther, like the other interviewees, said he chooses international news organizations over domestic ones, and that he “avoids Fox, unless he's in the mood for comedy”. Munther implied that the period following 9/11 was the only time he ever felt like an outsider, using the patriot act as an indication of what was going on. Munther did go on to say that the current atmosphere for Muslims is “alright” because “more and more people are learning about Islam and trying to educate themselves, which creates a relationship of understanding. There is still racism and prejudice out there, and I think a lot of it has to do with our foreign policy and media coverage.” Munther does not seem to have a problem identifying as an American, he like Hasan used words like “we”, and “us” when referring to American decisions and actions. Conversely, he did indicate there were times he felt like an outsider. Munther felt that the role of the media, and the foreign policy in the US, were sources of frustration, alienation, and animosity. Conclusion All of the interviewees objected the foreign policy the US maintains in the Middle East. However, many of them did not solely attribute

instances of alienation to the foreign policy. The interviewees all mentioned the role of the media. There was a unanimous and unequivocal recognition that FOX news was a biased source. Some interviewees avoided FOX, while others indulged. The media to the interviewees can correct or instill a stereotype among Americans, they view it as a powerful entity. In order to help Muslims feel more at home, the interviewees implied that the media has to welcome them. Despite many of the interviewees specifying possible policy changes and advocated political involvement among Muslims, none of them were able to truly affiliate themselves with a political party. Some said they hold certain views in certain situations; but overall, there was not a single party that satisfied them. This is an important finding, if Muslims don't find the political system suitable for them, then a feeling of hopelessness is bound to arise. The interviewees expressed concern over the relationship America maintains with Israel. A significant, noticeable observation is that every time they mentioned the death toll in the recent Palestinian–Israeli conflict, the interviewees became more intense and they spoke faster and louder. The interviewees were most bothered by other Muslims dying. Many interviewees expressed that their interest in the foreign policy was mainly due to its affecting other Muslims. It seems that the Muslims in American were easily able to relate to Muslims overseas. Many indicated that Islam taught them to care about other Muslims. My hypothesis was partially correct. I suspected that the foreign policy would alienate Muslims in America and eventually lead Muslims to feel unable to identify as Americans. All of my interviewees were able to identify as Americans regardless of the foreign policy, but alienation was an issue for the interviewees. However, the foreign policy was not the sole contributing factor. Many interviewees cited the media, American legislation (patriot act), and miscommunication between Americans, as sources of alienation. Perhaps a more elaborative study including a larger representative sample of American Muslims can provide insight into these findings.