



# America's Muslims Against America's Jews

**Christian anti-Semitism is yesterday's problem; today's, and tomorrow's, comes from a different direction, and poses a serious threat to Jewish...**

MAY, 1999 · BY DANIEL PIPES

On March 1, 1999, a federal district court in Brooklyn sentenced one Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar, late of Hebron, to life imprisonment. His crime: conspiring to use a weapon of mass destruction, threatening to do so, and carrying the device itself. Although Abu Maizar had not actually harmed anyone, when the police raided his apartment on July 31, 1997, they found plenty of evidence that the twenty-three-year-old was on the verge of setting off a pipe bomb later that same day.

Oddly, the verdict attracted almost no attention. In the *New York Times*, it was reported on page 5 of the second section, below the fold. No editorials were written, no politicians spoke for the record, no ads appeared to express relief that justice had been done. A foiled attempt at mass murder by a Muslim in New York was, it would seem, less than newsworthy.

This is very puzzling, and very disturbing. For Abu Maizar's intended crime was, in fact, no isolated phenomenon; nor was it the product of a merely personal derangement, the act of a lone individual frustrated with his lot and lashing out at "the world." Here, complete with errors of spelling and grammar, are excerpts from the typewritten letter the police found in his apartment. Captioned "In the name of the Gade [God]," it was addressed to "the united states of america and U.S.A. citizens":

no poday [nobody] can wein [win] the ware [war] against Islam and we are warring. . .  
 . We are ready by our soul-blood boombes [bombs] to deines [for whoever denies] our  
 gouls [goals] . . . we are going to buarn [burn] the ground under the america and  
 Jewish stat[e]. . . . Our request shoud [should] be done on our mujjahiddeenis  
 [warriors] ready to hit every where by they [the] suuisid [suicide] boomb [bomb].

The letter was signed “Alljeihd [the jihad] for all agssa [ages] movement.”

Nor was this all. After his arrest, Abu Maizar told an FBI agent that he had decided to detonate the bomb on a subway line that runs from the northern tip of Manhattan to Coney Island at the very south of Brooklyn “because there are a lot of Jews that ride that train.” At the trial itself, Abu Maizar informed the court that he wanted to harm this country “because I feel that the United States is supporting the Jewish state and the United States should be punished for supporting Israel.” He spoke openly of his hopes to kill “as many [Jews] as I could take. . . . I always dreamed to be a martyr”; acknowledged supporting Hamas, the Palestinian extremist group; and in his error-filled letter demanded the release of several fundamentalists imprisoned in the United States. When the guilty verdict was read in court, he jumped to his feet, held an open copy of the Qur’an over his head, and shouted “*Allahu Akbar!*”—God is great, the battlecry of Muslim extremists.

In other words, far from being a solitary crackpot, Abu Maizar represents a very large movement—fundamentalist Islam—in whose name Muslims like him are ready to commit the most heinous acts of violence, and even to give up their own lives, in an effort to “punish” America and, especially, to kill American Jews.

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Fundamentalist Islam (or Islamism, as it is increasingly and more properly called) turns the traditional religion of Islam into a 20th-century-style radical ideology. Like earlier such visions—fascism, Marxism-Leninism—it seeks to build the just society by forcing human life to conform to a preconceived totalitarian plan. This Islamic-flavored totalitarianism holds that if only Muslims lived in strict accordance with the sacred law of their faith, the *shari’a*, they would regain the wealth and strength that was theirs at the height of Islam’s glory in the Middle Ages.

Jews enter the picture, along with British and American “imperialists,” as the perceived main obstacle to the fulfillment of this Utopian vision. In the fundamentalist view, Jews everywhere have spared no effort in their drive to dominate the world and especially the Muslim nations. Every perceived enemy of Islam, from Atatürk to Madonna, from Israel to

the U.S. military's Central Command, is the creation of global Jewry. If the threat posed by this supposed assault on Islam is ever to be eliminated, a no less ruthless war against the Jews is an urgent necessity, and the duty of every Muslim.

In its obsession with the Jews, fundamentalist Islam confirms its structural resemblance to the other major totalitarian ideologies of our century. (As Hannah Arendt long ago pointed out, anti-Semitism was intrinsic to both Nazism and Soviet Communism.) In one way, however, it goes beyond its precursors. Nazis and Communists never had the audacity to emigrate in large numbers from their home countries to the United States; much less did they hope to find a substantial base of support among Americans. Yet that is precisely what fundamentalist Islam, together with its odd fellow traveler, the Nation of Islam—a native-born amalgam of Islamic, black-nationalist, and other elements—has done. Unlike the Brown Shirts and Communists of the 1930's, Muslims who hate the United States, and especially the Jews therein, are growing both in numbers and reach within our borders, enjoying the protections afforded by the rule of law and the indulgence of a benevolent, pluralist society.

It is a fortunate fact that such Muslims do not represent all Muslims in the United States. Some, indeed, resist, whether actively or passively, the demonization of Jews. Many leading Muslim organizations, whatever the true state of their feelings, are careful in public to avoid the taint of anti-Semitism. To the contrary, their spokesmen regularly appear in “dialogue” with Jewish leaders, or participate in efforts like the Detroit Round Table, a branch of the National Conference of Christians and Jews devoted to bringing Jews and Muslims together. Going farther, others have established cooperative links with American Jews (and Christians) on issues of common concern. Thus, in Washington, D.C., a leading imam joined with Christian and Jewish leaders in 1980 to help defeat proposed legislation to legalize gambling, and Muslims have similarly worked with Jews on matters connected to welfare and children's education. A few brave souls—most notably W. Deen Mohammed, the leading figure among black converts to mainstream Islam—have in the past also stood up against Muslims who attack Jews.

Both the Jewish and the Islamic communities profit by such connections. Jews gain allies, Muslims gain stature. For the more traditionalist elements in both communities, moreover, there is the added attraction of forming a larger front against what is seen as the “chaos and evil” of contemporary American society, to use the words of Robert Crane, a

prominent American convert to Islam who wants Muslims to “work with like-minded traditionalists of America’s other religions” in order to “complete the American Revolution.”

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But, in truth, these positive attitudes are very much the exception. The rule, insofar as Jews are concerned, is otherwise. At huge conventions closed to the press and public, in speeches and publications that tend to be couched in the historic Muslim languages rather than in English, nearly every Muslim organization in the United States—emphatically including those that carefully maintain a proper demeanor for public, English-language consumption—spews forth a blatant and vicious anti-Semitism, a barrage of bias, calumny, and conspiracy-mongering of a sort that has otherwise all but disappeared from American discourse.

Since leading Islamic groups in the United States are in regular touch with Middle Eastern organizations like Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, it may not be surprising that the rhetoric of the latter, infused with talk of killing Jews and celebrating acts of violence, should have found a home here as well. In an ironic echo of the hoariest themes of Christian anti-Semitism, medieval tales of Jews using Gentile blood in Passover rituals are now spread throughout the American Muslim community. These take their place alongside 19th-century myths of Jewish world domination and fantasies of revenge and physical extermination (“O Muslim, servant of God, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him”), often phrased in terms reminiscent of Nazi racial invective (“sons of monkeys and pigs and worshipers of evil”). Talk of a bloody and decisive battle with Jews is routine, both from openly extremist groups like the Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) and from seemingly moderate ones, like the Council on American-Islamic Relations, that are scrupulous in issuing abstract, pro-forma condemnations of “terrorism” (but do not identify what Hamas does as terrorism). The IAP in particular has distributed communiqués by Hamas calling for the killing of Jews, and has produced training videos for Hamas and recruited members on its behalf.

In addition to reprinting articles and books and recycling the rhetoric of the fundamentalist Middle East, Islamic groups here also fly in fundamentalist spokesmen from abroad to address their mammoth conventions at downtown hotels in cities like Chicago and Oklahoma City. (The annual conference of the Islamic Society of North

America, for example, attracts about 15,000 participants.) At one such gathering in Kansas City in 1989, Yusuf al-Qardawi, who is based in Qatar and is one of the most eminent Islamic theologians alive today, told his audience (in Arabic): “On the hour of judgment, Muslims will fight the Jews and kill them.” In 1991, a leader of Islamic Jihad, Abd al-Aziz Uda, assured a meeting of the American Islamic Group (AIG) that Jews “understand only one language: the language of *jihad*, and the language of confrontation, and the language of sacrifice.”

In one particularly hair-raising scene in December 1994, Bassam Alamoush, a prominent Jordanian fundamentalist, began his Arabic-language talk before the Muslim Arab Youth Association in Chicago with an anecdote: “Somebody approached me at the mosque [in Amman] and asked me, ‘If I see a Jew in the street, should I kill him?’” From a videotape in his possession, Steven Emerson, the well-known authority on international terrorism, describes what happened next:

After pausing a moment with a dumbfounded face, Alamoush answered the question to a laughing crowd: “Don’t ask me. After you kill him, come and tell me. What do you want from me, a *fatwa* [legal ruling]? Really, a good deed does not require one.” Later in the speech, Alamoush was interrupted by an aide with a note: “Good news—there has been a suicide operation in Jerusalem” killing three people. Thunderous applause followed his statement.

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It cannot be emphasized enough that the Islamic groups and organizations sponsoring such events and disseminating such material are not on the fringe but in the mainstream, where, by hiding their true identity, they manage to pass as moderates; the director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, for example, has attended White House functions. However wide the range of opinion may be in the Muslim community at large—like their co-religionists elsewhere, Muslims in the United States obviously espouse a variety of outlooks—the fact is that nearly every leading institution, as well as a large and perhaps increasing proportion of local mosques, weekly newspapers, and communal organizations, is in the control of the fundamentalists.

One of the few nonfundamentalist leaders in this country, Muhammad Hisham Kabbani, warned the State Department in early 1999 that extremists had “taken over 80 percent of the mosques” in the United States. (As if in confirmation of his point, Kabbani was vilified for his remarks with death threats.) What this means is that, in startling contrast to countries like Turkey and Egypt, where a lively debate is taking place between moderates and fundamentalists, here, in the land of the free, the moderate majority hardly has a voice.

What explains the near-hegemony enjoyed by fundamentalism? In part, it is a consequence of the support extended to it by Middle Eastern governments—Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya; these regimes, according to the (perhaps hyperbolic) estimate of Kabbani, have funneled “billions of dollars” into fundamentalist activism. Then, too, fundamentalists are highly focused and highly motivated, whereas moderates by definition tend to be less so, and also less involved in Islamic activities altogether.

Finally, the United States exercises a perversely magnetic appeal to fundamentalists. Often hounded from their own countries of origin, they have found refuge in a society that offers excellent communications and transportation, that is awash in money, and whose law-enforcement agencies still treat their activities with benign neglect. What better place than Los Angeles to spread the faith, Chicago to make a fortune for the cause, or Jersey City to plot mayhem?

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This brings us to the separate but related phenomenon of the Nation of Islam—a complement to the organizations under the control of the Middle-Eastern-inspired fundamentalists. Here, a little demography is in order. Of the total Muslim population in this country—conventionally but very unscientifically estimated at six million—something like three-quarters are immigrants, mostly from South Asia and the Middle East, and their descendants. That leaves another 25 percent who are converts, of whom most are African Americans. Among these, the great majority adhere to a form of traditional Islam, while a very small number—perhaps 20,000—are members of the Nation of Islam.

Despite its relatively puny size, the Nation of Islam is of cardinal importance. Nearly all American black converts to Islam, wherever they may eventually end up on the religious-national spectrum, have at one time or another had a connection to this organization or to

one of its many associated movements. Furthermore, the Nation of Islam has a substantial following among American blacks attracted to its teachings but not yet ready to take the huge step of converting from Christianity.

The Nation of Islam began its existence in isolation from the Middle East and that region's vehement brand of anti-Semitism. During the long reign of its founder Elijah Muhammad (1934-75), relations with Jews were mixed. Although he hated whites, Elijah Muhammad bore no particular grievance against Jews. "Jews and Muslims," he wrote once, "have always been able to settle their differences between each other better than Christians and Muslims. . . . The American Jew and the American Black Man may yet find some way of making a separate relationship out of the other world." Still, Elijah Muhammad was also capable of turning Jews into a potent symbol of his archenemy; Israel, he asserted in his *History of the Nation of Islam*, is "the whole of the white race."

After a short hiatus following Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, Louis Farrakhan revived the Nation of Islam under his leadership; by then, contacts had developed with the Middle East, whether through travel there on the part of Nation of Islam members or through a growing acquaintance with immigrants to the United States. Ever since then, anti-Semitism has become a central, even an obsessive, theme. By 1984, indeed, Farrakhan and his organization had become the most conspicuous propagators of anti-Semitism in the United States.

The Nation of Islam openly purveys the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the notorious turn-of-the-20th-century anti-Semitic forgery, and Farrakhan regularly expounds its motifs, holding Jews accountable for both capitalism and Communism, for the two world wars, for Hollywood, and for the U.S. debt. He accuses Jews of dominating American politics ("all Presidents since 1932 are controlled by the Jews") and the media ("any newspaper that refused to acquiesce to controlled news was brought to its knees by withdrawing advertising. Failing this, the Jews stop the supply of newsprint and ink"). To Farrakhan, Jews are "the most organized, rich and powerful people, not only in America but in the world." In fact, he has asserted, "85 percent of the masses of the people of earth are victimized" by Jews.

If these are old tropes, Farrakhan has also had the imagination to fashion new ones. His trademark invention is that Jews were primarily responsible for the transatlantic slave trade—which, he claims, killed 100 million Africans. His organization's "Historical

Research Department” has even done some original pseudo-scholarship, publishing in 1991 a volume entitled *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* that purports to prove how Jews took the lead in capturing black Africans, transporting them to America, and continuing their enslavement in the South. These ideas have become so influential in American black circles, and in some universities, that serious scholars of the subject have been compelled to issue book-length refutations.

Turning to more recent times, Farrakhan also blames Jewish “bloodsuckers” for standing in the way of black advancement. The active and well-documented participation of Jews in the black civil-rights movement he dismisses as a self-interested plot: in helping to integrate blacks into American society, Jews, he charges, were really aiming to destroy the autonomous black economic institutions spawned by Jim Crow in order to take them over themselves. Worse, by encouraging blacks to work within the system, Jews prevented them from escaping the chains of white supremacy. As if all that were not enough, Jews have also injected the AIDS virus into black newborns and are “plotting against us even as we speak.”

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To counter this alleged conspiracy, Farrakhan and his lieutenants and acolytes, who repeat and embellish these themes endlessly, have issued aggressive threats. In a much-publicized speech, Farrakhan referred to Adolf Hitler as a “very great man.” Years ago he warned American Jews, “If you harm Jesse Jackson, in the name of Allah, that will be the last one you harm.” And he has used almost the same words with regard to himself: “If you rise up to kill me, . . . all of you will be killed outright.”

So far, these threats have remained almost entirely verbal. Indeed, one might say that an effective division of labor exists in American Islam. While the Nation of Islam has become the country’s leading font of anti-Jewish rhetoric, elements of mainstream Islam, while presenting a much more polite public face, have a near-monopoly on anti-Jewish violence. In combination, the two of them are enjoying a success that far outpaces that of any possible rivals on the American scene.

The extreme right-wing Liberty Lobby, unlike the Nation of Islam, cannot pack thousands into large arenas to attend the harangues of its leader, or assemble hundreds of thousands on the Mall in Washington. The militiamen of Oklahoma or Montana cannot organize full-



time paramilitary forces in dozens of locations, much less win federal government grants to subsidize those forces. (For-profit offshoots of the Fruit of Islam, the Nation of Islam's strong-arm unit, have won contracts in several states to patrol high-crime areas.) Posse Comitatus cannot find the resources to put together a "Historical Research Department" that will produce a conspiratorial account of, say, the American tax code. The Aryan Nation cannot locate a foreign patron like Muammar Qaddafi of Libya, who has offered \$1 billion to the Nation of Islam.

Actual violence against Jews fits a similar pattern. Homegrown fanatics of the far Right may claim the June 1984 murder of Alan Berg, a Jewish talk-show host in Denver. By contrast, assaults by mainstream Muslims, mostly connected to the immigrant community, have included a long list of major incidents (as well as many lesser ones like a series of attacks on Chicago-area synagogues). A few highlights:

- **March 1977: Hanafi Muslims (a group of black converts) seized three buildings in Washington, D.C., including the headquarters of B'nai B'rith, and held hostages for 39 hours, leading to one death and one severe injury.**
- **November 1990: Egyptian-born El Sayyid Nosair assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane in a New York hotel.**
- **February 1993: in the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, which claimed seven lives and injured more than a thousand people, Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the operation, declared the towers not a civilian target but a military one, by virtue of the fact that it might house a "Zionist official."**
- **June 1993: on a planned "day of terror," the United Nations complex, the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, and other New York landmarks were to be bombed simultaneously. "Boom! Broken windows. Jews in the street," is how one of the plotters described the carnage that would ensue.**
- **March 1994: Rashid Baz, a Lebanese immigrant, opened fire on a van carrying Orthodox Jewish boys across the Brooklyn Bridge, killing sixteen-year-old Ari Halberstam.**
- **July 1997: Ali Hasan Abu Kamal, a sixty-nine-year-old Palestinian, shot seven tourists atop the Empire State building, killing one and severely wounding another; in his**

**suicide note, he accused the United States of using Israel as “an instrument” against the Palestinians.**

It is in this list that Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar’s July 1997 near-explosion of a pipe bomb in the New York City subway system assumes its rightful place.

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American Jews are not the only objects of Islamist violence in the West: the same pattern can be seen in Europe and elsewhere. Thus, in 1995-96, according to *Anti-Semitism Worldwide*, an annual survey published by the Anti-Defamation League, while rightists in Europe continued to harass Jews and to vandalize Jewish property, “violent attacks with the intent of causing bodily harm were perpetrated in most cases by Muslim extremists.” The only anti-Semitic terrorist act in Europe during 1995—the attempted bombing of a Jewish school near Lyons, France—was carried out not by skinheads but by an Algerian fundamentalist group. The same can be said of the bombings of the Israeli embassy and a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1992, in which 29 people lost their lives, and of similar goings-on in South Africa.

The point is this: in today’s world, with exceptions (especially in Russia) duly noted, anti-Semitism traceable to Christians is almost everywhere relegated to the fringes and is on the decline; it has been cast out of the teachings of the established churches and denounced by political leaders. But if trends in Christian society are going in one direction, in Muslim societies around the globe they are going in the opposite direction. There, far from being a fringe phenomenon, ideological and political anti-Semitism is common currency—among heads of state, governing parties, powerful opposition groups, mainstream newspapers, and leading intellectuals alike.

In other words, what was historically a Christian phenomenon is now primarily a Muslim phenomenon. If Christian anti-Semitism is increasingly yesterday’s problem, Muslim anti-Semitism is today’s problem, and tomorrow’s.

But that takes us back to where we began, in the nonresponse to Ghazi Ibrahim Abu Maizar’s attempt at mass murder. For in the United States one would hardly know anything about the depth and reach of Muslim anti-Semitism from following the press, from reading the work of most researchers, or even from tracking the statements of the

organized Jewish community. In *Looking for Farrakhan* (1997), a book-length effort to understand the Nation of Islam leader, Florence Hamlish Levinsohn explains his anti-Semitism exclusively in terms of his Christian background, saying not a word about its Islamic component. The Anti-Defamation League, even while valiantly leading the fight against Farrakhan's anti-Jewish racism, sedulously avoids mentioning its religious context. Worst of all, many American Jewish organizations continue to devote considerable resources and energy to targeting the "Christian Right," while virtually ignoring the rise of Islamist fascism.

But whatever one thinks of the causes favored by the Christian Right—educational vouchers, school prayer, the display of religious symbols in public places, even the rollback of *Roe v. Wade*—they hardly constitute the most serious threat to the security of Jews in the United States today. The real and present danger is by no means the pro-Israel Christian Coalition but the rabidly anti-Semitic Muslim Arab Youth Association; not Jerry Falwell but Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman; not those who wish, at the very worst, to convert Jews but those who, with every means at their disposal, intend to do them harm, who have already acted on those violent intentions, and who if unchecked will surely do so again.



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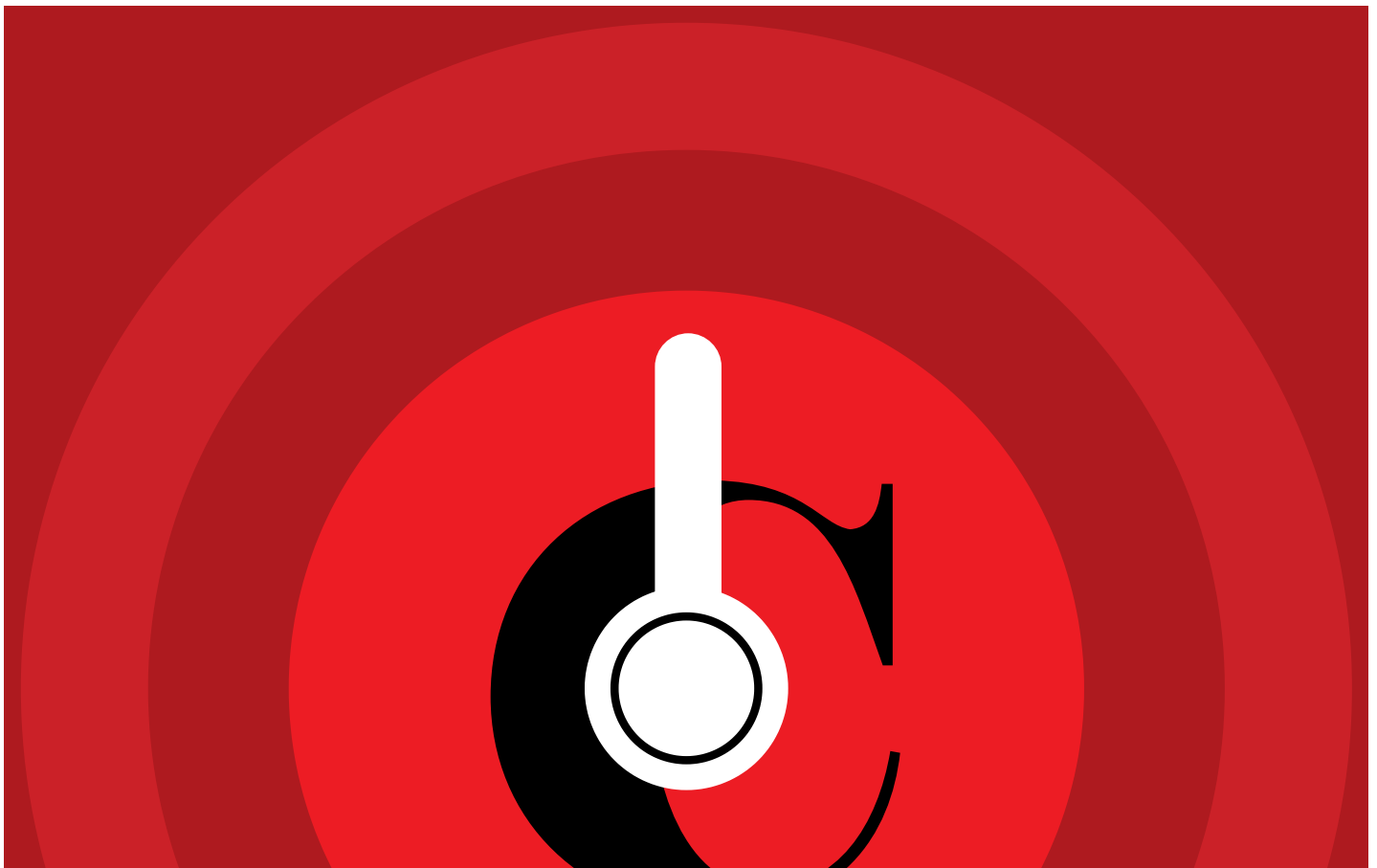
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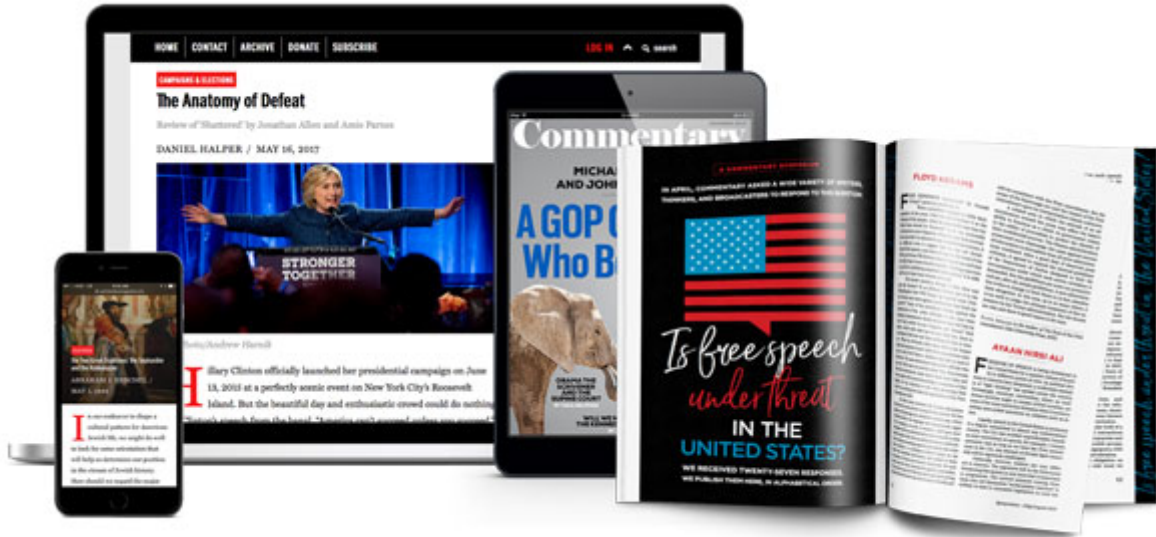
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