

Counterpoint

A forum for reactions and rebuttals

Writer's diatribe was just latest of his many anti-Muslim works

In his not-too-subtle smear of the American Muslim community ("It matters what kind of Islam prevails," Aug. 1), Daniel Pipes once again tries to paint Islam as a threat to America. But before analyzing Pipes' allegations, it might be illustrative to take a look at his history of Muslim bashing.

Throughout his career, Pipes has exhibited bigotry toward Muslims. As early as 1983, a Washington Post book review noted that Pipes displays "a disturbing hostility to contemporary Muslims . . . he professes respect for Muslims but is frequently contemptuous of them." Pipes, said the reviewer, "is swayed by the writings of anti-Muslim writers . . . [the book] is marred by exaggerations, inconsistencies, and evidence of hostility to the subject" (the Washington Post, Dec. 11, 1983).

In the Weekly Standard (Jan. 22, 1996), Pipes offered a glowing review of the infamous anti-Muslim book, "Why I Am Not a Muslim." The National Catholic Reporter (Nov. 17, 1995) called that book "the literary equivalent of hate radio . . . literary warfare against Islam," useful only to those "interested in returning to the polemical past to do battle with Islamic believers." Pipes



called the book "quite brilliant" and "startlingly novel." "This religion would seem to have nothing functional to offer," remarked Pipes.

Pipes also displays a racist's

distaste for Muslim immigrants who "wish to import the customs of the Middle East and South Asia." For Pipes, this sort of raw bigotry is nothing new.

In 1990, he said: "Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene. . . . All immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most" (National Review, Nov. 19, 1990).

In a review of a book that called for dialogue with the Muslim world, Pipes objected that the author "fails to . . . consider the implications of growing Muslim populations in the West. [The book], in other words, provides little guidance to the Islamic threat" (Wall Street Journal, Oct. 30, 1992).

Pipes claims Muslims should have no real religious attachments to the city of Jerusalem and recently argued that American Muslims pose a threat to the Jewish community ("If I forget thee: does Jerusalem really matter to Islam?" the New Republic, April 28, 1997, and "America's Muslims against America's Jews," Commentary, May 1, 1999).

Noted scholar and author Ed-

ward Said wrote that Pipes is one of a group of anti-Muslim pundits who seek to "make sure that the [Islamic] threat' is kept before our eyes, the better to excoriate Islam for terror, despotism and violence, while assuring themselves profitable consultancies, frequent TV appearances and book contracts" (the Nation, Aug. 12, 1996).

Pipes also seeks to silence those who oppose his one-sided view of Islam. In 1996, he attacked the Council on Foreign Relations for publishing a newsletter that he accused of "giving voice to Muslim fundamentalists" ("Fundamentalist Flap Roiling Council on Foreign Relations," Forward, May 10, 1996).

American Muslims recall Pipes' finger-pointing following the bombing in Oklahoma City. As the Village Voice noted: "Leaping directly into hysteria was the right-wing Daniel Pipes . . . who told USA Today . . . 'People need to understand that this is just the beginning. The fundamentalists are on the upsurge, and they make it very clear that they are targeting us. They are absolutely obsessed with us'" (May 2, 1995).

It would seem Pipes is the one with the obsession.

Given his hostility toward Muslims in general and to the

American Muslim community in particular, it is not surprising that Pipes paints a black-and-white image of good Muslim "integrationists" who love Mom and apple pie versus bad Muslim "chauvinists" who "aspire to make the United States a Muslim country."

Pipes obviously hopes to convince people of other faiths that the bad American Muslims are in the majority since he claims they "run most of the Muslim institutions in the United States." (These are presumably the same Islamic institutions currently engaged in a nationwide voter registration drive.) He warns of "bitter" results and "dire implications" if this is allowed to continue.

To support his inaccurate assessment of the Muslim community, Pipes claims American Muslims would turn this country into another Iran or Sudan and twists the words of a respected scholar like the late Ismail Al-Faruqi.

To show Muslims as hostile to this society, Pipes digs up the minor controversy caused by a Muslim basketball player who would not stand for the national anthem.

It would be interesting to hear Pipes' reaction to a quote by the great Jackie Robinson. In his

autobiography, Robinson spoke of his first World Series appearance, on Sept. 30, 1947: "There I was, the black grandson of a slave, the son of a black sharecropper, part of a historic occasion, a symbolic hero to my people As I write this 25 years later, I cannot stand and sing the anthem. I cannot salute the flag; I know that I am a black man in a white world."

I dare Pipes to call Robinson a chauvinist.

But this double standard is typical of Muslim bashers. Pipes would probably support a Christian or Jewish leader who suggested religious faith would benefit our society or who called the United States "God's country." Change "God" to "Allah" and this admirable sentiment is portrayed as a threat to the "West's norms." Throw in an *Allahu Akbar* and you have a sure-fire xenophobic hit.

The kind of agenda-driven polemic offered by Pipes does a disservice to readers and only serves to fan the flames of ignorance and prejudice. But perhaps that was his intent.

— Ibrahim Hooper, Washington, D.C. National communications director for the Council on American-Islamic Relations.