

## A skeptic's guide to President Obama's Cairo speech

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I must say, this speech was hard to stomach. So much pandering, so many historical inaccuracies, so many half-truths, distortions and outright lies. One could write a book on the flaws of this shameful excuse for a speech, but for now I'm analyzing the most glaring inaccuracies in the first ten minutes.

As is customary a full transcript follows:

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“I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo”

Cairo is not a timeless city. Jerusalem has been a permanent settlement for an estimated 5,000 years. Rome was founded about 2,800 years ago. These are timeless cities. Cairo is barely 1,000 years old. The ancient capital of Egypt moved dozens of times, to sites ranging up and down the Nile River valley; none of them were Cairo. Then Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, served as Egypt's Capital for nearly 1,000 years (332BC-641AD), until the Arab Islamic conquest in 641AD. At that point the Arab military commander founded a garrison-city called Fustat to administrate the newly conquered territory. It wasn't until 969AD that Cairo was founded nearby, and not until 1169AD that it became Egypt's permanent capital.

“The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of coexistence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars.”

The conflict and religious wars you speak of started shortly after Mohammed's death in 632 AD. Muslim armies invaded and overran about half of the existing Christian world in the space of one century. The Islamic caliphate steamrolled over the Middle Eastern and North African domains of the Byzantine Empire, and an Islamic army crossed into Spain in the year 711AD, invading European territory unprovoked nearly 300 years before the First Crusade, and about 800 years before the beginning of the European colonial period. But of course the aggression was not only directed at the West and Christians. Islamic armies also conquered the ancient empire of Persia and by the dawn of the 8th century had carved out a foothold into the Indian subcontinent, slaughtering Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus along the way.

“More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations.”

What about the rights denied to infidels in Muslim-dominated lands for the past 1,400 years? What about their aspirations? The Christians and Jews in the

Mediterranean world were relatively lucky. The Koran granted them "protected" status as Dhimmis. This was protection in the mafia sense, except the terms were much harsher. As people of the book, they were allowed to live as long as they paid exorbitant taxes, submitted to constant public humiliation, forfeited their legal rights and did not build any new Churches or Synagogues, or even repair existing structures. The non-monotheist civilizations to the East had it much worse. Mercy was the exception; the rule was slaughter and the abject destruction of their holy places.

And why do you only mention European colonialism? Why not Islamic colonialism which started earlier and lasted longer? Let's take the example of the country from which you chose to address the Muslim world. Egypt was held by European colonial empires for a total of 43 years: Napoleon's army briefly held the territory from 1798-1801, and the United Kingdom ruled from 1882-1922. Now let's look about 200 miles across the Mediterranean, to a Christian country called Greece. Greece was occupied by the Islamic Ottoman Empire from the mid-1400's through the year 1821: about 400 years, or about ten times longer than Egypt was occupied by the West. And Greece was just one province of the European portion of the Ottoman Empire, which occupied the entirety of the Balkan Peninsula and beyond. They ruled over the largely Christian inhabitants of this area for centuries, periodically pushing into central Europe as far as Vienna, and threatening to extinguish Christian civilization in Europe completely. And yet today, we don't see Greeks or Slavs flying planes into buildings in Istanbul, or blowing up buses in Cairo.

"Our second President, John Adams, wrote, "The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Muslims."

Fair enough, but unfortunately for us this feeling wasn't mutual. John Adams accompanied Thomas Jefferson to England in 1786 to speak to the ambassador of the Islamic state of Tripoli in London. These two revered founders of our nation were in Europe to ascertain why Islamic pirates were attacking American merchant ships in the Atlantic and Mediterranean and enslaving their crews for no apparent reason. They reported the Tripolitan ambassador's reasoning to the Continental Congress:

" ... that it was founded on the Laws of their Prophet, that it was written in their Koran, that all nations who should not have acknowledged their authority were sinners, that it was their right and duty to make war upon them wherever they could be found, and to make slaves of all they could take as Prisoners, and that every Musselman (Muslim) who should be slain in Battle was sure to go to Paradise. "

This puts us 10 minutes into Obama's 55-minute speech, and I'm already getting queasy.

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