

Project On Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) - *Islam in America - with Nadia Marzouki*

Audio Podcast

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On this podcast, Marc Lynch talks with Nadia Marzouki about Islam in America, the topic of her book, newly released in English, *Islam: An American Religion (Religion, Culture, and Public Life)*. In her book and this conversation, Marzouki explores how the topic of Islam has become so contentious in America.

Marzouki says her research showed her that controversies around Muslims living in America don't just express Islamophobia. "They betray and express a deeper discomfort and unease with an understanding of law, an understanding of rights, and an understanding of equal democracy. This is really what's at stake in the conversations among the disputes around mosques, Sharia law, and also— in a more minor way— the headscarf... or various forms of religious rituals related to the Islamic communities."

As an observer from Europe, Marzouki says, "It was really surprising to see how similar all the rhetorical tropes animating anti-Muslim movements were similar in Europe and the United States. This was all the more surprising because all the sociologies of Islam in Europe and United States. You don't have the same Muslim communities. They don't come from the same ethnic backgrounds. They don't have the same socio-economic level. They don't have the same level of education. In general, they're much more educated and have a better social economic level in the U.S. Before 2001, and even more so before 2008, Islam was never such a big problem in domestic politics in the United States."

"What's really completely absurd and problematic in the current situation both in Europe and in the U.S. is that we are deciding policies based on stereotypical discourse— and without any account for the empirics and the lived realities of Muslim communities."

Marzouki is an Andrew Carnegie Centennial Fellow, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, and a research fellow at Harvard's Belfer Center's Middle East Initiative.