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## Mohamed Elibiary: Holy Land verdict is another U.S. defeat

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In *Blind Spot, the Secret History of American Counterterrorism*, Timothy Naftali lays out our nation's historical struggle against terrorism, from the rumored Nazi attempt on President Dwight Eisenhower's life all the way up to 9/11.

Since the days of the Eisenhower Doctrine, the U.S. has played an "offshore balancer" role, supporting allied local regimes allied to our regional policy objectives. The regimes that opposed our way were categorized as "radical" or "rogue," and we often supported their overthrow in a policy known as "regime change," starting with Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953 Iran through Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Beginning with Iran's 1979 revolution, traditional Middle Eastern nation-states' support for national liberation movements took a major leap forward as Iran started using socio-political movements to weaken and eventually subvert regional U.S. allies.

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In 1993, new Clinton administration National Security Adviser Tony Lake, eager to address rising Middle Eastern challenges, believed that financing "was the softest part of the target" when trying to dismantle terrorist organizations. Because the United States enjoyed a huge competitive advantage in the banking industry, the choice seemed obvious to him. So Mr. Lake didn't simply advocate for domestic privacy safeguards to be dismantled in the post-Nixon-era guidelines; he advocated covert operations where Washington would essentially seize funds from bank accounts it suspected of connections to designated terrorists.

That last policy was too much for the Treasury Department and was seen as potentially undermining confidence in the U.S. financial system, so it was dropped.

Mr. Lake's persistent efforts propelled the Clinton administration to legislate what the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations agreed with but had never done — use secret evidence in politically decided immigration deportation cases and criminalize traditionally innocent activities such as charity if the government felt it provided "material support" to terrorist groups.

The 9/11 attacks simply advertised these policy debates, which had been going on among national security analysts for the past half-century, to the American people. In February 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated in Cairo that "for 60 years, the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East — and we achieved neither."

We now know that the Holy Land Foundation was shut down by an executive order shortly after 9/11 without any new evidence against it that wasn't already available to the previous administration, which simply authorized its surveillance.

Few North Texas Muslims will forget the misleading press conference by President George W. Bush shortly after 9/11, telling the American people that the HLF closure was a sign that the U.S. government was doing all it could to fight terrorism and, by extension, to keep another 9/11-style attack from harming the American people.

The 9/11 commission's greatest failure undoubtedly has to be not helping the American people differentiate between our Middle Eastern foreign policy for the past half-century and its blowback — and the violent extremists of al-Qaeda aiming to target the average American for other reasons.

The U.S. government won a resounding court victory last Monday, convicting all the Palestinian HLF defendants on all "material support" charges leveled against them. Yet in the grand scheme of things, our government's policy of denying our civil liberties and privacy at home while pursuing a cold war "containment" policy that often turns into a hot war for "regime change" has left thousands of Americans dead, tens of thousands maimed, trillions of taxpayer dollars squandered and our homeland more vulnerable than ever.

A myopic view might wish to celebrate the HLF verdict, but the big picture clearly shows a continuing loss for America.

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