

## **JIHAD, WAR, AND TERRORISM**

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Muslim cries of *Allahu Akbar* (God is Great) and calls for *al-Jihad* have rung out on Middle Eastern battlefields throughout the twentieth century. Yet, American military analysts and historians have failed to devote any serious attention to studying Islam and its relationship to war. The suicide attacks in the US on 11 September 2001 have generated a new interest in the relationship among terrorism, radical Islam, and religion of Islam. In response to the attacks, President George Bush has declared war on terrorism, especially on those responsible for the horrific deeds. However, his administration understands that it must prevent the struggle from turning into a West versus Islam confrontation. To avoid this development requires a critical appreciation of Islamic traditions on Jihad and war. For wherever there will be Muslim soldiers, guerrillas, or terrorists engaged in military operations, appeals for Jihad will ring out. As Iraqi General Mahmut Shit Khattab stated in 1968, "The human factor is still the decisive factor in war; it is still the most important force for any weapon or any equipment. However, man without creed is like foam, the foam of a torrent. . . The return to Islam will entail the proclamation of Islamic Jihad."<sup>i</sup>

Studying Islam presents an intellectual challenge to Americans.<sup>ii</sup> Muslims generally regard unity of politics and religion as the ideal and, therefore, mix faith and war together. American political tradition, on the other hand, enshrines the clear separation of church and state. Americans are by nature skeptical of religion intruding into politics. Calls to Jihad, thus, invoke images of religious fanaticism and extremism. Such a view is dead wrong. In fact, the religion of Islam contains strong moral and ethical principles on Jihad and the conduct of war, and there is a strong

tradition against killing innocent people. Radical Islam, however, generally preaches total war against its opposition and therefore condones the killing of some civilians as part of Jihad.

### CLASSICAL JIHAD

Islamic teaching emphasizes peace but also sanctions Holy War. In fact, armed struggle forms an integral part in Islam's formative period of the seventh century. This historical reality has created a unique ideal in which war appears as an extension of religion by another means.

**Muhammad's Prophethood.** Muslims believe God called Muhammad (570-632) to be a prophet and establish the new religion of Islam. Born in the commercial town of Mecca, Muhammad received his first revelations from God in 610. Until 622, Muhammad was a preacher who concentrated on proclaiming the message of Islam and inviting people to accept the true faith. The pagan ruling elite in Mecca felt threatened by a new faith based on strict monotheism. To escape imminent arrest, Muhammad fled Mecca for Medina on 20 June 622. That "Flight" or *al-hijrah* proved so epochal in Islamic history that after Muhammad's death, Muslims established their own lunar calendar beginning with this event.

With the *hijrah*, God revealed the nature of the new faith. In Medina, the Prophet founded the *ummah* or the universal Islamic community. Local tribes submitted to his authority. To govern this nascent state, Muhammad found the dimensions of his prophethood extended beyond that of Preacher. He now became the Statesman (*al-siyasi*) and the Conqueror (*al-fatih*).<sup>iii</sup> The nature of Islamic revelation changed as a result of the expansion of Muhammad's mission. The Meccan revelations addressed more matters of personal faith between God and the believer. Now in Medina, his divine inspiration focused on politics, trade, taxation, and other areas essential for the running of a government.

The founding of the Islamic community in Medina posed a direct threat to the pagan values prevailing in Mecca. Eventually the Muslim and pagan communities became involved in war for supremacy in the region. In this armed struggle, Muhammad assumed the mantle of

military leadership in accordance with God's command for him to resist evil: "Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! God loves not the aggressors. And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter."<sup>iv</sup> Between 622 and his death in 632, Muhammad participated in twenty-seven military expeditions, actually fought in nine engagements, and suffered a minor wound in one battle.<sup>v</sup> Muslims regard these battles as necessary, for they allowed Muslims to worship freely, secure from attack and persecution.<sup>vi</sup>

Ten years of warfare ended with the conquest of Arabia. When Muhammad died in 632, he left an embryonic state with tribal armies poised for expansion outside of Arabia. No distinction existed between the things of Caesar and those of God. All human activity fell under Islamic law. Muslims rulers who succeeded the Prophet Muhammad continued the mission of spreading God's kingdom here on earth by all means, including conquest. The successors were called caliphs.

**Jihad tradition.** War thus proved an essential component in the birth of the Islamic faith and in its expansion. A hundred years after the Prophet's death, the borders of the Islamic Empire stretched from India to France. In light of these conquests, Muslim jurists had to come to grips with the relationship between Islam and war. Jihad became the term associated with religious warfare. It does carry, however, a much deeper meaning than what Westerners would think of as holy war.

Jihad essentially means struggle. It comes from the Arabic verb *jahada*: to strive, struggle, fight. Muslim jurists have identified two types of Jihad in the religious sense. The Greater Jihad (*al-jihad al-akbar*) refers to the personal struggle of the heart, where the believer strives to overcome personal temptations and the carnal self. This inner struggle is the highest form of Jihad. Here Muslims strive to internalize the Islamic message through such prescribed actions as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The Lesser Jihad (*al-jihad al-asghar*) is the outward struggle of the Muslim against the enemies of the faith. This struggle requires the use of the tongue, the hands, or

the sword. It is only with the sword that Muslims actually engage in mortal combat by taking arms against Islam's adversaries.

Islamic teaching thus ennobles military service and war for the faith. In fact, God promises any Muslim who dies fighting "in the path of God" (*fi sabil Allah*) eternal life for his supreme sacrifice. Muslims call such a fallen soldier a martyr or *shahid*. In fact, any Muslim who dies defending his life, property, or family—even if not a soldier—becomes a *shahid*.

To adjudicate the propriety for peace and war, some Muslim jurists have divided the world into three territorial realms. The Abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) refers to those areas under Muslim rule. Ideally, Muslim governments should not fight each other, but for various reasons they have, in instances too numerous to quantify. Such conflicts, however, should not be Jihad, but simply war or *harb*. The Abode of War (*dar al-harb*) are lands controlled by non-Muslim rulers who oppose Islam, persecute Muslims in their domain, or conduct hostile operations against Islamic states. Muslims must wage Holy War (*al-jihad al-muqaddas*) against such states. Before the nineteenth century, Muslims have tended to conceptualize the armed struggle as one waged against unbelief (*kufir*) and infidels (*kuffar*). For Muslim scholars, *kufir* means more than a denial of truth; it also includes the notion of a direct threat to the *ummah*. Finally, there is the Abode of Peace or (*dar al-sulh*). Here, non-Muslim rulers allow Muslims freedom of worship and Muslims therefore can enter into treaties with such states. The Prophet Muhammad himself reached a truce with pagan Mecca in 628. The pact became known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyah.

Despite the divine sanction for warfare conducted for the faith, Islamic teaching requires Muslims to practice tolerance toward other religions. The Quran, the Muslim equivalent of the Bible, clearly prohibits forced conversion: "There is no compulsion in religion."<sup>vii</sup> It specifically singles out Christians and Jews as People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*), a term that also applies to Muslims. Book refers to revealed scripture, the Bible for Christians and the Torah for Jews. Muslims must respect Christians and Jews who practice their faith.

Historically, whenever Muslims conquered new territories, Muslim rulers awarded Christians and Jews *dhimmi* or protected status. This legal status allowed Christians and Jews to live in their separate communities free to practice their faith according to their own laws and traditions. The Islamic state was also obligated to protect the life, property, and places of worship of its non-Muslim People of the Book. Collectively, Christians and Jews paid a special poll tax or *jizya*, a tribute that exempted them from any obligatory military service. In return, Muslim rulers had the obligation to take care of Christians and Jews should they suffer economic hardship. Caliph Umar I (634-644), for example, made the following promise in his treaty with the Christians of Hira: “If any of their men become weak and old, or inflicted with a disease, or was rich and had become poor, the *jizya* shall be lifted from him and he and his family shall be supported by the Public Treasury so long as he resides in the dar al-Islam.”<sup>viii</sup>

The goal in military expansion was thus to establish Islamic rule, not to force conversions to the Islam. Christians and Jews were left to practice their faith with relative freedom. The general expectation was that over time non-Muslims would accept Islam. In fact, conversions to Islam usually occurred gradually as non-Muslims sought material and other advantages from belonging to the dominant political group.

Until the end of eighteenth century, standing armies in the Middle East were, in most cases, the exclusive domain of Muslims. Moreover, Islamic rule relegated Christians and Jews to being second class subjects from a modern perspective. However, granting protected status to religious minorities was enlightened practice for the pre-modern period. When the Christians reconquered Spain from the Muslims in the fifteenth century, for example, many Jews fled to Islamic lands where they received *dhimmi* status.

### **MODERN TRENDS**

Western imperialism, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution undermined the religious foundations of Muslim states. Intellectually, the West spread the ideological currents of

secularism and nationalism. Secularism championed the separation of the religion and the state, whereas nationalism placed national over religious identity. Both ideologies directly challenged the unity of religion and politics of Islamic states. Gradually, increasing numbers of Muslims began to debate among themselves the place of Islam in politics, society, and war. Muslim responses to the encroachment of the West fell into three competing political currents: secularism, fundamentalism, and modernism. These categories serve more as ideal types for purposes of critical analysis.

**Secularism.** Muslim secularists advocate a separation of Islam from politics. They regard nationalism and secularism as the primary forces of modern history. Countries go to war with national armies for national interests. According to this view, the state should impose no Islamic practices on society; rather, religion should be a matter of private conscience. Secularists argue that Islam only suffers when rulers or religious institutions use the faith for political ends. Religious leaders should concern themselves with "saving souls" and fostering a moral conscience for society. Three examples of secular states in the Middle East are Turkey (a democracy), Syria (a dictatorship), and Iraq (a dictatorship).

Turkey has been a secular state since the Kemalist Revolution (1923-38). Although approximately ninety-nine percent of the country is Muslim, Turkey has no official state religion. Instead, the current constitution enshrines Turkish nationalism and secularism as two inviolable principles. Official state ideology thus has no place for a Jihad (*Jihad olmaz*).

Despite the secular constitution, the Turkish Armed Forces still nurture a place for Islam in their military culture. Turkish soldiers receive a small measure of religious instruction and oral tradition that together stress how Islam ennobles military service. They hear that the greatest honor is martyrdom on the battlefield. Here, the stress is on giving one's life for not only God but also the Turkish nation (*Türk milleti*) and the motherland (*vatan*).<sup>ix</sup> The notion of martyrdom incorporates a nationalist dimension: "A martyr is a soldier who gives his life for the love of God in the performance of his duty to defend [his] motherland from an enemy attack."<sup>x</sup> In light of the

sacredness of fighting for one's motherland, official military histories published with the imprimatur of the General Staff always categorize fallen Turkish soldiers as "martyrs" (*sehit*), whereas their enemy counterparts are listed as "dead" (*ölü*).

Turkish military culture provides a contemporary example of a blending of Islamic faith with secularism and nationalism, with clear emphasis placed on the latter two ideologies. The Turkish Army is not without its Muslim critics, both within and outside the country. For the fundamentalists, the Turkish Armed Forces have denigrated Islam by embracing Western values and ideologies. Turkish nationalists respond that they have merely adapted the Islamic faith to the realities of the modern world without necessarily polluting its spiritual and moral teachings.

**Fundamentalism.** Muslim fundamentalists stand at the opposite end of the spectrum held by the secularists. Fundamentalists believe in the absolute unity of religion and politics as the ideal. Everything must be under the rule of Islamic Law, as it was in Muhammad's time in Medina. All state institutions must therefore be clearly and unequivocally Islamic, including the armed forces. Wars must be conducted for mainly religious, not national, ends; they are, in the main, waged against unbelief and against infidels. To ensure the state acts in conformity with Islamic teaching, religious experts (*ulama*) should possess independent judicial powers and may even run the government. Three recent examples of fundamentalist states are Saudi Arabia (Hanbali Sunnism), Iran (Twelve-Imam Shiism), and Afghanistan (the Deobandi school). Admittedly, each regime has often attacked the other as non-Islamic in some of its policies and practices.

In Iran, for example, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led a successful religious revolution that established an Islamic republic. During his reign, Iran engaged in a global struggle against Western liberalism and Eastern communism. To wage that sacred struggle, Iran possessed the only true "Army of God" (*jandollah*). Its *raison d'etre* was primarily religious: "The armed forces have the ideological mission of Jihad in the path of God."<sup>xi</sup> The small number of Christian soldiers, mainly Armenians, serve in non-combat positions with few or no responsibilities.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in September 1980, the Khomeini regime turned the war with Iraq into a cosmic struggle between good and evil: "You fight for the sake of God, and the Iraqis fight for the sake of Satan."<sup>xiii</sup> Khomeini spiritualized even the smallest of military actions: "Every bullet you fire is due to the power of God"<sup>xiii</sup> Naturally, all Iranian soldiers were promised martyrdom and Paradise if they fell in battle.<sup>xiv</sup> Iranians could readily accept this religious assertion: they were fighting a just war in defense of faith, land, and revolution against an invading army headed by a secular regime.

To ensure ideological conformity, Khomeini institutionalized political power in the hands of the Shiite clergy. With Iraq's invasion of Iran, war and politics were too sacred to be left to politicians or military commanders. In fact, the armed forces require religious indoctrination of officers and soldiers, the assignment of clerical commissars down to battalion level, and the appointment of Khomeini's special representatives to all major commands.<sup>xv</sup>

For the secularists, the Iranian Revolution only proves that religious fanaticism invariably emerges from any union of religion and politics. Secularists relegate the Muslim clergy, whom they deprived of any political power, to function more like chaplains in the U.S. Army. Moreover, they regard the Iranian Revolution as a corruption of Islam, a faith gone astray owing to the extremist teachings of Khomeini who in the name of God pitted Muslims against Muslims in battle. Recent elections in Iran have twice swept into the presidency Muhammad Khatami, a moderate cleric who seeks to soften the Islamic order imposed by the hard liners on Iranian society. According to secularists and modernists, Khatami's election and re-election prove that a regime alienates a people when it attempts to impose its brand of religion.

**Modernism.** Muslim modernists strike a middle ground between that of the secularists and the fundamentalists. Refusing to accept a rigid separation between religion and politics, the modernists also eschew embracing the notion of an Islamic theocracy. Their legal system balances Islamic and natural law. Religious courts coexist with a secular, criminal judiciary. Modernist appeals in war embrace Jihad, but the struggle takes on a more moderate, worldly tone. It is not the

cosmic struggle of God versus Satan, good versus evil, Islam versus unbelief, as it tends to be with the fundamentalists. Patriotism and nationalism often appear to hold greater sway than does Islamic ideology. Among the modernist states are Egypt (republic) and Jordan (monarchy).

Egyptian military culture, for example, represents a complex blending of Egyptian patriotism (*wataniyya*), Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya*), and Islamic ideology (*diniyya*). The latter has been a regular cultural pulse in Egypt throughout the twentieth century with varying degrees of intensity and effectiveness. When France and Britain invaded Egypt in the 1956 war, for instance, President Gamal Abdul Nasser readily went to the al-Azhar Mosque, where he rallied Egyptians to fight for Egypt with God's help, and the people embraced the Jihad.<sup>xvi</sup> In the 1973 war, Egyptian soldiers again were called "to martyrdom in the way of the honor of the motherland" (*bil-istishhad fi sabil karama al-watan*).<sup>xvii</sup> Those who fell in battle became martyrs, whereas Egyptian publications designated Israeli soldiers as killed (*qatil*).

In the twentieth century, the Egyptian Armed Forces have developed more along the line of a national than an Islamic army. Compulsory national service for all Egyptians has resulted in the conscription of Coptic Christians (ten to fifteen percent of the population) into the military. A national army has negated the justification for demanding the poll tax from non-Muslims. Moreover, with the passage of time, a small number of Copts have moved into positions of responsibility in the armed forces. In the 1973 war, for example, Brigadier General Fuad Aziz Ghali, a Copt, commanded the 18th Infantry Division. Before the end of hostilities, he received command of the Second Field Army, along with a promotion to the rank of major general. The Egyptian case parallels that of other, but not all, Arab countries. Where there is a sizable Christian minority, secularist and modernist armies have ceased to reserve command or other responsible positions for Muslims. In Syria during the 1973 war, for instance, the chief of the General Staff and the Deputy Director of Operations were both Christians.

With the incorporation of Christians into the armed forces, some religious authorities have extended the notion of martyrdom to non-Muslims as well. On 12 October 1973, for example,

Shaykh al-Azhar 'Abd al-Halim Mahmud, the highest religious dignitary in Egypt, did just that in the midst of war: "al-Jihad is an obligation for all, without distinction between Muslims and Christians. It is the duty of all who live under the sky of Egypt, the motherland (*watan*) of all. . . . Being martyred for the sake of the motherland gives access to Paradise. This is confirmed by divine laws that have been revealed to the People of the Book."<sup>xviii</sup> Many Muslims would not extend the honor of martyrdom to non-Muslims who die on the battlefield, for these soldiers are fighting for reasons other than defense of the Islamic faith.

The integration of non-Muslim Egyptian citizens into the armed forces caused a change in the application of Islam in the practice of war. Officially, Egyptians have tended to depict their struggle with Israel in more national and ideological than religious terms. In past wars, the Israelis were merely the enemy (*'aduw*), not infidels; the threat was imperialism and Zionism, rather than unbelief or Satan.

### **JIHAD ON THE CONVENTIONAL BATTLEFIELD**

Morale is a very important ingredient in combat. Many Western military experts stress peer pressure--a fear of letting one's comrades down--as the ultimate motivator in battle. Recent examples in the Middle East perhaps offer another perspective on the subject of combat motivation. Religion can motivate individuals to risk their lives, for humans possess a spiritual dimension in their being. There is no easy formula for evaluating critically the role of Islam in battle. Each conflict is unique and dynamic, and therefore requires careful analysis.

**Iran-Iraq War.** Iranian behavior in this war demonstrated both the rise and the decline of Jihad on the battlefield. At first, many Iranians, caught up with the unpopular Pahlavi dynasty's overthrow, experienced new hope with the Revolution. Like Frenchmen in 1792, Iranians rallied around their revolutionary regime when Iraq attacked in September 1980. Iraqi soldiers suddenly encountered unexpected Iranian mettle and zeal. In a relatively short time, the Khomeini regime mobilized society and went on the offensive into Iraq.

During a good part of the war, thousands of Iranians in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, inspired by revolutionary and Islamic zeal, participated in human wave assaults. The resultant carnage failed to deter the Guard, much to the dismay of the Iraqis. The Iranian regular army, for its part, considered such infantry assault tactics as wasteful and unprofessional. Nevertheless, even religious zeal ran its course as the human cost of the war became intolerable for society.

The war had eventually turned into Khomeini's personal war. Protests against the war grew in intensity, with even Shiite clerics discouraging enlistment. In the last year of the war, both the number of desertions and prisoners of war increased dramatically on the Iranian side. Eventually Khomeini ended the war to save the Revolution. Hashemi Rafsanjani, at the time the second most powerful man in Iran after Khomeini, later admitted to an important lesson that Iranian zealots took a long time in grasping: "All the moral teachings of the world are not very effective when war reaches a serious position."<sup>xix</sup> In the end, superior technology defeated religious elan, although the latter had enough zeal in its heyday to save the Revolution for the hard line clerics.

**Egypt in the 1973 War.** Islam was a powerful motivator for the Egyptian Armed Forces in the 1973 War. After the disastrous defeat in 1967, both Egyptian society and the military turned to Islam for solace and strength. During the period of reconstruction between 1967 and 1973, the Egyptian High Command used Islam to develop pride, confidence, elan, and sense of mission in the armed forces. In 1968, Major General Muhammad Gamal al-Din Mahfouz, in charge of moral orientation, tersely summarized the new Islamic emphasis in the military: "Al-Jihad was to be the fighting ideology of the army with 'victory or martyrdom' as the slogan and '*Allahu Akbar*' as the battle cry."<sup>xx</sup>

After the war, many Egyptians sincerely believed that this new Islamic orientation explained in part their successes on the battlefield against Israel. Israelis were certainly surprised by the new fighting capability of the Egyptian Armed Forces. In discussing Israeli intelligence failures, General Ahmad Ismail Ali, Egypt's war minister and commander-in-chief, claimed that

the Israelis missed in their calculations the power of the Islamic faith as exemplified in the war cry of *Allahu Akbar* uttered by Egyptian soldiers when crossing the Suez Canal.<sup>xxi</sup> Brigadier General Adil Yusri, who commanded the 112th Infantry Brigade of the 16th Infantry Division, reinforced this view from the vantage point of field commander when he noted that "the religious renaissance (*nahda*)...had a clear impact on the inner life of the soldier and his readiness for combat".<sup>xxii</sup>

In effect, Egyptian patriotism, Arab nationalism, and Islamic ideology combined to foster morale and a sense of mission for the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Unlike the Iranian case, the Egyptians fielded a professional army that had prepared for war for over six years. It knew its strengths and weaknesses, and Egyptian General Staff officers understood the critical importance of planning, training, and leadership.<sup>xxiii</sup> When the Israel Defense Forces tried to capture Suez City before a UN sponsored cease-fire, both the religious leaders and the townspeople rallied at the Mosque of the Martyrs and helped the Egyptian military organize a defense that prevented the town's capture. Islamic faith proved a vital ingredient for the will of a professional army and its society.<sup>xxiv</sup> Most importantly, however, national will coated with Islamic ideology remained generally high to the end of hostilities.

**Gulf War.** During the Gulf War, Baghdad called for a Jihad against "the assemblies of infidelity and polytheism...the forces of injustice, evil, and world Judaism."<sup>xxv</sup> Here was a secular regime perversely employing Jihad as would a fundamentalist one. The struggle would be the "Mother of Battles" in which good would defeat evil. Yet Saddam's appeals fell on deaf ears. His own land forces failed to respond effectively instead collapsing in the face of the allied attack.

The Iraqi Army's loss of will resulted from the cumulative effect of a series of events. After the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq appeared a country filled with new pride and hope. Those who visited Iraq saw a palpable pride in the ultimate victory over revolutionary Iran. Moreover, many Iraqis now expected for a better life based on the political liberalization promised by Saddam's regime immediately after the conclusion of the war.

The first major blow to shake this confidence was the invasion of Kuwait. The Iraqi Armed Forces, though battle experienced, were also war weary after eight years of fighting Iran. The rape of Kuwait, while enriching some Iraqis, no doubt also undermined professionalism, discipline, and morale in the military. Negative world reaction to the invasion created the anguish of isolation and tarnished Saddam's legal claims to Kuwait. Then came the thirty-nine day Allied bombing campaign. Its effects proved devastating beyond any prewar calculations made in Baghdad. Morale plummeted in the facing of mounting physical destruction and increasing human casualties without commensurate losses on the Allied side. Saddam's boasts of victory had left the armed forces and the country crippled and vulnerable to further devastation. Only the pampered Republic Guard exhibited some fighting mettle.

By the time the land campaign commenced, the Gulf War had essentially turned into Saddam Hussein's war--just as the last years of the Iran-Iraq war had become Khomeini's war. Personal wars, when exposed, undermine any moral credibility of a Jihad, and thus Saddam's calls for a Holy War eventually carried little weight in Iraq. Without a threat to national survival or independence, the Iraqi Army collapsed in Kuwait when surprised by the coalition's main attack on the western flank.

**Conclusion.** The above three examples demonstrate the different effects of calls to Jihad in battle. Jihad can serve as an elan that motivates heroic attacks into killing zones on conventional battlefields. It can be a crowning ingredient to armed forces prepared for war. Or it can have little effect because of the futility of the war effort. Each case study is both unique and dynamic. Jihad functions as a component of morale, which ebbs and flows in war depending on the changing character of conflict.

## **TERRORISM AND ISLAM**

In a similar vein to conventional warfare, Muslim radicals have also used Jihad to justify their terrorist strategies and tactics. As such, they have tended to blur the distinction between

combatant and noncombatant and have employed extraordinary methods in pursuit of their goals. Suicide bombing has been one such method.

To the vast majority of Muslims, Islamic terrorism is a contradiction in terms. Muslim tradition clearly condemns killing of innocent civilians. Even in warfare, for example, “the Prophet Muhammad always warned against the killing of women and children.”<sup>xxvi</sup> Attacking civilian targets is wrong because innocent people lose their lives. Yet, despite this religious admonition, Islamic history contains myriad examples where Muslims extremists and radicals have used Islam to justify terrorist acts. In this regard, terrorism is an Islamic problem, and Muslim clerics need to address radical Islam as a heresy when used to justify indiscriminate killing in the name of Islam with promises of martyrdom for those who commit suicide. Christianity and Judaism have faced similar challenges as Christians and Jews have killed women and children in the name of God.

Assassinations and terrorism in Islamic history are almost as old as the religion of Islam. In 661, Ali, only the fourth caliph or successor to the Prophet Muhammad, was assassinated for political reasons by a fellow Muslim who belonged to the first religious sect in Islam called the Kharijites. The late eleventh and the twelfth centuries saw the heyday of terrorism. In 1090, Hasan-e Sabah (1035-1124) seized the fortress of Alamut in the Elburz Mountains of Iran and founded a radical Islamic mini-state there. He established a local militia for defending his base and a secret order for carrying out political assassinations throughout the Middle East. In some instances, the suicide assassin, called *fida'i* or one who sacrifices himself, murdered his victim in a mosque for maximum shock effect. Muslim governments came to refer to the terrorists as *hashshashin*, the plural of *hashshash* or an individual addicted to hashish. Government propaganda depicted the terrorists as fanatics who carried out suicide killings doped on drugs believing they would go to heaven as martyrs for the faith. The word “assassin” in the English language is actually derived from the Arabic *hashshashin*. Western historiography has popularly designated Hasan-e Sabbah’s religious movement as the Order of Assassins. In addition to

attacking Muslim governments of their day, the branch based in Lebanon carried out a war against the Crusaders during their sojourn in the Holy Land.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Osama bin Laden and Qaeda are very much in the tradition of Hasan-e Sabbah and the Order of Assassins in using radical Islam to justify terrorist acts in the fight against domestic and foreign evils. Bin Laden and his associates represent the extreme spectrum of terrorism. The Saudi financier established Qaeda as a base for supporting a host of loosely aligned radical Islamic organizations. On 23 February 1998, Bin Laden issued his famous *fatwa* or legal opinion declaring a Jihad against the US, though he in fact lacked the authority to do so. He argued that it was the individual religious duty of Muslims “to kill Americans and their allies—civilians and military.” Co-signers of the document included Ayman al-Zawahiri, amir of the al-Jihad Organization in Egypt; Abu Yasir Rifa’I Ahmad Taha, a leader of the Egyptian Islamic Group; Shaykh Mir Hamzah, Secretary of the Jamiat ul-Ulema-e Pakistan; and Fazlul Rahman, amir of the Jihad Movement in Bangladesh.<sup>xxviii</sup> The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon conformed to Bin Laden’s directive. In his propaganda war since, Bin Laden has identified three major reasons for fighting the United States: the presence of American troops in Saudi Arabia with the two holiest cities of Mecca and Medina; US support for Israel in its oppression of Palestinian people and occupation of Jerusalem; and the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of Washington’s campaign against Saddam Hussein’s regime.

In the prosecution of their struggle, Bin Laden, Qaeda, and other radical-Islamic groups draw little distinction between civilian and military targets. Theirs is a struggle against their own apostate regimes, the United States, Israel, and Western imperialism. In one of his calls for a Jihad, Bin Laden noted that “the confrontation that we are calling for with apostate regimes . . . knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun.”<sup>xxix</sup> This struggle contains no elaborate theory of just war. Rather, the radical Islamists seek to channel the people’s frustrations into a total commitment to wage a cosmic struggle against infidels and apostates. Such a war demands supreme sacrifice and justifies

the use of any means against any target, civilian or military. In this case, radical Islam assigns more importance to the fervor of the Lesser Jihad than to the moral scruples of Greater Jihad. The overall message stands in sharp contradiction to Islamic teaching.

Generally, under normal conditions, most people find indiscriminate killing of civilians repugnant, and Muslims are no different in this regard. The Islamic world has generally condemned the terrorist acts of 11 September 2001. The prestigious Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram*, for example, immediately described these events as “suicidal attacks” (*al-hujumat al-intihariyya*) conducted by “terrorists” (*al-irhabiyyun*).<sup>xxx</sup> Responsible Arab newspapers have depicted the US as engaged in a “war on terrorism” (*harb al-irhab*) against a “terrorist network” (*shabaka al-irhab*). On 10 October 2001, foreign ministers from 56 Muslim countries participated in the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Doha, Qatar. At that gathering, they all condemned the attacks in New York and Washington as terrorism. In addition to the condemnation, however, the Muslim foreign ministers also noted the distinction between terrorism and the armed struggle of the Palestinian people to liberate their lands. Theirs was a noble struggle worthy of Muslim as well as international support.<sup>xxxii</sup> This reference to the Arab-Israeli conflict underscored the complexity of identifying and acting against evil.

Suicide bombing has become a recurring feature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict since the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993. As of 11 October 2001, 100 Palestinian bombers have killed themselves or met their death at the hands of Israeli security forces. Hamas and Islamic Jihad have claimed responsibility for these acts. Both groups claim that they are engaged in a Jihad against Israel and regard their kamikaze bombers as martyrs. Owing to its daring resistance to the Israeli occupation, Hamas may have more support among the Palestinian people than Yassar Arafat. A July 2001 poll of Palestinians showed a 58 per cent approval rate for these acts. This figure represented a twofold increase over a survey taken four years ago when hopes for peace were high.<sup>xxxii</sup>

The plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation has proved very troubling to the conscience of the Islamic world. Though difficult for Americans to accept, most Muslims, especially in the Arab world, assign a good part of the blame for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the US. Even moderate Muslims find US support for Israel disconcerting. A half-century of firm American support, for example, has permitted Israel to construct settlements on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the point that there are over 200,000 Israeli settlers living on lands conquered in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. This staggering figure suggests significant restrictions on any final sovereignty given to a future Palestinian state. All American administrations since 1967, however, have chosen to countenance Israel's steady settlement of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by placing a great value on maintaining friendly relations between Washington and Tel Aviv.

In the face of what Muslims see as outright conquest and occupation, followed by creeping settlement, they regarded the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation as a legitimate war against a foreign occupier. Both sides have clearly blurred distinctions between combatant and noncombatant. In the last two decades, the Palestinians living under Israeli rule have taken upon themselves to fight Israel. The first Intifadah, which lasted from 1987 to 1993, featured mainly non-violent protests with rocks as the main weapon of choice. The second Intifadah began in September 2000 and has turned into ugly combat on the streets of the occupied territories and suicide bombings within the pre-1967 borders of Israel. The Islamic world feels sympathy for the Palestinian people, and many Muslims regard suicide bombings as the most effective weapons left to the Palestinians in their armed struggle against Israeli occupation. Both sides have killed innocent civilians, Palestinians more by design and Israelis more by accepted "collateral damage." In such a war, civilians become fair targets or acceptable collateral losses to the combatants.

Suicide bombings have sparked debate among Muslim jurists and scholars. Three broad categories of response have emerged recently. In April 2001, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Sheikh, the grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, issued a legal opinion that such acts were contrary to Islamic teaching. In fact, suicide bombers should be buried without Islamic ritual and their graves should

far away from those of deceased Muslims. Others have argued that suicide bombings are acceptable. Still others have viewed them as wrong except in special cases like the Palestinian one where there is no other effective weapon to use against the aggressor.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

There is clearly much sympathy in the Muslim world for the Palestinians and some tolerance of their methods in fighting Israel. After all, both sides have killed innocent people. On 9 August 2001, for example, a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 18 Israelis and wounded some 80 others in his attack on a restaurant in West Jerusalem. The prestigious Egyptian newspaper *al-Ahram* depicted the event as “one of the greatest martyr (*istishahadiyya*) operations since the beginning of the Intifadeh.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> The Arab press consistently identifies those Palestinians killed by Israeli troops as martyrs, though some papers conveniently fail to mention the suicide bombers as martyrs for the cause.

Though the suicide attacks of 11 September have received general condemnation in the Muslim world, some Muslims see the US as deserving of such an assault. Bir Zeit University in Ramallah polled 1,200 Palestinians on 10 October 2001. A full 64 per cent of the respondents said the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon violated Islamic law; however, 26 per cent viewed them as consistent with the teachings of Islam.<sup>xxxv</sup> More Muslims could become of a similar opinion should the US widen its war against Middle East terrorism without any commensurate movement in the peace process.

Washington must be careful in waging war against terrorism so as not to incite more support for Bin Laden. Two fronts are important for deflating the passions of Muslim people and governments around the globe, and initially the Bush administration has moved wisely on each front. First, there is the propaganda war. Washington has expended some effort into avoiding making the war into a West versus Islam struggle. This requires some appreciation and admiration for the Islamic religion. It involves demonstrating that military operations target terrorists and their supporters with minimum collateral damage. Aid to the Afghan people and supporting opponents of the Taliban regime are both wise steps. Serious Muslims have warned the US of avoiding the

use of terrorism (indiscriminate targeting) to fight terrorism. In such a fight, each side gains justification for killing innocent civilians.

Second, there is the linkage between “Islamic” terrorism and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The administration began addressing this problem when Bush declared US support for the creation of a Palestinian state, conditional upon the acceptance of Israel’s right of existence, a statement that naturally received front-page coverage in Arabic newspapers.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Progress on the Palestinian-Israeli front is crucial for anti-terrorist cooperation with Middle East countries.<sup>xxxvii</sup> It will also help deflate people’s passions on both sides. As Carl von Clausewitz has pointed out in his theory on war, the passions of the people can influence government policy that in turn will affect the probability of success for military operations. Lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, coupled with a continuing US campaign against terrorist organizations in the Middle East, will inflame Muslim opinion and further threaten regional stability. Washington must move on this front as part of its overall strategy of defeating terrorism based in the Middle East.

## CONCLUSION

The evil side of war includes a terrorism that intentionally kills innocent civilians. The terrorist acts in New York and Washington brought that reality home. As the US grapples with this threat, opportunity exists to learn about a monotheistic religion unfamiliar to the vast majority of Americans and government officials.

The Islamic *ummah* is not a monolithic religious community, even when it comes to an understanding and practice of Jihad. While Muslims do agree on the concepts of Greater and Lesser Jihad and martyrdom, major differences exist concerning the use of Holy War in the modern world. Application of Islamic tenets in warfare remains an ongoing dynamic within each Middle East military and society. The Western analyst must therefore study each case separately with the skills of critical analysis.

Overall, however, the Muslim religion does present a compelling argument to the West. Why individuals risk their lives on the battlefield remains a philosophical problem concerning the essence of human nature. Examples in this century of Muslim soldiers fighting with the Jihad spirit argues against seeing peer pressure as sole explanation for their conduct. Even Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish hero of Gallipoli during World War I and the founder of the modern secular state of Turkey, was impressed by the Islamic faith that drove Turkish troops during that epic campaign. On 17 May 1915, he described the inner motivation he discerned in his men. "He who can read prepares himself with the Quran for the next world. The illiterates storm with the call 'God, God'. This noble spirit allows us to win the battle."<sup>xxxviii</sup> The Gallipoli campaign certainly left the Allies with a respect for the Turkish soldier, but without a commensurate understanding of his inner motivation.

Muslim secularists, fundamentalists, and modernists differ in their use of Islam in war. Yet, all three intellectual currents, with their differing appeals to soldiers, have regarded faith (*iman*)--a conviction in God, defense of country, or some other ideal outside of self--as an important combat motivator. In this regard, the rich Islamic tradition of Jihad continues to remain an ingredient of the various militaries in the Middle East. Islamic teachings on Jihad should challenge Western societies and individuals to question their own motivation and conduct in war to see if they conform to the highest ideals of humanity. Perversions of Islam by Muslim radicals to justify their acts of terrorism against innocent civilians must not prevent the West from admiring the Islamic religion and its rich traditions. Otherwise, the terrorists will have gained a victory in the propaganda war.

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<sup>i</sup> Quoted in Rudolph Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History* (The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 109.

<sup>ii</sup> Several serious books serve as excellent introduction to Islam. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, second edition (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1979); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 1990); and John Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, third

edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>iii</sup> Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *Hayat Muhammad*, 10th ed. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1969), p. 239.

<sup>iv</sup> Quran 2:190-191. This Quranic reference comes from the translation by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Glorious Quran*.

<sup>v</sup> These figures come from a famous biography by Ibn Ishaq. The translated excerpt appeared as "Ibn Ishaq: The Prophet Muhammad" in *Anthology of Islamic Literature: From the Rise of Islam to Modern Times*, edited by James Kritzeck (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 82.

<sup>vi</sup> Haykal, *Hayat*, p. 235.

<sup>vii</sup> Quran 2:256.

<sup>viii</sup> Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1955): 184.

<sup>ix</sup> For two military books representative of this religious instruction see Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, *Askere Din Kitabı* (Istanbul, 1946) and Celalettin Karagulle, *Erin Ders Kitabı* (Ankara, 1967). To check my reading of Turkish military literature on the place of Islam in military culture, I have also conducted numerous discussions with Turkish General Staff officers at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 1984-1991.

<sup>x</sup> Akseki, p. 429.

<sup>xi</sup> *Foreign Broadcasting Information Service [FBIS]*, 8 May 1987, p. 15.

<sup>xii</sup> Islamic Revolutionary Guard, Political Office, *A Glance at Two Years of War* (no place, no date), p. 26.

<sup>xiii</sup> *FBIS*, 25 April 1985, p. I 2.

<sup>xiv</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 September, p. I 2.

<sup>xv</sup> For a general treatment of the armed forces, see Nikola Schahgaldian, *The Iranian Military under the Islamic Republic* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1987) and Sepehr Zabih, *The Iranian Military and Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>xvi</sup> Muhammad Kamal 'Abd al-Hamid, *Ma'raka Sina wa Qanat al-Suways* (Cairo: al-Wa'y al-Arabi, 1960), 198-201.

<sup>xvii</sup> Musa Sabri, *Watha'iq al-Harb Oktober* (Cairo: al-Maktab al-Misri, 1974), p. 428.

<sup>xviii</sup> Cited in Peters, p. 134.

<sup>xix</sup> Quoted by Shahram Chubin, "Iran and the War: From Stalemate to Ceasefire" in *The Iran-Iraq War: Impact and Implications*, edited by Efraim Karsh (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 22.

<sup>xx</sup> Quoted by G. P. Armstrong, "Egypt" in *Fighting Armies: Antagonists in the Middle East*, edited by Richard A. Gabriel (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 161.

<sup>xxi</sup> Sabri, p. 396.

<sup>xxii</sup> Adil Yusri, *Rihla al-Saq al-Mu'allaqa: Min Ras al-Ush ila Ras al-Kubra* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'rafa bi Misr, 1974), p. 67.

<sup>xxiii</sup> For a more detailed treatment of Islam in the Egyptian Army's reconstruction, see George W. Gawrych, *The Albatross of Decisive Victory: War and Policy Between Egypt and Israel in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000): 71-94.

<sup>xxiv</sup> For a popular account of the battle for Suez City by an eyewitness see Ahmad Ismail Subh, *'Ubur al-Mihna* (Cairo: al-Hai'a al-Misriyya al-'Umma lil-Kitab, 1976), p. 119 on.

<sup>xxv</sup> *FBIS*, 18 September 1990, p. 33.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Khadduri, 129.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins* (The Hague: Mouton, 1955); Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968); and Enno Franzius, *History of the Order of the Assassins* (New York: Funk and Wagnells, 1969).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Text appeared in *al-Qudsi al-Arabi on 23 February 1998 and was published by the Los Angeles Times*. See [www.emergency.com/bladen98.htm](http://www.emergency.com/bladen98.htm).

<sup>xxix</sup> "Military Studies in the Jihad (Holy War) Against Tyrants," in *Declaration of Jihad (Holy War) against the Country's Tyrants: Military Series: 5*. I would like to thank Dr. Jake Kipp for making this quote known to me.

<sup>xxx</sup> *al-Ahram* 13-15 September 2001, [www.ahram.org.eg](http://www.ahram.org.eg).

<sup>xxxi</sup> *al-Ahram* 11 October 2001, [www.ahram.org.eg](http://www.ahram.org.eg).

<sup>xxxii</sup> Jamie Tarabay, "Palestinian Teen Becomes 100<sup>th</sup> Victim," Associated Press, 11 October 2001.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Donna Abu-Nasr, "Muslim scholars are debating legitimacy of suicide bombings," *Jordan Times*, 17 October 2001, [file:///C:/TEMP/Jordan Times \(News Section\).htm](file:///C:/TEMP/Jordan%20Times%20(News%20Section).htm).

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<sup>xxxiv</sup> *al-Ahram* 10 August 2001, [www.ahram.org.eg](http://www.ahram.org.eg).

<sup>xxxv</sup> Jamie Tarabay, "Poll: Palestinians Oppose Air Strikes," Associated Press, 11 October 2001.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> *al-Ahram* 3 August 2001, [www.ahram.org.eg](http://www.ahram.org.eg).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> For an editorial in this regard, see "America back in the middle," *The Economist* 6-12 October 2001, pp. 12-13.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Quoted in Gottard Jaschke, "Mustafa Kemal, Ein Geborener Soldat," *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire* 50 (Ankara, 1981), p. 108.