



Saddam Hussein

Keep in mind that for at least 1,000 years after Islam's founding in 622, Islamic states and their rulers were the most powerful entities in the world, far more impressive than any of their European and Christian rivals. At the turn of the previous millennium, the great cities of culture, learning, and science were Cordoba, Baghdad, and other urbane Arab

metropolises. That is emphatically no longer the case.

To the contrary, today's Muslim nations are weak and, by and large, failed states. Whatever importance they possess derives almost entirely from where they are located—atop the largest proven reserves of oil in the world.

For a long time, the Islamic empire stretched from the Pyrenees to Indonesia, including most everything in between. As recently as the sixteenth century the most powerful state in the world, including Europe, was Muslim: the Ottoman Empire. As recently as the seventeenth century, the Ottomans came remarkably close to capturing Vienna. Had they done so, all of Europe could have come under Muslim rule.

But things turned out differently. For the last two or three centuries the Muslim world has been in retreat—politically, militarily, and economically. To the west, Muslim states were forced to give up rule in Europe; in the east they were pushed out of India. For a period, Muslims even had to submit to the rule of non-Muslims in North Africa, the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia.

Today, all Muslim nations are self-governing and with few exceptions are officially Muslim states. Geographically speaking, the Muslim world is not grossly smaller than it was at its height. But politically, Muslim countries are shadows of their former selves.

This situation is not only a function of the rapid progress of their competitors and adversaries. The Islamic world itself has stopped improving; Muslim leaders have not appropriated those aspects of modernity that made their rivals strong. Worse still, Muslims have intermittently tried to adopt *defective* forms of modernization—especially various types of socialism. What they have not lastingly tried is democratic capitalism. Almost all Muslim countries are still ruled by some form of autocracy—some softer, some harsher—and most of their autocrats are corrupt.

The Muslim world has a truly glorious past—not only politically and militarily but also intellectually and spiritually—and a diminished and humbling present. The natural consequence is disappointment, shame, even despair. The contrast with life in today's powerful advanced democracies like the United States is stark and often embittering.

Hillel Fradkin, W.H. Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, has just been appointed president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

Of course, there are many peoples and countries which have lost the preeminence they once enjoyed. The city of Rome, after all, once ruled the world. In modern times, England and France rose to great power, then declined. The French, in particular, still find it hard to bear their reduced position, but these peoples have “moved on.” Why then does the diminished political station of Islamic countries so often yield fanaticism, rage, and terrorism?

The clearest explanation is that the Muslim faith assigns religious value to political success. The Koran presents Islam as the worthy successor, indeed the superior, of its monotheistic predecessors, Judaism and Christianity. Islam, unlike Christianity, has a political mission at its very heart. In contrast to Judaism (with which it shares a political element) Islam has a universalizing and missionary impulse. It looks forward eventually to a world united under Islam.

The original political and military successes of Islam served to confirm and reinforce the importance of political mission within its religious teachings. This has made Islam's more recent weakness especially troubling and freighted with greater significance than the ordinary rise and fall of state fortunes. Today's fanatics and terrorists have put an extreme interpretation on these circumstances. It is not merely history which has gone awry, they say, but the very constitution of the world. Demonic forces must be loose. How else is one to understand the current weakness of Mohammed's home lands? Satan himself must be at work—in the form of America, the Great Satan. America has achieved what has heretofore been unprecedented—“the occupation of the land of the two Holy Places,” Arabia, the very birthplace of Islam.

To be sure, only a minority of Muslims share this interpretation, and a still smaller number are prepared to act on it with terror and violence. Still, the view is sufficiently popular to be convenient for Muslim tyrants—like Saddam Hussein, who has his own, hardly pious, reasons for wanting the U.S. out of the Arabian peninsula.

Regrettably, demonizing views of the U.S. have also been given a platform in the press of several “moderate” Muslim countries, fanning popular resentment and hatred toward everything American. Faced with indigenous resistance to their own regimes, the rulers of nations like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan have found it useful to let the U.S. be the bogeyman, distracting their populations from problems at home. This may backfire spectacularly. It is certain to make our war against terrorism more difficult.

Islamic Militancy is on the Rise

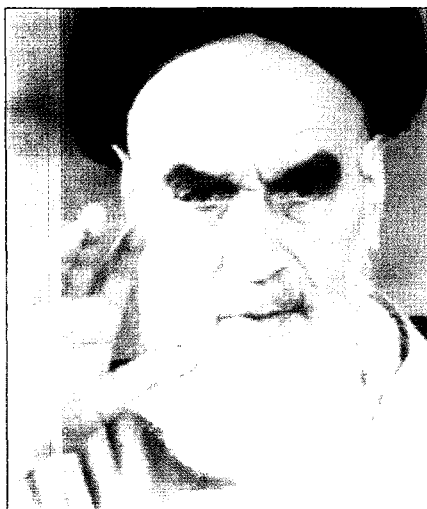
By David Wurmser

The response of today's Muslims to the frustrating reality of being surpassed by Western civilization in nearly all ways has followed three different paths. The first response has been to look at the West and understand that its ideas can be successfully applied to Muslim regions. Unfortunately, this “borrow from the West” school has split between those who embrace the idea of freedom—such as Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz—and those who prefer modernity's twisted twin: totalitarianism. A

series of wars starting with the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict and ending in Desert Storm set back many of the Muslim totalitarians, but some persist—notably in Iraq, Syria, and the PLO.

A second reaction has been to insist that the West's technological superiority can be absorbed without accepting its ideas. Many in the Saudi Arabian royal family—who vacation in Switzerland, own the latest hi-fi equipment, computers, and cars, and still virtually enslave their women—rank in this category. Oil riches and Western aid have allowed modern technology to flow freely into the Middle East. Remarkably, the economies and social life of the region remain extraordinarily backward. It's becoming obvious the ideas of the West have something to do with making the West great.

A third group of Muslims believe that if their societies will just



Ayatollah Khomeini

return to the most pure and strict Islamic practices, the Muslim world will revert to its former glory and surpass the West. This is the group with which we are now at war. The idea of going back to an extinct past to defeat rapidly advancing competitors may seem ludicrous. But radicals promoting just such a view have managed to deliver painful blows to the West. The British commander in Sudan, Charles Gordon, was defeated and beheaded by such a movement in a stunning humiliation for the British in 1885. The U.S. was likewise humbled by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. Four years later, Hezbollah killed 241 Marines in Beirut. And now, Osama bin Laden has repeatedly bloodied America, including the worst attack ever launched on our soil by a foreign enemy. As is clear from parts of hijacker Mohamed Atta's "last will," bin Laden and his followers are believers in Wahabi Islam, a puritanical Saudi sect that believes neither in reform nor in adoption of Western methods.

Within the Koran there are clear passages imploring believers to wage eternal war to further Islam. Many non-Wahabi Muslims interpret them as a call to eternal struggle for individual perfection, rather than real war. The Wahabis, of which bin Laden is one, will have none of such interpretations. They want actual war.

The most authoritative interpreter of Sunni Islamic law is a medieval-era scholar named al-Mawardi. At the turn of the last millennium he wrote in *The Ordinances of Government* that there could be no real peace between the Muslim world and the

David Wurmser is a Middle East expert at the American Enterprise Institute.

66 It is useless for the West to insist it is not at war with Islam. Islam itself is on trial here; it must now choose its path.

non-Muslim world. "Although Muslims have been forbidden to withdraw from battle with a foe...they may do so...to have a

temporary break," he states. Peace treaties and truces were entered into by Mohammed in his wars with infidels, but only for the purpose of reconstituting his strength to win in the next round. Following al-Mawardi, some modern Islamic scholars, such as Majid Kaddouri, have stated that such truces can legally last only ten years. For bin Laden, it is thus heretical *not* to be at war with America.

The Islamic holy texts urge confidence in battling a vastly superior enemy. The Koran says in chapter 8, verse 65, "O Prophet, urge the believers to fight. If there are twenty steadfast men among you they will beat two hundred, if there are a hundred, they will beat a thousand of the unbelievers, for they are men with no understanding."

The phrase, "men of no understanding," is critical. One of this century's key Islamist thinkers, who resided in the West in the late 1940s, was Sayyid Qutb. He argues the West is inherently weak not because it is Christian, but because it has lost its Christianity and become a land of idolaters. Qutb wrote in his book *The America I Saw*, "No one builds as many churches as Americans do.... Notwithstanding this, there is no one as removed from feeling the spirituality, respect, and sacredness of religion than the Americans."

To the likes of Osama bin Laden, our tolerance and lack of confidence in asserting our faith openly are taken as emptiness of the soul, and thus vulnerability. We would gain more respect, cause bin Laden's followers more fear, and create theological reservations about using terror if we were unapologetically and openly Christian.

Our apparent irreligiousness also lifts restrictions on the means Muslims may employ in a fight. Islam restrains its followers in battles with adherents of Christianity and Judaism, which the Koran defines as fraternal, "protected" religions. But the Koran allows much harsher tactics if the enemy is linked with Satan. Western women with their short dresses are certainly considered efforts to tempt Muslims away from their faith, and Americans look like Satanic unbelievers in tempting Muslims to worship idols like money and materialism. Therefore we can be attacked without restraint.

It is useless for the West to insist it is not at war with Islam. Bin Laden and the Wahabi sect are authentic Muslims with grounding in Islamic law. Still, America is not at war with *all* of Islam. But it is not America's choice to decide how much of Islam it is in conflict with, or to adjudicate which branch of Islam is more "authentic." Islam itself is on trial; it must now choose its path: Return Islam to its golden age, when reasoning flourished, or imprison Islam in a strict reading closed to interpretation and modification. That choice belongs to Muslims.

But one thing is clear: Whoever chooses the bin Laden or Khomeini version of the faith has chosen to be in mortal conflict with us.

An Israeli Army soldier patrols the Israel-Lebanon border.

AP World Wide Photo/John Freeman

By Eli Lehrer

Citizen Soldiers

What the U.S. Can Learn
From Israel About Fighting Terror

A cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth, Israel Police spokesman Gil Kleiman pulls a secure police pager from his belt and begins reading the day's news bulletins. It's October 4, 2001. A little after 9:00 a.m. two men entered a house in an Arab village and killed the owner; the same suspects had murdered the homeowner's son the evening before in an apparent blood feud. At 10:34, 2,000 people joined a protest on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City: Police arrested 15 Jews and about 30 Arabs. At 12:30, an Arab terrorist dressed as an Israeli soldier opened fire in the central bus station in the city of Afula, killing three and critically wounding a dozen others. The gunman was also killed but, as Kleiman tells a caller, "we don't count terrorists." At 2:38, an urgent bulletin indicates that a Russian airliner out of Tel Aviv has crashed over the Black Sea. Officials first suspect a terrorist attack, but it later turns out that an errant Ukrainian missile brought the plane down. "Is this unusual?" we ask Kleiman. "Just another day at our office," he answers, shaking his head. It is still only 3:00 p.m.

Israel, more than any other democratic society in the world, faces a constant threat of terrorist attack. While only a minority of Palestinians engage in terrorism, many more lend political support to the men conducting the violence. From their sheltered

redoubts on the West Bank of the Jordan River and in the Gaza Strip, terrorists have launched a renewed campaign against Israel this year, killing hundreds of Jewish, Arab, and Druze citizens. While Israel's body count of a few hundred terror victims per year pales in comparison to the more than 5,000 Americans killed on September 11, it's still a fearsome toll in a country less populated than metropolitan Chicago.

Without Israel's vigilant security policies, however, things would be much worse. Consider the following: No Israeli aircraft has been hijacked in over 20 years; security forces regularly stop even suicidal terrorists; and, in a society loaded with guns, mass shootings are rare. Indeed, Israel thrives amidst the attacks. The Jewish state has lively electoral politics, a feisty culture, and a bustling high-tech economy. As it reassesses its anti-terrorism policy in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the United States could learn a lot from Israel.

In a week of intensive visits with Israeli government officials, law enforcement officers, private security staff, and ordinary citizens, TAE studied the Jewish state's counter-terror efforts. Our main findings: First, Israel has an extraordinarily alert population that serves as the nation's first line of defense. Second, Israel involves its

Eli Lehrer is a TAE senior editor.