



PERSPECTIVES

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Islamic Imperialism: The Ongoing Tragedy of the Middle East

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Samuel Huntington predicted that only the Islamic civilization would re-emerge as the nemesis to the West. Recently, there is a rebirth of the Islamic struggle to reassert control over parts of the world, with *jihad*, or its modern manifestation – international terrorism – as its tool. The US is losing its dominance in the Middle East and is gradually being replaced by Iran. The Western world is in urgent need of a leader who will powerfully defend Western values against the growing influence of radical Islam.

Samuel Huntington remains relevant as ever. His book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996), presented a thesis that ran counter to the zeitgeist euphoria over globalization and a borderless world after the end of the Cold War.

Huntington unequivocally stated that the end of the Cold War would bring about a clash of civilizations. He inferred that soil, ethno-cultural devotion, and religion-based energy would claim and define the world in conflict. Huntington also drew a map of the world which can be described as "The West and The Rest." He recognized other less challenging civilizations – Hindu, African, Buddhist – but to him in the post-Cold War world, only the Islamic civilization would re-emerge as the nemesis to the West. According to Huntington, "The twentieth century conflict between liberal democracy and Marxist Leninism was only a fleeting and superficial historical phenomenon compared to the continuing and deeply conflicting relations between Islam and

Christianity." Unfortunately, the West displays weakness and lack of courageous leadership.

Islamic History

A review of the onslaught of Islam, from its foundation in the seventh century to its current attempts to dominate the world, elucidates the gravity of the challenge currently faced by the West. Bernard Lewis has noted that since its birth, Islam has sought to merge religion and state authority, and to expand its influence. Christian awareness of the new competing Islamic faith began almost immediately after its advent with the triumphant emergence of the new religion from its Arabian homeland and its spread eastward to the borders of India and China, and westward across North Africa and the Mediterranean Islands into Europe. Islamic penetration of Western Europe ended with the Christian re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula in 1492. The struggle lasted eight centuries.

Islam made inroads also in parts of Russia during the wars waged by the Ottoman Turks. There is still an ongoing conflict between Russia and its Chechen Islamic province. For close to 200 years, the Ottoman Empire advanced into Europe spreading Muslim domination in the Balkans and South Central Europe, including Budapest. The Ottoman Turks were defeated at the gates of Vienna on two occasions. The final defeat took place as recently as 1683.

The conquests stretching over a millennium are the antecedents to the rebirth of a struggle on the part of Islam to reassert control over parts of the world, with *jihad*, or its modern manifestation – international terrorism – as its tool. In this context, Bernard Lewis' caution about political terminology is important. He warned against the phraseology: "the war against terrorism." This, he says, is as if Churchill had told us we were engaged in a war against submarines. Terrorism, like submarines, are a tool, but are not the enemy. The enemy, Lewis says, is radical Islam.

The Current Radical Islamist Challenge

Today, it is politically correct to say that Islam is a religion of peace, and that the vast majority of Muslims want to live in peace. This may be true, but in light of worldwide Muslim terrorist acts in Bali, New York, the northern Chinese provinces, Mumbai, and Madrid, the reference to the religion of peace becomes questionable. Using such terms obfuscates the issue by causing a false optimism while diminishing the specter of the fanatics who rampage the globe in the name of Islam. The peaceful majority in Muslim lands is cowed into a non-existent force.

Unfortunately at this moment in history, it is fanatics who set the tone in Islamic countries. Their impact on ordinary citizens manifests openly with the mass celebrations in Islamic countries when “infidels” are killed, or Muslim terrorists are released from prison. It is fanatics from the Muslim world who slaughter children and non-Muslim tribal groups daily in Darfur, and are progressively taking over segments of Africa, be it Nigeria or Somalia. Islamic fanatics bomb, behead, murder, and carry out “honor” killings. They also stone rape victims and homosexuals. Muslim fanatics teach in the schools the virtues of becoming suicide bombers and acquiring the coveted status of a *shahid* (martyr).

Therefore, the peaceful majority is not always relevant. In communist Russia, the country was comprised of Russians who wanted to live in peace, but were terrorized by the communist leadership, who was responsible for the murder of at least 20 million of their own people. Similarly, 80 million Germans were not all Nazis, but they were irrelevant when Hitler and his murderous minions brought about World War II and caused the death of tens of millions, including one-third of the world's Jewish population. China's huge population was also peaceful, but Chinese communists under Mao Tse-tung managed to kill 70 million people in China.

History's lessons, when analyzed, are simple and blunt. Peace-loving Muslims have been made irrelevant by their silence, just as the majority of Germans, Russians, and Chinese. It is the extremists like Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or the Wahabists in Saudi Arabia, who dictate policies, set the agenda, and cause the majority to remain silent and to progressively even lose their naturally endowed rights to human freedom and dignity.

Like Nazism and cruel communism, the radical Islamist must be defeated not only for the sake of the silent majority in the Islamic world, but also for the sake of our own survival in the wars in which we are waging today.

Combating Radicalism and Defending the West

The Western world today needs a leader who will powerfully defend Western values against radical Islamic usurpers and their allies in the West. Huntington was pessimistic in this regard. He expressed an anxiety about the will and the coherence of the West, and said that the West neither monitors nor defends the ramparts of its free society. Islam will remain Islam, while he was equally dubious that the West would remain true to its mission of defending freedom, the rule of law, and human rights.

Today, the main leader of radical Islamist forces is Ahmadinejad, who wishes to establish his influence across the entire Middle East. Facing him are America, pacifist-oriented Europe, and America's alleged Sunni Arab allies. Israel – Ahmadinejad's target for elimination – is the only democratic state in this part of the world allied to the values of the West. Israel is surrounded by a sea of cultural, intellectual, and socioeconomic decay – which describes the current Muslim Middle East.

Iran, in its challenge to the West, arms Syria, Hamas, and Hizballah. Al Qaeda also supports the Iranian vision of challenging Western values. The Iranian daily *Kayhan* has clearly defined the participants in this struggle, "In the power struggle in the Middle East, there are only two sides, Iran and the US." So far, Team America has been losing on many fronts. Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* gave a short explanation: "Iran is smart and ruthless, America is dumb and weak. And the Sunni Arab world is feckless, unreliable, and divided."

Ehud Yaari, Israel's outstanding Arab affairs commentator, defines the present Middle East as a *Pax Iranica*, which follows the US' *Pax Americana* after the end of World War II and the Cold War. America let this hegemony slip from its grasp, while Iran now calls the shots in the Middle East, with a *jihād* motivated by religiously-inspired fervor to recreate a Persian empire and a Muslim Caliphate.

Yaari observes that anyone destroying Iran's atomic facilities will create a massive conflagration in the Middle East involving the Lebanese, Palestinians, Iraqis, and the Emirates. The realization of this possibility creates a strategy of inaction – neither Western powers nor the United Nations will want to face such an event.

In the short period of time since Jimmy Carter capitulated to the Ayatollahs, Iran has progressively influenced events in the Middle East. Today, it strongly influences Iraq's Shiite Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki and manipulates Shiite militias in Iraq. Iran also has built Hizballah into a military force equipped with 50,000 rockets that controls Lebanon and threatens Israel, and has supported the creation of Hamastan in Gaza.

Over eight years, the Bush Administration dragged America into a position where it was neither liked, feared, nor respected. Aaron David Miller, a negotiator with both Republican and Democratic administrations, says, "We stumbled for eight years under Bill Clinton over how to make peace in the Middle East, and then we stumbled under George Bush over how to make war, with the result that America is trapped in a region which it cannot fix and cannot abandon."

Churchill's admonition to the world when Chamberlain returned from the Munich Conference in 1938 practicing his policy of appeasement has relevance today, "We are existentially threatened by the malice of the wicked, enhanced by the weakness and hesitation of the allegedly virtuous."

What is urgently needed today is a Western awakening.

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