

The Religious Sources Of Islamic Terrorism

By SHMUEL BAR

WHILE TERRORISM — even in the form of suicide attacks — is not an Islamic phenomenon by definition, it cannot be ignored that the lion's share of terrorist acts and the most devastating of them in recent years have been perpetrated in the name of Islam.

This fact has sparked a fundamental debate both in the West and within the Muslim world regarding the link between these acts and the teachings of Islam. Most Western analysts are hesitant to identify such acts with the bona fide teachings of one of the world's great religions and prefer to view them as a perversion of a religion that is essentially peace-loving and tolerant. Western leaders such as George W. Bush and Tony Blair have reiterated time and again that the war against terrorism has nothing to do with Islam. It is a war against evil.

The non-Islamic etiologies of this phenomenon include political causes (the Israeli-Arab conflict); cultural causes (rebellion against Western cultural

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colonialism); and social causes (alienation, poverty). While no public figure in the West would deny the imperative of fighting the war against terrorism, it is equally politically correct to add the codicil that, for the war to be won, these (justified) grievances pertaining to the root causes of terrorism should be addressed. A skeptic may note that many societies can put claim to similar grievances but have not given birth to religious-based ideologies that justify no-holds-barred terrorism. Nevertheless an interpretation which places the blame for terrorism on religious and cultural traits runs the risk of being branded as bigoted and Islamophobic.

The political motivation of the leaders of Islamist jihadist-type movements is not in doubt. A glance at the theatres where such movements flourished shows that most fed off their political — and usually military — encounter with the West. This was the case in India and in the Sudan in the nineteenth century and in Egypt and Palestine in the twentieth. The moral justification and levers of power for these movements, however, were for the most part not couched in political terms, but based on Islamic religious sources of authority and religious principles. By using these levers and appealing to deeply ingrained religious beliefs, the radical leaders succeed in motivating the Islamist terrorist, creating for him a social environment that provides approbation and a religious environment that provides moral and legal sanction for his actions. The success of radical Islamic organizations in the recruitment, posting, and ideological maintenance of sleeper activists (the 9-11 terrorists are a prime example) without their defecting or succumbing to the lure of Western civilization proves the deep ideological nature of the phenomenon.

Therefore, to treat Islamic terrorism as the consequence of political and socioeconomic factors alone would not do justice to the significance of the religious culture in which this phenomenon is rooted and nurtured. In order to comprehend the motivation for these acts and to draw up an effective strategy for a war against terrorism, it is necessary to understand the religious-ideological factors — which are deeply embedded in Islam.

The Weltanschauung of radical Islam

MODERN INTERNATIONAL Islamist terrorism is a natural offshoot of twentieth-century Islamic fundamentalism. The “Islamic Movement” emerged in the Arab world and British-ruled India as a response to the dismal state of Muslim society in those countries: social injustice, rejection of traditional mores, acceptance of foreign domination and culture. It perceives the malaise of modern Muslim societies as having strayed from the “straight path” (*as-sirat al-mustaqim*) and the solution to all ills in a return to the original mores of Islam. The problems addressed may be social or political: inequality, corruption, and oppression. But in traditional Islam — and certainly in the worldview of the

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Islamic fundamentalist — there is no separation between the political and the religious. Islam is, in essence, both religion and regime (*din wa-dawla*) and no area of human activity is outside its remit. Be the nature of the problem as it may, “Islam is the solution.”

The underlying element in the radical Islamist worldview is ahistoric and dichotomist: Perfection lies in the ways of the Prophet and the events of his time; therefore, religious innovations, philosophical relativism, and intellectual or political pluralism are anathema. In such a worldview, there can exist only two camps — *Dar al-Islam* (“The House of Islam” — i.e., the Muslim countries) and *Dar al-Harb* (“The House of War” — i.e., countries ruled by any regime but Islam) — which are pitted against each other until the final victory of Islam. These concepts are carried to their extreme conclusion by the radicals; however, they have deep roots in mainstream Islam.

While the trigger for “Islamic awakening” was frequently the meeting with the West, Islamic-motivated rebellions against colonial powers rarely involved individuals from other Muslim countries or broke out of the confines of the territories over which they were fighting. Until the 1980s, most fundamentalist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan Muslimun*) were inward-looking; Western superiority was viewed as the result of Muslims having forsaken the teachings of the Prophet. Therefore, the remedy was, first, “re-Islamization” of Muslim society and restoration of an Islamic government, based on Islamic law (*shari’ah*). In this context, jihad was aimed mainly against “apostate” Muslim governments and societies, while the historic offensive jihad of the Muslim world against the infidels was put in abeyance (at least until the restoration of the caliphate).

Until the 1980s, attempts to mobilize Muslims all over the world for a jihad in one area of the world (Palestine, Kashmir) were unsuccessful. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a watershed event, as it revived the concept of participation in jihad to evict an “infidel” occupier from a Muslim country as a “personal duty” (*fard ’ein*) for every capable Muslim. The basis of this duty derives from the “irreversibility” of Islamic identity both for individual Muslims (thus, capital punishment for “apostates” — e.g., Salman Rushdie) and for Muslim territories. Therefore, any land (Afghanistan, Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, Spain) that had once been under the sway of Islamic law may not revert to control by any other law. In such a case, it becomes the “personal duty” of all Muslims in the land to fight a jihad to liberate it.¹ If they do not succeed, it becomes incumbent on

¹“If the disbelievers occupy a territory belonging to the Muslims, it is incumbent upon the Muslims to drive them out, and to restore the land back to themselves; Spain had been a Muslim territory for more than eight hundred years, before it was captured by the Christians. They [i.e., the Christians] literally, and practically wiped out the whole Muslim population. And now, it is our duty to restore Muslim rule to this land of ours. The whole of India, including Kashmir, Hyderabad, Assam, Nepal, Burma, Behar, and Junagadh was once a Muslim territory. But we lost this vast territory, and it fell into the hands of the disbelievers simply because we abandoned Jihad. And Palestine, as is well-known, is currently under the occupation of the Jews. Even our First Qibla, Bait-ul-Muqaddas is under their illegal possession.”
— *Jihaad ul-Kuffaari wal-Munaafiqeen*.

any Muslim in a certain perimeter from that land to join the jihad and so forth. Accordingly, given the number of Muslim lands under “infidel occupation” and the length of time of those occupations, it is argued that it has become a personal duty for all Muslims to join the jihad. This duty — if taken seriously — is no less a religious imperative than the other five pillars of Islam (the statement of belief or *shahadah*, prayer, fasting, charity, and *hajj*). It becomes a de facto (and in the eyes of some a de jure) sixth pillar; a Muslim who does not perform it will inherit hell.

Such a philosophy attributing centrality to the duty of jihad is not an innovation of modern radical Islam. The seventh-century Kharijite sect, infamous in Islamic history as a cause of Muslim civil war, took this position and implemented it. But the Kharijite doctrine was rejected as a heresy by medieval Islam. The novelty is the tacit acceptance by mainstream Islam of the basic building blocks of this “neo-Kharijite” school.

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The Soviet defeat in Afghanistan and the subsequent fall of the Soviet Union were perceived as an eschatological sign, adumbrating the renewal of the jihad against the infidel world at large and the apocalyptic war between Islam and heresy which will result in the rule of Islam in the world. Along with the renewal of the jihad, the Islamist Weltanschauung, which emerged from the Afghani crucible, developed a Thanatophile ideology² in which death is idealized as a desired goal and not a necessary evil in war.

An offshoot of this philosophy poses a dilemma for theories of deterrence. The Islamic traditions of war allow the Muslim forces to retreat if their numerical strength is less than half that of the enemy. Other traditions go further and allow retreat only in the face of a tenfold superiority of the enemy. The reasoning is that the act of jihad is, by definition, an act of faith in Allah. By fighting a weaker or equal enemy, the Muslim is relying on his own strength and not on Allah; by entering the fray against all odds, the *mujahed* is proving his utter faith in Allah and will be rewarded accordingly.

The politics of Islamist radicalism has also bred a mentality of *bello ergo sum* (I fight, therefore I exist) — Islamic leaders are in constant need of popular jihads to boost their leadership status. Nothing succeeds like success: The attacks in the United States gave birth to a second wave of mujahidin who want to emulate their heroes. The perception of resolve on the part of the West is a critical factor in shaping the mood of the Muslim population toward radical ideas. Therefore, the manner by which the United States

²This is characterized by the emphasis on verses in the Koran and stories extolling martyrdom (“Why do you cling to this world when the next world is better?”) and praising the virtues of paradise as a real and even sensual existence.

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deals with the present crisis in Iraq is not unconnected to the future of the radical Islamic movement. In these circles, the American occupation of Iraq is likened to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; a sense of American failure would feed the apocalyptic ideology of jihad.

The legality of jihad

THESE BELIEFS ARE commonly viewed as typical of radical Islamic ideology, but few orthodox Islamic scholars would deny that they are deeply rooted in orthodox Islam or would dismiss the very ideology of jihad as a military struggle as foreign to the basic tenets of Islam.

Hence, much of the debate between radicals and nonradicals is not over the religious principles themselves, but over their implication for actual behavior as based on the detailed legal interpretation of those principles. This legal interpretation is the soul of the debate. Even among moderate Islamic scholars who condemn acts of terrorism (albeit with reservation so as not to include acts perpetrated against Israel in such a category), there is no agreement on *why* they should be condemned: Many modernists acknowledge the existence of a duty of jihad in Islam but call for an “Islamic Protestantism” that would divest Islam of vestiges of anachronistic beliefs; conservative moderates find in traditional Islamic jurisprudence (*shari’ah*) legal justification to put the imperative of jihad in abeyance; others use linguistic analysis to point out that the etymology of the word jihad (*jahada*) actually means “to strive,” does not mean “holy war,” and does not necessarily have a military connotation.³

The legalistic approach is not a barren preoccupation of scholars. The ideal Islamic regime is a nomocracy: The law is given and immutable, and it remains for the leaders of the *ummah* (the Islamic nation) to apply it on a day-to-day basis. Islam is not indifferent to any facet of human behavior; all possible acts potentially have a religious standing, ranging between “duty” (*fard*, pl. *fara’id*); “recommended” (*mandub*); “optional” (*jaiz*); “permitted” (*mubah*); “reprehensible” (*makruh*); and “forbidden” (*haram*). This taxonomy of human behavior has far-reaching importance for the believer: By performing all his religious duties, he will inherit paradise; by failing to do so (“sins of omission”) or doing that which is forbidden (“sins of commission”), he will be condemned to hell. Therefore, such issues as the legitimacy of jihad — ostensibly deriving from the roots of Islam — cannot be decided by abstract morality⁴ or by politics, but by meticulous legal analysis and rul-

³This is a rather specious argument. In all occurrences of the concept in traditional Islamic texts — and more significantly in the accepted meaning for the great majority of modern Muslims — the term means a divinely ordained war.

⁴A frequently quoted verse “proving” the inadequacy of human conscience in regard to matters of jihad is Koran 2:216: “Fighting is ordered for you even though you dislike it and it may be that you dislike a thing that is good for you and like a thing that is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.”

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ing (*fatwa*) according to the *shari'ah*, performed by an authoritative Islamic scholar (*'alem*, pl. *'ulama*).

The use of *fatwas* to call for violent action first became known in the West as a result of Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, and again after Osama bin Laden's 1998 *fatwa* against the United States and Israel. But as a genuine instrument of religious deliberation, it has not received the attention it deserves. Analysts have frequently interpreted *fatwas* as no more than the cynical use of religious terminology in political propaganda. This interpretation does not do justice to the painstaking process of legal reasoning invested in these documents and the importance that their authors and their target audience genuinely accord to the religious truthfulness of their rulings.

The political strength of these *fatwas* has been time-tested in Muslim political society by rebels and insurgents from the Arabian peninsula to Sudan, India, and Indonesia. At the same time, they have been used by Muslim regimes to bolster their Islamic credentials against external and domestic enemies and to legitimize their policies. This was done by the Sudanese mahdi in his rebellion against the British (1881-85); by the Ottoman caliphate (December 1914) in World War I; by the Syrian regime against the rebellion in northern Syria (1981); and, *mutatis mutandis*, by Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to legitimize his peace policies toward Israel.

The *fatwas* promulgated by sheikhs and *'ulama* who stipulate that jihad is a "personal duty" play, therefore, a pivotal role in encouraging radicalism and in building the support infrastructure for radicals within the traditional Islamic community. While one may find many *fatwas* which advocate various manifestations of terrorism, *fatwas* which rule that those who perform these acts do not go to paradise but inherit hell are few and far between.

The questions relating to jihad which are referred to the religious scholars⁵ relate to a number of issues:

The very definition, current existence, and area of application of the state of jihad. Is jihad one of the "pillars" (*arkan*) or "roots" (*usul*) of Islam? Does it necessarily imply military war, or can it be perceived as a duty to spread Islam through preaching or even the moral struggle between one's soul and Satan?⁶ If the former, then what are the *necessary conditions for jihad*? Does a state of jihad currently exist between *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb*? And how can one define *Dar al-Islam* today, in the absence of a

⁵The following list of questions has been gleaned from a large corpus of *fatwas* collected by the author over recent years. The *fatwas* represent the questions of lay Muslims and responses of scholars from different countries. Some of the *fatwas* were written and published in mosques, others in the open press, and others in dedicated sites on the internet.

⁶This claim, a favorite of modernists and moderates, comes from a unique and unconfirmed hadith which states: "The Prophet returned from one of his battles, and thereupon told us, 'You have arrived with an excellent arrival, you have come from the Lesser Jihad to the Greater Jihad — the striving of a servant [of Allah] against his desires.'"

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caliphate? Is the rest of the world automatically defined as *Dar al-Harb* with which a state of jihad exists, or do the treaties and diplomatic relations which exist between Muslim countries and “infidel” countries (including the charter of the United Nations) change this?⁷

Who must participate in jihad, and how? Is jihad a personal duty (*fard 'ein*) for each and every Muslim under all circumstances or a collective duty (*fard kifaya*) that can be performed only under the leadership of a leader of all Muslims (*imam, khalifa, amir al-mu'aminin*)? Is it incumbent on women? On minors? (According to Islamic law, in the case of a defensive jihad for the liberation of Islamic territory from infidel occupation, “a woman need not ask permission of her husband nor a child of his parents nor a slave of his master.”) May a Muslim refrain from supporting his attacked brethren or obey a non-Muslim secular law which prohibits him from supporting other Muslims in their struggle?

How should the jihad be fought (jus in bellum)? The questions in this area relate, inter alia, to: (A) Is jihad by definition an act of conflict against the actual “infidels” or can it be defined as a spiritual struggle against the “evil inclination”? If it is the former, must it take the form of war (*jihad fi-sabil Allah*) or can it be performed by way of preaching and proselytization (*da'awah*)? (B) Who is a legitimate target? Is it permissible to kill non-combatant civilians — women, children, elderly, and clerics; “protected” non-Muslims in Muslim countries — local non-Muslims or tourists whose visas may be interpreted as Islamic guarantees of passage (*aman*); Muslim bystanders? (C) The legitimacy of suicide attacks (*istishhad*) as a form of jihad in the light of the severe prohibition on a Muslim taking his own life, on one hand, and the promise of rewards in the afterlife for the *shahid* who falls in a jihad on the other hand.⁸ (D) The weapons which may be used. For example, may a hijacked plane be used as a weapon as in the attacks of September 11 in the light of Islamic prohibitions on killing prisoners? (E) The status of a Muslim who aids the “infidels” against other Muslims. (F) The authority to implement capital punishment in the absence of a caliph.

How should jihad be funded? “Pocketbook jihad” is deeply entrenched in Islamic tradition. It is based on the injunction that one must fight jihad with his soul or with his tongue (*jihad al-lissan* or *da'awah*) or with his money (*jihad fi-mal*). Therefore, financial support of jihad is politically correct and

⁷Some Islamic judicial schools add to the *Dar al-Islam/Dar al-Harb* dichotomy a third category: *Dar al-'Ahd*, countries which have peace treaties with Muslims and therefore are not to be attacked. The basis for discerning whether or not a country belongs to *Dar al-Islam* is not agreed upon. Some scholars claim that as long as a Muslim can practice his faith openly, the country is not *Dar al-Harb*.

⁸It should be noted that in the historic paradigms of “suicide” terror, which are used as authority for justification of such attacks, the martyr did not kill himself but rather placed himself in a situation in which he would most likely be killed. Technically, therefore, he did not violate the Koranic prohibition on a Muslim taking his own life. The targets of the suicide terrorist of ancient times were also quite different — officials of the ruling class and armed (Muslim) enemies. The modern paradigm of suicide bombing called for renewed consideration of this aspect.

even good for business for the wealthy supporter. The transfer of *zakat* (almsgiving) raised in a community for *jihad fi-sabil Allah* (i.e., jihad on Allah's path or military jihad) has wide religious and social legitimacy.⁹ The precepts of “war booty” (*ghaneema* or *fay*) call for a fifth (*khoms*) to be rendered to the mujahidin. Acts that would otherwise be considered religiously prohibited are thus legitimized by the payment of such a “tax” for the sake of jihad. While there have been attempts to bring Muslim clerics to denounce acts of terrorism, none, to date, have condemned the donation of money for jihad.

The dilemma of the moderate Muslim

IT CAN BE safely assumed that the great majority of Muslims in the world have no desire to join a jihad or to politicize their religion. However, it is also true that insofar as religious establishments in most of the Arabian peninsula, in Iran, and in much of Egypt and North Africa are concerned, the radical ideology does not represent a marginal and extremist perversion of Islam but rather a genuine and increasingly mainstream interpretation. Even after 9-11, the sermons broadcast from Mecca cannot be easily distinguished from those of al Qaeda.

Facing the radical Weltanschauung, the moderate but orthodox Muslim has to grapple with two main dilemmas: the difficulty of refuting the legal-religious arguments of the radical interpretation and the aversion to — or even prohibition of — inciting an Islamic Kulturkampf which would split the ranks of the *ummah*.

The first dilemma is not uniquely Islamic. It is characteristic of revelation-based religions that the less observant or less orthodox will hesitate to challenge fundamental dogmas out of fear of being branded slack or lapsed in their faith. They will prefer to pay their dues to the religious establishment, hoping that by doing so they are also buying their own freedom from coercion. On a deeper level, many believers who are not strict in observance may see their own lifestyle as a matter of convenience and not principle, while the extreme orthodox is the true believer to whom they defer.

This phenomenon is compounded in Islam by the fact that “Arab” Sunni Islam never went through a reform.¹⁰ Since the tenth century, Islam has lacked an accepted mechanism for relegating a tenet or text to ideological obsolescence. Until that time, such a mechanism — *ijtihad* — existed; *ijtihad*

⁹The prominent fundamentalist Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for example, gave a *fatwa* obliging Muslims to fund jihad out of money collected for charity (*zakat*). (*Fatwa* from April 11, 2002 in Islamonline.)

¹⁰True, religions are naturally conservative and slow to change. Religious reforms are born and legitimized through the authority of a supreme spiritual leader (a pope or imam), an accepted mechanism of scholarly consensus (Ibnud, the *ijma*’ of the schools of jurisprudence in early Islam), internal revolution (Protestantism), or external force (the destruction of the Second Temple in Judaism). Islam canonized itself in the tenth century and therefore did not go through any of these “reforms.”

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is the authorization of scholars to reach conclusions not only from existing interpretations and legal precedents, but from their own perusal of the texts. In the tenth century, the “gates of *ijtihad*” were closed for most of the Sunni world. It is still practiced in Shiite Islam and in Southeast Asia. Reformist traditions did appear in non-Arab Middle Eastern Muslim societies (Turkey, Iran) and in Southeast Asian Islam. Many Sufi (mystical) schools also have traditions of syncretism, reformism, and moderation. These traditions, however, have always suffered from a lack of wide legitimacy due to their non-Arab origins and have never been able to offer themselves as an acceptable alternative to ideologies born in the heartland of Islam and expressed in the tongue of the Prophet. In recent years, these societies have undergone a transformation and have adopted much of the Middle Eastern brand of Islamic orthodoxy and have become, therefore, more susceptible to radical ideologies under the influence of Wahhabi missionaries, Iranian export of Islam, and the cross-pollination resulting from the globalization of ideas in the information age.

The second dilemma — the disinclination of moderates to confront the radicals — has frequently been attributed to violent intimidation (which, no doubt, exists), but it has an additional religious dimension. While the radicals are not averse to branding their adversaries as apostates, orthodox and moderate Muslims rarely resort to this weapon. Such an act (*takfir* — accusing another Muslim of heresy [*kufr*] by falsifying the roots of Islam, allowing that which is prohibited or forbidding that which is allowed) is not to be taken lightly; it contradicts the deep-rooted value that Islam places on unity among the believers and its aversion to *fitna* (communal discord). It is ironic that a religious mechanism which seems to have been created as a tool to preserve pluralism and prevent internal debates from deteriorating into civil war and mutual accusations of heresy (as occurred in Christian Europe) has become a tool in the hands of the radicals to drown out any criticism of them.

Consequently, even when pressure is put on Muslim communities, there exists a political asymmetry in favor of the radicals. Moderates are reluctant to come forward and to risk being accused of apostasy. For this very reason, many Muslim regimes in the Middle East and Asia are reluctant to crack down on the religious aspects of radical Islam and satisfy themselves with dealing with the political violence alone. By way of appeasement politics, they trade tolerance of jihad elsewhere for local calm. Thus, they lose ground to radicals in their societies.

The Western dilemma

IT IS A TENDENCY in politically oriented Western society to assume that there is a rational pragmatic cause for acts of terrorism and that if the political grievance is addressed properly, the phenomenon will fade. However, when the roots are not political, it is naïve to expect political ges-

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tures to change the hearts of radicals. Attempts to deal with the terrorist threat as if it were divorced from its intellectual, cultural, and religious fountainheads are doomed to failure. Counterterrorism begins on the religious-ideological level and must adopt appropriate methods. The cultural and religious sources of radical Islamic ideology must be addressed in order to develop a long-range strategy for coping with the terrorist threat to which they give birth.

However, in addressing this phenomenon, the West is at a severe disadvantage. Western concepts of civil rights along with legal, political, and cultural constraints preclude government intervention in the internal matters of organized religions; they make it difficult to prohibit or punish inflammatory sermons of imams in mosques (as Muslim regimes used to do on a regular basis) or to punish clerics for *fatwas* justifying terrorism. Furthermore, the legacy of colonialism deters Western governments from taking steps that may be construed as anti-Muslim or as signs of lingering colonialist ideology. This exposes the Western country combating the terrorist threat to criticism from within. Even most of the new and stringent terrorism prevention legislation that has been enacted in some countries leans mainly on investigatory powers (such as allowing for unlimited administrative arrests, etc.) and does not deal with prohibition of religion-based “ideological crimes” (as opposed to anti-Nazi and anti-racism laws, which are in force in many countries in Europe).

The regimes of the Middle East have proven their mettle in coercing religious establishments and even radical sheikhs to rule in a way commensurate with their interests. However, most of them show no inclination to join a global (i.e., “infidel”) war against radical Islamic ideology. Hence, the prospect of enlisting Middle Eastern allies in the struggle against Islamic radicalism is bleak. Under these conditions, it will be difficult to curb the conversion of young Muslims in the West to the ideas of radicalism emanating from the safe houses of the Middle East. Even those who are not in direct contact with Middle Eastern sources of inspiration may absorb the ideology secondhand through interaction of Muslims from various origins in schools and on the internet.

Fighting hellfire with hellfire

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the above, is it possible — within the bounds of Western democratic values — to implement a comprehensive strategy to combat Islamic terrorism at its ideological roots? First, such a strategy must be based on an acceptance of the fact that for the first time since the Crusades, Western civilization finds itself involved in a religious war; the conflict has been defined by the attacking side as such with the eschatological goal of the destruction of Western civilization. The goal of the West cannot be defense alone or military offense or democratization of the Middle East as a panacea. It must include a religious-ideological dimension:

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active pressure for religious reform in the Muslim world and pressure on the orthodox Islamic establishment in the West and the Middle East not only to disengage itself clearly from any justification of violence, but also to pit itself against the radical camp in a clear demarcation of boundaries.

Such disengagement cannot be accomplished by Western-style declarations of condemnation. It must include clear and binding legal rulings by religious authorities which contradict the axioms of the radical worldview and virtually “excommunicate” the radicals. In essence, the radical narrative, which promises paradise to those who perpetrate acts of terrorism, must be met by an equally legitimate religious force which guarantees hellfire for the same acts. Some elements of such rulings should be, *inter alia*:

- A call for renewal of *ijtihad* as the basis to reform Islamic dogmas and to relegate old dogmas to historic contexts.
- That there exists no state of *jihad* between Islam and the rest of the world (hence, *jihad* is not a personal duty).
- That the violation of the physical safety of a non-Muslim in a Muslim country is prohibited (*haram*).
- That suicide bombings are clear acts of suicide, and therefore, their perpetrators are condemned to eternal hellfire.
- That moral or financial support of acts of terrorism is also *haram*.
- That a legal ruling claiming *jihad* is a duty derived from the roots of Islam is a falsification of the roots of Islam, and therefore, those who make such statements have performed acts of heresy.

Only by setting up a clear demarcation between orthodox and radical Islam can the radical elements be exorcized. The priority of solidarity within the Islamic world plays into the hands of the radicals. Only an Islamic Kulturkampf can redraw the boundaries between radical and moderate in favor of the latter. Such a struggle must be based on an in-depth understanding of the religious sources for justification of Islamist terrorism and a plan for the creation of a legitimate moderate counterbalance to the radical narrative in Islam. Such an alternative narrative should have a sound base in Islamic teachings, and its proponents should be Islamic scholars and leaders with wide legitimacy and accepted credentials.¹¹ The “Middle-Easternization” of Asian Muslim communities should also be checked.

A strategy to cope with radical Islamic ideology cannot take shape without a reinterpretation of Western concepts of the boundaries of the freedoms of religion and speech, definitions of religious incitement, and criminal culpability of religious leaders for the acts of their flock as a result of their spiritual influence. Such a reinterpretation impinges on basic principles of Western civilization and law. Under the circumstances, it is the lesser evil.

¹¹Here the pessimist may inject that, today, all the leading Islamic scholars in the Middle East who enjoy such prestige are in the radical camp. But there have been cases of “repentant” radicals (in Egypt) who have retracted (albeit in jail and after due “convincing”) their declarations of *takfir* against the regime. In Indonesia, the moderate Nahdlatul Ulama led by former President Abdurahman Wahid represents a genuine version of moderate Islam.