

THE WAR OF IDEAS  
JIHADISM AGAINST DEMOCRACY

WALID PHARES

palgrave  
macmillan

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Dedication</i>	vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix
Chapter One: The Historical Debates	1
Chapter Two: The Antidemocracy Axis	21
Chapter Three: Irreconcilable Views	39
Chapter Four: The Jihadi War on International Principles	53
Chapter Five: The Assault on Pluralism	67
Chapter Six: Democracy's Pillars under Attack	85
Chapter Seven: Gender Apartheid	101
Chapter Eight: Jihadism Waits Out the Cold War: The First War of Ideas, 1945–1990	115
Chapter Nine: Battles over Minds: The Second War of Ideas, 1990–2001	139
Chapter Ten: The Clash of Futures: The Third War of Ideas, 2001–2006	163
Chapter Eleven: The War on Learning	183
Chapter Twelve: Inflaming Hearts and Fooling Minds	207
Chapter Thirteen: War on the Messengers	235
Conclusion	243
<i>Notes</i>	251
<i>Index</i>	261

# INTRODUCTION

AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AND THE BEGINNING of the twenty-first, we have witnessed a historic change in the approach to war and peace in international relations. In the wake of the Cold War, leaders and policy planners face new challenges. Efforts to persuade the public to support policies and ideologies have become an increasingly important activity of government in democracies, demanding ever greater resources, skill, and attention. Ideas now have to be presented, argued, and defended in public discourse. Although ideas have always been the engine of history, the audience for them has vastly increased with globalization and more widespread access to media (especially electronic media), and thus today a greater number of individuals influence whether a policy obtains support.

It is not only governments that have come to realize that there is now a global playing field in the struggle for control over which ideas are promoted. Militant organizations have reached the same conclusion: in times of war and peace alike, influencing the public by promoting ideas is a must. In democracies in general, this means debating and selecting from among many competing ideas. For radical groups, it means imposing one vision for the masses to follow. But regardless of party or group, in world politics, the promotion of ideas has become the prerequisite to action, including war.

In the last few years, especially after the September 11, 2001, attacks in America (and increasingly around the world as the so-called War on Terrorism spread to Afghanistan, Iraq, the greater Middle East, south Asia, Africa, Russia, and within the West), talk of a “War of Ideas” emerged in the media and to a lesser extent in academia. The first public statements about the concept were made by U.S. leaders such as President George Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and congressional figures from both parties. But other world leaders and politicians have also mentioned the roles of ideologies

and doctrines in the context of counterterrorism efforts and confrontations with radical regimes and organizations. Among these leaders are British prime minister Tony Blair, French president Jacques Chirac, and Russian president Vladimir Putin. In the Muslim world, rulers such as Jordan's King Abdallah have also mentioned the clash of ideologies within Islam. But in the academic and intellectual communities in many democracies, the concept of a War of Ideas has been approached with suspicion and sometimes even disdain. Many of the gatekeepers of knowledge on campuses consider ideas to be their exclusive domain. They feel uncomfortable when nonprofessional thinkers, including statesmen and bureaucrats, meddle in academics. As a result, this major perspective—one that absolutely must be discussed and analyzed—has not thoroughly taken hold in the West, even though the War of Ideas has been mobilizing countries, regions, and armies across the globe in the first years of this millennium.

Particularly in the Arab Muslim nations, the War of Ideas is raging. It has inflamed millions of readers, viewers, and listeners, transforming large numbers of them into militants and demonstrators, some into suicide bombers, and many into voters. From websites to al Jazeera television, the flow and counter-flow of ideas are growing. In contrast to the people of the West, the Arab and Muslim masses are deeply engaged in the conflict of ideas, both old and new. Leaders in those regions, however, seem to espouse the same hesitant attitude as Western elites and merely attempt to maintain the status quo.

But regardless of who wishes for it, who is prosecuting it, and who prefers to think it isn't happening, the War of Ideas—call it a clash, conflict, dialogue, exchange, or search for alternatives—is occurring and will be for a long time. It has become the overarching framework of the twenty-first century.

In the early 1990s, I observed the post-Soviet intellectual debate, searching for new answers. Having lived in the Middle East throughout my youth and young adulthood, I saw firsthand the clash of ideologies, especially in the intellectual capital of the Arab world, Beirut. In 1990, the collapse of the Soviet Union ended not only the Cold War, but also the old East–West debates. With millions of Eastern Europeans demonstrating in the streets for democracy, one might have expected their counterparts across the Mediterranean to do the same. Unfortunately, they didn't. While the Iron Curtain collapsed across Europe, a fundamentalist curtain still surrounded the Middle East's

civil societies. From Prague to Kiev, liberty was on the march, but from Beirut to Darfur, oppression remained widespread. As a result, most Iraqis, Syrians, Lebanese, Sudanese, Iranians, and others living under dictatorship, occupation, and radical ideologies felt hopeful at the sight of a wall falling in Berlin, the punishment of a tyrant in Romania, and the election of a Czech dissident as president. The end of the old bipolar paradigm of the Cold War may have brought freedom to the peoples of Eastern Europe, but not to those living in the Middle East.

I left the city of ideas overlooking the Mediterranean the year the world was changing, in 1990. But in the West, not all the changes I saw had been noticed yet. I was back on campus (in the United States after relocating in 1990), obtaining a Ph.D. in international relations and observing with great interest the evolution of political thinking in world affairs, from Europe to North America. At the time, the pressing debate was what a post-Soviet world would look like. To political scientists, it boiled down to this key question: Is there a global enemy anymore? To politicians dealing with the concerns of their public, the question was about mass security: Is there still a threat, somewhere in the world, that will shatter the daily lives of ordinary citizens? The answer of Western elites, both European and North American, was clear: world conflicts were over, security had been won, and there were now other issues to be addressed. It was at this time that Francis Fukuyama wrote his celebrated essay arguing that with the fall of the Soviet Union came the disappearance of global perils—the “end of History.”

But a couple of years later, another leading thinker from the sole remaining superpower warned that the real threats were yet to be seen. To Samuel Huntington, the new world politics would be defined by what he called the “clash of civilizations.” American and European academia split between two camps: those who dismissed this idea and those who agreed with it. I had another view: civilizations as identities never vanished, even during the Cold War. They were not referred to for decades, but deep down, they were the real tectonic plates of world politics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new division emerged between those who wanted to reignite the clash, the jihadists, and those who didn’t, democracies.<sup>1</sup>

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed two parallel intellectual debates: one within the West, over which path to follow for the future, and another in the East, about which past to bring into the future—secular nationalism or Islamic fundamentalism. As classrooms and newsrooms in the

democracies questioned whether a post-Soviet threat existed, in the east and south of the Mediterranean, the doctrine of Islamism was working its way deeper inside the social fabric. Confusion reigned in the industrialized powers, where ideas abounded but explanations were few. Why, for example, was the Arab-Israeli conflict not solved in the 1990s despite the internationally supported peace agreements of 1993? Who was sabotaging peace in the Middle East? Why was the Taliban able to brutalize women and minorities without being sanctioned by the international community? Why did the United States and Europe intervene twice to save peoples from ethnic cleansing and massacres in the Balkans but not to stop the genocide in the Sudan, which were taking place at the same time? Why are secular ideas valued over faith in the West but subordinated to religion in the Muslim world?

The West enjoyed the freedom to challenge ideas, but its public wasn't mobilized by these debates until September 11, 2001, when four planes flown by "*des fous d'Allah*"<sup>2</sup> massacred 3,000 people in 30 minutes in the most powerful nation on earth. From that morning on, the world changed dramatically, as did the meaning of ideas. Ordinary citizens started to wonder how all this could have happened so suddenly. In fact, it wasn't really sudden at all; rather, the debate over ideas hadn't reached the public, which hadn't been informed of the ideological conflicts raging worldwide. As I argued in my previous book, *Future Jihad*, the intellectual elites had failed their customers: for more than a decade, professors in the West had ignored the presence, growth, intentions, and misdeeds of those terrorists who went on to target the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and later Madrid's trains and London's subways and buses.

The first question posed by Americans after the disaster of 9/11 was, Why do they hate us? Joe Public had no idea of the existence of an angry Mohammad Atta and a determined but patient Ziad Jarrah, both of them products of Jihadism. In fact, average citizens in the West, including the United States, knew nothing about Jihadism at all. Most of the 1,200 instructors of social science, Middle East studies professors, and "experts" on Islam from Oxford to Harvard had treated jihad as a benign spiritual tradition, like yoga.<sup>3</sup> It was the lack of an idea—or, more accurately, the insertion of a false idea (that Jihadism was a benign matter)—that made the public so unaware of the dangers we all faced. A missing political idea of that seriousness and gravity would allow the politics of war and peace to become very fragile.

It is not a secret that politics has long been a major reason behind war and peace among nations. It is also not a secret that economics has always been a major component of politics. Many civilizations have moved in different directions, both culturally and geographically, to satisfy their political economies: Assyrians, Persians, Romans, Chinese, Indians, Nubians, Aztecs, Europeans, and many others have followed their strategic interests in shaping their marches across the globe. Behind each historic speech and visionary plan have lain basic logistical needs: water, land, greenery, natural boundaries, room for expansion. To legitimize major decisions, strategies, conquests, sacrifices, and other collective human endeavors, ideas had to be structured, grounded in logic, accepted, and pursued. Rulers have used ideas to persuade, mobilize, and lead their followers. These visions have been the real engines of history.

## IDEAS OF WAR AND PEACE

Ideas have been produced by philosophers, social visionaries, and politicians to guide people; however, religion has played the most powerful role in shaping the destinies of civilizations. Usually understood as a link between humans and the metaphysical realm, religions have been elevated to the highest levels of political inspiration: Moloch, Zeus, Baal, Zarathustra, Jupiter, Bophal, Buddha, Odin, El-lat, and other ancient deities were at the center of legislation, invasion, and exploration. Monotheist faiths such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Bahaim were transported worldwide, changing humanity's policies and forming the basis of what would become international relations. Religions, beyond economics, produced the politics of war and peace. People of faith believe that all religious ideas come from the divine. In contrast, many social scientists believe that humans create religious ideas. Regardless, one fact remains unchallenged: ideas are at the center of religions; man-made or divinely inspired, they have moved people throughout history to change the world, their achievements seen by proponents as progress but by opponents as catastrophes.

In short, ideas are behind collective human behavior, whether political, economic, or religious. They describe the world and prescribe actions; they serve as fuel for war and as philosophies for peace. In the modern world, more than ever, ideas clash, and when nations and civilizations collide, they are prompted by competing ideas. The drama of human history is that men

have acted and been violent under the auspices of ideas, often as a result of material needs. In these circumstances, ideas were “used” to legitimize physical goals. But the most dramatic developments in the history of ideas occur when communities actually act violently on the sole ground of differences in ideas, such as in theological wars, when, for example, adherents kill for the nature of Christ, for injunctions of the Qu’ran, or for doctrinal claims.

Such a dramatic conclusion leads us to ask why clashes of ideas become clashes of arms. Why cannot ideas clash with ideas and let human societies live in peace? These questions have confronted historians and philosophers for centuries with no real answers. They have become more difficult as massacres, genocide, and terrorism have come to define the twentieth and now the twenty-first century: Why would rulers, political leaders, militants, individuals, and terrorists kill, die, and destroy for mere ideas? Are these mental schemes, from divine or intellectual inspirations, connected endemically to human intentions? I believe that, while sociopolitical interests and religious beliefs have mobilized nations and civilizations to clash and strike back at each other, a more lethal form of modern commitment has led to the atrocities of recent history: ideology.

## IDEOLOGY

Ideologies can be seen as the daughters of ideas—more complex, more determined, and by far more lethal. A history of ideology teaches us that modern conflicts, especially since the nineteenth century, are grounded in doctrinal roots. Nationalism is the earliest form of militant ideology in the contemporary West, followed by Marxism and fascism. In the Arab and Muslim world, religious fundamentalism took the lead in the nineteenth century, followed by extreme nationalism, which alternated with socialism and Islamism throughout the twentieth century. Similarly, East Asian and African cultures moved among nationalism, religious extremism, and Communism. In Latin America, the pendulum swung between left- and right-wing ideologies.

This is not to say that ideas have displaced practical or even cynical motives, such as expansionist designs, national rivalry, and sheer greed. In fact, ideologies legitimize and are produced by these designs. For example, in the early last century, nationalism and the balance of power combined to produce World War I. Bolshevism led to the massacre of millions in Russia, and in the



Spanish civil war, men and women killed and were killed for Marx and Lenin. During the 1930s, German Nazism and Italian and Japanese fascism decimated nations and ethnicities for “race, nation and purity.”<sup>4</sup> Bloodshed resumed over Communism in the Soviet Union and China for another half century, with proxy conflicts in Asia, Africa, and the Americas all ideologically driven. The opponents of totalitarian ideologies, mostly liberal democracies, but sometimes nationalist movements too, faced off with the “isms” of Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, and Yamato and continued to resist the Soviets of Khrushchev and Brezhnev throughout the Cold War. Between 1945 and the 1990s, many small regional conflicts flared up across the globe: Korea, the Arab-Israeli conflict, Vietnam, Cyprus, India-Pakistan, and so on. Civil and ethnic wars spread as well, in places such as Lebanon, Ireland, Sudan, the Philippines, and Nigeria. And insurrections and revolutions mushroomed in Cuba, Bolivia, Algeria, Hungary, Iran, and beyond. In all of these conflicts, and with leaders from Bismarck to Trotsky and from Hitler to Mao Zedong, ideologies were omnipresent: nationalist, socialist, communist, populist, anarchist, or ultrareligious, they all sought domination in the name of a higher calling, a divine, materialistic, philosophical, or historical ideal that claimed supremacy among human doctrines. Ironically, ideologies may start as an expression of age-old desires, such as lust for territory and domination, but as history evolves, they become self-fueled as a desire in itself, an autonomous wish to accomplish an idea regardless of its irrelevance.

## THE HOUSES OF DEMOCRACY

All in all, the history of the twentieth century boiled down to a series of struggles between two major camps: the fortresses of authoritarianism and the houses of democracy. For example, the aging empires of Central Europe and the Ottoman Sultanate were pitted against the emerging democracies of Western Europe and North America. During World War II, the fascist powers of the Axis faced the mostly Western allies. During the Cold War, the authoritarian Soviet Bloc battled a mostly democratic NATO. And for decades, modern democracies opposed dictatorships, tyrannies, and authoritarian regimes.

Liberal governments weren't always on the side of liberty. Democracies possessed colonies and ruled other nations, notably in the past empires of Great Britain, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and

even Japan. Later on, democratic powers and superpowers allowed their authoritarian allies to repress weaker nations: Indonesia and East Timor; Iraq and the Kurds; Syria and Lebanon; and South Africa are familiar examples. Democracies weren't and aren't perfect, but democracy was and remains the best form of government human societies have yet experienced. Democratic cultures ensure pluralism, open societies, rule of law, accountability, and eventually human rights and self-determination—all principles agreed on by the bulk of international society since the nineteenth century's series of democratic revolutions and the twentieth's rise of international law.

As we stated earlier, the engine of history in the modern era has been the spread of the ideas of democracy and freedom, successfully or unsuccessfully, intentionally or unintentionally, forcefully or peacefully, internally or externally; as a result of offensive or defensive wars, of civil conflicts or regime change, of one election or multiple elections; in one shot or gradually; as a result of an educational process or by elites, history has almost become the evolution of ideas and their results. All developments in world politics seem to indicate that the ideal governance is through the rule of the people and by the people. The growth of democracy has witnessed several setbacks since its inception and tragic ruptures with genocidal consequences in the twentieth century. Nevertheless, like a phoenix, it reemerges and takes off again. Russia knew multipartisanship for a few months in 1916–17 but was ruled by a one-party dictatorship for 73 years before reverting to a multiparty system in 1991. Modern Germany experienced a transfer from an empire in 1914 to the weak Republic of Weimar in 1920. The latter lasted 13 years, only to give way to the Third Reich, the most violent race-based regime in history. But half of Germany regained democracy in 1946, and the other half joined it in 1990. Egypt decolonized in the 1940s as a constitutional monarchy, lost its embryo of democracy under Nasser's dictatorship, and has been attempting to regain shreds of it since Sadat. Chile and Argentina experienced democratic elections before they were ruled by military dictatorships for decades, then returned to a free society. Other countries tasted some forms of democratic practice before internal wars devoured their liberties, for example Lebanon and Ivory Coast. Some countries split violently but preserved their democracies, such as Cyprus; others separated gently and maintained their open systems, such as Czechoslovakia.

Democratic forms of government evolved in different ways and under a variety of constitutions but converged toward similar principles: people elect their government and choose their laws. These basic principles, inherited from centuries of struggle and thousands of years of self-questioning, gained momentum decade after decade and one century after the other. Even dictatorships adjusted to the historical shift: most ideological and authoritarian regimes claimed to be serving a particular form of democracy or at least used the term in their names. The Soviet countries promoted a proletarian democracy; East Germany called itself the German Democratic Republic; Latin American populist governments cited democratic ideals as inspiration for their dominant party systems. Organizations seeking a one-party future state, such as the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, projected the same illusion. Furthermore, liberal elites attacked each other for not being democratic enough, as was the case between American and European establishments. Advocates of Third World ideologies criticized the “Western bourgeois” democracies of the North. The cacophony grew within world politics as it was debated whose democracy was better, fairer, and more suitable for just societies.

Democratization continued until a movement rose from the past to reject it altogether as an enemy of mankind, refusing the terms of debate and dragging a large segment of the international community back into a predemocratic era, or at least trying to do so. Some of the anti-democratic forces emerged from within Western civilization, such as fascism, Nazism, and Bolshevism. They struggled within their cultural zone over the control of countries and regions, but they were ultimately defeated. Still, other anti-democratic forces emerged from the Islamic sphere targeting power both within its own cultural zone and also beyond. These are the forces of jihad.

## THE HOUSES OF JIHADISM

An old belief from centuries ago, jihad reemerged in world affairs slowly at first, beginning in the 1920s, growing steadily through the 1980s, and becoming more forceful starting in the early 1990s. While Communists and Fascists were battling capitalists, liberals, and nationalists for a half century, those who would label themselves as the jihadists of modern times waited for the right moment to unleash their War of Ideas. Self-described heirs of past

powerful empires, the Islamic fundamentalists and their various precursors and derivatives are diverse and always changing, but they share one main goal: to bring down democracy.

Salafists, Wahabis, Takfiris, Tablighis, and other Sunni Islamists reject the concept of pluralism and radically oppose the rule of the people. Only Allah and his teachings, they postulate, are the basis for governance. The Shia-born Khomeinists condemn Western-style liberalism but co-opt concepts and words from international democratic institutions such as the idea of a republic. They installed an Islamic republic in Iran, but its mandate is believed to be divinely inspired and not subject to the approval of civil society. Islamists from all schools of thought, and violent jihadists in particular, have an ideology of their own, based on ideas diametrically opposed to classical liberal democracies. The jihadists aim at the re-creation of what they perceive as a caliphate, merging dozens of Muslim countries into one world power. They want to impose strict religious laws on the people of the caliphate and claim furthermore that this form of government is ordained by God. Hence they have no tolerance for man-made legislation, and politics is tightly scripted by the militant interpreters of faith. The followers of Jihadism, openly or discreetly, as well as those who share the Islamists' enemies, have moved worldwide to obstruct the rise of secular democracies, especially within the realm of the Muslim world. They plan to resume what they believe is a millennial project: world domination.

## FORCES OF FUTURE AND PAST

Running against historical trends, the jihadists were bound to clash with democracies—all democracies—and are ultimately on a collision course with world civilization altogether, including with the allies they seek to enlist in their “holy” war. The rise of the contemporary jihadists has created a universal conflict between two camps: the forces accepting and promoting a future with multiple types of democracies, and those heading back toward the past, armed with extreme religious injunctions. Democracies are moving forward, though not without failures, while Jihadism is hurtling backward with occasional relative successes. The energies of the two outlooks have been unleashed against each other, willingly or unwillingly, culturally, politically, and increasingly militarily.

This monumental clash has been poorly explained to the public, especially in the West. Western elites have mostly failed to describe the conflict and, more particularly, refused to define the enemy of international relations in the post-Cold War era. In their own realm, the jihadists have subverted the understanding of the ultimate challenge. Although the clash of civilizations had subsided worldwide and was removed from Western agendas by the mid-twentieth century, the pioneers of the new caliphate and imamate argued otherwise to their masses. In an environment of forced backwardness and limited access to modern education, the societies of the greater Middle East and the wider Muslim world have been subject to the “explanations” of Islamists and other radicals. From China’s borders to the Atlantic Ocean, masses are being taught to hate the other side of the world and blame it for all evil.

In between the two worlds, a marriage of convenience has developed between oil interests and ideology: the petro-jihadist connection. Spreading out in both directions, the hydra of the twentieth century’s political economy aims at perpetuating the conflict into the twenty-first century. The jihadists have been waging a war of ideology against democracies, using the influence of their petro-economies, and democracies have fallen to a “global civil war” of ideas, politics, and interests.

A rising core in the United States, with support from growing political awareness in Europe, in the Arab-Muslim world, and in the international community, are facing off with a militant core within the Arab-Muslim sphere, in alliance with radical currents and sympathizers worldwide, including within the West. But while violent confrontations are located in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, Lebanon, Chechnya, and many other sites of the War on Terror, the clash of ideas is universal, taking place at all levels and without interruption.



On both sides, ideological fortresses and propaganda machines seek to blur the vision of the enemy and win the battle of legitimization in the eyes of potential supporters. For example, bin Laden, Ahmedinijad, Assad, and the plethora of militants under their umbrellas want the Western public to believe in the justness of al Qaeda, Iran’s regime, and Syria’s elite and punish the elected leaders of the West for their “aggression” toward the Arab Muslim world. On the other hand, policymakers in Washington, London, Paris,

and many dissident pockets in the Third World hope the masses of Arabs and Muslims will embrace freedom and democracy and bring about the needed change.

Indeed, a War of Ideas is raging, relentlessly, behind the War on Terror. The outcome of the second is ineluctably conditioned by the consequences of the first. For the party that succeeds in convincing the largest numbers on the opposite side will eventually either stretch the war into the future or end it to its advantage. During the fall of 2001, Osama bin Laden said on al Jazeera that as long as he can reach the next generations of Muslims, he will be winning the war against his enemies. In fact, the central point in the entire war between Jihadism and democracy is this: All it takes for the jihadists to make progress is to continue to implant their ideology in the minds of the younger waves of followers. And all it takes for the supporters of the radicals within international society (and particularly inside Western democracies) is to prevent the public, especially youth, from understanding this equation.

In 27 years of observing, studying, and monitoring the conflict of ideas and the clash of ideologies, I have watched changing arguments used by the various parties. I have witnessed Western attitudes toward Islamic fundamentalism evolving from sympathy to concern, from a U.S. foreign policy that encouraged jihad in the Soviet-occupied Afghanistan of the 1980s to an American presidential speech blasting Islamist terrorism in 2005. And during that same period, I saw the Islamists changing their goals from a holy war against Communist atheism with the help of a “godly America” in the twentieth century to a jihad against the United States with the help of godless Marxists in the twenty-first century. Based on my years of following the evolution of the main players in world politics and closely analyzing the strategies of the two main camps in the current War on Terror, this book describes in detail the intellectual and other forces—the big picture—behind the ongoing world conflict. What are the aims of the jihadists and their allies, and how do they intend to reach them? How do they want their enemies to think, and are their strategies working? In fact, the ideological conflict and the War of Ideas overlap but do not coincide. Often, both democracies and jihadists moderate their idealism, make concessions on principles, depart from their ideals, and postpone their end games while finding rationales for these deflections. Ideologies are slower to change, but ideas that advocate them find ways to reshape strategies and tactics.

Observing the two sides is fascinating but troubling. By understanding the strategic intentions of the jihadists as of the early 1990s, you could see a 9/11 coming; by examining the level of consciousness of Western diplomacy, you could guess the upcoming failures. Al Qaeda's fatwas in 1996 and 1998, and the *New York Times* reporting of them during the same years, included a powerful message as to what was to come. Exploring Hezbollah's rationale for its October 1983 suicide attacks against the U.S. marines and French soldiers in Beirut and reviewing the media analysis of these events in Washington and Paris that same month presaged the future. And later on, even after 9/11, 3/11, and 7/7, the obvious goals of the terrorists, when put alongside the assessments of Western governments, create a deeply disturbing picture: even now, years after the jihadists made their ideology and intentions loud and clear, many in the West and in other democracies hesitate to accept a standing reality. From Berkeley to the Sorbonne, there is no war but imperialism; from the State Department to the Quai d'Orsay, the war exists, but it is on "terror." On al Jazeera, it is an "American War on Islam"; on Christian evangelical networks, it is "God sending Islam to punish the seculars." In Brussels, the European Commission's "experts" impose a deep silence about the doctrinal roots of Jihadism in order not to offend the "sensitivities of Muslims," as described by the jihadists. In Qatar, the World Union of Imams headed by Sheikh Yusuf al Qardawi wants the United Nations to ban any criticism of Islam, religion and history. Across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, an immense tower of Babel has been erected by the warriors of ideas: determined to win the final jihad against the infidels, the followers of Salafism, Wahabism, and Khumeinism indoctrinate their societies and attempt to mollify their opponents. As they proceed in their holy war of ideologies, they prosecute a very real War of Terror. The West and other democracies, on the other hand, respond with a War on Terrorism and sink their resources into Byzantine debates and intellectual dramas, and only in some instances display a will to reach out to the anti-jihadist Muslims.

Looking at both sides of this great chess game, I wanted to share my findings with readers across the globe. I wrote this book as a means to participate in the debate, but above all, to provide anyone, whether a beginner in international affairs or an academic expert, a glimpse of what the clash of minds looks like when the arguments are explored and compared.

In this book, my goal is limited to the warfare of minds. What do strategies aim at, what tactics and practices do they expect to see implemented,

how do they read each other, how do they react and reshape their arguments? Ultimately I wish to show the ways that ideologies are constantly shifting, too slowly to detect easily but deeply influential over time. My objective is to open the eyes of the reader to the logic behind these ideas and their influence on the ongoing world conflict between Jihadism and democracy.



# CHAPTER ONE

## THE HISTORICAL DEBATES

THE IDEOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN JIHADISM AND democracy has spread into a vast array of areas, from international relations to legal interpretations and mass movements. In the 1990s, most of these debates were developing unilaterally. The Islamic fundamentalist intellectuals and their academic sympathizers in the West were “revealing” to the world their views on international politics, views they claimed had been suppressed by colonialism and imperialism for more than a century. Western intellectuals, in their overwhelming majority, made significant efforts to legitimize the arguments of their counterparts from the East, instead of debating them or at least investigating them.

In subsequent chapters, I’ll expand on the key players in these historical debates on both sides of the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean and will make the case that the dominant debate was not inclusive of all trends and ideas. In fact, the exchange of ideas on world politics wasn’t taking place on merely a one-way street, but on a one-lane street: the public in the West was denied an alternative explanation of trends on the other side of the world, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The intellectual spokespersons of the Arab and Muslim world on both sides of the international divide developed a single dominant paradigm, ignoring opposing views. As I will show later, these elites claimed that the sole crisis in the Middle East was the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that all other problems were caused by it and would find their way to resolution only with the end of the Palestinian-Israeli quagmire. But had this unilateral debate been characteristic of the Eastern sphere only, Western pluralist culture could have helped

generate a greater multiplicity of opinions among the Greater Middle Eastern elites toward international matters in general and political culture in particular. The drama after the Cold War was that Western elites largely reflected the views of their dominant counterparts across the water, and sometimes even the specific interests of regimes east and south of the Mediterranean.

The post-9/11 ideological debates and the War of Ideas between democracies and jihadists and their allies are not new. They are familiar in concept, substance, and subject. Most of the theses advanced by leaders, politicians, and opinion makers in the West are in fact either a reference to what their predecessors came up with, decades if not centuries ago, or fragments of previously marginalized concepts by various influential figures and authors. Indeed, the strategy of “spreading democracy” in countries still ruled by dictatorships and authoritarian regimes, advocated by the Bush administration and gradually considered by some of its allies, is a natural extension, although in radically different contexts, of the American and French Revolutions and of Western liberal doctrines toward Eastern Europe, Latin America, and even Africa. The novelty, perhaps, of Washington’s grand strategy after the New York and Washington massacres of 2001 was to apply this old doctrine to countries in a cultural zone that had been forbidden from debating democracy by their own ruling elites and their allies within the West. The ideas of democracy, separation of powers, identity, equal opportunity, rule of law, secularism, and justice for all have traveled in time from Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, and Enlightenment Europe to the League of Nations, the United Nations, and the Tribunal of the Hague. Other civilizations have reached democracy by their own different paths, via the same consensus of international principles: self-determination, liberty, and freedom for all humankind. These principles have been destined to be universal, not selective, even if historical circumstances impeded their implementation. The issue is one of essence, for the universality of these democratic principles is valid only if at every opportunity the international community works to expand them to reach more people.

Unfortunately, the story of the twentieth century was one of great exceptions—wars, genocides, and oppression. But fortunately, after every descent into cataclysmic bloodshed, such as World Wars I and II, the Soviet oppression, and the ethnic cleansings of the last quarter of the century, international principles still prevailed, recognizing the wounds of the victims, sometimes

healing them but usually waiting for them to heal. Still, at least in the public declarations, foreign policies, and diplomatic announcements, democratic powers were unanimous that humans have rights inherent in their very nature. Whether these rights are respected or not, violated or protected, legislated or interpreted, at the end of the day, they are part of the constitution of the international society. The differences in putting them into practice come from how governments, organizations of states, political movements and parties, and economic interests perceive them and are willing to serve them. Contemporary world history has witnessed the recognition of these principles by stages and, despite raging conflicts, moved to shape them into documents. That is, until the jihadists began to wage war against democracies and against the ideas they had put forth for over two centuries.

To put it simply, the current War of Ideas is not introducing new ideologies and doctrines, but pitting against each other two forces with opposing world visions: democracies limping forward and jihadists rushing backward. The followers of fundamentalism, unlike their interlocutors across cultures, do not seek to integrate their views and values within the modern world; they reject the contemporary web of values and institutions. Instead, they propose, or in fact want to impose, a world of their own, wholly and holy, on the ashes of the current international society. Hence today's conflict of ideas is between the global consensus, reached by the international society, and the forces working to reverse or replace it. Between the mosaic of democracies and the panoply of Jihadism, the disagreement is philosophical, historical, and doctrinal: it is about how the world has functioned for centuries and how it should evolve. This debate bears on questions of war and peace, the clash or coexistence of civilizations, questions of nations and nationalism, and socioeconomics.

## WAR AND PEACE

For all the progress that has been made in the modern world in diplomacy, signing treaties and making collective agreements on resolving conflicts, social scientists have largely agreed on the impossibility of eradicating wars and collective violence without a full satisfaction of human societies. Indeed, theologians discount the establishment of world peace short of divine intervention. Therefore, what modern international society has been able to achieve is a consensus on the principle that wars are the exception that

should be limited, restrained, and, when necessary, bound to humane rules. In sum, peace should be the constant objective, and war the unavoidable evil to be contained.

In the current international legal system, which includes the UN Charter and the subsequent documents related to peaceful relations among nations and governments, legitimate reasons to go to war involve clear concepts such as defense of the national soil, rebellion against a foreign military occupation, or intervention to salvage a civilian population under threat of massacre. It took centuries to reach the present stage of consensus on war and peace—still imperfect, however. Without delving into the entire history of international relations, we can review the development of peace as a universal concept, efforts to challenge the legitimacy of all wars, and measures to protect the victims of conflicts including prisoners and civilians and to establish security systems to stop aggressors who breach the laws of war.

It was the Romans who introduced a now familiar nuanced justification of wars: the search for peace. From republic to empire, Rome developed two new components to the equation. One was to seek peace as a national policy, but only as a result of military might: *Si vis pacem para bellum* (If you want peace, prepare for war). An old precursor to the modern realism of the West, this rationale at least spoke of peace as a preferred state, though it legitimized power as the sole foundation for it. But this first component was coupled with another, showing the deeper sense of early realism: the Pax Romana (peace of the Romans). This was an attempt to provide a somewhat secular motive for conquests, other than divine sanction. It is in the interest of the conquered to be conquered, because of the “peace” that will be installed. The Romans, followed by most other empires, including Arabs, Europeans, and Asians, rationalized the conquests of other nations and territories by devising a doctrine of “in the name of future peace, we are now bringing war and invasion to you.” The aim obviously was to legitimize conquest and ultimately colonialism, but the notion of “ultimate peace” signified that peoples were increasingly attracted to a “state of peace,” even at a high price. In the path of the Romans and the Byzantines, for example, the Arab armies of the Rashidun caliphs and the following Umayyad and Abbassid dynasties claimed they were bringing salaam (peace) to the conquered peoples of the Middle East, such as the Arameans, Copts, Berbers, and Persians. In many accounts, Arab classical historians said the invading armies of the Fatah were actually “liberators” freeing the oppressed societies outside Arabia.<sup>1</sup> These armies

kept “liberating” peoples, like the Romans had done before, until the “Arab Pax” reached the Pyrenees to the west and China to the east. Centuries later, Spanish conquistadors marched through the jungles and mountains of Central and South America, bringing “Iberian peace” to the Indians. So did the Anglo-Saxons and other Europeans in North America. The French added a new concept in the nineteenth century: *La mission civilatrice*, a special mission to “bring civilization” into North Africa. In other words, all these powers from antiquity to modern times invoked a state of peace that would be expanded in parallel with their colonial rule. And on top of sociopolitical values, religions often played a dominant role in justifying war and peace.

Before the main monotheist religions began to impact world history, almost all beliefs were used as incentives to territorial aggrandizement and overseas invasions. And even when polytheism receded in front of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in Europe and parts of Africa and Asia, the “marching orders” of the monotheist religions continued to rely heavily on the divine. To ancient Hebrews, for example, the “marching order” was to head toward a specific land, Canaan, and seize it in the name of God. Christians received a wider marching order, to bring the “godly good news to all peoples.” Islam went even further by following a more powerful marching order: to “bring all peoples under the word of Allah.” Each one of these religious projects developed a different geopolitical history. An ancient Israel was established, with shrinking and expanding borders for centuries, with the Jewish religion as its soul, in war and peace. Christianity sought to separate the affairs of Caesar from those of God, rejecting violence among humans. Christian politics wasn’t supposed to exist, let alone Christian wars. But Christian emperors and kings continued to clash as those before Jesus had. Islam expanded within Arabia and into the outside world as a result of major battles, with Fatah and jihad as the epicenter of the caliphates. In short, the divine remained involved in war and peace, regardless of how far and deep the theological, warlike orders from one religion against the other. Monotheist faiths and most other religions are part of the history of nations and civilizations, with their continuous conflicts. But with intellectual revolutions, enlightenment, political development, and reforms, a consensus emerged as the modern nation-state came into existence: more and more, political philosophies and cultures prescribed a more earthly source for the norms of conflicts, and the rationale for religious war slowly shrank. With the American and French Revolutions, British reforms, Italian-Vatican

agreements, and the Russian Revolution, state and religion were separated, and theological regimes collapsed in the West. The last religious injunction for military action before the formation of the League of Nations was the Ottoman sultan's call for jihad against the Allies and in favor of the Central Powers during World War I. Indeed the call by the Ottoman sultan for state jihad in 1914 was the last before the fall of the sultanate in 1922.

But the disappearance of direct religious wars from world politics and of religious influence from the making of wars in the early twentieth century didn't stop nationalist and social ideologies from producing conflicts that were just as destructive, reaching higher levels of technological violence. In World War I, millions died for the sake of nationalism, but democracies emerged victorious. World War II witnessed Nazism and Fascism obliterating tens of millions of men and women before being defeated again by the forces of transatlantic democracies and their Soviet ally. A third global conflict resumed between Western democracies and the Communist bloc but did not end with a world war. The nuclear dilemma on both sides prevented mutually assured destruction. Although regional wars across the planet have taken place in subsequent decades, from the Middle East to South Asia, a belief in international peace has unified diplomatic claims on all continents, at least in theory. Since 1954, the United Nations—at least in principle—has elevated peace to a worldwide political philosophy. Under the United Nations, peace keeping and peace building received vast endorsement, albeit depending on state interest. But during the Cold War, the threat of destructive ideological wars persisted. Pro-Soviet forces and their allies often took to the battlefield to conduct wars against the “enemies” of the proletariat. From Vietnam, Cambodia, and the crushing of East Europe's popular uprisings to international Soviet-inspired terrorism, state Communism appeared to be the last threat to democracies. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of Moscow's Soviet establishment in 1991, world peace was supposed to have been reinforced. Without the nuclear duel between the United States and the USSR, the Cold War ended. On a planetary scale, it was thought that no global movement aimed seriously at world domination, or at least intended to reestablish a past empire. War obviously hadn't been eradicated, however, as nationalism, ethnic strife, and other tensions persisted across the continents. The two Yugoslav conflicts, the Rwandan genocide, Sudan's civil war, and a score of local violent conflicts proved that.

But democracies felt they had the upper hand in the 1990s and began to prepare for what they thought would be an advanced international peace process, with mechanisms and teeth. At the United Nations, the traditional Soviet veto was gone; Communist China didn't choose to replace the older Communist brother in world affairs but to secure its economic dominance first, learning from Moscow's mistakes. Multinational forces, mostly put together by an expanding NATO, seemed to be efficient in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Rwandan disaster, apparently, only encouraged the United Nations and Western powers to put more effort into preempting future catastrophes. And it appeared that the Arab-Israeli conflict could be contained by a Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Regional crises and local violence were thriving still, but the international community seemed able to close in on the renegades, though not without difficulties. South Africa was emancipated, Germany was reunified, East Timor was granted independence, and all former republics of the Soviet Union were recognized. In conclusion, the 1990s projected democracies as the long-term victors of a very bloody twentieth century.

This view of the world was enhanced by the fact that after the demise of the Soviet threat, there were no significant forces on the world stage challenging the very essence of international law or of the political philosophy hailed by Western democracies and their allies around the world. Even when governments, regimes, and organizations collided and fought against each other, they all referred to the same set of ideas and principles. Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic was tried in The Hague for "crimes against humanity," as were militia leaders from Africa. Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) disagreed on many items but referred to the same charter of the United Nations. Anti-Americans, antiglobalists, pro-free marketers, nationalists, secessionists, opposing political parties in Western democracies, transitional regimes in the former Soviet Union, Scandinavian social democracies, Japanese political parties, Arab and Third World dictatorships, regardless of the degree of democratization within one or the other system, referred to one higher set of ideals and overarching principles in international relations, of which they all claimed to be part. Liberal democracies such as Canada and New Zealand and oppressive regimes such as Zaire and Burma all knew the worldwide standards of respect for human rights, but applied them differently. In short, the international community seemed to have become a large basket of various governments and regimes, with a set of

ideas about war and peace recognized in theory but practiced dramatically differently.

In this setting of the early 1990s, liberal democracies felt they were leaders in a unified vision of a world hoping for international peace, though there were obvious failures in reaching it. Unfortunately for these democracies, they were wrong in their assessment. For there were players on the world stage who not only disputed the leadership role of the advanced democracies in international relations, but also rejected the very system of values upon which modern society had based its advances. These were the jihadists.

Not unlike other ideological movements throughout modern history, the self-described jihadists of various doctrinal persuasions rejected the international system that had been reached by consensus, the political culture advocated by democracies, and the principles upon which human rights were declared to be universal and inalienable. After Nazism and Fascism claimed a racially and nationally based world order in contradiction with the League of Nations, and after Soviet Bolshevism rejected liberal freedoms, jihadi Salafism and Khumeinism announced to the world that they not only would reject the democratic basis of modern international relations for themselves, but also planned to impose their own totalitarian system upon all nations. This post-Soviet form of totalitarianism is something the world has had to face since the 1990s, at first in fits and starts, but then openly after 9/11, because it is at the roots of the War on Terrorism and more specifically Jihadism.

This new jihadist totalitarianism is a reality with dire consequences for the current equation of international relations and the search for peace—in the UN Charter, for example—for the simple reason that the ideology behind the new wars against the “infidels” does not see peace as most players in world politics do. To the followers of al Qaeda, Islamic jihad, Combat Salafism, Wahabism, and Hezbollah, to name the main players in the field, the concept of peace does not coincide with international standards, let alone democracies’ expectations. Even Soviet Communists, who developed their own ideological notion of “final peace,” nevertheless operated within diplomatic and legal debates under the same umbrella of ideas as others when negotiating peaceful resolutions to crises. Jihadists, in contrast, adopt principles radically opposed to those of all other players, liberals and Marxists alike.

The Islamists reject the transformations of international relations that have taken place over the centuries and have led to the new ideals of war and



peace in the West. The body of intellectual achievements that have taken place in Europe, America, and the modernizing Muslim countries between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries are seen as null and void by jihadi ideologues. First of all, the separation of state and religion is not an acceptable concept to Islamists. This alone ensures that the universal results of the Western liberal revolutions, as well as of the Marxist attempts to create criteria for a modern society, and even the reforms embraced by modern Muslims, are all equally irrelevant: the jihadists of the twenty-first century consider themselves the direct successors of the Muslim dynasties of the Middle Ages. They believe they are actually the heirs of the previous caliphates and accept to a degree the formal legality of the Ottoman Sultanate. The world's democracies are coming to realize, not without pain, that the new enemies of international law have a vision of the future that is literally a restoration of the distant past. The notion of "peace" in jihadi thought is based on a millennial concept that, 13 centuries ago, was standing policy within the Islamic empire, in much the same way that "godly wars" were legitimate in biblical times and in the Christian medieval era. To democracies, and to some extent all members of the international community, world peace is the ultimate objective to reach and one of the highest values to spread. But to jihadists, "peace" is just a state of affairs between one war and another—or, to be more precise, an acceptable condition when it is part of the readjustment of the balance of power in favor of Islam or a path to the surrender of the infidel. For in the eyes of the *jihadiyyeen* (jihadists), history is nothing but a continuous "clash of civilizations," which can end only when the one they claim to represent finally triumphs over all others. Thus victory—theirs—is a prerequisite for lasting peace. It is not hard to see why, insofar as there is an "international community" based on democratic standards and the idea of universal human rights, the jihadists lie outside it. The "need" for a final victory by the jihadists is what makes the clash between civilizations in modern times one of their highest objectives.

## THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

When Professor Samuel Huntington published his famous article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, "The Clash of Civilizations?,"<sup>22</sup> it triggered one of the 1990s' most intense debates. In America, and then around the world, the ideas advanced by Huntington created a wide divide between his supporters and the

dominant schools in international relations. A distinguished Harvard professor, Huntington argued that after the Cold War, large civilizations would constitute the basis for interaction on the world stage. He identified the major players in diplomacy, wars, and economics: the Western, Islamic, Slavic-Orthodox, African, Latin American, Hindu, Sinic (Chinese), Buddhist, and so on. Huntington argued that countries would cluster politically in “civilizations” instead of East-West or North-South groupings, and conflicts would arise among these large civilization-based alliances. In the following years, scores of American and European intellectuals, followed by their counterparts in many other regions, criticized this as a “false and misleading” theory in international politics.<sup>3</sup> Earlier in the decade, Francis Fukuyama had argued that the main global confrontations ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and that humanity is now seeking to solve problems other than those of identity and culture.<sup>4</sup> “The clash of civilizations doesn’t exist” was the response at every single meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and other related social science forums after the publication of Fukuyama’s article in *Foreign Affairs* and the subsequent book, which appeared in 1996.<sup>5</sup>

Western and international academic elites abhorred the Huntington vision, accusing it of “bringing the world centuries backwards.”<sup>6</sup> In a nutshell, the mainstream thinking argued that religious and cultural conflicts have existed for centuries, but “modern” clashes aren’t about “civilizations” inasmuch as they take place because of economic and national interests. In their response to the theory, liberals and Marxists lined up behind a unified opposition to Huntington’s thesis. In the Arab and Muslim world, writers and commentators joined the fray against the idea that Islamic civilization is fighting on several fronts against “others.” In his description of the conflicts, Huntington identified what he saw as the “bloody borders of the Islamic civilizations,” with wars in Chechnya, Sudan, Kashmir, the Philippines, and so on. Muslim intellectuals blasted back by arguing that Muslim countries were under attack by the West, not the other way around. Arab-American commentators such as Edward Said accused the likes of Huntington, and before him Bernard Lewis, of legitimizing imperialism and neocolonialism. Thus, Western democracies’ intellectual establishment and its Muslim counterparts refused to admit that civilizations were clashing—before 9/11.

The supporters of Huntington’s theory formed a core group, which was in the minority throughout the 1990s. The international intellectual consen-

sus ranged from far left to liberal. The Marxists claimed that “cultural civilizations do not exist; it is all about economic oppression.”<sup>7</sup>

Liberals affirmed that “civilization is universal but parts of it are left behind by the more endowed parts, now in the West.”<sup>8</sup>

But more scientific findings, identified as historicist-legalist, asserted that though indeed religious and geocultural civilizations had clashed for centuries from ancient times onward, enlightenment, industrial revolution, and democratization have actually shifted that clash and halted it. This theory accepted Huntington’s assertion as valid, but only for previous centuries. Pre-9/11, democracies would at the most admit only that civilizations had clashed in the past, but held that they weren’t anymore.<sup>9</sup>

With all modesty, I should mention that according to the Area Arab Studies of the Library of Congress, my own work on international relations of civilizations preceded Professor Huntington’s by 14 years. In my book *al Taadudiya*,<sup>10</sup> I introduced the concept of a world divided into main civilizations, mostly religious, as a *summa divisio* (highest division) of nations and cultures. Titled “The Organization and Coexistence of Civilizations,” a chapter describes the wider civilizational webs, linguistic subgroups, and national and ethnic entities. Despite the Cold War realities of the time, I argued that indeed civilizations exist not only culturally, but also politically, including via their votes at the United Nations. But I theorized that although civilizations have clashed throughout history, they can coexist like any other subgroups. They act like large and loose entities, often divided, but at some times united on global issues. Mainly, it is important to admit that civilizations do indeed exist as world realities; that they do have historical differences, but that evolution in international relations and law has been able to reduce and in many cases reverse these tensions. According to Professor Huntington’s theory, however, the clash is unstoppable.

Strangely, unexpected endorsers of the theory of civilizations have been the jihadists. Since the launching of their movements in the twentieth century, both Salafists and Khumeinists asserted strongly that their struggle is about the *umma* (umma in Arabic language means literally “nation” but could also mean “universal community”), which in their view *is* the global Islamic civilization. Contemporary jihadist ideologues, such as Abdel Wahab (nineteenth century), Hassan al Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Imam Khumeini (twentieth century), based their doctrines on the fundamental belief that a *Hadara Islamiya* (Islamic civilization) continues to exist, despite the collapse of the

caliphate in the 1920s, and is under attack by the forces of *kufir* (infidelism) worldwide. These militant currents, self-identified as *Islamiyun* (Islamists), borrowed the previous self-identification of the highest religious and political authority in the Muslim world, known as the sultanate under the Ottomans and the caliphate under the Arab dynasties. Before the collapse of the Turkish Empire in 1924 at the hands of secular general Mustafa Kemal, the Muslim world was ruled (at least nominally) by a supreme authority, the caliph.<sup>11</sup> Since the seventh century, with no significant interruptions, Muslim dynasties have ruled vast parts of Asia, Africa, and Europe, assigning regions and countries to *walis* (governors). The Muslim empires, as in other areas of the world, have led their subjects in wars and political crises. For centuries they clashed with other empires, including Christian, Hindu, and African. The caliphate represented Muslim civilization in the same way as the Papacy and the Byzantine Crown represented Christian civilization at some stage of history. Muslim geopolitics were influenced by Islamic theology a great deal, as were Hebrew geopolitics in biblical times and the actions of Christian empires during the Middle Ages.

But while ancient Israel came to an abrupt end in 70 AD/CE, the Hindu religious kingdoms under the Moguls in the fifteenth century, and the various Christian empires (as well as the papal states) by the end of the nineteenth, the last Muslim empire ended only in the early 1920s. Historically, by the beginning of the twentieth century, international society had withdrawn its recognition of universal religious empires and instead viewed nations and states as sole representatives of peoples. The League of Nations, followed by the United Nations, didn't include a concept of civilizations, but only nation-states. The idea of civilizations remained a vague cultural reference in academic, literary, and popular circles. However, nationalist ideologies would often exacerbate the "civilizational" affiliation of their nationality. Found mostly on the right, as in the case of extreme British, French, German, Russian, and Hindu nationalisms, these attitudes were also predominant among Arab nationalists, from both right and left wings.<sup>12</sup>

In the mainstream Arab Muslim intelligentsia, the wider *Hadaara* (civilization) became a center of pride and a serious component of public policy. A sense of belonging to a Muslim civilization became part of almost all political ideologies, from Nasserism to Baathism, even though secular. However, it was the Islamists who took the concept of global Islamic civilization literally; the Islamists in general and the jihadists in particular, since the 1920s, were

bent on reconstructing the caliphate as a hub for the *umma*, the wider house of the “civilization of Islam.” In practical terms, this means that the jihadists not only believe in the continuous existence of a civilization as a real political entity, but also are committed to removing any obstruction to its revival, including 21 Arab governments and more than 50 Muslim states—all of which are to be subsumed under the caliphate. And beyond the rebuilding of the caliphate, the Islamo-jihadists are committed to pursuing past conquests into infidel lands, “at the discretion of Allah and the orders of a reinstated Caliph.”<sup>13</sup> In sum, not only do jihadists believe in the clash of civilizations, but they are consciously practicing it. It is not merely a passive clash of divergent civilizations, but an active war. In fact, while mainstream Muslim governments have integrated international law and global institutions, the Salafist and Khumeinist long-term objective is to dismantle international relations as we know them and reinstate *dar el Islam* (house of Islam).<sup>14</sup>

More pertinent for the War on Terrorism and its overarching War of Ideas is the fact that the jihadists are ready to kill and die for the *idea* of an *umma* civilization. And that fact was mostly missed by Western democracies until very recently. Instead, intellectual leaders in the international community, both liberals and Marxists, attempted to address the economic root causes of terror and violent crisis but again failed to understand the Islamist paradigm.<sup>15</sup>

## THE ECONOMY DEBATE

Centuries before the Marxists reduced all social movements to the economy of social classes, thinkers, politicians, and diplomats from all cultures used water, agriculture, booty, lands, gold, silver, technologies, and goods as “material” roots for war and conquest. Put in simple terms, all wars and conflicts, even the most religious and theological, had economic goals at their center. A debate rages and probably will continue to rage between believers and atheists, as well as among people of divergent beliefs, as to whether, and how, a deity intervenes in or directs human history. Existential reflection on human origins and the human condition will always swing radically between the “scientific idea” that humans are material beings who rose to consciousness, and the “spiritual idea” that all existence, including human, is of divine origin. But underlying the philosophical and theological debate about human destiny, geopolitics attempts to explain social actions regardless of

the unsolved mysteries of the universe. And here debate rages as well, among those who see the history of religion as strictly an economic one, those who see it as a spiritual one, and those who see it as a combination of both.

To take one example, the Bible reports that God ordered the Hebrews to move toward the land of Canaan. But a socioeconomic interpretation of these events links them to the migration of ancient Semitic tribes to lands with water within the Fertile Crescent. In Christian theology, God sent his Son Jesus to save humanity from sin. Historians, on the other hand, speak of the maturing of the Greco-Roman civilization toward monotheism. In Islam, Allah ordered Mohammed to reveal a new religion and spread it to all peoples. A sociological analysis shows that extreme, harsh conditions inside the Arabian Peninsula pushed the nomadic tribes to conquer the northern and more arable lands of Syria, Mesopotamia, and beyond.

Theological and sociological interpretations of world events intertwine and mingle; but after centuries of evolution, the international community of modern times has come to see in economics a human need in itself, to be addressed as such, regardless of religious imperatives. With the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, liberalism, and the rise of behavioral and other social sciences, a consensus grew within the international academic elite on the centrality of economics in historical movements. Although the debate about the explanation of these economics, their cultural impact, and their future evolution has remained lively, a consensus in political thought has emerged: economics can affect, and indeed radically change, the thinking, policies, and strategies of ideological movements, particularly those inspired by theologies.

In Marxist thinking, economics constitutes the entirety of what ideological movements are about. Hence, changing the economics of social classes would transform movements, including religiously motivated ones, into mostly social energies. In liberal thinking, economics is the “dominant part” of ideological currents, but other ingredients, such as cultural, historical, and political forces, have to be factored in as well. To conservatives, economics is only one component of the political thinking process (including ideological movements).

Political systems find their places along this continuum as well. Unlike dictatorships and autocracies, democracies include and tolerate all types of economic thinking, as an expression of pluralism. But by the end of the twen-

tieth century, and as political violence grew exponentially across continents, the most common international attitude toward terrorism has been an agreement on the so-called root causes. The common thread has been to consider that the most important reason behind the rise of terror—including fundamentalist terrorism, and especially jihadi terrorism—is the so-called inequalities, the postcolonial and socially frustrated segments of the economically disfavored and underdeveloped areas in the Muslim world. A consensus among world elites that crosses political divides has developed based upon this view of jihadi terrorism.

“Why do they hate us?” asked America in the wake of 9/11. “Because of their economic conditions,” answered the overwhelming majority of social scientists, both Marxist and liberal, and more intensely the Middle East Studies elite in the West. Falling into a familiar trap, the leading thinkers of democracies confused the Third World as a whole with Islamic fundamentalists, and Muslim societies with jihadists. For even if economics can be used to explain most historical events and analyze ideologies, a global explanation of any social phenomenon, such as terrorism, and Jihadism in particular, has to factor in other psychological, political, and historical ingredients. Democracies looked at Jihadism as one of the religiously inspired ideologies that can relate to the universal socioeconomic order, over which right- and left-wing ideologies struggle. And here was the analytical mistake of international elites, from the extreme left to the extreme right: Jihadism is not *another* ideology competing for the existing world order, with its economic, social, and financial incentives. Rather, it is an ideology trying to destroy the current order and replace it with another world order altogether. Philosophical nuances can make great differences in real politics, as with the different economic visions of capitalists, Communists, Fascists, and even conservative and religious movements. Democracies believe they can accommodate all economic views and ideological visions—as long as the overarching objective is the “democratic state,” where all can coexist. But liberal democracies, and with them entire societies, have paid dearly for this conceptual mistake, as when Western democracies trusted Nazi and Fascist regimes, and when the Free World abandoned Europe and Central Asia to a Soviet occupation that some argued was building a “just society.” It is happening again when Western elites affirm that jihadist groups and Islamist regimes are nothing but an expression of transitional economies and social frustration.

As I will note later, the jihadist ideology is not economically inspired, even though its elites profit from its political success—for example, the Taliban, the Sudanese regime, and Iran’s ruling establishment. The leaders of the Islamist movements, from Abdel Wahab of Arabia, to Hassan al Banna and Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, to Salafi clerics such as Ibn al Uthaymeen and al Albani in the Saudi Kingdom, and many others around the globe, have been very clear in their writings and speeches: it is not about economics, nor about enhancing the socioeconomic conditions of Muslims; the *Aqida al Islamiya* (Islamist doctrine) is about the “will of Allah.” It is about the spread of an ideology, mainly through jihad, first within the Muslim world and then beyond. Once the caliphate is reestablished, then “justice,” including social and economic justice, will prevail. It is supremely ironic that though many intellectuals in the West attribute the claims and actions of the Islamists and jihadists to “dire socioeconomic conditions,” the Islamists themselves declare just the opposite! Osama bin Laden, the Saudi multimillionaire, has no economic agenda for the *umma*. When he speaks of its resources as being plundered by the “Crusaders and the Jews,” he intends to regain it so as to reinstate a caliphate as rich as the lost sultanate. Ayman Zawahiri, al Qaeda’s number two, was a medical doctor in Egypt, not a proletarian. On al Jazeera TV (generously funded by Qatar’s oil industry), the prominent cleric Sheikh Yusef al Qardawi tells his audience, “Your jihad is wealth in itself. You’re not here on this Earth to reach material equality or financial prominence; you’re here to spread the *deen* (religion) of Allah.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Jihadism has recruited rich and poor, bourgeois and workers, immigrants and natives alike. Its outreach is vertical across classes and horizontal across nations. Democracies have missed this enormous “detail” just as much as they have confused nationalism and fundamentalism.

## THE NATIONALISM DEBATE

The most debated phenomenon over the past two centuries in the industrialized world and many colonial regions has been nationalism. The idea of a nation is old but has witnessed a constant evolution. Linguistically, it has meant many things to many cultures and peoples. Attempts to define the concept of “nation” have been continuous and varied from school to school in social science. The classical German school, known as “objective,” claimed that a nation is defined by history, language, geography, and sometimes race. In



contrast, the French school, using the “subjective” concept, argued that a nation is determined by the will of its members to live together as a nation. Jean Jacques Rousseau and others sympathized with the right of self-determination. More modern approaches, using an American perspective, have viewed the legitimacy of a nation through its functionality: if it functions like a nation and looks like one, then it is one. More hybrid approaches have attempted to include all of the above parameters; that debate is still open, particularly with the emergence of the ethnic factor. But whatever the definition of a “nation,” it is its derivative that has caused trouble in all stages of world history and particularly the modern era: nationalism.

Defining the collective identity of a nation is one thing. Struggling or even making war on behalf of this identity, under the ideology of nationalism, is something else. Nationalism has served positive purposes but has also caused human devastation. Nationalists have helped determine the identity of peoples, draw borders, liberate countries from foreign occupation, and protect cultural identity. They have played a significant role in bringing tyrannies down, ending absolutism, and opening the path to modernity. But extreme nationalist movements have also caused civil wars, occupations of other countries, colonialism, isolationism, and even global wars. The exaggeration of German, French, Italian, Spanish, English, Turkish, Arab, Russian, Japanese, Chinese, and many other nationalisms in the modern era has led to the Holocaust, genocides, massacres, and oppression. German Nazism and Italian Fascism are only among the worst examples. Russian extreme nationalism, even under a Marxist regime, was responsible for the suppression of non-Russian nationalities. Arab nationalism has oppressed numerous minorities in the Middle East. In the current state of international relations, democracies recognize nationalism as a legitimate movement when it expresses the will of a national resistance against occupation, such as during World War II, and when the nationalist “resistance” is a form of decolonization. But democracies have come to realize the excessive role of nationalism in such cases as the ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia or the nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. However, Western democracies have not consistently exposed such nationalist “excesses” in the twentieth century. For example, the United States and Europe rushed to condemn Yugoslav ethnic cleansing, and rightly so—but not Sudan’s similar drama. They spent energy to solve Cyprus’s crisis in 1974, but very little to help Nigeria in its civil war in the 1960s.

Despite these inconsistencies, democracies have at least been attempting to better understand “national-ethnic” crises around the world, as in Darfur, Iraq, East Timor, and other comparable cases. What Western democracies have failed to see clearly is the relationship between nationalism and Jihadism, especially in the context of the War on Terror. As mentioned above, many in the West confused the jihadi movement and its overarching Islamist current with a reaction on behalf of “underdogs”—victims of colonialism, neocolonialism, and underdevelopment. The same misguided application to jihadis of the rationale of economic factors was also committed with regard to national identities. A main argument floating among elite thinkers and commentators in the United States and Europe has been—and remains—that the jihadists in different geographical locations are the expression of the “national frustration” of the populations they represent. Hence, during the 1990s, the Wahabis of Chechnya were presented on both sides of the Atlantic as a “nationalist resistance, who happen to be Islamists.”<sup>17</sup> Similar interpretations were applied to Jaish e Taiba and Jaish Mohammad in Kashmir, Abu Sayyaf in the southern Philippines, and to a certain extent Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The analytical mistake made in the West after the Cold War was to not understand the very nature of the jihadi ideology: it is a pan-nationalist, cross-national, and theologically inspired doctrine. The Salafi vision of the international struggle opposes what they perceive as *dar el Islam*, the abode of Islam worldwide, with the rest of the world, which they dub *dar el harb* (the war zone). The Islamists may well operate in the midst of a specific nationality (Arab, Turkish, Asian) and in the context of a particular country (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia), but their aim is for the whole *umma*, which theoretically would include all 52 Muslim states. The jihadists are ideological internationalists by definition. Mohammed Atta, an Egyptian, and Ziad Jarrah, a Lebanese, along with 15 Saudi citizens perpetrated the attacks of September 11, 2001, against a country designated as an enemy of “all Muslims” by al Qaeda. Abdallah Azzam, a Palestinian, was fighting the Soviet Russians in Afghanistan instead of the Israelis at home. More recently, American citizens, supporters of al Qaeda, have conducted warfare in central Asia, thousands of miles away from their homes.

Western intellectuals, in the main, have reacted too fast to the attacks of 9/11 by imputing them to a so-called global frustration by Arabs and Muslims over the problem of Palestine. By doing so, they have confused interna-

tional jihadists and Palestinian nationalists. In the jihadi view, expressed by bin Laden, Zawahiri, and many radical clerics such as al Qardawi, Palestine is one issue among many in the greater confrontation with the *kuffar* (infidels). It may be the main issue, especially to Palestinian Islamists, but not the single jihadi issue worldwide. For whereas the PLO's first objective is to establish a Palestinian state on as much land as possible, al Qaeda's agenda in Palestine is to dismantle Israel, then merge the "province" of Palestine into the greater caliphate. In short, the jihadis are not nationalists, but internationalist Islamists. Such nuances are crucial in the War of Ideas.

Policy planners commit tremendous mistakes if they confuse a nationalist claim with a jihadi one. The two may overlap in political propaganda and on the battlefield, but they are distinct spheres with opposed agendas. Jihadism, in its various robes—Salafism, Wahabism, Deobandism, Khumeinism—can easily use nationalist causes, take over these causes, and fuel ethnic strife. But at the end of the day, nationalism has its own logic and Jihadism another, and democracies must understand the differences if the War of Ideas with the terrorists is to be won with the support of nationalities and not against their will.