

Knowing  
the  
Enemy

*Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror*

Mary R. Habeck

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## 5 *The Clash of Civilizations, Part I*

### THE AMERICAN CAMPAIGN TO SUPPRESS ISLAM

The conflict that jihadis believe is inevitable has nothing to do with Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations.” Instead it is a fusion of their views of liberalism as the ultimate evil with medieval Islamic theories that divided the world into two hostile factions: the House of Islam and the House of War.<sup>1</sup> The House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) included all territory under the rule of Islam, while the House of War (*dar al-barb*) was the rest of the world that refused to recognize the authority of Islam and therefore was open to warfare. Unlike most Muslims today, jihadis accept this dichotomous view of the world—it is, in fact, the centerpiece of their foreign policies—although they have made significant changes to the original medieval theory. Most importantly, jihadis rarely talk about the “House of Islam” because few of them believe that true Islam exists anywhere in the world. In-

stead a majority argue that the fundamental division of the world is between supporters of the Truth (al-Haqq—true Islam) and its eternal enemy, falsehood (batil)—also called “unbelief” (kufr).<sup>2</sup> The two are completely incompatible. When the first messengers were sent to mankind by God to preach the Truth, falsehood immediately arose to oppose it. For jihadis, the struggle between the two principles, which are always embodied by groups of people, is an “inherent part of Allah’s creation” and one of the “universal laws of life,” laid down in the Qur’an.<sup>3</sup> In fact God ordained a law of enmity between human beings at the beginning of time so that “it is in the nature of the unbeliever to hate Islam and Muslims.”<sup>4</sup> ‘Umar Bakri Mohammad takes this line of reasoning one step further, arguing that by their very nature all ideologies must expand or contract: there is no middle ground of coexistence or cooperation. Thus Islam must expand to fill the entire world or else falsehood in its many guises will do so.<sup>5</sup>

For some jihadis it is not enough to assert that the conflict is a natural part of God’s order. To satisfy their reading of Islamic law, they must find some way to show that the current enemies of Islam are the aggressors, that it is they who have begun the war that continues to this day. The result is three elaborate theories about “unbelief” that are used to blame anyone other than “true” Muslims for the conflict between Islam and liberalism. One theory claims that people or groups mentioned in the Qur’an and hadith—the unbelievers who confronted Muhammad—are the same today as they were fourteen hundred years ago; another

that the enemies of Islam represent a concept known as *taghut*, which is often mentioned in the sacred texts; or, if the current enemies cannot have any possible connection to the Qur'anic narratives, a third theory argues that they somehow embody the principle of unbelief (or falsehood). It is worth emphasizing that by taking this interpretive route, these jihadis begin by locating the problems of the Muslim community within the actions of outsiders and do not therefore blame other Muslims as greatly for the economic, political, or social difficulties of the umma. This is an important point, because it has meant that jihadist groups have generally targeted unbelievers rather than ordinary Muslims although, as we shall see, they have found ways to excuse the “incidental” deaths of even innocent Muslims.

The first theory about unbelief is generally the most common, and jihadis who use it ascribe to the concept of “archetypes” discussed earlier. They assert that Jews and Christians, the modern proponents of liberalism, have the very same attributes and goals as the communities Muhammad first clashed with, still desiring especially the destruction of Islam. Qutb, one of the foremost proponents of this view, argued repeatedly throughout his commentary on the Qur'an that the Jews allied themselves with unbelief, began the war with Muhammad, and have continued their deadly struggle to this day.<sup>6</sup> In his reading of the Jews today, they are exactly the same people as they were fourteen centuries ago, allowing Muslims to use the Qur'an and hadith to understand their nature and their strategies and how to defeat them.<sup>7</sup> Other

jihadis (and many Islamists) have agreed with Qutb, describing in detail the inherent evil of the Jews and the eternal characteristics that have earned them God's curse.<sup>8</sup> Because of this incompatibility of Islam and the Jews, war with them is, bin Ladin has said, "inevitable."<sup>9</sup>

The jihadis condemn as well the Christians, most of whom rejected Muhammad's message and (in the form of the Byzantine Empire) fought with the nascent Islamic state. A verse from the Qur'an often repeated by the jihadis is "Never will the Jews and Christians be satisfied with you until you leave your religion." Although obviously directed at Muhammad, jihadis have reinterpreted the "you" to mean all Muslims and the "Jews and Christians" to mean Europe and America with their "religion" of liberalism. Invective directed against these "Christians" today resembles that used against the Jews.<sup>10</sup> Another tack is taken by a jihadist argument that modern Christians are controlled by the Jews, who plan to exploit them for the original Jewish goal of destroying Islam.<sup>11</sup>

Qutb believed that the nature of the Jews and Christians, as revealed in the Qur'an and hadith, showed that they were entirely responsible for the struggle between Islam and the unbelievers. He asserted that the "peoples of earlier revelations"<sup>12</sup> knew that Muhammad spoke the truth and that what he recited confirmed their own books.<sup>13</sup> Why then, despite this knowledge, did they choose to side with "falsehood" and "unbelief" and attack him? Qutb argued that there were many reasons: the envy



of the unbelievers, who did not want prophets sent to anyone other than their own peoples; the grudges and hatreds of the Jews; and the “deviance” and “sinfulness” of both communities, which made them unwilling to admit that Muhammad might be right, especially when he pointed out their corruption.<sup>14</sup> This intentional malice puts the guilt for the original confrontation between Muhammad and the Jews/Christians solely on the “people of the book.” Later jihadis have stressed that the Jews and Christians were the military aggressors as well, thus making these communities the instigators of both the intellectual and physical sides of the “eternal” struggle.

A second way of viewing the conflict between Islam and the rest of the world is through the lens of the Qur’anic word *taghut* (tyranny).<sup>15</sup> By identifying leaders of the liberal West—men like Bush, Blair, or Berlusconi—with this religious term, the jihadis are able to claim that they share the characteristics of the tyrants mentioned in the sacred texts. They can then argue that, as with Pharaoh and other godless oppressors of the Qur’an and hadith, so the unbelievers today want to dominate the world. The tyrants know—as did Pharaoh—that the Truth, opposed to tyranny and oppression by its very nature and calling, is the only obstacle to these plans. Therefore, they know that they must get rid of Islam and the faithful Muslims if their wicked designs are to succeed. This syllogism again allows jihadis to seek answers for how to deal with the conflict by turning to the Qur’an and hadith.

The final concept was also first raised by Qutb and now finds wide acceptance among many jihadist groups. The basic idea is that various nations and peoples have embodied unbelief throughout time. The first representatives of unbelief were, of course, the Jews and early Christians. Once they were prevented from fulfilling their plans, the Christian West (initially represented by the Byzantine Empire), embarked on a vicious war against the Islamic community in an attempt to wipe it out. Only the superior strategies and military acumen of Muhammad and his successors prevented this from happening. When Byzantium faltered, Rome stepped in and began the Crusades as a holy war against Islam itself. The aim of the Crusades was thus not to prevent attacks on pilgrims, to support Constantinople in its war with various Islamic states, nor to take back Jerusalem from the Saracens, but rather to destroy Islam and kill or convert all the Muslims. The failure of the Crusades to achieve this objective led directly to imperialism and the colonization of Islamic territory, viewed by the jihadis as simply another attempt by the unbelievers to destroy Islam. The five-hundred-year gap between the ending of the Crusades and the start of French and British incursions into Egypt is, by the way, glossed over as if it does not exist. To eliminate Islam, the Christian colonizers used every wicked tool at their disposal (missionary activity, Westernized education, the imposition of French and British legal systems) but were miraculously prevented from harming the true religion. With the collapse of the European empires, the

United States took up the cause and—through its ideology of liberalism—is now the leading spirit behind the attempts by falsehood to destroy Islam and kill or convert the Muslims. Modern jihadist groups recognize the new position of the United States by calling it the “greater Unbelief (Kufr),” an important term taken from the work of Ibn Taymiyya that will be explored in greater depth later. Jihadis stress that this latest chapter in the struggle between Truth and falsehood/unbelief may not be the last, because the conflict is destined to continue until the end of time, when final victory will come to the Muslims.

Each of these embodiments of unbelief has had its own strategies and tactics for attacking Muslims that the jihadis do not see as distinct assaults motivated by specific circumstances, but rather as part of the overall conspiracy to destroy Islam. This “campaign to suppress Islam,” as one jihadist group calls it, began with military and smear attacks by the earliest Jews and Christians. Militarily, jihadis believe that the two communities attacked the early believers whenever they could and were traitorous when they signed treaties. The jihadis also see an ideological side to the campaign, claiming that Jews and Christians distorted the message of Muhammad, blasphemed against God, and denied the prophethood of the founder of Islam. These two sides to the earliest assault on Islam—one military and the other ideological—created a precedent for later attacks that the jihadis believe the enemies of Islam have followed ever since.

The Crusades, in contrast, were a strictly military attempt to

conquer Islamic lands and kill or forcibly convert Muslims. According to Hizb al-Tahrir, European Christians had carefully watched the situation in the Caliphate and waited patiently to attack until the Islamic state was sufficiently weak. When various provinces of the state had managed to break off and begin independent lives, they realized that the time was ripe for conquest.<sup>16</sup> To achieve their nefarious ends, the Crusaders chose a specific strategy of creating in Islamic territory Christian states that would then gradually expand until they took over the entire Muslim community. Jihadis believe that only the dedication to Islam of the Muslims living at that time, and the brave leadership of Salah al-Din, saved the Islamic world from destruction.<sup>17</sup>

There are two implications that jihadis draw from the experience of the Crusades. First and foremost is the idea of the crusades as archetype. Just as certain figures and stories from the Qur'an and hadith repeat themselves throughout history, so too are the Crusades seen as teaching important permanent lessons about the unbelievers and how to defeat them. In its founding manifesto, Hamas states that the group takes very seriously the "lessons" to be learned from the Crusades, most especially that Muslims can face these "raids" and plan how to fight and defeat them "provided that the intentions are pure, the determination is true and that Muslims have benefited from past experiences, rid themselves of the effects of ideological invasion<sup>18</sup> and followed the customs of their ancestors."<sup>19</sup> Hizb al-Tahrir believes the Crusades teach Muslims that true victory will come only if

the unbelievers are expelled from Islamic lands and the Muslims then follow up with further conquests and wars against the unbelievers in their own lands.<sup>20</sup> Other jihadis argue that the choice of strategies by the Crusaders, the creation of dependent states that would act as bridgeheads within the Islamic community, has reappeared with the setting up of the artificial Crusader state of Israel.<sup>21</sup> This is one reason that Qutb, ‘Usama bin Ladin, and other jihadis call their current enemies “Zionist-Crusaders.”

The second implication is that the Crusades never really ended.<sup>22</sup> Although pushed out of the Middle East by the Islamic fervor of faithful Muslims and by Salah al-Din, the Europeans were only rebuffed and not truly defeated. All the interactions of Europeans (and Americans) with the Islamic world after the Middle Ages are seen as continuations of the “crusading spirit,” which is attempting to finish off the offensive begun hundreds of years before.<sup>23</sup> Qutb believed that “all Westerners” carried this spirit “in their blood,” and that it was their hatred of Islam that motivated their attempts to conquer and colonize the Muslims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries<sup>24</sup> through what he called “crusaderist imperialism.”<sup>25</sup> Qutb linked the imperial impulse as well to “international Zionism,” which fought together with the Christians in an unjust war against the only obstacle to their plans for world domination: Islam.<sup>26</sup> He warned that Muslims should not be confused by arguments that the Europeans were no longer motivated by religious feelings, because “when we talk about crusader hostility toward Islam latent in the Euro-

pean soul, we must not be deceived by appearances. We must not be fooled by the pretense of respect for religious freedom or the claim that Europe is not fanatically Christian today as it was at the time of the crusades, so that there is nothing to drive them to fanaticism against Islam as there was in those days. This is all deception and error.”<sup>27</sup> Imperialism was not primarily about economic resources, control of territory, or military domination, but instead, like the Crusades, was about the destruction of Islam.<sup>28</sup> Even more telling was his attack on modern Western scholars who attempted to show that the Crusades were a form of imperialism. This was exactly backward, Qutb wrote: “The truth of the matter is that the latter-day imperialism is but a mask for the crusading spirit, since it is not possible for it to appear in its true form, as it was possible in the Middle Ages.”<sup>29</sup>

Some jihadis, while not rejecting the identification of the Crusades with imperialism, have found other ways to understand this European/Christian/Jewish assault on Islam. A common interpretation, almost certainly influenced by exposure to leftist critiques, condemns the capitalist exploitation of Muslim countries: the purposeful oppression and humiliation visited on colonized territory to steal the wealth of the Muslims and to enrich the imperial center.<sup>30</sup> A word of caution is in order, however, since many jihadis—including Hizb al-Tahrir, al-Muhajiroun, and Supporters of Shari‘ah—use the term capitalist to mean secular liberalism or even democracy. The charge then is not just that the Europeans exploited and oppressed Islamic lands for

financial gain (as the general leftist analysis would have it), but that these “Jews and Christians” stole the wealth of the Muslims and imposed their ideas about modernity, democracy, and liberalism in a deliberate attempt to destroy Islam. The charge against the Jews is made explicitly by Hamas. In its manifesto the group asserts that “with their money they [the Jews] were able to control imperialistic countries and instigate them to colonize many countries in order to enable them to exploit their resources and spread corruption there.”<sup>31</sup> The corruption, of course, includes the subversive ideas, such as liberalism, of the Western world.

Jihadis argue, in fact, that the political and economic aspects of imperialism were, right from the start, combined with an ideological assault on the religion, led by missionaries and orientalists. The imperialist powers set up universities to launch fierce campaigns against “Islamic thoughts” and to shift the allegiance of Muslim students to Western ways of thinking. Western culture was to replace Islamic culture, Western laws were to make obsolete Islamic laws, Muslims were to learn to criticize and even despise their own history and to favor Western history. Meanwhile, orientalists made Muslims doubt their religion by subjecting the Qur’an and hadith to critical analysis while missionaries attempted to convert them to Christianity.<sup>32</sup> As discussed earlier, Sayyid Qutb and Hasan al-Banna were especially sensitive to the ideological assault on Islam.<sup>33</sup> In his commentary on the Qur’an, Qutb denounced the leading intellectuals of his time, arguing that they had been brainwashed by orientalist cri-

tiques of their religion and then implanted by Westerners into the Islamic community in a deliberate attempt to ruin Islam.<sup>34</sup> The unbelievers did not study Islam as a way to understand and appreciate the religion, he wrote, but rather to find its weaknesses and attack it so that they could draw Muslims away from the true faith.<sup>35</sup>

Sayyid Qutb argued that the ideological conflict showed the real essence of the confrontation between the Muslim community and the “Judeo-Christian world.” Despite the physical control of the colonizers, he would write, the confrontation was not over territory or for military domination, but rather it was a struggle whose sole aim was to destroy Islam.<sup>36</sup> Because the war was first and foremost one of faith and belief, it was obvious that the enemies of Islam would have to lead the believers astray from their religion and even to deceive them about the true nature of the conflict.<sup>37</sup> In the end, however, the orientalist and missionaries were unable to remove the “solid rock” of Islam, forcing Europeans to find another way to destroy the religion.<sup>38</sup>

On 3 March 1924 they finally succeeded, carrying out what one jihadi has called “the mother of all crimes”: the abolition of the Caliphate.<sup>39</sup> In the jihadist understanding of this catastrophe, the imperialists wanted to dismantle the Caliphate primarily because their enmity for Islam compelled them to do so, and not for imperial profit. Kemal Atatürk was thus the tool of the Jews and British and French colonialists, who used him to strike a decisive blow against the only entity that could uphold the rules



and laws of Islam.<sup>40</sup> The proof of this, jihadis argue, can be seen in the European demand that the shari‘a be eliminated and replaced with European laws, and that a secular state be established in the place of the righteous Caliphate.<sup>41</sup> Atatürk, through this reading of history, becomes an “English agent,” “Jewish criminal,” and “traitor to Islam,” wholly controlled and manipulated by the unbelievers for their evil schemes.<sup>42</sup> Many jihadis agree that since the day that the Caliphate was abolished, “Islam has disappeared from the living of life.”<sup>43</sup>

With the destruction of the Caliphate, the imperialists could move on to implement the other elements of their anti-Islamic conspiracy. One of the most important of these was to divide up the Caliphate (which the jihadists claim included the entire Islamic world) into “cartoon states,” “measly pieces” that they could more easily manipulate.<sup>44</sup> All these petty states—set up on “nationalist, democratic, capitalist or communist models of ‘progress’ and ‘development,’” are not only un-Islamic, they are in fact actively opposed to Islam, serving the global purposes of unbelief.<sup>45</sup> To compound the problem, the imperialist powers put subservient agent rulers in charge of the ministates so that they could maintain their control of Islamic territory even after direct colonization had ended.<sup>46</sup> These deceiving leaders conspire with “their masters” the unbelievers to help the West dominate the world, follow Western directives in all their domestic and foreign policies, and, most importantly, oppress the real Muslims and keep “true” Islam from being implemented.<sup>47</sup> The

heads of most of the Gulf states, the Hashamite rulers of Jordan, Pervez Musharraf, and Husni Mubarak are specifically named as agents of the British, Americans, and other Western powers.<sup>48</sup> The most hated of the “puppets,” however, is the Saudi regime.<sup>49</sup> Hizb al-Tahrir even argues that not only the original Saudi leader, but his spiritual adviser, ‘Abd al-Wahhab, were agents of the British in the unbelievers’ struggle to undermine and eventually destroy the Ottoman Empire.<sup>50</sup>

Al-Qaida agrees with this reading of the leaders in Islamic countries. ‘Usama bin Ladin has long attacked the Saudi ruling family for their abandonment of Islamic law, persecution of the “true” Muslims, economic policies that devastated his homeland, and support for the Americans.<sup>51</sup> As we shall see, it was the latter that would eventually inform his decision to declare war on the United States in 1996. Bin Ladin has also called the heads of Pakistan and “some Arab countries” American agents.<sup>52</sup> An al-Qaida statement from November 2002 accuses the United States of using their Islamic agent rulers to prevent the establishment of shari‘a, to humiliate and imprison the real Muslims, to steal the Islamic community’s wealth, and to surrender to the Jews. Meanwhile, when the Islamic party in Algeria practiced democracy and won the elections, “you unleashed your agents in the Algerian army on to them, to attack them with tanks and guns, to imprison them and torture them.”<sup>53</sup>

The dismantling of the European empires and the collapse of overt imperialism has not, in the minds of the jihadis, ended this

Western strategy in the war against Islam. Russia, France, and Britain are still assumed to be colonial powers, intent on re-asserting their control over the Islamic lands and on resuming their assault on Islam.<sup>54</sup> In the same way, despite the fact that the United States was never involved in imperialist ventures in the Middle East or in any Islamic territory, Americans are also called colonizers who have the same goals as the Europeans. The jihadis believe that the only difference is that the United States has been more cunning in disguising its intentions, engaging in cultural imperialism rather than military or political domination. Using various slogans such as “humanitarian intervention,” and the promise of military accords, mutual security agreements, economic and financial aid, and cultural programs, the United States is insinuating itself into the weak countries that make up the Islamic community in order to dominate and control them.<sup>55</sup>

Jihadis also believe that one true colonial state remains in the Middle East: Israel. As we have already seen, the founding of Israel is taken by jihadis as a continuation of the Crusader strategy of planting Western states on Islamic territory. Israel is thus seen as part of the military assault by the West to “subjugate a portion of the Muslim world permanently.”<sup>56</sup> A further elaboration of this point argues that Israel has three distinct strategic purposes, all serving the interests of Britain and other colonizers: to separate “the Muslim lands in the East from those in the West, making their unity more difficult”; to plant “a new enemy for the

Muslims on their lands, in the first Qiblah [direction of prayer] and the third of the Holiest Mosques. This would draw their attention to a new enemy, focusing all their energies on defeating him and in turn weakening their capability of resisting Western aggression”; and to establish “an advanced base for the disbelieving colonialists” for their further conquests and schemes.<sup>57</sup> Ayman Zawahri and ‘Usama bin Ladin tie this aggression—the founding and continued existence of Israel—to the United States specifically. Zawahri argued that “Israel is a developed American military base in the heart of the Islamic world and in one of its most sacred places. So America must pay the price for its oppressive and brutal policy toward the Muslims, especially in Palestine.”<sup>58</sup> For bin Ladin, the United States and Israel are so intertwined that to talk about “Israel” or the Jews is to talk about America.<sup>59</sup> He in fact declared after the September 11 attacks that “those who distinguish between America and Israel are the real enemies of the [Islamic] nation.”<sup>60</sup> It is interesting that Khomeini agreed with this reading of the relationship between Israel and the United States long before the Six-Days War.<sup>61</sup> The support of the United States explains for jihadis how small Israel has been able to defeat the combined might of the Islamic nation for the past fifty years.<sup>62</sup>

The existence of Israel has other sinister implications, connected to the supposedly ancient struggle with the Jews. At least one jihadist group argues that Israel is part of a Jewish attempt to recapture the lands and honor that were lost 1,400 years ago

when Muhammad defeated Jewish Arab tribes in places like Khaybar.<sup>63</sup> Many more believe that “Zionists” want to expand their current territory until it includes most of the Middle East, creating a “Greater Israel” that—in conjunction with the United States—will eventually try to rule the world.<sup>64</sup> The entire campaign against Iraq (1991–present) is viewed as part of the overall Jewish/American plot to disarm any potential enemies of Israel and ensure Israeli dominance in the Middle East as the first step in this long-term strategy.<sup>65</sup> Other jihadis have accepted European anti-Semitic motifs and see Israel in control of media around the globe, behind every war, and, above all, continually attacking and corrupting Islam.<sup>66</sup>

Israel is supported in its drive to corrupt Islam by a fresh ideological assault on the religion from the West.<sup>67</sup> Dissatisfied with the results of the missionary and orientalist offensive, “unbelief” had to find other ways to destroy Islam and the Islamic way of life. The new attack has some of the elements of the old (such as questioning the truthfulness of Islam and attempting to distort the sacred texts), but it has several additional elements designed to undermine a Muslim “mentality,”<sup>68</sup> including a coordinated assault through the international media, an attack by scientists on the truth of the Qur’an and hadith, and the promotion of a series of Western concepts meant to confuse and demoralize Muslims. Using newspapers, TV, satellite dishes, radio, and the Internet, the unbelievers hope to destroy the morality that forms the bedrock of Islamic society.<sup>69</sup> After exposure to debauched

TV shows like *Baywatch*, Internet pornography, music, dance, and other temptations, Muslims abandon their religious duties—the prayer—and adopt the wicked and un-Islamic behavior of the United States and the rest of the West.<sup>70</sup> An American jihadi is not alone when he laments the media’s “promotion of a degenerate counterculture” that has “corrupted our youth and robbed us of a whole generation of future leaders.”<sup>71</sup> In one of his audiotapes, bin Ladin protests “the crusader media campaigns against the Islamic nation. These campaigns show how malicious are the evils they harbor against the nation in general and against the people of the two holy mosques in particular. The Americans’ intentions have also become clear in statements about the need to change the beliefs, curricula, and morals of Muslims to become more tolerant, as they put it. In clearer terms, it is a religious-economic war. They want the believers to desist from worshipping God so that they can enslave them, occupy their countries, and loot their wealth.”<sup>72</sup> Other “unbelieving” states participate in the West’s attack on Islam, including India, indicted by Kashmiri jihadis for opening up theaters and otherwise spreading corrupt behavior.<sup>73</sup>

A second part of this coordinated offensive has been undertaken by Western scientists, who have apparently worked with political and religious leaders to find the perfect ways to threaten the totalizing truth of Islam. Western scientific ideas like evolution, psychology, and sociology, which create doubt in the minds of the Muslims about their faith, are purposely disseminated

through Western-style education in the Islamic world. On this particular part of the ideological assault, one jihadi writes that “Muslims must remember that the Qur’an is the truth and if scientists contradict what the Qur’an says, then Allah . . . and the Qur’an [are] still correct and they are liars.”<sup>74</sup>

The West has promulgated too a number of devious concepts—“interfaith dialogue,” “integration,” “tolerance,” and “multiculturalism”—specifically designed to reduce a Muslim’s attachment to the community and Islamic ideals, while convincing Muslims that other religions and cultures are the equal of Islam.<sup>75</sup> The West used “nationalism,” on the other hand, to split up the community on racial or ethnic grounds and thus weaken the entire Islamic world.<sup>76</sup> Likewise, jihadis insist that the notions of “moderate Muslims” and “fundamentalist Muslims” are a Western invention meant to create divisions within the umma and thus destroy its greatest strength: the unity of all Muslims.<sup>77</sup> Fundamentalism is a particular bugbear for the jihadis, who recognize that this label has cost them prestige in the eyes of moderate Muslims.<sup>78</sup> Three general lines of argument are to assert that all true Muslims—including Muhammad—are, by the West’s definition, fundamentalists; that without the fundamentalists Islam would have been destroyed long ago; and that in any case this is an artificial category created by the West to attack the true Muslims.<sup>79</sup> The related campaign against terrorists and terrorism has led to two separate responses. Some jihadis embrace the terms, arguing that the Qur’an and hadith command the believ-

ers to terrorize their enemies while others see this as just another slur used to malign the only tactics that Muslims have to wage war on the unbelieving oppressors.<sup>80</sup> ‘Usama bin Ladin’s views on this particular concept have changed over time. In 1996 and 1998 he argued that the United States used the label “terrorist” to divert attention from the true state terrorism that it regularly practiced on Muslims in Iraq and elsewhere,<sup>81</sup> while after September 11 he asserted that there was “good terrorism” and “bad terrorism,” and that “we practice terrorism that is a good feat, which deters [the United States and Israel] from killing our children in Palestine and other places.”<sup>82</sup>

The assault on Islamic thoughts is complemented by American manipulation of Muslims’ education. In recent years, the U.S. government has quietly requested that certain intolerant aspects of schoolbooks in places like the Palestinian Authority and Saudi Arabia be altered. These requests are attacked by jihadis (and many Islamists and Wahhabis) as unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of the Islamic nation.<sup>83</sup> For jihadis there is only one reason for the American efforts at educational reform: to seize control of young Muslims and shape their minds as the unbelievers wish.<sup>84</sup> A jihadist professor argues that this insidious plot “is a crime against the coming generations, destroying their mentalities and spirit, and in the end, it will lead to the complete overpowering of their Islamic personalities, producing generations of Muslims molded by the West, attached to her [religion], [creed], values and system of life.”<sup>85</sup> In a revealing declaration



that shows just how seriously some jihadis take educational reform, al-Qaida demanded, in a statement from November 2002, “Do not interfere in our politics and method of education. Leave us alone, or else expect us in New York and Washington.”<sup>86</sup>

Jihadis believe that the United States and the rest of the West are not alone in their ideological offensive against Islam. Government-appointed ulama and other Islamic scholars, for financial or political gain, have perverted their calling and loyalty to Islam by issuing fatwas in support of un-Islamic behavior.<sup>87</sup> Respected shaikhs like Wahhabi ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Bin Baz and Islamist Yusuf al-Qaradhawi are bitterly attacked as “mistresses to the satanic rulers” and “Pentagon Muslims,” willing to undermine the rule of God’s law to keep their favored standing within the governments of the “puppet agents.”<sup>88</sup> Denigrating even Islamist scholars who disagree with their vision of Islam, jihadis have cut themselves loose from any authority that might be able to limit their war and will trust only their own particular interpretations of the texts.

According to jihadis, after decades of ideological attacks the West believed that they had prepared the grounds for a final all-out military offensive on Islam. Using their surrogates, the Israelis and Maronites, the United States was already killing Palestinian and Lebanese Muslims. Then the Americans for the first time inserted their own troops into the fight, invading Beirut with the colonialist French to put down the Islamic rising against the Christians and Jews. Although chased away (surprisingly eas-

ily) by the actions of a few brave Muslims, the Americans did not give up. The United States (with the UN) attacked Saddam Hussain in 1991—and used the resulting sanctions to kill millions of Muslim children; they invaded Somalia and tried to take over the country; Americans armed and incited Serbs in Bosnia and Kosovo; and the United States and other unbelievers aided multiple attacks on Muslims around the world—in Kashmir, Chechnya, Indonesia, Sudan, and elsewhere.<sup>89</sup> For ‘Usama bin Ladin and other jihadis, the final blow was the Saudi welcoming of American troops into the holiest territory of Islam and the “land of the two sacred mosques.”<sup>90</sup> In his 1996 declaration of war and 1998 reiteration, bin Ladin made the presence of American soldiers in the Arabian peninsula his main *casus belli*, claiming that this was a *de facto* occupation of Islamic land and therefore completely unacceptable to Islamic law.<sup>91</sup>

The breadth of the campaign against Islam is staggering, involving every single nation on the planet as well as every international organization.<sup>92</sup> Qutb called the unbelieving forces “a grand alliance of evil,” unified only by their hatred for Muslims and their desire to see the believers dead and Islam destroyed.<sup>93</sup> At the head of the offensive, always leading the way in the attacks on Muslims and Islam worldwide, is the United States. By the nineties America became for jihadis the source of every evil, the fountainhead of the unbelief that has always tried to destroy Islam.<sup>94</sup> Yet all was not lost. The jihadis argued that “as the democrats seek to extend their reach, the Muslim world has, at last,

begun its defense, paving the way for the inevitable war between Islam and Kufr.”<sup>95</sup> The jihad has begun and it can end only with the destruction of the evil powers, the overthrow of their wicked ideology of liberalism, and the downfall of their unlawful international system.

## 6 *The Clash of Civilizations, Part II*

### JIHAD ON THE PATH OF GOD

To jihadis, the aggression of the unbelievers, their ideological assault, and the military conflicts that they have begun, justify open warfare with them. The term that the extremists use for this warfare, *jihad*, has been discussed earlier, but there are details about the concept that need further clarification. As we have seen, the majority of the *abadith* (plural of hadith) and verses in the Qur'an that deal with the topic refer to jihad as fighting (*qital*). There is also a well-developed body of work within Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) that treats jihad as fighting and elaborates a legal framework for this Islamic just war. Each of the four schools of fiqh (Maliki, Hanifi, Hanbali and Shafi'i) has rules and regulations for participating in jihad: when it is legitimate and when not; who is bound to participate and who can be excused; what behaviors and tactics are acceptable. A brief look at "The

Reliance of the Traveler,” one of the older Shafi‘i manuals of shari‘a (written in 1368) shows this traditional view of jihad: that it is primarily about fighting; that the fighting will continue until everyone in the world acknowledges the rule of Islam; that fighting is a communal obligation (*fard kifayya*) when offensive and an individual obligation (*fard ‘ayn*) when defensive.<sup>1</sup> Jihad can be declared only by the Caliph in this traditional vision of Islamic just war, a requirement that has created difficulty for jihadis today. The objective of jihad in the manual is to make war on the Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians until they acknowledge the rule of Islam and pay tribute, or until they become Muslims. Other peoples (including polytheists and apostates from Islam) have only the choice of becoming Muslim or dying. The extremists are therefore not outside the bounds of *traditional* Islam when they talk about jihad as warfare justified by certain criteria.

Yet the way that the radicals talk about jihad does not fit within *modern* Islamic discourse about this sensitive duty. The general Islamic understanding of jihad today is that it consists of both an internal and an external component. Believers are urged to strive for a deeper faith and to control their desires, while seeking God and the good. This internal struggle is given priority, but there is also a vision of external struggle that includes striving to make society conform to Islamic norms of justice. The warfare that forms the majority of the verses and ahadith on the subject of jihad is understood by present-day Muslims to refer to a specific time and place during Muhammad’s mission, a time that has

come and gone. Instead Muslims believe that the just war of jihad is defensive only, the last resort when attacked by aggressors.<sup>2</sup> Jihadis have subverted this modern understanding of jihad and are attempting to win over the Muslim community to their vision of continuous warfare with the unbelievers by making jihad as fighting the only definition of jihad; by defining their jihad as defensive or at least as legitimated by respected Islamic scholars; and by justifying the way they fight their war with legal rulings from religious authorities past and present.

Perhaps most importantly, jihadis ignore or minimize the internal struggle that is part of the concept of jihad. The Qur'an uses the phrase "jihad fi sabil Allah" (struggle in the cause of God) in ways that have nothing to do with fighting, and the text often employs the term *jihad* in the sense of working to do God's will.<sup>3</sup> Even when striving with the unbelievers is mentioned, there are verses that describe this as a struggle with words only, not with weapons.<sup>4</sup> The term *mujahidun* is also used at times to refer to those who strive in good deeds, and not to warriors.<sup>5</sup> The most important hadith on the internal jihad quotes Muhammad as saying after a significant victory by the Muslims that "we have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad." When asked by his companions what was the "greater jihad," Muhammad is reported to have replied, "The struggle within one's own soul." Most Muslims accept this hadith as valid and see it as legitimating a turn away from the earlier emphasis on warfare and toward the internal struggle for goodness. The jihadis, along with some

Islamists, reject this hadith as spurious and have spilled a great deal of ink trying to show why warfare cannot be the “lesser jihad.”<sup>6</sup> Throughout their writings jihad as fighting (qital) dominates and for many becomes the whole of this duty.<sup>7</sup> Then, in turn, warfare becomes the whole of Islam. For jihadis, combat on the path of God is the same as their faith and the entirety of their religion. The other duties (prayer, tithing, fasting, the hajj) may even take second place to warfare, which is the “peak” of the religion and compulsory on true Muslims.<sup>8</sup> They agree with Ibn Taymiyya that those Muslims who refuse to take part in the fighting are at the very least hypocrites who have neglected the faith and perhaps even apostates who can be fought and killed.<sup>9</sup>

The issue of defensive warfare is more complicated. As we have seen, jihadis argue that the struggle facing Muslims began with attacks by the West, an argument that is designed to convince doubting Muslims that they should join the battle against open aggression, the only good reason for war that most of the Islamic community now recognizes. That the vast majority of Muslims have not taken up arms suggests that the extremists have failed to win their argument. There is another tack taken by certain jihadist groups: to define “defensive” in creative ways that allow them a great deal of latitude in making their case.<sup>10</sup> Both Mawdudi and Qutb argued that the difference between offensive and defensive did not make sense in Islamic jihad—only the difference between an individual and a collective duty. Faced with criticism from liberal Muslims, however, both had to find a way

to deal with these categories. Mawdudi tried to convince Indian Muslims that a distinction between the terms *offensive* and *defensive* could be made only when one nation attacked another in pursuit of territorial gain. Islam, in contrast, sought to assault the rule of an opposing ideology (an offensive attack) while defending its own principles through capturing state power (an offensive tactic but with a defensive purpose).<sup>11</sup> Sayyid Qutb, confronted by Islamic clergy who insisted that Islam recognized only defensive warfare as just, wrote, "If we insist on calling Islamic Jihad a defensive movement, then we must change the meaning of the word 'defense' and mean by it 'the defense of man' against all those elements which limit his freedom. These elements take the form of beliefs and concepts, as well as of political systems, based on economic, racial or class distinctions. . . . When we take this broad meaning of the word 'defense,' we understand the true character of Islam, and that it is a universal proclamation of the freedom of man from servitude to other men, the establishment of the sovereignty of God and His Lordship throughout the world, the end of man's arrogance and selfishness, and the implementation of the rule of the Divine Shari'ah in human affairs."<sup>12</sup> Defensive jihad for Qutb then becomes a war for the freedom of man from servility to other men, a war that allows people to become the slaves of God alone.

The definition of "defensive" by Qutb and Mawdudi shows that they envisioned aggression as the mere existence of competing ideologies, rather than a physical attack by an enemy state or



other entity. Later jihadist theorists, such as Fathi Yakan, had similarly unusual definitions for aggression. In a section of his book devoted to “self-defense,” Yakan discussed the necessity of jihad to counter “attacks from every materialistic ideology and system that threatens the existence of Islam as a global paradigm of thought and system of life.”<sup>13</sup> In their explication of the “clash of civilizations,” Hizb al-Tahrir begins with the “violent intellectual struggle” unleashed by the West and then discusses the economic and political aggression that continued throughout the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> There are several specific cases of nonviolent interaction with unbelievers that the jihadis have argued are, in fact, aggression. Thus bin Ladin believed that the U.S. humanitarian intervention in Somalia during 1992–1993 “was a blatant invasion under the eyes of the whole world. Somalia was occupied for crusader-colonialist purposes,” and therefore grounds for jihad.<sup>15</sup> Yet another unusual definition of aggression is the persecution of Muslims by the unbelievers, also called “oppression” in the Qur’an.<sup>16</sup> Hindering anyone from accepting Islam, intimidating Muslims, or treating the believers unjustly is viewed by jihadis as reason enough for defensive jihad.<sup>17</sup>

A more widely accepted view of aggression is when Islamic lands are physically invaded, conquered, or occupied. Almost every Islamic scholar advocates defensive jihad in these circumstances, and most Islamists also see this as the proper definition for aggression and justification therefore for declaring a jihad.<sup>18</sup> The four schools of fiqh describe an attack by the unbelievers as

one of the major reasons for jihad to become an individual duty (fard ‘ayn), meaning that every male Muslim is obligated by his religion to join the defensive struggle against the invaders. Even Hizb al-Tahrir, which has supposedly renounced jihad until the creation of an Islamic state, believes in joining a jihad if an Islamic country is invaded.<sup>19</sup> When bin Ladin declared war on the United States in 1996 based on the fact that the Americans had invaded Muslim countries (Iraq and Arabia) and were occupying the holy lands of the Hijaz, he was tapping into this general Islamic understanding of aggression in hopes of rallying Muslims to his cause.<sup>20</sup>

Yet there are several complicating factors even in this concept. Before 1492, distinguishing Islamic lands from those of the unbelievers was fairly straightforward. Various Muslim rulers controlled parts of Spain, North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond to India and Indonesia. This entire area was, by definition, the Islamic lands. Matters have become more complex since. The question is what, in the modern world, constitutes “Islamic territory.” Most Muslims today believe that this means the same thing as Islamic nations, and consists of those countries where Muslims are a clear majority. The jihadis vehemently disagree. ‘Umar Bakri Mohammad, the leader of al-Muhajiroun, defines Islamic territory as “any place Islam conquered or where Islam was implemented or where the majority of people embraced Islam on it. If the signs of Islam become prevalent e.g. [the call to worship] and [Ramadan] celebrations, then it will become a

Muslim country.”<sup>21</sup> By this definition, a country does not have to be mostly Muslim to become an Islamic country—it need only have a large number of Muslims residing within its boundaries or have been under an Islamic state at any point in history. Keeping this territory from unbelieving domination then becomes an obligation, and defensive jihad is justified. This explains why Palestine as a whole is considered invaded, conquered, and occupied territory by the jihadis.<sup>22</sup> In the same vein, the jihadis in Kashmir engage in warfare because, they argue, India invaded and occupied Islamic territory when the ruler of Kashmir declared his intention to turn his state over to India and not Pakistan.<sup>23</sup>

Hasan al-Banna was the one of the first proponents of this view. He recognized a “minor homeland” consisting of Egypt and the Sudan, a “great homeland” of the Arab-speaking Muslim world, and a “greater homeland” of the Muslim world from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, all of which had to be liberated from the occupying infidels.<sup>24</sup> In his basic work on the obligation for Muslims to wage jihad in Afghanistan to repel the Soviet invaders, ‘Azzam was just as adamant about the need to reconquer every bit of Islamic land that had been taken from the Islamic community. He wrote that “if the [unbelievers] infringe upon a hand span of Muslim land, jihad becomes [an individual duty] for its people and for those near by. . . . Sin is suspended to the necks of all Muslims as long as any hand span of land that was Islamic is in the hands of the [unbelievers].” But what land was he talking about? He explained that “the sin upon this present gen-

eration, for not advancing towards Afghanistan, Palestine, the Philippines, Kashmir, Lebanon, Chad, Eritria etc[.], is greater than the sin inherited from the loss of the lands which have previously fallen into the possession of the [unbelievers].” By the previously occupied lands, ‘Azzam meant that Spain, Bulgaria, and more must also at some point be reconquered through a defensive jihad.<sup>25</sup>

The inclusion of lands that have not been ruled by an Islamic state for generations in ‘Azzam’s definition of Islamic territory is not unusual. In an open letter to George W. Bush after September 11, Shaikh Safar al-Hawali, one of al-Qaida’s supporters in Saudi Arabia, wrote that he and people like him still dreamed of “regaining” al-Andalus (Spain).<sup>26</sup> The jihadis who carried out the Madrid bombings of 11 March 2004 gave as one of their reasons the “Spanish crusade against the Muslims,” (the *reconquista*) and that “it has not been so long since the expulsion from Al-Andalus and the courts of the Inquisition.”<sup>27</sup> Hizb al-Tahrir claims the entire Balkans, Hungary, Romania, Austria, the Crimea, and Poland as eternal Islamic land for which a defensive jihad can be waged.<sup>28</sup> In a long treatise on jihad, the head of Jama’at ud-Dawa in Pakistan argued that “Spain that had been Muslim territory for more than eight hundred years was captured by the Christians. . . . 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 dis-

believers just because we disregarded Jihad.”<sup>29</sup> Other jihadis also support “retaking” all of India as well as Russia (which once paid tribute to the Muslim Tatars).<sup>30</sup>

The question of offensive jihad is even more complex and controversial. The most widely respected Islamic authorities: the six accepted collections of (Sunni) hadith; the authoritative commentators on, and exegetes of, the hadith and Qur’an; the leading ancient experts on Islamic law; and the four schools of Islamic fiqh all assume that Muslims have a duty to spread the dominion of Islam, through military offensives, until it rules the world. By the dominion of Islam these authorities did not mean that everyone in the world must convert to Islam, since they also affirmed that “there is no compulsion in religion,” rather that every part of the earth must come under Islamic governance and especially the rule of the shari‘a. ‘Azzam’s definition of offensive jihad follows this traditional understanding of jihad, noting that it is a duty for the leader of the Muslims “to assemble and send out an army unit into the land of war once or twice every year. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the Muslim population to assist him, and if he does not send an army he is in sin. And the Ulama have mentioned that this type of jihad is for maintaining the payment of [tribute]. The scholars of the principles of religion have also said: ‘Jihad is [the call to Islam] with a force, and is obligatory to perform with all available capabilities, until there remains only Muslims or people who submit to Islam.’”<sup>31</sup> Once again it must be emphasized that ‘Azzam’s explanation of offen-

sive jihad is simply a recounting of the interpretations of the most respected *traditional* Islamic authorities. To deny this fact would be to deny one of the main reasons that jihadis have gotten a hearing in so much of the Islamic world today.

However, the vast majority of Muslims today have renounced this concept of a continuous offensive against the unbelievers. They believe that Islam will spread peacefully and without conflict and that military jihad today is reserved for defensive purposes alone.<sup>32</sup> Jihadis bitterly assail this attitude as a sign that Muslims have surrendered to the ideas and ideals of the unbelievers, that they have, as Qutb put it “defeatist and apologetic mentalities.”<sup>33</sup> He wrote elsewhere that those Muslims who try to defend Islam by arguing that (offensive) jihad is a matter of history and no longer valid or necessary “have undermined the very meaning and significance of jihad for the culture and history of Islam.”<sup>34</sup> Other jihadis have been equally harsh. Khubiab Sahib, in a widely disseminated tract on the “essential provision of the mujahid,” writes that a new generation of Muslim intellectuals are presenting a distorted picture of Islam when they portray the shining past of Islam—the conquest of India through jihad—in an apologetic and guilt-ridden manner.<sup>35</sup>

A number of the extremists believe that the definitions of jihad as defensive war alone, as well as the attempts to control how the sacred texts that speak to jihad are interpreted, are part of the unbelievers’ plots against Islam. The West, in this view, understands the significance of jihad and thus conspires to dis-

tort its meaning and keep the believers from the Qur'an and other sacred texts because otherwise they might take up the just war against their enemies.<sup>36</sup> The jihadis emphasize continually that only through a comprehensive vision of jihad—offensive as well as defensive—will the Islamic world be able to protect Muslims who are under attack, throw off the dominion of the unbelievers and apostate Muslims, regain the lost honor and dignity of former years, and advance Islam until it rules the world.<sup>37</sup> This constant need to support their interpretations of offensive jihad shows that the extremists have not yet won their argument with moderate Muslims who are resisting the idea of warfare with the rest of the world.

Jihadis, however, unlike most Muslims, embrace offensive jihad and fiercely defend their “right” to spread the rule of Islam even if they are not attacked by the unbelievers first. There are four basic justifications that jihadis give for offensive jihad: to obey God’s command; to make the word of God supreme; to open the nations for Islam; and to make certain that the Islamic community assumes its rightful position as leader of the world. Jihadis argue that the most important reason for Muslims to wage offensive jihad is because God has commanded it. Regardless of any other justifications for this act, fulfilling one’s duty to God—a duty just like prayer, tithing, or fasting—should be the prime motivating factor for the true believer.<sup>38</sup> In fact, as we have seen, many jihadis argue that anyone who will not engage in offensive warfare in the cause of God has abandoned the faith.

The other justifications are taken just as seriously. The phrase “to make God’s word<sup>39</sup> supreme” means that the true believers will fight to ensure that the creed, “There is no divinity but God,” with its implications about tawhid and God’s sole right to rule, is implemented. Qutb and Mawdudi are the two ideologues most associated with this concept, and they have influenced profoundly the jihadis who have followed them.<sup>40</sup> As we have already seen, Qutb did not believe that there was any use talking about the defensive side of jihad: the most important part of the just war was to defeat the reigning political, social, cultural, and religious systems of the world and replace them with the dominion of God alone. Jihadis today have also emphasized this reason for offensive warfare against the unbelievers. ‘Usama bin Ladin gave several reasons for his 1996 declaration of war on the United States, including making God’s word the highest and the infidel’s word inferior.<sup>41</sup> Later statements by bin Ladin confirmed that he saw this as the essential reason for instigating war against the Jews and Christians especially.<sup>42</sup>

The phrase “opening the nations for Islam” is a traditional way of talking about jihad that has specifically Islamic connotations.<sup>43</sup> In the first instance, it means making certain that every country will allow the call to Islam to be made freely and without hindrance. In the *traditional* interpretation of this phrase, any nation that blocked the spread of Islam by interfering with Muslim missionaries or that would not allow its peoples to be exposed to the Islamic message were legitimate targets for attack.<sup>44</sup> Jihadist



groups agree with this traditional view, one even defining the entire concept of jihad as “the removal of obstacles, by force if necessary, that stand between people and Islam.”<sup>45</sup> The other definition for “opening the nations” is part of jihadist discourse alone, and shows the influence that modern movements like socialism and communism have had on the jihadis. In this reading, Islam is a liberation theology, determined to free men from oppression by other men and return God to His rightful place as the sole legislator. This could be done only with an offensive that would take on the leading powers of the day and, through military and ideological struggle, overthrow them. For al-Banna, the Muslims thus become an “army of salvation which would rescue humanity,” and lead them to the path of truth.<sup>46</sup> Freeing Egypt from secularism and modernity was just the beginning, for al-Banna stated that “we will not stop at this point, but will pursue this evil force to its own lands, invade its Western heartland, and struggle to overcome it until all the world shouts by the name of the Prophet and the teachings of Islam spread throughout the world. Only then will Muslims achieve their fundamental goal, and there will be no more ‘persecution’<sup>47</sup> and all religion will be exclusively for Allah.”<sup>48</sup> Mawdudi, obviously influenced by the rhetoric of his day, called Islam “a revolutionary ideology and program which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals.” The method used to carry out this revolutionary program was jihad through word if possible or through the sword when necessary.<sup>49</sup>

Qutb saw Islam as “a general declaration for the liberation of mankind,” and that it must employ an “army of truth” to bring this philosophical declaration into practical existence.<sup>50</sup> Thus it was “immaterial whether the homeland of Islam . . . is in a condition of peace or whether it is threatened by its neighbors. When Islam strives for peace, its objective is not that superficial peace which requires that only that part of the earth where the followers of Islam are residing remain secure. The peace which Islam desires is that the religion (i.e. the law of the society) be purified for God, that the obedience of all people be for God alone, and that some people should not be lords over others.”<sup>51</sup> How could Islam, he demanded, abandon the rest of mankind, leaving them to suffer servitude to lords other than God Almighty? Muslims therefore had to seize the initiative and attack the tyrannical systems physically to save humanity and free people throughout the world from servitude.<sup>52</sup>

The three main jihadist ideologues make clear a central point of the ongoing war with falsehood: that it will continue until Islam has “liberated” the entire world from darkness, tyranny, and servitude to mere men. Jihadis thus neither recognize national boundaries within the Islamic lands nor do they believe that the coming Islamic state, when it is created, should have permanent borders with the unbelievers.<sup>53</sup> The recognition of such boundaries would end the expansion of Islam and stop offensive jihad, both of which are transgressions against the laws of God that command jihad to last until Judgment Day or until the

entire earth is under the rule of Islamic law.<sup>54</sup> It would also prevent the Islamic nation from becoming the “best community brought forth for mankind,” a Qur’anic injunction that they interpret as meaning that Muslims have been given the leadership of the entire planet.<sup>55</sup>

At the core of the extremists’ views of jihad is their conviction that this is an act of worship dedicated to God alone. Thus jihadis believe that they must conduct both the offensive and defensive war according to the laws of Islam as found in the sacred texts, their earliest interpretations, and Islamic jurisprudence. The tactics that the jihadis use are chosen therefore because the extremists believe that these authorities permit or even prescribe them. It bears repeating that most Muslims disagree with the jihadist interpretation of the sacred texts and Islamic law, and especially their views on how to conduct offensive combat. The extremists do not, of course, care what the rest of the Islamic world has to say about jihad. They believe that they are maintaining the truth even if “so-called” Muslims have long since fallen into apostasy and sin.

Given the extremists’ peculiar views of the sacred texts, jihadist warfare has taken on distinctive characteristics, including a belief in retaliation in kind, an idea that the essence of warfare is deception, and the use of suicide (martyrdom) operations. The Qur’an and the hadith support the notion of justice in retaliation, exemplified by the *lex talionis* (law of retaliation) and there is explicit support for attacking someone in the same way that he

attacks the believers.<sup>56</sup> Jihadis have taken this to mean that just as the Americans and the rest of the West have aggressed against the Islamic world, the Muslim community has the God-given right to retaliate in kind: whatever weapons the enemy uses, the Muslims can use; whatever number of people the enemy kills, the Muslims have the right to kill an equivalent number. In the 1998 declaration of war, al-Qaida specifically called for killing civilians and military personnel based on the Qur'anic injunction to "fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together."<sup>57</sup> Two well-known jihadist clerics argued separately after the September 11 attack that the deaths of innocent civilians in New York was permitted because the United States had killed innocent Muslims.<sup>58</sup> The text cited by one of the clerics to justify this decision, "Then whoever transgresses the prohibition against you, you transgress likewise against him . . . may not necessitate the equality in the number of the dead or the wealth for this is a matter that cannot be specified in every case. But what is intended is to meet an action with an action: killing with killing, taking prisoners with taking prisoners and causing wreckage and destruction with causing wreckage and destruction."<sup>59</sup> Statements by bin Ladin, 'Ayman al-Zawahri, and other members of al-Qaida subsequently have all emphasized a supposed right to respond to any aggression in an equal manner.<sup>60</sup> Bin Ladin specifically said that "we treat others like they treat us. Those who kill our women and our innocent, we kill their women and innocent, until they stop from doing so," and that this was valid

both religiously (because allowed by God and the shari'a) and logically (because retaliation would deter them from aggressing again).<sup>61</sup> Zawahri argued that Americans can also be treated the same as Israelis have treated the Palestinians, because the unbelievers were acting in concert with one another.<sup>62</sup>

A second jihadist tactic of war—deception—involves secrecy, speaking ambiguously, misleading the unbelievers, or even outright lying. This can include concealing one's allegiance to Islam and attacking the enemy without warning or declaring war (as long as they have at some time been invited to Islam).<sup>63</sup> The jihadis defend this sort of behavior with a well-known hadith by Muhammad that “war is deceit.”<sup>64</sup> Since the extremists consider themselves always at war with the unbelievers and their Muslim agents, they also believe that they should always be allowed to lie to anyone who opposes their version of Islam. Some Westerners were surprised by the behavior of the September 11 hijackers just before they carried out their attacks, but their actions—pretending to be irreligious, acting as Americans would, and seemingly enjoying those sinful pleasures that the unbelievers do—could be justified by this principle of war.

The final tactic is much better known and includes the use of suicide bombers and the deaths of the hijackers during the September 11 attacks. The basic justification for this comes from a very traditional vision of Islamic law, which allows a warrior to carry out a hopeless assault if it will encourage the Muslims or cause the unbelievers to lose heart.<sup>65</sup> Respected clerics—

including non-jihadis—have endorsed suicide bombers as an effective and legitimate tactic, especially when used against Israelis, but also against Americans, Russians, and other non-Muslims.<sup>66</sup> Among the jihadist groups, Abu Hamza, Hizb al-Tahrir, and Zawahri have all explicitly approved these sorts of operations.<sup>67</sup> The jihadis believe that suicide bombers are effective because they strike fear into the hearts of the unbelievers, they show that the mujahidun love death rather than life, and they kill far more of the enemy than they do of the believers. They write off the “incidental” slaughter of innocents (including other Muslims) as unavoidable “collateral damage,” which is, in any case, permitted by Islamic law.

It is this point that has created the most serious problems for the jihadis, for while the four traditional schools of shari‘a have strict rules about what constitutes justified actions during war, these do not always match modern notions of legitimate military behavior. This was not always the case. Centuries before Western nations codified the international laws of war, Islamic jurists used the Qur’an, hadith, and life of Muhammad to determine the Islamically correct way to conduct war. The majority determined that noncombatant women, children, and monks or nuns could not be killed; that captives should not be slaughtered outright; and that even animals and trees had certain rights.<sup>68</sup> Islamic law a thousand years ago was, in effect, beginning a process of distinguishing between military targets and civilians, protecting the rights of prisoners of war, and thinking

about shielding the environment from the effects of war. The fact that Muslim nations became signatories to the various international conventions on warfare during the twentieth century and that the vast majority of Muslims today accept modern norms of behavior in wartime could be viewed as a natural continuation of this process.

The jihadis disagree. They have repeatedly stated that the very concept of international laws is contrary to the shari‘a and refuse to honor any agreements between nations—including those that deal with military affairs, human rights, or international institutions and mechanisms. Instead they argue that Muslims need to return not only to the sacred texts, but also to the traditional interpretations of these texts to determine how to behave during military jihad today. The result has been actions that are recognized by the rest of the world—including the vast majority of Muslims—as outside the bounds of modern conventions of war. Five areas in particular are of special significance for understanding jihadist attacks over the past few decades: the targeting of civilians; the treatment of captives; an opposition to permanent peace treaties; the issue of booty; and terrorizing the enemy. The issue that clashes most strongly with the global view is the treatment of noncombatants. International law has very strict rules and definitions about how to distinguish civilians from soldiers and what constitutes legitimate military targets during time of war. The traditional Islamic understanding of belligerents did not follow these modern distinctions. Instead all

four schools of *fiqh* agreed that all male unbelievers beyond puberty (generally age thirteen or fourteen) could be killed during *jihad*, regardless of whether they belonged to a formal military organization—even regardless of whether they had weapons. This does not mean that all males *had* to be killed: rather that, as a group, they were legitimate targets in time of war. The only exceptions to this rule were monks, old men (only in some of the schools of *fiqh*), the insane, and the disabled. Men from these groups, as well as women, children, and slaves were considered nonbelligerents who would not normally be killed unless they took up arms themselves, contributed money for the war, or incited fighting against the Muslims. Intentionally killing unbelievers who fell into one of the prohibited categories was not a serious sin, but rather an action that could be expiated by confession and prayer. Incidentally killing them—as well as Muslims—by using a weapon that killed indiscriminately, or because they were mixed in with combatants, was not even blameworthy.<sup>69</sup>

The jihadis affirm these medieval rules of warfare and therefore have no hesitation about killing any non-Muslim men who belong to the target country whether they are members of the military or not. Their definition of combatants is broad enough to allow as well the deliberate killing of women, children and Muslims if they help the enemy either by word or deed. Jihadis also justify killing these groups even if they are not helping the unbelievers when they are mixed with fighters, as long as they are not purposefully targeted.<sup>70</sup> The ideologue for the group that



killed Egyptian president Anwar Sadat went one step further and argued that deliberately killing Muslims was legal because the leading scholars of Islam allowed the killing of Muslim prisoners if the infidels used them as human shields or forced them to enlist in their army. If they are killed, he wrote, they will be martyrs, and the prescribed jihad cannot be neglected on account of those who are killed as martyrs. Hence, “when we kill them in accordance with the Command of God we are both rewarded and excused. They, however, will be judged according to their intentions.”<sup>71</sup> As the September 11, Bali, and Madrid attacks show, al-Qaida and its clerical supporters have not been backward about endorsing military operations that either deliberately or incidentally kill noncombatants—including Muslims—based on these interpretations of the sacred texts.<sup>72</sup> Even before these occurred, bin Ladin supported attacks that led to the deaths of innocent Muslims and non-Muslims alike.<sup>73</sup> Other, non-Islamic, reasons are also given by some extremists for the killing of civilians. A Pakistani jihadi justified intentionally targeting all Indians because their population growth is a strategic threat to the Muslim community, while the Islamist Qaradhawi argued that Israeli civilians are legitimate military objectives because of both universal conscription and the democratic process that proves every Israeli is complicit in the policies of the government.<sup>74</sup> This same justification was given by one of al-Qaida’s supporters for the killing of ordinary Americans during the September 11 attacks.<sup>75</sup>

The treatment of prisoners of war is a second area where ji-

hadist views of legitimate warfare clash with current international norms. Governed by The Hague, Geneva, and other conventions, international law today recognizes that every combatant has the right to surrender and to receive good treatment from his captors, including the right to food, shelter, communication with the outside world, and freedom from torture. The traditional Islamic view was that the leader of the Muslims (the Caliph) had the right to choose four courses of action for male prisoners: death by “cutting the neck,”—slitting the throat or chopping off the head; enslavement; ransoming them for money, goods, or the release of Muslim prisoners; or freeing them. Female prisoners could only be enslaved or freed.<sup>76</sup> The jihadis again agree with these traditional views—although they have dismissed the need for a Caliph—and have been implementing them in their various conflicts.<sup>77</sup> The fact that Daniel Pearl, Nicholas Berg, Paul Johnson, and others were executed by having their throats cut was not a sign of lawlessness, but rather an indication of the jihadis’ allegiance to these legal opinions. Again, when Masood Azhar bragged to a reporter about his success in obtaining weapons for the release of Indian captives, he was following his interpretation of the traditional judgments that allow ransoming prisoners of war for goods.<sup>78</sup> The issue of torture is addressed directly by al-Qaida, which argues from various ahadith that the scholars of Islam allow torture and beating hostages or other captives if it will help the Muslims.<sup>79</sup>

Jihadis also profess to follow the traditional Islamic rulings on

peace treaties. The dominant model for jurists' understanding of agreements with non-Muslims was Muhammad's treaty of Hudaibiyya. Here the Muslims and their opponents agreed to a cessation of hostilities that was to last ten years. Based on this precedent, Hanafi law recognized truces for up to ten years if "victory over [the unbelievers] and taking payment [of tribute] from them is too difficult to obtain." Jihad would resume without warning, however, if the non-Muslims broke the agreement.<sup>80</sup> Maliki law allowed truces for three months and then only if it is concluded for reasons other than fear alone.<sup>81</sup> The jihadis generally believe that cease-fires are possible under certain very circumscribed conditions, most especially that they do not allow unbelievers to have possession of Islamic land and that they have a definite time limit.<sup>82</sup> Qutb wrote that a truce could be declared without a specific period, but that "if treachery is *feared* on the part" of the unbelievers, it could be brought to an end.<sup>83</sup> Other jihadis and their clerical supporters are harsher. 'Umar Bakri Mohammad argues that in the absence of a "true" Islamic state, Muslims are not allowed to conclude any treaties with the unbelievers, while Hamas states in its covenant that no peaceful solution is possible with Israel.<sup>84</sup> There is also agreement that permanent peace with unbelievers is contrary to Islam because this would imply that jihad will not continue until Judgment Day or that there is no eternal hatred between the believers and the unbelievers.<sup>85</sup>

Traditional Islamic treatises on jihad also dealt thoroughly

with the taking of booty, an act which is, of course, forbidden by modern international conventions. The Qur'an and hadith have many statements on what constitutes booty and how to divide it equitably among the believers once God has given them victory over the unbelievers.<sup>86</sup> The four schools of fiqh developed elaborate rules to legislate this aspect of jihad, rules and interpretations that have been rejected by the vast majority of Muslims today. The jihadis, on the other hand, argue that these rules are still valid and that booty is, therefore, a lawful part of their war against the West.<sup>87</sup> 'Azzam mentioned that the issue of booty had arisen among the mujahidun in Afghanistan, al-Faraj asserted that those who engaged in jihad against the Egyptian government should be able to seize booty, and a Pakistani jihadi discussed the taking of booty in jihad as if it were a matter of course.<sup>88</sup> Masood Azhar argues that booty is the jihadi's provision from God, since his "livelihood" is under the shade of a spear.<sup>89</sup> Hizb al-Tahrir has even incorporated booty into their proposed constitution for the coming Islamic state, making spoils from warfare one of the central sources of funding for the government.<sup>90</sup> In both declarations of war, bin Ladin mentions booty, stating in 1996 that the blood of American soldiers in Arabia "is permitted [to be spilled] and their wealth is a booty; their wealth is a booty to those who kill them."<sup>91</sup> The 1998 declaration was even more expansive, asserting not only that all Americans—military and civilian—could be killed, but that the mujahidun should "plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it."<sup>92</sup>

There is, finally, the problem of terrorism. Based on one verse in the Qur'an<sup>93</sup> as well as a few ahadith,<sup>94</sup> the jihadis are convinced that creating fear in the hearts of the unbelievers is not only a sound tactic in their war, but one that is supported by Islamic law. Qutb argued that one of the main purposes of jihad was to "strike terror into the hearts of God's enemies who are also the enemies of the advocates of Islam throughout the world, be they open with their hostility and known to the Muslim community, or others who may be discreet with their real feelings, not openly stating their hostile attitude toward Islam."<sup>95</sup> Qutb clearly was advocating the use of terror tactics not just against aggressors or open enemies of his version of Islam, but against anyone who did not support him. Almost every jihadist group affirms a desire to kill or maim men, women, and children in the most horrific ways in order to strike fear in their enemies. Thus Abu Hamza supports suicide bombings not because it is the most efficient way to free occupied Islamic territory, but because "this is the only way the [unbelievers] will be terrorized."<sup>96</sup> As we have seen, bin Ladin himself had ambivalent feelings about the term terrorism, but this should not be confused with his overall conviction about the need to terrorize the enemy. By May 1998 he would state that the terrorism he practiced was commendable because it was directed against the enemies of God—the tyrants and aggressors—and because "terrorizing those and punishing them are necessary measures to straighten things and to make them right."<sup>97</sup> In the 1998 declaration of war terrorism is de-

scribed as “a legitimate and morally demanded duty,” while an al-Qaida statement of 10 October 2001 raises terrorism to a tenet of Islam and the shari‘a.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, Muhsin al-Awaji, commenting on September 11 and on American condemnation of the attacks, said that “we are proud to be described as terrorizing the enemies of Allah and our enemies.”<sup>99</sup>

It is worth reemphasizing that the jihadist commitment to offensive warfare, their belief in terrorizing entire populations, their views on prisoners of war and booty, and their deliberate targeting of innocents have not found widespread support among the vast majority of the Islamic world. This has created a serious problem for the jihadis, for they are depending on a massive uprising of the Muslim community to replace fighters who are killed and to spread their war around the world. The result is that jihadis have been forced to find new grand strategies and military thinking that will deal with the unbelievers while they await the “inevitable” awakening of the umma.