

## What do the Jihadists want?

# STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

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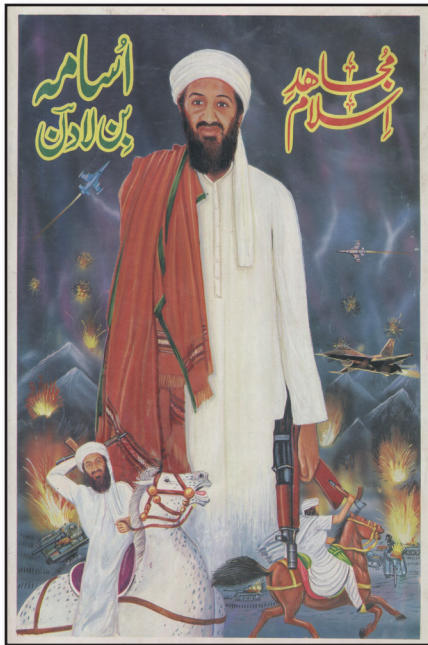
# Lessons from Chechnya's Long History of Jihadism

*By Max Boot*

What do jihadists want? Simple: power. The power to impose their own extreme version of Shari'a law. But that is not what most Muslims want. For the most part they want the same things as non-Muslims: jobs, education, families, a higher standard of living, peace, and security. Therein lies both the power and the weakness of jihadist extremists: they are strong because they are motivated by religious certitude, but at the same time they are weak because their program is too austere to be popular when actually implemented even in traditional Muslim societies. If properly exploited by a skilled adversary, this weakness can turn out to be fatal.

Both the appeal and the limitations of jihadism have been evident in one of the longest-running guerrilla struggles of the past two centuries—the movement by the people of Chechnya, Dagestan, and other parts of the Northern Caucasus to free themselves from Russian imperial rule. The struggle started in the 18th century and continues into the 21st century. But it was in the 19th century that it produced its most notable personality—a forerunner of Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi known simply as Shamil.

Born in 1796, Shamil became imam of the *gazavat* (holy war) against the Russians in 1834 after his predecessor as imam was assassinated by tribal rivals. A skilled horseman, sword fighter, and gymnast, Shamil cut an impressive figure, standing six feet three inches and appearing taller still because of his heavy lambskin cap, the papakh. His flowing beard was dyed orange with henna, and his face was, in Tolstoy's telling, "as immovable as though hewn out of stone." His force of personality was such that one of his followers said that "flames darted from his eyes and flowers fell from his lips."



Terence White Collection, OAC 2002C71.  
Hoover Institution Archives.

To keep a desperate resistance going against overwhelming odds required the ability not only to inspire hope but also to instill fear. Shamil was a master of both. He traveled everywhere with his own personal executioner, chopping off heads and hands for violating the dictates of Allah and his humble servant, the Commander of the Faithful in the Caucasus. Although he was influenced primarily by the Sufist tradition, Shamil's "fanatical puritan movement," notes one history book, "was in many ways comparable to the contemporary Wahhabi movement in Arabia." He did not hesitate to slaughter entire aouls (villages) that did not heed his demands.

When a group of Chechens, hard-pressed by the Russians, sought permission to surrender, they were so afraid of his wrath that they conveyed their request through Shamil's mother, thinking this would make him more amenable. Upon hearing what she had to say, Shamil announced that he would seek divine guidance to formulate an answer. He spent the next three days and nights in a mosque, fasting and praying. He emerged with bloodshot eyes to announce, "It is the will of Allah that whoever first transmitted to me the shameful intentions of the Chechen people should receive one hundred severe blows, and that person is my own mother!" To the astonished gasps of the crowd, his followers, known as the *murids* ("he who seeks" in Arabic), seized the old lady and began beating her with a plaited strap. She fainted after the fifth blow. Shamil announced that he would take upon himself the rest of the punishment, and ordered his men to beat him with heavy whips, vowing to kill anyone who hesitated. He absorbed the ninety-five blows "without betraying the least sign of suffering." Or so legend had it.

This street theater helped animate Shamil's *murids* to maintain a fierce resistance. He mobilized over ten thousand men to conquer much of Chechnya and Dagestan and inflicted thousands of casualties on Russian pursuers. But over time, his ruthlessness cost Shamil popular support—as it did for more recent Chechen rebels. Tribal chieftains who did not want to cede authority to this religious firebrand turned for support to the Russians. So did many ordinary villagers who balked at his demands for annual tax payments amounting to 12 percent of their harvest.

Russia's initial response to the Chechen uprising in the 19th century—as in the 21st century—was characterized by brute repression. One early Russian viceroy, General Alexei Yermolov, said: "I desire that the terror of my name should guard our frontiers more potently than chains or fortresses.... One execution saves hundreds of thousands of Russians from destruction, and thousands of Mussulmans from treason." But the scorched-earth approach Yermolov practiced drove more recruits into the *murids'* camp. The Russians only began to have success against Shamil when they launched efforts to woo the population away from the Islamists.

The turnaround began when Prince Alexander Bariatinsky took over as viceroy of the Caucasus in 1856, following the accession of his childhood friend as Tsar Alexander II. In contrast to his reactionary predecessor, Nicholas I, the new tsar was a modernizer and a liberal. He encouraged Bariatinsky to try a more conciliatory approach. Whereas Shamil traveled with his executioner, Bariatinsky traveled with his treasurer, doling out bribes to tribal leaders. Those elders also received more autonomy within the imperial system and protection from the fanatical *murids*. "I restored the power of the khans as a force inimical to theocratic principle," Bariatinsky explained. (Gen. David Petraeus did much the same thing in Iraq where he recruited Sunni sheikhs to oppose al-Qaeda in Iraq.) In addition, Bariatinsky encouraged Muslim clerics to denounce Shamil as an apostate and to preach a doctrine of nonviolence.

To address local grievances, he issued orders to allow women and children to escape from besieged aouls instead of simply killing everyone as in the past. He even sponsored greater educational opportunities for women. "I believe it is important," Bariatinsky wrote, "to win the greatest possible devotion of the territory to the government, and to administer each nationality with affection and complete respect for its cherished customs and traditions."

Like all great counterinsurgents, even the most liberal, Bariatinsky did not limit himself to such "hearts and minds" appeals. He undertook large-scale clear-cutting of forests to flush out the rebels, and he built bridges to reach their mountain aeries. He also issued his soldiers rifled weapons, which were considerably more effective than the flintlocks employed in the past. Rather than undertake futile punitive expeditions, he launched a systematic reduction of all rebel strongholds in Dagestan.

The final push began in 1858 with three armies converging on the rebels' fortresses. Shamil's aeries fell one after another until finally he was left with just 400 followers in the aoul of Gunib facing an army of 40,000. Seeing the hopelessness of the situation, Shamil surrendered on August 25, 1859. He pledged allegiance to the tsar and urged his followers to lay down their arms, and in turn he was well treated. Shamil lived out his days in Russia with the benefit of a pension and country house provided by the tsar. He finally died in 1871 while making the Hajj to Mecca in Ottoman-controlled Arabia.

This enlightened approach to counterinsurgency—which blended carrots and sticks—stands in stark contrast to the more brutal approach employed by Stalin in the 1940s to put down another Chechen uprising. The Soviet dictator deported half a million Chechens and Ingushes (another ethnic group in the North Caucasus) to Central Asia, killing tens of thousands along the way. The Chechens were only allowed to return following Stalin's death.



Much has changed since Stalin's day, but the Russian army's approach to pacification in Chechnya in recent years bears more resemblance to his tactics (and Yermolov's) than Bariatinsky's. After Chechnya's declaration of independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russians invaded Chechnya in 1994 and pulled out in 1996, stymied by Chechen guerrillas who, like their nineteenth-century predecessors, resisted to the death. But the Russian army returned in 1999 to subdue the breakaway province using scorched-earth tactics. The capital, Grozny, was leveled. An estimated 100,000 Chechens were killed out of a prewar population of just a million; perhaps 20,000 Russian soldiers also perished.

At first a purely nationalist uprising, the Chechen resistance assumed more of a jihadist character as the conflict went along. But, just as in the days of the original Shamil, no amount of faith could enable Shamil Basayev (a fanatical Islamist leader who was killed in 2006) to prevail. In fact the extremism of the new Shamil and his confederates backfired, just as it did for their nineteenth-century forerunner. The Chechen rebels sacrificed any goodwill around the world with heinous acts of terrorism such as the taking of hostages in a Moscow theater in 2002 (at least 170 people died when Russian commandos stormed the building) and at a middle school in North Ossetia in 2004 (380 people died, at least half of them children).

Chechnya now has a measure of stability, but it still chafes under the heavy-handed and corrupt rule of a Russian puppet regime—and resistance, in the form of acts of terrorism in the Northern Caucasus and southern Russia, continues. Nothing can excuse the attacks of Chechen terrorists, but nor is there any excuse, either morally or strategically, for the human-rights abuses committed by the Russians and their proxy forces. There will be no lasting peace in the Caucasus until Vladimir Putin stops practicing Yermolov-like brutality and instead adopts a more measured, Bariatinsky-style approach to pacification.

The U.S., too, should heed the lessons of nineteenth-century Chechnya in its battles against jihadists around the globe: While hard-core terrorists need to be captured or killed, the long-term key to victory lies not in meting out death and destruction but in making common cause with Muslim moderates against the extremists who seek to dominate their societies.



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# Jihadi Terrorism's Moving Targets

*By Josef Joffe*

Before the Islamist version, we used to think about terror in strategic, that is, means-ends terms. Terror, defined as maiming and murdering civilians, was to serve a more or less rational purpose: killing a potentate for the sake of regime change, slaying colonials to achieve national independence. However evil the means, a solution was theoretically possible: write a new constitution or withdraw from overseas possessions. This is the model of anti-colonial warfare. Once independence was achieved, the Mau Mau in Kenya or the FLN in Algeria stopped the mayhem, especially for lack of targets, who had disappeared.

Jihadi terrorism (JT) does not fit the "strategic model" for three reasons. One, the purpose keeps changing. Two, the ends become unlimited; the demands are "resolutely uncompromising."<sup>1</sup> Three, the proclaimed ends are not the real ones. Whence it follows that, short of completely eliminating the threat by superior and sustained force, there is no "rational" solution to the problem. Concessions do not work in the face of changing, boundless, or make-believe ends.

*Changing Goals:* The best example is Osama bin Laden. In his 1996 fatwa, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," he called for the expulsion of Americans from Saudi Arabia. Then, the call was for the destruction of Israel, then for the elimination of *all* Western forces from *all* of Islam, beginning with Afghanistan. Nor did the "moveable feast" end here. Taking a page from the writings of Sayyid Qutb, his disciple turned on America as such in 2002, demanding that the country "reject the immoral acts of fornication, homosexuality, intoxicants, gambling, and usury." If goals keep changing, JT cannot be satisfied by definition.

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1. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 128.

*Unlimited Ends*: The “rolling” nature of JT’s purposes is closely related to their boundless expansion, which leads to the hypothesis that it is the *demanding*, not the substance of the quest that truly matters. If the game has no end, as in a blackmailing situation, there is no offer that could satisfy, hence no closure. Not only is the existence of Israel the issue, but the Jews as such. “They will leave you nothing, either in this world or the next,” read a bin Laden message in 2005. Such an indictment targets the Jews’ boundless evil essence in the here and hereafter; hence they must be fought to the end, here and everywhere.

Three key concepts of JT are the “Umma,” the “Caliphate,” and “Al-Andalus.” The “Umma,” the “Islamic community,” implies terminating the Islamic nation-state in favor of the Caliphate that would rule all of Araby and Islam. “Al-Andalus” refers to the restoration of Islamic rule over lands once controlled in the Iberian Peninsula, all the way to those once occupied in France. As far as political ends go, these are about as boundless as can be. It is in their nature that they cannot be achieved, unless in a real-life Apocalypse that leaves Islam as the sole inheritor of (much of) the earth.

Apocalyptic ends, which by definition cannot be realized in the real world, sharpen the question: “What does JT want?” Ends that are beyond JT’s grasp rephrase the issue: “What does it really want?” What are the differences between the proclaimed and the actual purposes of JT? One answer is an old one, the “propaganda of the deed,” usually attributed to Mikhail Bakunin. It is not an idea (or the end) that breeds the action, but the deed that propagates the idea—again, not something that could be achieved through a rational political process.

In the JT framework, “martyrdom” for its own sake has come to play a dominant role—a concept largely divorced from concrete goals like driving the Israelis from Palestine. The true aim may be heaven, a better place than the here and now. Or serving as a model that will recruit others

to the cause of suicide bombing. Or giving honor (and post-mortem material benefits) to one's family. At any rate, the silence that usually follows such attacks speaks for itself; almost never are reasons given or grievances uttered. The deed is the message.

Or the deed has nothing to do with the "Jew" or the "Infidel"—and everything with the power struggle inside the JT universe. Indeed, the vast majority of victims are other Muslims, deemed either enemies or adhering to the wrong faith. Iraq is the best example. The endemic mayhem is between Shi'a and Sunni, no Western "Infidels" needed. Those who dwell on the "root causes" of JT—the Israeli occupation, the American presence—cannot explain the "fratricidal terrorism" that predominates in the realm of Islam. Samuel Huntington's famous phrase "Islam has bloody borders" should actually read: "Islam's bloodiest borders are on the inside."

A final answer to "What terrorists really want" may be drawn from Max Abrahms' eponymous article in *International Security* (Spring 2008). He argues that "organizational maintenance," not political grievances, explains the persistence of terrorism. People join "not to achieve their official goals, but to experience social solidarity"—as in any voluntary association.<sup>2</sup> Terrorism then becomes a way of life, nourished by communal warmth and sustained through crime, like extortion or drug-trafficking. Various studies<sup>3</sup> have concluded that, say, members of Hezbollah and Palestinian jihadis, have joined up for social acceptance and as antidote to alienation. If so, goal-achievement not only doesn't matter, but actually militates against system maintenance. When the March of Dimes ran out of polio victims, the organization turned to muscular dystrophy. The organizational imperative goes some way toward explaining why JT does not present reasons for its attacks, why demands keep changing or expanding, and why concessions are neither requested nor accepted.

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2. Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008), pp. 28-29.

3. As cited in *ibid.*, p. 98, n. 109.

JT, we might conclude on a more general note, is about being, not achieving. What it wants matters little; its true purposes are often not even grasped by its own adherents. We might succeed in analyzing what “they really want,” but the normal ways of politics—give and take—will elude us. JT and the West is not a strategic relationship.



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# Al-Qaeda's Aims

*By Peter Mansoor*

In the summer of 2006, Marine Colonel Peter Devlin authored an intelligence assessment that all but conceded defeat in al-Anbar province in Iraq. "The social and political situation has deteriorated to a point that [Multi-National Forces] and [Iraqi Security Forces] are no longer capable of militarily defeating the insurgency in al-Anbar," his report stated. The tribal system in the province had collapsed; violence and criminality ruled people's lives. The provincial economy was in a shambles; Anbaris, except for those enriched by criminality and corruption, lived largely hand to mouth. Sunni residents on the whole detested al-Qaeda, but viewed the organization as their defender of last resort against a campaign of sectarian cleansing by the central government in Baghdad. For the first time in its history, al-Qaeda had taken hold of a substantial piece of ground and had implemented its brand of Islamist governance in it.

The jihadist government was both ugly and ruthlessly effective. Al-Qaeda operatives imposed a strict and brutal interpretation of Shari'a law on a largely secular Sunni tribal culture. The jihadists banned tobacco use and chopped off the fingers of anyone caught smoking. Al-Qaeda operatives forced temporary marriages (presumably allowed under their version of Shari'a law) on local women to satisfy their desire for sex. Senior al-Qaeda leaders—most of them foreigners—demanded marriages with the sisters and daughters of sheiks to cement their bonds to the tribes. Jihadists assassinated rivals and then booby-trapped their bodies to kill family members coming to collect them for burial. Headless corpses lay in the streets for days at a time, a sacrilegious occurrence in a religion that demanded burial within twenty-four hours of death. In short, what al-Qaeda offered was a trip back to the Dark Ages.

What the jihadists wanted was a return to a golden age when Islamic civilization challenged Europe and Asia for supremacy. Control of a sanctuary in Iraq was just the first step in a deliber-

ate plan to control the wider Middle East, a strategy spelled out in a 2005 letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri, the number two man in al-Qaeda, to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. From their sanctuary in Iraq, jihadists could destabilize the neighboring states of Syria, Jordan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. The collapse of these regimes would enable jihadists to control tens of millions of Muslims and the oil supplies on which Europe, Japan, and China relied to fuel their economies. A jihadist victory in Egypt would complete the encirclement of Israel, which would then be destroyed. Meanwhile, the United States, the “far enemy,” would be destabilized by a campaign of terrorism and economic sabotage. The end result would be the creation of a new Islamic caliphate that would rival the power of the West and restore the glory of Islam.

Al-Qaeda’s vision was appealing to a certain segment of the Islamic world, but it was fundamentally ahistorical. The Islamic golden age was a time when secularism, not sectarianism, prevailed. Islamic scholars gave the world a number of important advances in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, literature, and other disciplines. They did so through research and learning in a variety of intellectual pursuits, exactly the opposite educational program of jihadist madrassas, which focus primarily on Islamic studies. In short, jihadists want to restore the glory of the Islamic golden age without understanding what made it golden in the first place.

In Iraq, al-Qaeda’s ideology and ruthlessness were its undoing. Anbari sheiks, tired of jihadist brutality and the interruption of the smuggling networks that were the tribal life blood, rose up to ally with American forces and destroy their tormenters. The resulting Awakening tore the heart out of al-Qaeda in Iraq and was a major reason for the success of the surge in 2007 and 2008. It turns out that when presented with the reality vice the vision of jihadist government, Sunni Arabs did not like what they saw. The surge was a major strategic defeat for al-Qaeda, one regrettably squandered by the failure of the United States to remain engaged in Iraq over the long haul.



Despite what they view as a temporary setback in Iraq, jihadists have not altered their goals. Indeed, the civil war in Syria has given al-Qaeda another battleground on which to project its energies, with the objective of creating a jihadist sanctuary in the heart of the Levant. With no surge in the offing, it remains to be seen whether the jihadists will be more successful this time around.



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# What The Jihadists Are Rebellng Against

*By Victor Davis Hanson*

What are the jihadists rebelling against? To paraphrase Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, “Whad-da you got”?

In Raymond Ibrahim’s edited *The Al Qaeda Reader*, which collates the various writings and recordings of the late Osama bin Laden and his henchman Dr. al-Zawahiri, over 20 purported pretexts are offered for the Islamists’ assault on the West that culminated in the September 11, 2001 attacks. They run the gamut from the failures to sign the Kyoto accords to the absence of campaign financing reform.

The point is that the details shift and change according to the political moment—often predicated from cutting and pasting together the global media’s reporting of current protest and dissent within the West.

Yet the impulse remains the same: a deep-seated anger, driven by envy and a sense of inferiority, that the so-called West enjoys inordinate power, disproportionate wealth, and undeserved influence, at least to a greater degree than a far more deserving Islamic world. How can this be, given the once great Caliphate at Baghdad, the glories of al-Andalus, and the heroic expulsion of the Crusaders from Muslim lands?

Again, the guilty suspects are legion. Sometimes the Jews caused The Fall. Sometimes the culprit is the modernist age of creeping secularism, of women with scanty clothes and boys with long hair. And, of course, the Americans and Europeans did it.

And why not a “they did it”?

Otherwise, the true causes of Islamic disparity require too much introspection that might suggest that there is too much of bin Ladenism rather than too little in the Islamic world. The reason that a similarly once poor South Korea is not now Egypt, or that a once impoverished Chile is not Syria is not difficult to fathom, but apparently toxic to contemplate. In short, greater liberality between the sexes, freer markets, increasing transparency, consensual government, the rule of law and property rights, meritocracy over tribalism, and religious tolerance tend to promote prosperity and security in the same manner that their antitheses retard it.

A final thought: apparently not everyone is so culpable. One could argue that a Russia or China is not exactly tolerant of Islamic religious expression or Muslim immigrants, at least in the Western liberal fashion of the United States. But both dictatorships are unpredictable, not too concerned about global public opinion, and have some record of brutal suppression. That fact suggests that another argument for jihadism is simply that Islamists believed that at one time they could get away with anti-Western terrorism in a way not so true elsewhere of more repressive regimes, or perhaps even now of the West.

We all accept the antidotes for reform: more open markets and prosperity in the Middle East, greater constitutional government in Islamic nations, a free press, and reform among fundamentalist Islamists. But until an indigenous, successful Arab Spring, or Persian Awakening, or Cedar Revolution is established, the West seems more or less relieved that the Islamic world is turning its wrath on itself rather than on others.

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution, is a classicist and an expert on the history of war. He is a syndicated *Tribune Media Services* columnist and a regular contributor to *National Review Online*, as well as many other national and international publications; he has written or edited twenty-three books, including the *New York Times* best seller *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power*. His most recent book is *The Savior Generals: How Five Great Commanders Saved Wars That Were Lost - from Ancient Greece to Iraq* (Bloomsbury 2013). He was awarded a National Humanities Medal by President Bush in 2007 and the Bradley Prize in 2008 and has been a visiting professor at the US Naval Academy, Stanford University, Hillsdale College, and Pepperdine University. Hanson received a PhD in classics from Stanford University in 1980.

# The Obama Administration's Distinction Between Jihad and Terrorism

*By Kiron K. Skinner*

The official policy of the U.S. government is that the country is not engaged in a war or struggle against global jihad. The National Security Strategy of May 2010 asserts that the war in which the US is engaged "is not a global war against a tactic—terrorism or a religion—Islam. We are at war with a specific network, al-Qa'ida, and its terrorist affiliates who support efforts to attack the United States, our allies, and partners."<sup>1</sup> President Obama boldly reaffirmed this perspective in a speech two months ago: "The United States is at war with al Qaeda, the Taliban, and their associated forces."<sup>2</sup>

While serving as Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, John Brennan declared, "We [do not] describe our enemy as 'jihadists' or 'Islamists' because jihad is a holy struggle, a legitimate tenet of Islam, meaning to purify oneself or one's community, and there is nothing holy or legitimate or Islamic about murdering men, women and children."<sup>3</sup>

In her final days as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton broke with the Obama administration's orthodoxy of eschewing the word 'jihad' and its specific characterization of the threat facing the United States, saying, "We now face a spreading jihadist threat. We have driven a lot of the AQ operatives out of...Afghanistan, Pakistan.... But we have to recognize this is a global movement." Later she added, "What we have to do is recognize we're in for a long-term struggle here.

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1. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf), accessed on July 23, 2013.

2. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university>, accessed on July 23, 2013.

3. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-assistant-president-homeland-security-and-counterterrorism-john-brennan-csi>, accessed on July 23, 2013.

And that means we've got to pay attention to places that historically we have not chosen to or had to."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the U.S. is not in a war confined primarily to Afghanistan and Pakistan but rather in a long war—a monumental struggle over ideas and civilizations—being waged by Islamists.

When the Democratic Party's most influential leader and presumptive presidential nominee begins speaking of a jihadist threat to the United States well beyond the defeat of al-Qaeda, we should be on notice that, more than a decade after 9/11, we have yet to have a serious non-partisan discussion on the threat that radical Islam and Islamists pose to the West. Contending that there is no ideological battle at stake because al-Qaeda's ideology amounts to terrorism—a tactic, not a worldview, is to misunderstand the persistence of jihadists, the diversity of their tactics, and the global spread of their movement, even though its adherents are few.

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4. <http://s3.documentcloud.org/documents/560967/senate-foreign-relations-committee-benghazi.pdf>, accessed on July 24, 2013.

# The Jihadists' Quest for Paradise

*By Bruce S. Thornton*

The jihadists see themselves in a world-historical struggle that began in the 7th century when the first Muslim warriors destroyed two empires and spread their faith from the Atlantic to China. This rapid success seemingly validated the Koranic message that the Muslims are “the best of nations” destined to rule the world.

Unfortunately, history had other plans. The nexus of cultural innovations of the West—science, universities, open societies, dynamic economies—stopped the long string of Muslim successes. Starting with the siege of Vienna in 1683, European nations relentlessly encroached on the land of Allah, until the final humiliation came in 1924 when the caliphate was dissolved, the humiliation bin Laden referenced after 9/11. Moreover, Europeans had reshaped the Islamic heartland according to Western ideas, such as the nation-state and consensual secular government, alien to orthodox Islam. The question for many pious Muslims was, how did this happen?

The founders and theorists of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was created 4 years after the disappearance of the caliphate, most influentially formulated the answer. Hassan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb argued that Muslims had fallen away from the doctrines of Islam that accounted for that earlier success. Yet in subsequent years alien ideologies kept being imposed on the faithful by their feckless leaders: fascism, democracy, socialism, nationalism in various guises could not reestablish Muslim dominance, or even provide social order and prosperity for their peoples.

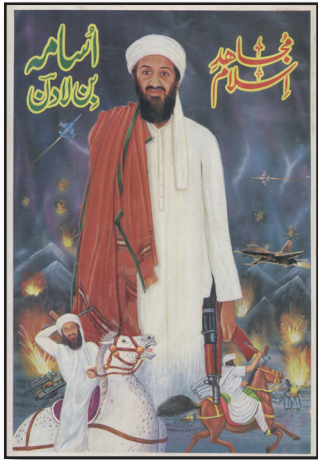
Two events gave new impetus to the jihadist solution, and both took place in 1979. First, the Iranian revolution created an Islamic Republic in oil-rich Iran, one that defied with impunity and humiliated the American superpower. The other was the success of the jihadists in driving the

Soviet Union from Afghanistan, and the eventual installation there of another Islamist regime, the Taliban. These successes fired up the global faithful, for what else could account for such triumphs over the two mighty global superpowers, if not the purity of Allah's warriors and the truth of their faith?

Despite the setbacks in the years since 9/11, the global jihadist movement is still active and growing. The aims of the jihadists must be understood in spiritual, not temporal dimensions. From this perspective, as the Taliban have said, Westerners have the watches, but the faithful have the time. The Crusader Kingdoms lasted 200 years, but eventually were driven from the Middle East. We can drone to death any number of jihadist "leaders" and al-Qaeda "number twos," but as al-Zawahiri said after the death of bin Laden, any one man is just one grape taken from a bunch. In a cosmic battle, what the jihadists want does not have to be achieved in the lifetime of those fighting today. All that matters is that they wage jihad, for in dying they will achieve a spiritual paradise. For as bin Laden once said, "this life, this world, is an illusory pleasure," and "the rewards of this world are few and the next world is better and more permanent."

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING



## What do the jihadists want?

There are a great many recent works examining the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the threat of al-Qaeda, and the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism. In response to this issue's specific question ("What do jihadis want?"), the editorial board has identified the following works for their discussion of jihadism:

- Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror: Radical Islam's War Against America* (Random House, 2002).
- David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (University of California Press, 2005).
- Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* [rev. ed.] (Columbia University Press, 2006).
- Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1988).
- Peter Bergen compiled "The Ultimate AfPak Reading List" for *Foreign Policy Magazine* (June 27, 2013), which can be accessed at the following web address: [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/08/the\\_ultimate\\_afghan\\_reading\\_list](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/09/08/the_ultimate_afghan_reading_list)

This comprehensive list is subdivided into 13 different categories, ranging from country (i.e., Afghanistan, Pakistan), to al-Qaeda, to more general topics (e.g., Islamist Terrorism and Its Intellectual Influences, Counterterrorism, etc.).

# STRATEGIKA

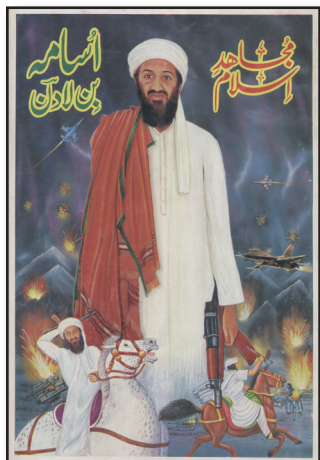
CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



## What do the jihadists want?

1. Do popular elections, even in a constitutional framework, deflate or empower radical Islamists?
2. Did the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan erode jihadism, have only marginal effect upon it, or enhance its appeal?
3. Over a decade after 9/11, which is the greater danger to Western interests —the Iranian-Hezbollah-radical Shiite axis, or the Sunni Islamists and al-Qaeda affiliates backed by Persian Gulf money and supportive governments like those in Egypt and Pakistan?

# STRATEGIKA

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