

BATTLE FOR MUSLIMS' HEARTS AND MINDS: THE ROAD NOT (YET) TAKEN

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After a five-year war against global terrorism, it is apparent that Muslim extremism and violence is growing. Attacks are sweeping across the world from North Africa to Southeast Asia, with targets extending from Casablanca, Madrid and London to Istanbul, Riyadh, Jakarta and Bali. The Osama bin Ladens and Abu Musab al-Zarqawis of the world have turned a once-popular jihad — a struggle in Afghanistan against Soviet occupation supported by the Muslim world and the West — into an unholy war of suicide bombings, hostage-taking and broad-based violence.

Concurrently, a sharp increase in Islamophobia in Europe and America has been accompanied by growing anti-Americanism in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Western images of terrorist attacks and suicide bombings in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Indonesia are countered in the Muslim world by the invasion and occupation of Iraq, abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, and images

of civilian deaths and destruction from the Israeli invasions of Gaza and Lebanon. From Morocco to Mindanao, the "war against Islam and Muslims" has become a popular belief and slogan. Leaders as diverse as Saddam Hussein, Ayatollah Khomeini, Bin Laden, Zarqawi and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have exploited memories of the Crusades and European colonialism and charges of American neocolonialism as threats to Islam. This view is reinforced by the power of globalization, fanned by the rapid penetration of television and Internet news throughout the Muslim world. Muslim feelings of humiliation and powerlessness are compounded by the widespread belief that not only the prospect of democracy but also Islam and Islamic tradition, sources of power and strength for renewal and future success, are under siege by Western dominance. For many Muslims, Western — especially American — political, economic, military and cultural hegemony are threats to independence and self-determination as well as Islamic identity.

It is against this backdrop that the United States desires stable, secular democracies in predominantly Muslim countries it views as threats, with the successful creation of such democracies being the ultimate measure of victory in the “war on terrorism.”

The Bush administration says it understands that a critical early step is to win the hearts and minds of Muslims. But a number of challenges exist before that step can successfully be taken.

DEMOCRATIC EXCEPTIONALISM

Belief that the United States is serious about democracy in Muslim countries has been undermined by what is perceived as America’s, and to a great extent Europe’s, double standard in promoting democracy: its long track record of supporting authoritarian regimes and failing to promote democracy in the Muslim world as it did in other regions and countries after the fall of the Soviet Union.

As former Ambassador Richard Haass acknowledged in a speech on December 4, 2002, the U.S. government has for decades practiced “democratic exceptionalism” in the Muslim world, subordinating democracy to other U.S. interests such as accessing oil, containing the Soviet Union, and grappling with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

If, as many maintain, the war against religious extremism and terrorism is a war of ideas and thus an essential and integral part of public diplomacy, making our case convincingly and effectively requires that rhetoric about the promotion of democracy be matched by actions on the ground that are devoid of a perceived double standard and the practice of democratic exceptionalism.

It also requires knowing the answers to these questions: What do Muslims really

think, and what do they really care about? Is there truly an increase in Muslim radical views? If so, what is driving it?

In mid-2005 and early 2006, the Gallup Organization surveyed 10 predominantly Muslim countries (Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh) as part of its new World Poll, which by the end of 2006 will survey about 130 countries, including more than 35 that are predominantly Muslim. There were 1,000 in-home, face-to-face surveys per country, with sampling in urban and rural areas that is the statistical equivalent of surveying the nation’s adult population, with a statistical-sampling error rate of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The findings of the Gallup World Poll provide a critical foundation and context for understanding the nature and origins of radical views, as well as perceptions about Western attempts to foster democratic governments.

To determine who might be accurately categorized as “politically radicalized” and “moderate,” Gallup looked at how respondents answered a question about the moral justification of the 9/11 attacks and their favorability ratings of the United States. Those who said the 9/11 attacks were completely morally justified and who also have an unfavorable or very unfavorable opinion of the United States were termed politically radicalized and thus potential supporters of terrorism. Those who did not say the attacks were completely justified were termed moderates. This group of “moderates” can be further broken down into “skeptical moderates,” those with unfavorable opinions of the United States (51 percent), and “pro-U.S. moderates,” those with neutral to favorable opinions of the United States (38 percent).

The vast majority of all polled said the 9/11 attacks were unjustified. Our focus however, will be on the 7 percent who said the attacks were completely justified and have unfavorable opinions of the United States.

There are a number of findings that are surprising, and some defy conventional wisdom about the drivers of Islamic extremism:

- Both the politically radicalized and moderates have strong religious sentiments, as measured by frequency of religious service attendance and affirmation that religion is an important part of their lives.

- The politically radicalized are, on average, more educated and affluent than moderates.

- The politically radicalized convey a sense of being “dominated” or even “occupied” by the West.

- Responding to an open-ended question, the politically radicalized most frequently mention “occupation/U.S. domination” as their greatest fear, while moderates express concerns about economic problems.

In an atmosphere in which the clarion call of a clash of civilizations seems increasingly inevitable, what can be done? The need for public diplomacy has never been more important, making the need for solid data about those we wish to convince even more critical.

Robert McNamara says he now believes that what doomed the United States during the Vietnam War was a lack of knowledge about its enemy, the North Vietnamese. It didn’t know what they thought or what they wanted. The war was seen only in broad geopolitical terms, part

of the “domino theory” and the worldwide struggle to prevent the spread of a monolithic communism, just as the present war is cast as a war against global terrorism, although some Muslims see it as a war against Islam. As the world community faces a continued struggle with global terrorism, it is critical that we look closer and understand “the other” Muslim mainstream majorities as well as those who are — or could someday be — linked with extremism and terrorism.

Some of the key questions that must be asked, and to some degree have been answered by the Gallup study, are these:

- Who are the politically radicalized, and what makes them tick?
- What is the link between terrorism and poverty or ignorance?
- What is the relationship between Islam and terrorism, and between jihad and suicide terrorism?
- Why do they hate us and our way of life?
- How do those who are politically radicalized feel about Western freedoms and technology?
- How do they view America?
- What do they say about the countries of Europe?
- What are the primary drivers of extremism?

WHO ARE THE RADICALIZED?

Debates about how people become terrorists have been going on for decades. The causes of terrorism are said to be psychological (they are abnormal, deranged, irrational), sociological (they are uneducated, alienated social misfits),

economic (they are poor, unemployed, hopeless), political (they reject democracy, freedom, human rights), and religious (they are fanatics, zealots, believers in a violent religion that rejects modernization and technology).

The conventional wisdom is based on old and deeply held stereotypes and presuppositions, in part an intuitive sense that radicalism and terrorism were driven by a combination of religious fanaticism, poverty and unemployment. The reluctance to see radicals as otherwise intelligent, rational people responding to perceived grievances was reflected within weeks after 9/11. Media reported the “stunning discovery” that most of the attackers were not from the poor, downtrodden, undereducated and alienated sectors of society, but rather that they, like their leaders Bin Laden and the physician Ayman al-Zawahiri, were well-educated, middle- to upper-class and from stable family backgrounds. This profile raises important questions about why people from seemingly normal backgrounds become terrorists.

But, should we have been so surprised by the profile of the 9/11 attackers as well as the leaders of al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups? Not if we remembered recent history, for Muslim extremism is not a new phenomenon. Extremist groups from Egypt and Algeria to Lebanon, Pakistan, Indonesia and the southern Philippines have existed for decades. Early studies by the Egyptian sociologist Saad Eddin Ibrahim and others of the assassins of Egypt’s President Anwar Sadat in 1981 have concluded:

The typical social profile of members of militant Islamic groups could be

summarized as being young (early twenties), of rural or small-town backgrounds, from the middle and lower middle class, with high achievement motivation, upwardly mobile, with science or engineering education, and from a normally cohesive family.... Most of those we investigated would be considered model young Egyptians.¹

Similarly, with some exceptions, today’s breed of militants and terrorists, from the 9/11 attackers to the London bombers of 7/7, have been educated individuals from middle- and working-class backgrounds. Some were devout; others were not. Most were not graduates of madrasas or seminaries but of private or public schools and universities. Bin Laden was trained in management and economics, Al-Zawahiri, a pediatric surgeon, and other al-Qaeda leaders, as well as those responsible for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks such as Muhammad Atta, were well-educated, middle-class professionals. British-born Omar Sheikh, the terrorist kidnapper of the executed *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, was educated at elite private schools, including the London School of Economics.

Analyzing the answers of the 7 percent of those who justify 9/11 and view the United States unfavorably and comparing them with the moderate majority produces some surprising results. Calling the 7 percent “politically radicalized” is not to say that all in this group commit acts of violence. However, those with radical views are a potential source for recruitment or support for terrorist groups. This group also is so committed to changing political situations that they are more likely to view other civilian attacks as justifiable.

For example, 13 percent of the politically radicalized versus 1 percent of moderates say attacks on civilians are “completely justified.”

What is the age and gender of the political radicals? They are younger, but not substantially. Forty-nine percent are between the ages of 18 and 29, while 42 percent of those with moderate views are in the same age range. Contrary to what some might expect, while the politically radicalized are more likely to be male, 37 percent are female. In many Muslim societies (Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Indonesia), increasing numbers of women are educated and, like men, also have access to the international media; their greater awareness of international affairs and politicization is not surprising. Similarly, a minority of suicide bombers have been women.

POOR AND IGNORANT?

The Arab Development Report of 2005 and many other studies of Muslim countries have documented for years the existence of significant poverty and illiteracy. They are found in Palestinian refugee camps and the slums of Algiers, Cairo, Baghdad and Jakarta, as well as in many other non-Muslim developing nations. Poverty and a lack of information and skills necessary for social mobility are the result of deep-seated economic and social problems that can generate broad-based discontent. However, are poverty and a lack of education and poverty key factors that distinguish those with radical views from moderates? The data say no.

- The politically radicalized, on average, are more educated than moderates: 67 percent of those with radical views have

secondary or higher educations versus 52 percent of moderates.

- The politically radicalized are also more affluent than moderates: 23 percent of the politically radicalized say they have low or very low incomes versus 28 percent of moderates.

JOBLESS AND HOPELESS?

Unemployment, like poverty, has been a major social problem from Algeria, Egypt and Sudan to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia. Yet, neither unemployment nor job status differentiates the politically radicalized from moderates:

No difference exists in the percentages of politically radicalized and moderates who say they have a job.

Among those who are employed, the politically radicalized hold jobs with greater responsibility: almost half (47 percent) of those with radical views versus 34 percent of the moderates say they supervise other people at work.

The politically radicalized are not more “hopeless” than the mainstream. In answers to questions about their lives, larger percentages of politically radicalized than moderates respond that they are more satisfied with their financial situation, standard of living and quality of life. For example, 64 percent of the politically radicalized versus 55 percent of moderates believe their standard of living is getting better.

Surprisingly, the politically radicalized are also, on average, more optimistic about their personal future than are moderates. A greater percentage of the politically radicalized (52 percent versus 45 percent of moderates) believe they will be much

better off in five years. However, while a larger percentage of those with radical views are more optimistic about their own lives, they are, across the board, more pessimistic about world affairs and international politics.

RELIGION-TERRORISM CONNECTION?

The religious language and symbolism that terrorists use tend to place religion at center stage. Many charge that global terrorism is attributable to Islam, a militant or violent religion, and terrorists who are particularly religious. What do the data say?

- Large majorities of those with both radical and moderate views (94 percent and 90 percent, respectively) say religion is an important part of their daily lives.

- Majorities of both groups (64 percent of politically radicalized and 51 percent of moderates) indicate that having a rich spiritual life is essential.

- No significant difference exists between the politically radicalized and moderates in worship attendance.

Considering the link between religion and terrorism requires a larger and more complex context. That other powerful forces such as political and economic grievances are primary catalysts for terrorism does not mean that religion may not play a significant role. Throughout history, close ties between religion and politics have existed in societies. And throughout history, leaders have used religion to recruit members, to justify their actions, and to glorify fighting and dying in a sacred struggle.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Although, today, many see linking religion and politics in Islam as somehow unique and peculiar, many historical examples exist in other religions as well. In Judaism, the conquest and settlement of the land of Israel was pursued under the direction of God; King David's successors were anointed by God. In Christianity, kings and emperors were often crowned by the pope. The Crusades were fought as a divinely sanctioned holy war; as Pope Urban II declared, "It is the will of God." The conquistadors and European colonialists were motivated by "crown and cross," imperial expansion and Christian mission. In Hinduism, rulers upheld the divine order, and the doctrine of *dharma* supported the Hindu social class/caste system.

In recent decades, religion has become part of wars of liberation and resistance as well as acts of terrorism throughout the world. We see this in conflicts between Sikhs and Hindus in India; Muslim Bosniaks, Croatian Catholics and Serbian Orthodox in the former Yugoslavia; Christian, Muslim, and Druze militias in Lebanon; Catholic and Protestant militants in Northern Ireland; Muslims and Christians in Nigeria; Muslim (Hamas and Islamic Jihad) and Jewish fundamentalists (the Gush Emunim, Meir Kahane's Kach party and Yigal Amir, the assassin of Yitshak Rabin) in Israel-Palestine.

Closer to home, the vast majority of terrorist attacks on American soil in the last 15 years have come from Christian terrorist groups. Catholic, Lutheran and Presbyterian activists have bombed gay bars, shot or killed abortion providers, and bombed their clinics. White Christian-supremacy groups have been linked to attacks on the

Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta and many other incidents, including Ruby Ridge. Timothy McVeigh used the Cosmotheism espoused by William Pierce to justify bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. However different, religions have in the past as well as today been a means to legitimate holy and unholy struggles and wars.²

ISLAM AND “JIHAD”?

No word has come to popularly symbolize violence and terror in the name of Islam more than jihad, a term that is widely used and abused. Jihad was used in the Afghan resistance to Soviet occupation. Post-Afghanistan, it has been employed in just about every Muslim struggle of resistance and liberation as well as extremism and terrorism in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Kashmir, Gaza, Lebanon and Bali. Terrorists like Bin Laden, Zarqawi, the London bombers and other radicals as well as, ironically, many non-Muslims equate jihad with a Muslim holy war against unbelievers. However, many observant Muslims counter that holy war is not an Islamic but rather a Christian term, originating with the Crusades.

Jihad, meaning “to struggle,” is rooted in the Quran’s command to “struggle or exert” oneself in the path of God. It primarily means the obligation of all Muslims, individuals and the community, to do God’s will: to lead a virtuous life, struggle against the evil in oneself, make a serious effort to do good works and help to reform society. Depending on the circumstances in which one lives, jihad can also mean fighting injustice and oppression, creating a just society through preaching and teaching and, if necessary, engaging in armed struggle to defend one’s community

and religion. These multiple meanings continue to exist across the Muslim world.

One of the open-ended questions Gallup asks is, “Please tell me in one word (or a very few words) what ‘jihad’ means to you.” Of the thousands of self-crafted definitions received, personal definitions of jihad include (in roughly decreasing order of frequency) references to:

- “A commitment to hard work” and “achieving one’s goals in life”
- “Struggling to achieve a noble cause”
- “Promoting peace, harmony or cooperation, and assisting others”
- “Living the principles of Islam”

In the four Arab nations in which the question was asked in 2001 (Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan and Morocco), the most frequently articulated descriptions of jihad included references to one’s “duty toward God,” a “divine duty” or a “worship of God” — with no explicit militaristic connotation at all.

In four of the eight countries in which this question was asked (Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Indonesia), a significant minority did include some reference to “sacrificing one’s life for the sake of Islam/God/a just cause” or “fighting against the opponents of Islam.” This was the single most identifiable pattern within the verbatim responses received, though in none of these countries save Indonesia was it expressed by an outright majority.

One thing is clear: among Muslims globally, the concept of jihad is considerably more nuanced than the single sense in which Western commentators invariably invoke the term.

RELIGION AND SUICIDE TERRORISM

The most controversial and increasingly widespread form of terrorism is suicide bombing, used since the early 1980s as a major strategic weapon of resistance by Muslim militants as well as other religious (Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist) and ethnic groups. Often suicide bombings are attributed to religious fundamentalism or religious fanaticism, motivated by a holy-war mentality and the promise of heavenly rewards for martyrs. But while terrorists use religious appeals to recruit volunteers, is religion the key precipitator of terrorism?

Robert Pape of the University of Chicago, after a comprehensive study of all suicide terrorism incidents from 1980 to 2003, concluded:

From Lebanon to Sri Lanka to Chechnya to Kashmir to the West Bank, every major suicide-terrorist campaign — over 95 percent of all the incidents — has had as its central objective to compel a democratic state to withdraw.³

However, while redressing real or perceived occupation and injustice, both religious and secular groups have framed their terrorist acts within a powerful religious medium.

The Tamil Tigers, a Marxist-Leninist group whose main tactic is suicide bombings, has appealed to Tamil Hindu identity in its struggle against Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka to achieve independence. Hamas, an acronym for “Islamic resistance movement,” originated primarily to resist Israeli occupation, but religion has been used to legitimate its existence and its acts of terrorism. Even the al-Aqsa Martyrs

Brigade, a secular Palestinian militia has, like Hamas, used religion to legitimate its suicide bombings, choosing the name al-Aqsa (a major mosque and religious site in Jerusalem) as well as calling its attacks “jihad” and its fallen “jihadists” martyrs.

Lebanon, Madrid and Iraq provide good examples from the past two decades of suicide bombers’ strategy, tactics and objectives. Although suicide attacks are said to have originated with Hamas in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they actually first occurred in the Muslim world in Lebanon, used by Hizbollah and al-Jihad in 1983 against the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, when 241 Americans were killed. Hizbollah’s suicide attackers exemplify the fact that members of resistance movements are not necessarily motivated by religion. The attackers in this case included only eight Muslim fundamentalists, along with three Christians and 27 communists and socialists.

The political context changed in 1989 after the Taif accords ended the Lebanese civil war. Hizbollah became a major player in electoral politics. Although as a political party Hizbollah enjoyed a significant presence in the Lebanese parliament, it refused to lay down its arms in the south, continuing to fight what it regarded as Israeli occupation. The Israeli pullout after 18 years (1982-2000) was widely seen by many, in particular militant Islamists, as vindicating the tactical use of violence and suicide bombing. In their minds, the tactic was further vindicated in summer 2006 during the latest Hizbollah-Israeli conflict in Lebanon.

In contrast to Lebanon and many other countries, the 2004 suicide bombing in Madrid was carried out by al-Qaeda, not against occupation in Spain but to terrorize

Spaniards before elections and thus defeat the incumbent prime minister, who supported the invasion and occupation of Iraq. This strategy succeeded when the new government withdrew Spanish troops from Iraq shortly after assuming power.

Suicide terrorism was unknown in Iraq before its invasion and occupation by the United States and Great Britain. However, it became a widespread tactic, used by Sunni and Shii militants in their sectarian conflicts over power and to end American occupation.

If suicide terrorism is not simply driven by blind religious, ethnic, or cultural hatred but by perceived or real injustices, in particular occupation, then what about the ever-present question, “Why do they hate us?”

WHY DO THEY HATE US?

This question, raised in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, looms large following continued suicide and other terrorist attacks as well as the dramatic growth of anti-Americanism. A common answer provided by some U.S. politicians and experts has been, “They hate our way of life, our freedom, democracy and success.”

Considering the broad-based anti-Americanism not only among radicals but also among a significant mainstream majority in the Muslim world (and indeed in many other parts of the world), this answer does not satisfy. Although there are many common grievances expressed in the Muslim world, do the politically radicalized and moderates differ in attitudes about the West?

- When asked what they admire about the West, both politically radicalized and

moderates mention the top three spontaneous responses: (1) technology; (2) the West’s value system — hard work, individual responsibility, rule of law, and cooperation; and (3) fair political systems — democracy, respect of human rights, freedom of speech, and gender equality.

- Looking at their own countries, a significantly higher percentage of the politically radicalized (50 percent versus 35 percent of moderates), contrary to popular belief, say that “moving toward greater governmental democracy” will foster progress in the Arab/Muslim world.

Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom, those who are politically radicalized are not necessarily anti-democracy.

Moreover, when considering relations between the Muslim world and the West, the politically radicalized do not simply reject the West. No significant difference exists between the percentage of the politically radicalized and moderates who say, “Better relations with the West concerns me a lot.” Even more surprising, those with radical political views more intensely believe that Arab/Muslim nations are eager to have better relations with the West. This point of view was expressed by 58 percent versus 45 percent of moderates.

WHAT ABOUT EUROPE?

Although many in the West believe that anti-Americanism is tied to a basic hatred of the West as well as deep West-East religious and cultural differences, Muslim assessments of individual Western countries reveal a different picture. Unfavorable opinions of the United States or Great Britain do not preclude a favorable attitude toward other Western countries such as France or Germany.

The politically radicalized are consistently more negative than moderates in their opinions of all Western countries. However, there is a stark contrast in their view of particular Western nations. Even those who are politically radicalized consistently differentiate between countries and leaders and do not see a monolithic West. For example, while only 25 percent of the politically radicalized have very unfavorable opinions of France and 26 percent have very unfavorable opinions of Germany, this percentage jumps to 68 percent for Britain and 84 percent for the United States.

Strong unfavorable opinions of Western heads of state also vary significantly. Ninety percent of the politically radicalized and 62 percent of moderates express a dislike for George Bush; dislike for Tony Blair registers at 70 percent of politically radicalized and 43 percent of moderates. That level of dislike does not extend to other Western leaders. For example, dislike of Jacques Chirac is significantly lower: 39 percent among the politically radicalized and 24 percent among moderates.

Similarly, 81 percent of the politically radicalized and 67 percent of moderates describe the United States as aggressive, while few see France (7 percent of moderates and 9 percent of politically radicalized) or Germany (8 percent of moderates and 9 percent of politically radicalized) as aggressive. An across-the-board blind hatred of Western culture by those who are politically radicalized is not reflected in this worldwide data.

PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY?

While the spread of democracy has been the stated goal of the United States, majorities in virtually every predominantly

Muslim nation surveyed in 2005 doubted that the United States is serious about the establishment of democratic systems in the region:

- Only 24 percent in Egypt and Jordan and 16 percent in Turkey agree that the United States is serious about establishing democratic systems.
- The largest groups in agreement are in Lebanon (38 percent) and Indonesia (48 percent) but even there, 58 percent of Lebanese and 52 percent of Indonesians disagree with the statement.

Although the politically radicalized, as we have seen, are more optimistic about their personal lives, they are significantly more skeptical and pessimistic about world affairs. The skepticism among Muslims in general regarding the United States and its promotion of democracy is intensified among radicals: While about half (52 percent) of moderates say they disagree that the United States is serious about supporting democracy in the region, almost three-fourths (72 percent) of the politically radicalized disagree.

As mentioned in the discussion about democratic exceptionalism, many Muslims charge that the United States and the West in general have a double standard when it comes to the promotion of democracy and human rights in the Arab/Muslim world. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the politically radicalized disagree that the United States will allow people in the region to “fashion their own political future as they see fit without direct U.S. influence,” compared with 48 percent of moderates.

The impact of that perception is clear when one considers that Gallup also found

that 50 percent of the politically radicalized feel more strongly that their progress will be helped by “moving toward governmental democracy,” compared with 35 percent of moderates.

For the politically radicalized, their fear of Western control and domination, as well as lack of self-determination, reinforces their sense of powerlessness. Thus, there is the development of a belief among the politically radicalized that they must dedicate themselves to changing an untenable situation.

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The creation of modern Muslim states after World War II brought high expectations for a strong and prosperous future. Many governments and elites looked to Western models (political, economic, legal, and educational ideas and institutions). However, nation building in the Muslim world, where borders were often artificially drawn by European colonial powers, placed peoples with diverse centuries-old religious, tribal and ethnic identities and allegiances under non-elected rulers (kings and military officers). As later conflicts and civil wars in Lebanon and Iraq would demonstrate, it was a fragile process that bore the seeds of later crises of identity, legitimacy, power and authority.

By the late 1950s and 1960s, widespread dissatisfaction with the track record of Western-inspired liberal nationalism took its toll. Monarchs and governments tumbled from power and new rulers emerged in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Sudan, Iraq and Algeria. All were based upon some form of Arab nationalism/socialism with its populist appeals to Arab identity and unity, the failures of liberal nationalism and the

West, and the promise of widespread social reforms. At the same time, Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood attracted tens of thousands of members in Egypt and Sudan as well as Syria, Jordan and Palestine.

However, Arab nationalism/socialism was discredited by the disastrous Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The disillusionment was driven by a widespread feeling of loss of identity, failed political systems and economies, and the breakdown of traditional religious and social values. In response, many governments turned to Islam to buttress their legitimacy and deal with the challenge of Islamic reform and opposition movements. Since the 1970s, religion and culture have remained major forces in Muslim politics and society.

Issues of religious identity are very important to both the politically radicalized and moderates. The usual response to what they admire most about themselves was “faithfulness to their religious beliefs.” The statement they most closely associate with Arab/Muslim nations is “attachment to their spiritual and moral values is critical to their progress.” But, what distinguishes the politically radicalized from moderates is their greater emphasis on their spiritual and moral values.

- In contrast to less than half (44 percent) of the moderate group, fully two-thirds of the politically radicalized give top priority to holding on to their spiritual and moral values as something that is critical to their progress.

- The politically radicalized also, in significantly higher percentages, emphasize preservation of their culture traditions and principles as well as their holy places and Islamic values as admirable qualities of the

Muslim world.

Responses to poll questions also reveal the belief that Muslims' Islamic heritage, which is critical to their progress, is also perceived to be in danger of being weakened by the West's denigration of Islam and perception of Arabs and Muslims as inferior. Only 12 percent of the politically radicalized and 16 percent of moderates associate "respecting Islamic values" with Western nations. For both groups, the West's "disrespect for Islam" ranks high on the list of what they most resent.

Therefore, as one might expect, when asked what the Arab/Muslim world could do to improve relations with Western societies, the top response from the politically radicalized was "improve the presentation of Islam to the West, present Islamic values in a positive manner."

THE WAR AGAINST ISLAM

Many Muslims see the lure of Western pop culture in dress, the Internet and Western media. Eighty percent of theaters in Muslim countries show Hollywood films, according to a recent study by the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations. The Gallup World Poll found that about half of both the politically radicalized and moderates associate "producing enjoyable films and music" with the West.

While many are attracted, many others (not unlike many conservative Christians and members of the Christian right) are repulsed. They perceive Western societies' permissiveness as an assault on traditional religious and cultural values. They fear the strong appeal of Western music, movies and TV programs, especially among the younger generation. The strength of this threat is enhanced by a predominant feeling that a secular and

powerful West that does not share its values is overwhelming the Muslim world. When asked the open-ended question, "In your own words, what do you resent most about the West?" the most frequent response across all countries for both moderates (42 percent) and the politically radicalized (51 percent) was "sexual and cultural promiscuity," followed by "ethical and moral corruption" and "hatred of Muslims."

Another source of resentment comes from the depiction of Muslims in Western media. A survey by Jack Shaheen in his book, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, found that the vast majority of Arab characters in 900 American films were outright racist caricatures. Images of ordinary Muslims and Muslim cultures in a Western mass media that is distributed globally are almost non-existent or distorted. Moreover, Western TV programs and films that are most popular in the Muslim world encourage a superficial emulation of Western fashions, personalities and values. Notably, a significantly greater proportion of politically radicalized than moderates cite Western cultural penetration, Western immorality and moral corruption as the top reasons for resentment.

More informed about international politics and committed to protecting cultural values needed for renewal and reform, the politically radicalized are far more intense in their belief that Western political, military and cultural domination is a major threat. When asked to define their greatest fears about the future of their country, the politically radicalized most frequently cite interference in their internal affairs by other countries, national security, colonization, intrusion, occupation, manipulation, the

fear that “might is right,” and U.S. dominance. In contrast, moderates rank economic problems as their top concern.

The alienation from the West that the politically radicalized feel more intensely is also shown by the larger percentage (40 percent versus 20 percent of moderates) who think that Western societies do not show any concern for better coexistence with the Arab-Muslim world. The politically radicalized (37 percent versus 20 percent of moderates) also feel more intensely that the time for a better understanding between the West and the Arab/Muslim world probably will never come.

Even more stunning, but consistent with their responses to other questions, is the extent of radicals’ commitment. Fully half said that willingness to “give one’s life for a cause, to fight against injustice” is “completely justifiable.” This contrasts with only 18 percent of moderates who express that view.

Although both groups are concerned about bias and Western political interference in their affairs, the greater intensity and fear expressed by the politically radicalized predispose them to have a more sympathetic ear for terrorists if their grievances are not addressed.

WHAT DRIVES RADICALISM?

A primary catalyst for radicalism, often seen as inseparable from the threat to Muslim religious and cultural identity, is the threat of political domination and occupation. The interplay of the political and religious is strongly reflected in radical and moderate responses to open-ended questions like, “What can the West do to improve relations with the Muslim World?” and “What is the most important thing the United States could do to improve the

quality of life of people like you in this country?” Given what they admire about themselves and resent about the West, answers to these questions paint a consistent picture:

- Reflecting the importance of Islam, the most frequent response given by both groups was this: having more respect, consideration and understanding of Islam as a religion; not underestimating the status of Arab/Muslim countries; and being fair and less prejudiced.
- Reflecting the priority they give to democracy, the politically radicalized give equal importance to the need for political independence. Their responses include these: stop meddling in our internal affairs, colonizing us, and controlling natural resources.

The heightened sense of the West’s threat to political freedom and to Islamic identity has reinforced the desire for Sharia, or Islamic law. Recourse to the Sharia, the blueprint for an Islamic society, provides a centuries-old paradigm. Thus, however different and diverse Muslim populations may be, for many Sharia is central to faith and identity. While both moderates (83 percent) and the politically radicalized (91 percent) want Sharia as a source of law, a significantly higher percentage of the radicalized (59 percent versus 32 percent of moderates) want to see Sharia as the only source of law.

This desire for Sharia is reminiscent of the reasons behind the early development of Islamic law: to create a rule of law as a shield against the power of the caliph or sultan. As Richard Bulliet in *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* notes:

All that restrained rulers from acting as

tyrants was Islamic law, sharia. Since the law was based on divine rather than human principles, no ruler could change it to serve his own interests.⁴

Today, greater interest by the politically radicalized in the implementation of Islamic law reflects their desire to limit the power of rulers and regimes that they regard as authoritarian, “un-Islamic” and corrupt.

This is not a call for theocracy, however. When asked to what extent they wanted religious leaders involved in public life (secular family law, curricula in schools, drafting new laws or a constitution, deciding who may run for office or how women may dress in public, or determining their country’s foreign policy), majorities of both the politically radicalized and moderates do not want religious leaders to be directly in charge. Nevertheless, the politically radicalized are more likely to want religious leaders to play an “advisory” role, consistent with the ulemas’ traditional role as advisers to rulers.

One of the most important insights provided by Gallup’s data is that the issues that drive the politically radicalized are also issues for moderates. The critical difference between these two outlooks is one of priority, intensity of feeling, degree of politicization and alienation. This accounts for key differences in the hopes of each group:

- When asked about their dreams for the future of their country, majorities of both moderates and the politically radicalized cite improved economic conditions, followed by greater security and an end to civil tensions.

- While moderates then focus on improvements in educational systems, the

politically radicalized give higher priority to promoting democratic ideals and freedom of speech, enhancing their country’s international status, earning more respect, and playing more important regional and international roles.

Moderates and the politically radicalized differ more widely in expressing their greatest fears about their country’s future. Moderates’ top concern focuses on economic problems: inflation, stagnation, the high cost of living, a decline in the value of their currency, and an increase of taxes and foreign debt. This is followed by crime, assassinations and uncontrolled security situations.

Meanwhile, the top fear of the politically radicalized is national security: interference in internal affairs by other powers. Concerns include colonization, economic dominance, occupation, the fear that might makes right, and U.S. dominance, followed by other political issues: civil war, internal conflict, disunity, sectarianism and regional wars.

DIAGNOSIS OR MISDIAGNOSIS?

Diagnosing terrorism as a symptom and Islam as the problem, though popular in some circles, is flawed and has serious risks with dangerous repercussions. It confirms radical beliefs and fears, alienates the moderate Muslim majority, and reinforces the idea that the war against global terrorism is really a war against Islam. Whether one is radical or moderate, this negative attitude is a widespread perception. The politically radicalized are not crazed lunatics caught up in an illusion that is not shared by the vast majority. Rather, they are distinguished by a greater “degree of awareness,” leading to more intense

alienation, politicization and a deeper commitment to sacrifice and taking action to create change.

Americans, like the vast moderate majority in the Muslim world, share a fundamental aversion to extremism. Asked what they admire least about the Muslim world, Americans said overwhelmingly, “extremism/radicalism/not open to others’ ideas.” Likewise, when asked what they admired least about their own societies, Muslims’ top concerns included extremism and terrorism. This should not be surprising, given that the primary victims of Muslim extremism and terrorism have been Muslim societies. The “terrorist fringe,” far from being glorified, is rejected by citizens of predominantly Muslim countries, just as it is by citizens in the United States.

Americans and Muslims throughout the world have at least two things in common: a predominantly unfavorable opinion of George W. Bush and a fundamental aversion to extremism and terrorism. This amount of agreement between Muslims

and Americans, plus the fact that about 9 out of 10 Muslims are moderates, is the good news for those optimistic about Islamic coexistence with the rest of the world. But the bad news is the enormous difference in perceptions between Muslims and Westerners, as well as the vast number of politically radicalized Muslims who could be pushed to support or perpetrate violence against civilians.

How bad is it? Majorities of Muslims — both politically radicalized and moderates — say they know and admire the West’s technology, freedom of speech, and value system of hard work. Meanwhile, Americans asked what they know about Muslims predominantly offer two responses: “Nothing” and “I don’t know.”

There are 1.3 billion Muslims today worldwide. If the 7 percent (91 million) who are radicalized continue to feel politically dominated, occupied and disrespected, the West’s opportunity to address these drivers of extremism will be as great as the challenge of succeeding.

¹ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Islamic Militants,” *MERIP Reports*, 103 (February 1982): p.11. See also Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Islamic Militancy as Social Movement,” in Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, ed., *Islamic Resurgence in the Arab World* (Praeger, 1982), pp. 128-31, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam* (Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 118-19.

² From a statement by Mark Juergensmeyer at the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism, and Security, March 8-11, 2006, Madrid, Spain.

³ Robert Pape, *The Logic of Suicide Terrorism: It’s the Occupation, Not the Fundamentalism* (Random House, 2005), p. 2.

⁴ Richard W. Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 62.