

# Encounter at 10: The Power of Ideas

*The 2008 Bradley Symposium*

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COMMISSIONED ESSAY:

## The Jihad in Plain Sight

by Andrew C. McCarthy

*The threat posed by radical Islam was with us long before September 11, 2001, but from its hard-power attacks to its soft-power encroachments, we stubbornly refuse to see it.*

THE LEFT is in full swoon over . . . restaurant menus.

For well-meaning progressives, there is, of course, no war on terror. The “war”—at least this week’s “war”—is on obesity. Thus, with barely contained glee, the *New York Times* reported on April 17 that a federal judge had upheld the regulation, promulgated by the Health Commissioner of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s Nanny City, requiring all eateries to post a calorie-count for each menu offering.

Disgruntled restaurateurs had grouched that they knew best how to serve their patrons, and that the patrons were adult enough to make their own choices. The Commissioner, though, would have none of it. He urged the court that this battle of the bulge was a crisis. In such straits, he declaimed, nothing is more crucial than information. Judge Richard J. Holwell agreed. Edified about their interests, it seemed to the jurist only natural that “consumers will use the information to select lower-calorie meals,” and that “these choices will lead to a lower incidence of obesity.”

Alas, information turns out to be crucial only in a manufactured crisis. When it comes to the real thing, like the jihadist threat to our lives and our way of life, we’d prefer not to know.

That is the clear message from our diplomatic progressives at Foggy Bottom. A week after Judge Holwell issued his calorie-count decision from the very courthouse that served throughout the nineties as frontline in what then passed for the war against jihadism, the Bush administration circulated guidance, long touted by the State Department and other pockets of Islamophilia, that would purge *jihadism*—the word, the very thought—from our public lexicon.

The Surgeon General believes smokers need a neon warning of the pluperfectly obvious. State, however, does not think jihadism is hazardous to your health. To the contrary, our top policy makers—the officials who regard Yasser Arafat’s legacy, Fatah, as an indispensable partner for peace; who’ve just responded to the news that North Korea is helping Syria build nukes by . . .

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removing Kim Jong Il's terror regime from the perennial list of State Sponsors of Terrorism—have determined that jihad, like Islam itself, is a public good and therefore (try to follow this) we should just stop talking about it.

We Western non-Muslims, you see, must school the world's 1.4 billion adherents of Islam: The "real" jihad is an internal struggle for personal betterment, a key tenet of the Religion of Peace—or the "religion of love and peace," the iteration preferred by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the annual Iftaar dinner by which official Washington now marks the end of the "holy month of Ramadan." Besides, administration officials helpfully explained to the Associated Press, referring to a terrorist as a *jihadist*, an *Islamofascist*, or a *mujahideen* "may actually boost support for radicals among Arab and Muslim audiences by giving them a veneer of religious credibility or by causing offense to moderates."

Of course, if *jihad* truly were a sublime summons to become a better person, it is not entirely clear how plowing jumbo jets into skyscrapers and mass-murdering civilians could achieve the sheen of the sacerdotal in the eyes of the faithful—droves of whom took to the streets in celebration of the 9/11 atrocities. Nor is it clear why calling a terrorist a jihadist would cause angst for "moderates" ... unless they are pretending that *jihad* is something other than what it is.

And they are. In so doing, moreover, they enjoy enormous support from special pleaders strategically dotted throughout government, to say nothing of their academy and media allies. Yet, as I've recently documented in *Willful Blindness: A Memoir of the Jihad* (Encounter Books 2008), for all its energetic earnestness, the campaign to refurbish *jihad* (and to crush dissenters) is persuasive only in the ivory towers of elites desperate to be persuaded. Down here on Planet Earth, it is futile.

The Muslim world is not populated by Western intellectuals hard-wired to nuance white into black by legalistic arcana and historical massaging. In large swaths of the ummah, there is rampant illiteracy, education consists of myopic focus on the Qur'an, and intolerance (especially anti-Semitism) is so rudimentary a part of everyday life that any jihad rooted in "good works in society" would not conceivably comport with Western liberals' understanding of that term.

Progressive, moderate Muslims would doubtless like the concept of jihad to vanish. They are in a battle for authenticity with fundamentalists, and jihad would be far easier to omit than it is to explain away. Indeed, if anyone should resort to a purge of *jihad*, better it be Muslim reformers repealing the concept than U.S. Pollyannas striking the word. To persist in conceding jihad's centrality as an Islamic obligation while distorting its essence can only fatally damage the reformers' credibility and, hence, the entire reform effort.

Jihad, however, is very unlikely to go away. There are too many Muslims who believe in it, and there would be no Muslim world without it. When it comes to jihad, authenticity is simplicity, and, simply stated, jihad is and has always been about forcible conquest. As explicated by the West's pre-eminent scholar of Islam, Princeton's Bernard Lewis:

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Conventionally translated “holy war” [*jihad*] has the literal meaning of striving, more specifically, in the Qur’anic phrase “striving in the path of God” (*fi sabil Allah*). Some Muslim theologians, particularly in more modern times, have interpreted the duty of “striving in the path of God” in a spiritual and moral sense. The overwhelming majority of early authorities, however, citing relevant passages in the Qur’an and in the tradition, discuss jihad in military terms.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the erudite former Muslim of the *nom de plume* Ibn Warraq points out that even

[t]he celebrated *Dictionary of Islam* defines *jihad* as ‘a religious war with those who are unbelievers in the mission of Muhammad. It is an incumbent religious duty, established in the Quran and in the Traditions as a divine institution, enjoined specially for the purpose of advancing Islam and of repelling evil from Muslims.’<sup>2</sup>

It is no wonder that this should be so. The Qur’an repeatedly enjoins Muslims to fight and slay non-Muslims. “O ye who believe,” commands Sura 9:123, “fight those of the disbelievers who are near you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty unto him.” It is difficult to spin that as a call to spiritual self-improvement. As it is, to take another example, with Sura 9:5: “But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them. And seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war),” relenting only if they have accepted Islam.<sup>3</sup> The *hadith*, lengthy volumes recording the words and traditions of the prophet, are even more explicit, as in Mohammed’s teaching that “[a] single endeavor (of fighting) in Allah’s cause in the afternoon or in the forenoon is better than all the world and whatever is in it.”<sup>4</sup>

It is an unrelenting fact that Islamic doctrine is the catalyst for the cataracts of Islamic terror raining down on the globe. This does not mean all or most Muslims are or will become terrorists—though some percentage will, and a far larger number will sympathize with fundamentalist goals if not terrorist methods. Nor does it mean that Islamic doctrine is not rife with many virtuous, peaceable elements—though many of these, their resonance with Western intellectuals notwithstanding, trace to the initial, Meccan phase of the Mohammed’s ministry, borrowing heavily from other religious traditions as the prophet sought to entice conversion to the new creed; they were later superseded by the bellicose scriptures of the Medinan period, when the warrior prophet spread Islam by the sword.

What it does mean, though, is that the mortal threat we face *is* jihadism, which *is caused by Islam*—no less than obesity is caused by high calorie counts, lung cancer by smoking cigarettes,

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (Scribner, 1995), p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (Prometheus Books, 1995. 2003 ed.), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> See also Andrew Bostom (editor), *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims* (Prometheus Books, 2005), pp. 125-26 (collecting Qur’anic verses commanding warfare).

<sup>4</sup> Bostom, *The Legacy of Jihad*, pp. 136-37, quoting the Sahih Bukhari Collection of Hadith, Vol. 4, bk. 52, nos. 42 & 48.

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birth defects by imbibing alcohol during pregnancy, and countless lesser risks to our well-being by pathologies our benevolent bureaucrats compel us to confront remorselessly (unconcerned that they might be misconstrued as crusading to rid the world of food, tobacco, alcohol, etc.).

No less do we require accurate information about jihadism to arrive at sound public policy.

Because discussions of this topic are so infected by timidity, passion and no small amount of demagoguery, it bears emphasis that there is no single Islam. In marked contrast to most Judeo-Christian traditions regnant in the West, Islam is bereft of a regimented clerical hierarchy, councils, or synods to provide standards of orthodoxy. Though the Sunni/Shiite divide draws most of our attention, there is in fact a wide variety of Islamic sects, to say nothing of the prevalent phenomenon—quite familiar to Westerners—of adherents who are at best culturally or nominally Muslim but care little about theology and its demands. That said, however, it is whistling past the graveyard to ignore or minimize the virulent strain of fundamentalist Islam that galvanizes jihadism. And it is positively fatuous to suggest that it stems from what Americans say about it. Witness, to take just one recent example, the rioting jihadists in Indonesia who stoned and burned a . . . mosque—their anger provoked by another sect of Muslims, the Ahmadi, who are deemed heretics because they don't accept Mohammed as the final prophet or jihad as a divine injunction.

It is simply not the case that a mere nineteen terrorists hijacked a peaceful religion, as President Bush hastened to assure Americans while smoke billowed from the Pentagon and lifeless bodies were pulled from the rubble of the Twin Towers. It is not the case, as the Clinton administration and its Justice Department were equally emphatic in mollifying the public when the World Trade Center was first bombed in 1993, that a rag-tag handful of miscreants had “perverted” the “true Islam.” The species of Islam that has spurred these and other attacks has a long and distinguished pedigree. It is fourteen centuries old. It is rooted in the literal commands of the scriptures. It is a project that has engaged high intellects, and a belief system that continues to win the allegiance of the educated and the illiterate, rich and poor, young and old, princes and peons—cutting even across the Sunni/Shiite divide. It is not the majority construction of the faith, but it is the creed of a sizable minority—and a dynamic one, underwritten by Saudi billions and catapulted by Khomeini's revolution. Even if it were representative of only twenty percent of the Muslim world (an estimate which probably sells it short), that would translate into over a quarter-billion people.

For the past thirty years, Omar Abdel Rahman, the infamous “Blind Sheikh,” has been among the most consequential exponents of this doctrinal interpretation. It is he who spurred the murderers of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981, the WTC bombers in 1993, and, according to al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the 9/11 suicide hijackers. He is no perverter of scripture. To the contrary, he is better understood as a party-spoiling resister of modernization and anti-literalism. A doctor of Islamic jurisprudence graduated from al-Azhar University in Egypt, the seat of Sunni learning, his renown as a master of doctrine accounts for his influence.

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Jihad, he instructed hordes of admirers, is “the peak of a full [embrace] of Islam.... There is no work that equals” it. He recounted that, for over a millennium, jihad had unambiguously and unapologetically called for the aggressive application of brute force against oppressors and infidels. It “means fighting the enemies.” Jihad was not about internal betterment, other efforts at peaceful achievement. It was not to be accomplished by such quotidian practices as prayer, mosque attendance, alms giving, or living a virtuous life. At such suggestions, he scoffed:

Jihad is jihad.... There is no such thing as commerce, industry and science in jihad. This is calling things . . . other than by [their] own name. If God . . . says, “Do jihad,” it means do jihad with the sword, with the cannon, with the grenades and with the missile. This is jihad. Jihad against God’s enemies for God’s cause and his word.

Echoing his most profound influences—fourteenth century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, the Muslim Brotherhood’s intellectual engine Sayyid Qutb, and Ayatollah Khomeini (a Shiite whose triumph in Iran Abdel Rahman hoped to replicate in Egypt and beyond)—the Blind Sheikh exhorted followers that it was their duty to wage jihad against any regime that did not govern by Allah’s law, sharia. In the short term, this meant in Islamic countries; in the long term, because Islam aspires to global hegemony, it meant throughout the world.

The command is straight out of Qutb, who rejected as an absurdity that Islam’s core mission could ever be achieved by individual efforts at personal betterment or the religion’s intellectual force. Supplanting man’s dominion with God’s could never “be achieved only through preaching,” he warned, because incumbent regimes were plainly “not going to give up their power merely through preaching.”<sup>5</sup> Expelling them was the mission of jihad, highlighting its centrality as a core Islamic obligation. The purpose of jihad is “to wipe out tyranny and to introduce freedom to mankind.” Whenever Islam is obstructed by “the political system of the state, the socio-economic system based on races and classes, and behind all these, the military power of the government,” the religion, according to Qutb, “has no recourse but to remove them by force so that when [Islam] is addressed to peoples’ hearts and minds they are free to accept or reject it with an open mind.” All such impediments are deemed to be persecution, implicating the Qur’anic injunction (in Sura 2:190-91) to “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you . . . and slay them whenever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter.”

There were blazing signs that Abdel Rahman’s acolytes were preparing just such an offensive in the years before radical Islam declared war by bombing the World Trade Center in 1993. We refused to see them. The FBI ended surveillance in 1989 despite witnessing the nascent jihad army conducting paramilitary training. The CIA allowed its lavish aid for the Afghan mujahideen to flow to the most anti-American elements of the anti-Soviet jihad—elements that promptly turned on the United States once the Russians were defeated. A brazen 1990 killing by Abdel Rahman henchman Sayyid Nosair, the murder of Jewish Defense League founder Meir

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<sup>5</sup> Quotes from Sayyid Qutb are from his book *Milestones* (Ch. 4, “Jihaad in the Cause of God”) (Mother Mosque Foundation, Cedar Rapids, IA, 1993), pp. 57-63.

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Kahane, was treated as the work of a lone, crazed gunman despite a wealth of seized evidence proving Nosair was part of a jihadist network which had far greater ambitions.

Simply stated, we did not take the enemy and his motivations seriously before he announced himself. We did not react seriously in attempting before 9/11 to prosecute him into submission while he attacked again and again. And we are not serious now if we believe we can democratize him into submission—a fact that should be palpable given his penchant for exploiting democratic freedoms in furthering the jihad, and given that lack of democracy is not what drives him to act. His motivation is what he takes to be the divine summons to jihad.

The jihadist project—and it most certainly is a *jihadist* project—is to remove all barriers to the establishment of sharia (the prerequisite for Islam’s dominance). Those barriers are not merely military but political, cultural, spiritual and attitudinal. Force is used when necessary, but the theory of terrorism—and, while barbarous, terrorism is a rational method, not a form of madness—is that force should rarely be necessary. The terrorist defies our settled assumptions about civilized behavior. His actions, quite intentionally, are wanton and depraved, the better to extort us into capitulation through occasional shock and awe rather than a regular, predictable pattern of attacks. Though his self-perception is hallow, the terrorist’s strategy is not in principle different from the mafia loan shark, who generally collects his usurious payments without incident because the debtor well knows the wages of resistance.

The strategy is having the desired effect. The administration did not arrive at the language purge initiative on its own. It was done in consultation with what our government regards as influential Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council. MPAC greeted AP’s report of the new language code with a chest-beating press release, braying that its “regular ... engagement with government agencies including [the Department of Homeland Security,]” coupled with its long advocacy of a “nuanced approach” that stresses “the importance of decoupling Islam with [*sic*] terrorism,” had been instrumental. Naturally, it omitted its equally long history of lobbying for government recognition of the Hamas and Hezbollah terrorist organizations, and statements by some of its leading figures endorsing terrorist bombings as legitimate “resistance” against Israel.

Meanwhile, the State Department having successfully pushed for an outright reversal of the American policy against direct negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Iran (as it pursues nuclear weapons and supplies the jihadists fighting American soldiers in Iraq), is known to be considering negotiations with the Muslim Brotherhood—the font of modern jihadist thought whose credo remains, “Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Qur’an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.”<sup>6</sup> This should come as little surprise, one supposes, given the gushing praise State’s director for public diplomacy, Alberto Fernandez, publicly offered in 2006 for Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, the Brotherhood’s “spiritual leader” who,

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<sup>6</sup> Eli Lake, “Bush Weighs Reaching Out to ‘Brothers’” (*New York Sun*, June 20, 2007. Online at <http://www2.nysun.com/article/56899>. Last accessed May 6, 2008).

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when not inciting the infamous riots over a Dutch newspaper's cartoon depictions of Mohammed, can be heard urging his audiences to continue the fight "in Palestine, in Iraq, in Lebanon, and in every country that has been conquered by foreigners."

Administration officials frequently point to the powerful Ayatollah Ali Sistani as our key ally in Iraq, a true "moderate" and friend of democracy. Sistani, of course, does not meet personally with American officials. As his website elaborated, interface with non-Muslims is to be avoided since they must be considered in the same category as urine, feces, semen, dead bodies, blood, dogs, pigs, alcoholic liquors, and "the sweat of an animal who persistently eats [unclean things]."<sup>7</sup> Even after the State Department midwived Iraq's new "democratic" constitution—which, in stark contrast to Western democratic traditions, establishes Islam as the state religion and enshrines sharia as a fundamental component of law—Sistani issued a fatwa calling for homosexuals ("sodomites," as he put it) to be "killed in the worst manner possible." In Afghanistan, meantime, where State helped draft a very similar constitution, a man was subjected to a death-penalty trial for converting from Islam to Christianity, apostasy being a capital offense under Muslim law. He was spared due only to international outcry, though, it should go without saying, survival required his relocation to a country where the religion of peace is not predominant.

The list of horrors could go on all day. State has issued a grant to fund a "citizen exchange" program coordinated by the Islamic Society of North America—notwithstanding that the Justice Department named ISNA as an unindicted co-conspirator in its prosecution of an Islamic charity, the Holy Land Foundation, for funding Hamas. Another designated unindicted co-conspirator in the case, the Council for American-Islamic Relations, which was begun by a Hamas spin-off and boasts several members who've been convicted or deported due to terrorism investigations, is frequently consulted by government agencies. They now require investigators to undergo cultural sensitivity training. So even as CAIR counsels Muslims on how to avoid cooperation with the FBI, and even as it protests against (and brings lawsuits to impede) virtually every sensible national security measure enacted since 9/11, it is permitted to teach our agents that jihad, the real jihad, is the internal quest for self-improvement.

The clear message is that resistance is futile. That, at least, is what the Pentagon sought to convey to Stephen Coughlin, a reserve officer and distinguished lecturer who was among the government's leading scholars of Islam. Coughlin was threatened with non-renewal of his Defense Department contract job for refusing to "soften" his views on jihad and the nexus between Islamic doctrine and Islamic terror. They had proved offensive to one Hesham Islam, a top aide to Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England. Mr. Islam, a navy veteran who was born in Egypt, has reportedly opened Pentagon doors for the Muslim Brotherhood and ISNA. Though not a theology expert, his 1992 master's thesis in national-security affairs at the Naval Post-

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<sup>7</sup> From an English translation of the work of Sistani on Islamic Law on Sistani's Web site, specifically No. 84, "Najis things: Introduction," online at <http://www.sistani.org/local.php?modules=nav&nid=2&bid=59&pid=2857>, and No. 107, "Najis things: Kafir," online at <http://www.sistani.org/local.php?modules=nav&nid=2&bid=59&pid=2863>. Last accessed on May 6, 2008.

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graduate school was largely devoted to lambasting Israel and the influence of American Jews on U.S. politics.<sup>8</sup> In today's ship of American state, the Hesham Islams are at the wheel while the Stephen Coughlins walk the plank.

The purge mentality's infiltration of the U.S. government is complemented by lawfare suppression tactics beyond our borders. Most illustrative is "libel tourism," the practice by which persons or entities identified as having abetted Muslim terrorists (especially by funding them) trawl the planet for respected legal systems (particularly, the British courts) which provide less protection for journalists than America's First Amendment jurisprudence. The strategy of suing U.S. journalists in foreign courts has proved especially effective for Saudi Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz, who has managed to block or impede publication of several exposés despite having been cited as an al Qaeda underwriter in congressional testimony by Richard Clarke, former Clinton administration counterterrorism czar.

In a shrinking world, foreign libel judgments have a grievous in terrorem effect not only on journalists but on potential publishers and patrons of their work. All must now consider legal liability, to say nothing of the ruinous costs of litigation, in assessing works that address the patent links between Islam and terror. Consequently, recent legislation in New York as well as a proposed federal law to combat libel tourism are welcome developments. They target the very abuses from which the right to free-expression, so fundamental to informed self-governance, was intended to liberate our society. Those abuses are especially foreboding for a publisher such as Encounter Books, which has made a purpose of enriching the public discourse regarding the salient national security challenge of our age—recently publishing not only my own book, but such critical works as Melanie Phillips' *Londonistan*, Bruce Thornton's *Decline and Fall*, David Price Jones' *Betrayal*, Caroline Fourest's *Brother Tariq*, and Herb London's *America's Secular Challenge*, to name just a few.

Could the truth set us free? Islamic fundamentalists certainly think so. In late March, the invaluable Middle East media monitor, MEMRI, reported on a telling interview given by a top cleric, Muhammad al-Munajid, to Saudi television.<sup>9</sup> Free speech, he explained, was intolerable because it could lead to free belief:

The problem is that they want to open a debate on whether Islam is true or not, and on whether Judaism and Christianity are false or not. In other words, they want to open up everything for debate. Now they want to open up all issues for debate. That's it. It begins

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Emerson, "Pentagon Aide's Invitations Contradicted U.S. Policy" (Investigative Project on Terrorism News, Feb. 4, 2008) (<http://www.investigativeproject.org/article/596>); Claudia Rosett, "Questions for the Pentagon: Who Is Hesham Islam?" (*National Review Online*, Jan. 25, 2008. Online at <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=NTQ1ZjE0MWZlYW12ODVjYzU3MjcyZjBkMzcxNzBjNTQ=&w=MA>. Last accessed May 6, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> "Saudi Cleric Muhammad Al-Munajid Warns: Freedom of Speech Might Lead to Freedom of Belief" (MEMRI Video Clip 1734, March 30, 2008. Online at [http://www.memritv.org/clip\\_transcript/en/1734.htm](http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/1734.htm). Last accessed May 6, 2008).

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with freedom of thought, it continues with freedom of speech, and it ends up with freedom of belief.

Why the next thing you know, he grouched, they'll be saying, "there are loopholes in Islam, or that Christianity is the truth." Who knows, they might even say,

anyone is entitled to believe in whatever he wants.... If you want to become an apostate, go ahead. Leave Islam and join Buddhism? No problem. That's what freedom of belief is all about. They want freedom of everything. What they want is very dangerous.

Indeed. We are confronted by a tyrannical suppression culture that knows exactly what's at stake. That's why it's fighting so hard. How tragic that the liberty culture, the one founded on the conceit that free expression is truth's crucible, has lost its way.

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