Preface

THE FIRST ISSUE OF *CURRENT TRENDS IN ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY* received a most appreciative response. The editors and authors were most gratified by this. On behalf of my colleagues, let me express the hope that the present issue will enjoy a similar reception.

What is certain is the importance of this publication's subject: the current state of Islamist ideology. Since the publication of our first issue, there has been a dramatic increase in the appreciation of the importance of the ideological dimensions of Islamism and radical Islam. This is in large measure a result of the London bombings of July 7, 2005 and the attempted bombings of July 21, 2005. In response to those attacks, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that the ideological component of the struggle with radical Islam was as important as the military and operational aspects—if not more so. President Bush has recently expressed similar views.

In Britain, Blair's pronouncements have received nearly universal assent across the entire political spectrum from left to right. This is very striking, especially in light of the fact that popular opposition in Britain to its role in the war in Iraq remains strong and widespread. It might have been thought that reaction to the bombings in Britain would have seized on British policies in Iraq both to explain the bombings and as a basis for addressing the terrorist challenge in general. But this has proved not to be the case. It is difficult to say exactly why, but it certainly has a lot to do with the fact that the London bombers were either British-born or longtime residents rather than foreign terrorists. Consequently, their path toward terrorism was necessarily linked to a process of radicalization that had occurred within Britain and through an ideological dynamic operative in Britain itself. This was consonant with and perhaps reinforced by the view that such a dynamic is also operative in Western Europe more generally—a view that was brought increasingly to the fore by recent events elsewhere, including the murder of Theo Van Gogh by a Dutch born and educated Muslim, and signs of ideological radicalization in other countries such as France, Belgium and Germany.

Already, there has been much talk in the press that a fundamental intellectual and policy reorientation has occurred, with significant implications for how both the American and British administrations will continue to prosecute this conflict. In Britain, Blair took the dramatic step of proposing to ban two organizations—Hizb ut-Tahrir and Al-Muhajiroun—known to be more or less exclusively ideological organizations, rather than ones that have a direct jihad and terrorist operation. This step was coupled with a proposal to deport radical Islamic preachers. The drama of these actions was made possible by the fact that for some time London—or "Londonistan," as it has come to be called—has served as one of the principal centers of radical ideological activity. At the same time, it underscores the increase in the focus on ideology.

As in our first issue, we trust that the present collection of articles and analysis will help illuminate the current character and dynamic of Islamist ideology in both its local and global dimensions.

Two of the reports in this issue address the European scene directly. The article by Michael Whine provides an analysis of the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in Britain and the significant inroads it has made into British political life. Eric Brown's report provides an account of the debate currently raging in Islamist circles concerning the formulation of a so-called "Euro-Islam." As the article makes abundantly and brilliantly clear, part of this debate is actually occurring outside of Europe (in America and the Middle East, for example). This is for two reasons. The first reason, hardly surprising, is the interest of Islamists generally in advancing their agenda within Europe. The second reason is more surprising: the Islamists are concerned that ideological developments within Europe might adversely affect the ideological dynamic within the worldwide Muslim community and the political universe of Muslim-majority countries.

A third report by Zeyno Baran brings needed focus to an important but often neglected region: Central Asia. The article also concerns indirectly the European scene, inasmuch as one of the most important radical groups in Central Asia, Hizb ut-Tahrir, has been active in the UK.

We also continue in this issue our reporting on Islamist ideology in Southeast Asia. Angel Rabasa writes about the structure of religious education in Southeast Asia.

Finally, three reports in this issue are devoted to more general and even global topics. Shmuel Bar provides an overview of the Sunnite and Shiite division that sheds some light on the ideological and religious drivers of the current conflict in Iraq. Nibras Kazimi writes about the recent and dramatically bitter debate between Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, now well-known as the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq, and his former mentor Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi. Fi-

nally, Reuven Paz offers an analysis of new trends in the Islamist discussion about the acquisition and use of weapons of mass destruction.

These three articles have, for somewhat obvious reasons, a direct relation to certain operational dimensions of radical Islam. However, as all three articles attest, they also have an important bearing on the ideological dynamic of radical Islam and Islamism globally. They confirm the fact that despite the role that "practical" imperatives play in shaping radical Islam, the overall strategy and choice of tactics of radical Islam continues to require ideological justification and argumentation, including the development of jurisprudential arguments and pronouncements (ie., fatwas.) These debates thus draw upon and reflect back on radical ideology with a variety of long-term consequences.

One other point should be noted here. As many of the articles in this volume make clear, there are increasing signs of a generational struggle within Islamist ranks as younger and newer leaders challenge the established leadership—including, for example, Zarqawi's challenge to his own teacher in matters of strategy and tactics. As always with any ideological movement, these challenges entail not merely self-assertion but argumentation as a means of either gaining or maintaining the support of the movement's present and future members. In combination with other factors, the quality and persuasive force of these arguments and counter-arguments will have an important impact on the future shape of Islamism and radical Islam as a whole.

In addition to these new pieces, we have decided to reprint the introduction to our first issue. This endeavor is still sufficiently new to warrant the explanation of the ideological dimensions of Islamism and radical Islam that this introduction provides. We would only add that since our first issue, the need for this kind of independent research endeavor was emphasized and championed in the final report of the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction. That report argued that one of the sources of weakness within the American intelligence community prior to September 11, 2001—and even after—was insufficient attention to open source material, especially in the ideological sphere, and a lack of a variety of analyses. Apart from internal governmental measures that should be taken, the commission recommended the use of independent, non-governmental research efforts as a vital source of fresh analysis and ongoing critical appraisal. This publication is designed to address these needs.

–Hillel Fradkin
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