

***Ignoring religion in international relationships is a dangerous error that inevitably leads to an endless stream of policy miscalculations. To give lip service in this politically-correct era to a basic understanding of Islam and Islamic culture and then to proceed with secular American objectives is to functionally disregard the realities of Islam and Islamic culture as well as the religious foundations of our own attitudes and worldviews....***

***A profound but unintended problem that Americans have created is that our disregard for the place of Islam effectively abandons the Muslim world to extremists. Dismissing religion as a proper basis for strategic interaction gives away the primary battlefield to our opponents. Strategically, Americans are fighting the wrong war — directly ignoring Clausewitz’s dictum.*** —excerpts from this paper

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## **Introduction: The “Elephant in the Room” of Western/Islamic Dialogue**

Throughout the Islamic world, religion is the fundamental means of communication. About one quarter of the world’s seven billion persons is Muslim. Regardless of the wide variety of languages spoken by a myriad of Islamic nationalities, the *Umma*<sup>1</sup> communicates through a commonly held religious worldview. Islamic faith is founded upon revealed sacred texts (Koran and Hadiths) which disclose divine purpose and destiny for all humanity. This commonality of understanding transcends national borders, language, and cultural peculiarities.

Religious communication is rational, based in revelational truth<sup>2</sup> and contains common concepts understood by all humanity. All religions hold in common some understanding of the human-divine relationship. This understanding resolves itself into personal and social norms that are surprisingly consistent around the globe (i.e. proscriptions on adultery, murder, theft,

etc.). Most importantly, religion fundamentally informs people groups about Truth,  
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human purpose and destiny — all of which illuminates a commonly held worldview.

In Islamic<sup>4</sup> contexts Americans are at an overwhelming and self-imposed strategic disadvantage. Further, it is a common but disastrous categorical mistake to assume that religious discourse is non-rational or even irrational. Religious conversation is based upon a foundation of ontological meaning and epistemological assumptions rooted in divine revelation.  
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Such intercourse also includes eschatological end states and experiential methods.

Political discourse in all of its permutations (academic, cultural, conflict, diplomatic, economic, ethnic, and religious, etc.) is dynamic conversation about how life is to be lived. Religion is always a potent factor in the dialogue — either overtly or covertly. This is so because both disciplines are about how humans will live their lives. When diplomatic discourse carefully avoids all suggestion of faith, religion inevitably is the elephant in the room.

War is a conversation between people groups, and we know that most of the time, the dialogue goes badly. War has been called the failure of diplomacy. “Historically, war results when political conflict escalates to violence...after options short of violent force have failed to attain important political ends.”<sup>6</sup> Clausewitz famously asserted that war is found on the continuum of “politics by other means.”<sup>7</sup> He defined war as “violence intended to compel [rather than persuade] our opponent to fulfill our will.”<sup>8</sup>

The conduct of war has long been the bane of humanity because of its boundless violence and criminality. Genghis Khan’s conquest of Eurasia; the Goth and Visigoth conquests of Europe; and World War II are examples of war without limits. Liang and Xiangsui coined the term Unrestricted Warfare<sup>9</sup> to refer to conflict “unrestricted by the rules that apply to super powers in a regulated international system.”<sup>10</sup> Clausewitz, however, denied the possibility of absolute (unrestricted) war, noting that every nation or entity has (ethical or cultural) boundaries it will refuse to cross.

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Persons of faith labor to apply universal ethical principles to violent conflict. In the Christian West this is known as Just War doctrine. Just War doctrine is not simply an ethical checklist cynically consulted on the way to do what we intend to do anyway. Rather, Just War

considerations are essential moral principles guiding communal and individual behavior throughout the spectrum of conflict. Such ethical principles guide one to understand what behaviors are permitted or forbidden — and (importantly) how to discern the difference.

National ethical boundaries are rarely sharp cut but are more often ill-defined frontiers between good and evil. Furthermore, a relentless stream of technological developments continues to alter the moral terrain. Just War doctrine must continually evolve to comprehend these new challenges.

Just War<sup>12</sup> principles are the practical application of faith to the ethical conundrums brought about by nationally- and internationally- sanctioned violence. The conduct of Just War requires careful understanding of our own motives and the motives of others. Just War doctrine must be an on-going and robust conversation with one's allies as well as one's enemies.

A fact that seems to be routinely overlooked in current academic Just War discussions is the fact that war is a deadly competition that must be won. Losing a war has unthinkable consequences for a people. The ethical conduct of war is not a synonym for a suicide pact. Just War doctrine provides moral regulation while in pursuit of victory on the battlefield and beyond. Thus this article will discuss a basis for American victory in the current wars in Islamic lands.

Christian<sup>13</sup> and Muslim civilizations both believe that humanity is divinely created with both head and heart, thus a rational-emotional integration of Truth is necessary. Further, both religions hold that moral boundaries are integral to human well-being. Sacred texts contain standards of morality that the devout seek to faithfully apply across the spectrums of human endeavor.

In the West, we inherit Just War principles from a long tradition of Christian teaching, largely beginning with Church Fathers Ambrose and Augustine. However, clerics and philosophers alike have taught that Just War principles are firmly rooted in universal ethics. Pre-Christian Western philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, derived a complete set of cardinal virtues for human behavior. Church Fathers studied and incorporated such virtues in Just War doctrines.<sup>14</sup> Just War morality in the West is derived from Christian teaching, and it is also universally based upon human “prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice.”

<sup>15</sup>

Universal morality is affirmed by the Christian scripture, which reveals the omnipotent Creator who created humanity in His own image.<sup>16</sup> Because of this shared fundamental unity (*imago dei*), humans also share in a universal morality given by the Creator.

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### **Indifference to Religion Undermines Effective Relations with Muslim Leaders Who Also Oppose the Goals of Al-Qaida**

American strategic leaders<sup>18</sup> and thinkers, trained in an Enlightenment influenced worldview and also thoroughly aware of the adverse consequences of public religiosity, disregard religion — which is the foundation of a people's worldview.

*Ignoring religion in international relationships is a dangerous error that inevitably leads to an endless stream of policy miscalculations.*

To give lip service in this politically-correct era to a basic understanding of Islam and Islamic culture and then to proceed with secular American objectives is to functionally disregard the realities of Islam and Islamic culture as well as the religious foundations of our own attitudes and worldviews. For instance, the State Department's *Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy*, updated February 2010, makes no discussion of religion, Islam or related issues or how these might impact U.S. efforts in the region!

Regardless of America's commitment to the separation of church and state, it is a truism of life that government and religion must interact in countless ways. Although it is plainly outside of our current worldview and comfort zone, America's strategic leaders are obliged to engage other nations through the means of religious communication. It is also a Truth that no matter how hard American policy makers may try to ignore it, the fundamentals of our religious heritage profoundly affect our own outlook.

Religion, regardless of the intensity of one's piety, is the basis upon which all of a nation's life is ordered. This is why Islamic peoples (especially Islamist radicals) contend that they are engaged with the Christian<sup>19</sup> West in Afghanistan and Iraq. Because Americans regard our nation as secular<sup>20</sup> (i.e. publically indifferent to religion), we have a

peculiar blindness to our own fundamentally religious assumptions.

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But the rest of the world plainly understands that our American constructs, end states and ideals (however sanitized of religious language) are firmly rooted in the Christian faith.

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Nations are never truly secular, because their people are invariably religious.<sup>23</sup> Moreover nations do not separate themselves from their predominant religious worldview. Throughout the Middle East and South West Asia (as indeed the rest of the world) it's all about religion.

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Even for the American soldier there is no practical separation of church and state, because the soldier is both the church

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and the state. It is ironic that Islamic and (personally religious) American warriors meet in a conflict in which their common battleground is the secular United States of America.

The most effective communication in Muslim contexts is typically in the language of religion. Islamists know and expertly practice this strategic principle. Religious communication is not merely the cynical use of pious words and symbols.<sup>26</sup> It involves the incorporation of religious concepts, metaphysics, morals, and sensibilities in framing dialogue with Islamic entities and peoples. If America is to effectively communicate with the Islamic world, the content of our effort must be found in fundamentally religious discourse.

Religion as a basis for communication can be very unfamiliar ground for American strategic leaders. Descartes' radical dualism ultimately resulted in today's post-modern epistemology which, unfortunately, employs a fact-value divorce. Thus all religious knowledge is assumed to be non-rational, non-scientific, and personal — certainly not a proper basis for any sort of public discourse. This denial of any religious epistemological knowledge essentially handicaps the American effort because it *a priori* denies the validity of an entire realm of knowledge that is accessible and necessary to Muslims. Thus Americans hear Muslim religious words and concepts but do not come to the table with tools to adequately comprehend the underlying assumptions of the Islamic worldview. Conversely, Muslims perceive that it may be useless to speak to Americans about ultimate values, which are spiritually discerned, because of their inability to understand or converse about such things.

The Islamic worldview is necessarily sourced in claims of revealed Truth. The immediate, deep divide between Islamic and official Western worldviews has much to do with disagreement about the substance of reality, which informs us about the ultimate purpose and destiny of

humanity.

*The critical strategic task for America is to find common ground at the intersection of our religious commonality. Conversely, the critical strategic task for Islamists is to prevent any such convergence, intersection or basis of understanding between the Umma<sup>27</sup> and the West.*

Western Political-Military (POL-MIL) language rests upon fundamental assumptions derived from two millennia of Christian civilization. Infused in these fundamentals, often in a contradictory manner, are the secularizing principles of the Enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> American strategic biases are deeply rooted. American discourse is based upon a foundation of meaning, end states and methods informed by our own mix of religio-secular assumptions. Real connection between these two worlds depends upon accurate understanding and an ability to effectively interact with each other's worldview.

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Therefore, it is imperative that American strategic leadership employ effective religious communication in all POL-MIL intercourse.

Religion is both the problem and the solution. Ignoring the obviously religious center of the Islamic world assures continual frustration, if not defeat, for American policy objectives. The reasons for American religious blindness are found in current legal and philosophical interpretations of our founding documents. The First Amendment to the Constitution contains a disestablishment clause: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>30</sup> In the dynamic of interpreting this right, religion has been progressively denied a place in public policy.

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## **Identifying the Strategic Center of Gravity**

It is not news in the current conflict with our global Islamist opponents that the support of the Islamic *Umma* is both a strategic and operational Center of Gravity (CoG)<sup>31</sup> for the application of

American power in the Middle East. Islamic faith is a strongly held belief by an enormous, determined, globally dispersed population.

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Therefore, ultimate goal of the Al Qaida (AQ) network of likeminded Islamist organizations is not simply the establishment of a restored global Caliphate -- it is decisive control of the

*Umma*

, followed by ultimate control of the entire world. This is AQ's raison d'etre and therefore both its strength (ideological passion and direction) and weakness (loss of which transforms AQ et. al. into garden variety insurgencies). Islamist narrative, therefore, is framed as both strategic and operational communication aimed at garnering and maintaining the support of their global constituency.

What to do about this clearly identified Center of Gravity (the Islamic *Umma*) presents an elaborate and wickedly complex issue for confronting and defeating our Islamist opponents. Clausewitz taught us that the statesman must first determine the kind of war to be prosecuted.

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Treating the global Islamist threat as a localized insurgency or mere criminal enterprise is a mistake we have been years in rectifying. Regardless of American efforts, it is unlikely that Islamist ideology will ever be decisively defeated. Ideas are not subject to POL-MIL extermination. Radical solutions continue to be the refuge of the desperate, the dispossessed and the ideologue.

It is a feasible strategy that Islamist ideology might be undermined by the more humane and irenic ideas found in moderate expressions of the Muslim faith. Few Muslims, as evidenced by the 2011 "Islamic Spring," desire to live under a totalitarian regime. Most Muslims deeply desire a radical improvement in their daily lives and find a central hope (where little else exists) that Islamist organizations may do just that. "Thus decisive defeat will require neutralizing that center...accomplishing that defeat will mean employing the diplomatic and informational elements of national power as deliberately as the military one."<sup>34</sup> However, national power thus exercised is not necessarily our own but that of moderate and centrist Muslim governments and cultural-religious institutions.

A few months after moving his organization to Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden published his first *fatwa*

, "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," in *al-Quds al-Arabi*

, the Arabic language newspaper based in London.

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A

*fatwa*

is an Islamic religious opinion normally issued by an acknowledged scholar, and its importance depends upon the communally recognized status of that jurist. Bin Laden's work, known as the Ladenese Epistle, "is an endless list of charges... The most prominent accusation has become bin Laden's hallmark: the "Zionist-Crusader Alliance, that amalgam of world infidelity, is waging a war against the people of Islam."

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His declaration of war caught the attention of the entire Muslim world on two counts. First, bin Laden was not a recognized

*Quranic*

authority even if he might popularly speak for the masses. Some in the West have noted that bin Laden and other non-clerical Islamists have "Protestantized" the Islamic religion by making every man a religious authority capable of interpreting sacred texts.

Secondly, as all Muslims know, "the declaration of jihad creates a legal state of hostilities."<sup>37</sup> His subsequent attacks on the USA "stem from a pervasive fear — in the minds of bin Laden and many other Muslims — that American culture is crushing theirs."

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Bin Laden exploited the fact that there "is no "clear, decisive, and unequivocal religious authority [in Islam] able to declare that the killing of innocents by terrorist attacks is contrary to Islam."

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Islamist narrative focused upon finally defeating "Crusaders" is a decisive bonding force for many aggrieved ethnic groups within Islam.

A strategic question Americans ought to ask is, "Why did we give any credence to bin Laden (and given his demise, other such radical Islamist leaders)?" Why didn't we publicly denigrate his declaration of *jihad* and declare him an international criminal instead of honoring him as the leader of a global insurgent movement? Language is important. Too often legitimacy has been inadvertently granted to Islamists (and denied to non-radicals) by the language we use.

Employing the terms *jihad*, *jihadist* and *mujahidin* communicates that America really does recognize the rightness of the Islamist cause. Using ethical language such as "unholy war," "terrorist" and "evildoers" more accurately steers Arabic translations toward derogatory terms of " *hir*

*abah*

" "

*Irhabist*

" and "

*musfidoon*

"

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This distinction upholds a universal morality that places the protection of humanity over and above the ideological urges of Islamists.

In the 1980s, I served as a referee for a boy's (9-12 year old) soccer league. Teams would form and play together for almost four years. Inevitably, the older teams dominated. One spring Saturday it was unusually hot and humid. The undefeated champions were matched against the youngest team, which had not won a game all fall and, so far, all spring. At the half, the older team led by four goals to nothing. While their coach was distracted, well-meaning moms served the parched champs ice-cold sodas — some kids gulped down two or three. Predictably, the team cramped up, and when the second half began they could barely field seven somewhat-functional players.<sup>41</sup> As a referee, I was "impartially" delighted to be there for the youngest team's first victory. It mattered to not one of their overjoyed supporters that they won by an unfair advantage. By the same circumstance, the champs routinely had an unfair developmental advantage over other teams.

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On September 11, 2001, there was a similar reaction around the Muslim world. The "home team" (perennial losers in the family of nations) had finally won one. Yes, many in the Islamic world were aghast at the inevitable consequences arising from such an attack; but most viscerally felt that in some way the score had been momentarily evened.

The Islamic world identified with this "victory." Why? Regardless of ethnic background or national borders, Islamic peoples (*Umma*) find consanguinity with each other.<sup>43</sup> National constructs are not nearly as important to Muslims as their common faith. For this reason, America's strategic leaders will continue to be frustrated in the attempt to erect Western-model democracies in the Islamic world. Our unstated and unspoken goal is to bring the Enlightenment to Islamic lands. Erecting western democracy framed by the Enlightenment will always be resisted by Muslim society. This is not simply a wickedly complex problem, but rather a fundamental misreading of what is possible.

As a class of humanity, Muslims feel dispossessed and oppressed by the current world order. Consider this story:

One day...an elderly Bedouin man discovered that by eating turkey he could restore his virility. So he bought himself a turkey and he kept it around the tent, and every day he watched it grow. He stuffed it with food, thinking, Wow, I am really going to be a bull. One day, though, the turkey was stolen. So the Bedouin called his sons together and said, "Boys, we are in great danger now – terrible danger. My turkey's been stolen." The boys laughed and said, "Father, what do you need a turkey for?" He said, "Never mind, never mind. It is not important why I need the turkey, all that is important is that it has been stolen, and we must get it back." But his sons

ignored him and forgot about the turkey. A few weeks, later the old man's camel was stolen. His sons came to him and said, "Father, your camel's been stolen, what should we do?" And the old man said, "Find my turkey." A few weeks later, the old man's horse was stolen, and the sons came and said, "Father, your horse was stolen, what should we do?" He said, "Find my turkey." Finally, a few weeks later, someone raped his daughter. The father went to his sons and said, "It is all because of the turkey. When they saw that they could take my turkey, we lost everything."<sup>4</sup>

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The turkey theft illustrates the Muslim's sense of loss and vulnerability in a hostile world. Modern Muslims are faced with a nagging conundrum which we might put this way: "How is it that Islamic people, who are the possessors of the only true religion and who ought to be (and once were!) the most powerful people on earth, are now so poor, backward and powerless?"<sup>45</sup> Muslims deeply resent successive defeats; loss of international prestige; loss of authority within their own nations; and loss of control within their own families as their women and children

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model their behavior upon the "Christian" West. Muslims are also caught in a cycle of hopelessness, lack of opportunity and poverty.

Over all, Islam has been in retreat since Ottoman forces were defeated in their second siege of Vienna in 1683, more than three hundred years ago. During that time Christian and post-Christian civilization has profoundly affected the economics, government, mores, society, and culture of the entire Muslim world.<sup>47</sup> Existing national leaders in Muslim nations are dictatorial, insular and grossly out of touch with their populations. These realities have brought forth profound discontent and resentment throughout the

*Umma*

. Islamist ideology has given voice to angry passions in the Muslim civilization.

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Islamists also offer the eschatological hope of a unified

*Umma*

, restored to its rightful, preeminent place, in a region that "remains divided by tribal, religious, and political divisions, in which continued instability is inevitable."

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Islamists are those who so clearly articulate the hopelessness of the Muslim masses by identifying a powerful enemy in the Great Satan (

*dajjal*

), which is the USA, and locating all of life's answers in fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. Religious extremism always flourishes in an environment in which adherents perceive their beliefs and way of life are under attack. The modernist cultural and economic assault on Islam (sometimes called "westoxification") is popularly seen not only as confirmation of Islamist ideology but substantiation of the need for Muslims to return to a purer practice of their religion.

Current affairs in Muslim lands serve to amplify and verify all these resentments in the popular mind. The fact of a Western military presence (labeled “Christian Crusaders”) in Muslim lands is an ongoing affront to the impoverished Muslim estate. American strategic leaders must directly address Muslim feelings of dispossession and oppression and do this from a thoroughly religious perspective. Until some real communication with Islamic sensibilities is made, no lasting change in the current Islamic world order will be influenced by the United States.

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### **Conflicting Views on the Center of Society**

American emphasis upon secular governmental structures as the center of society is contrary to the culture and religion of Muslim peoples. Religious persons view their faith as the center of life, with all human endeavor ordered by religion. These competing worldviews each prescribe very different societies.

The Islamic concept of equity between all Muslim persons comes nearest to the Enlightenment ideal of individual freedom and equality, but it is certainly not close to being equivalent to it. In Muslim society, not all have the same affluence, position, role or power, but Allah regards all persons alike — making distinction only for personal piety.<sup>50</sup> There is no place for prejudice: all are equally judged by Allah, so there are no valid distinctions of race, gender or any other category. However, with equity comes responsibility for the moral and spiritual care of the *Umma*

. The individual’s actions directly affect the entire

*Umma*

. In contradistinction to the Islamic world, Western liberal civilization has disassociated society and the individual. Personal liberty is highly prized in the West — with predictably disastrous moral, familial and societal consequences.

Middle Eastern cultures (which are intimately tied to Islam) are structured with an endogamous family construct — meaning arranged marriages within the family. Such relationships define family within the greater tribal structure. These arrangements retain wealth and property in the family, as well as undergirding patriarchal authority. There is no concept of autonomous action, faith or morality that is somehow divorced from family and society.

In most Arab societies, everyone knows where they fit into the overall structure. Loyalty is to extended family, individual agency is weak, and the entire structure tends to resist outside influence. Religion is organic to birth and reinforces the authority of the patriarchal system. However it is the social structure, which predated Islam, that comes first. Assaults to tribe and family, real or imagined, are therefore assaults against religion, and vice versa.<sup>51</sup>

Western attempts to establish democratic government in the Western Liberal tradition are a poor fit for Islamic cultures. Inadequate American performance in the business of nation building has more to do with our unwillingness to honor indigenous belief systems than our desire to do a good work abroad.

For Western minds it is difficult to understand the union of Islam and state. In Muslim nations, official religion is subordinate<sup>52</sup> to but inseparable from the state. However, the Islamist world-view is quite opposite — religion is primary over all things, and must direct the workings of government as well as the society. Islamist thought stresses the necessity of political control: “the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world.”<sup>53</sup> Islamist ideology rejects all modern Muslim governments as counterfeits of the Islamic idea. The Islamist goal is to establish political unity of the worldwide

*Umma*

— a caliphate headed by a “Rightly Guided Caliph.”

<sup>54</sup>

Initially, the Caliphate must be restored in the heart of the Islamic world — the Levant, Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iraq. This is not a novel teaching, but dates from the thirteenth century.<sup>55</sup> From that base of moral and political strength, the new Islamist revolution would be spread throughout the world.

American insistence upon the Rule of (Western) Law will does not resonate on the Muslim street. In fact, insistence upon establishing a secular rule of law completely misses the point. Islam is a religion of laws. The rule of *Sharia* is well established<sup>56</sup> in Islamic nations. To assert Western Liberal Law as fundamentally superior explicitly denies the legitimacy of Islam and smacks of the cultural imperialism that Muslims detest.

Insisting upon inserting Western Liberal Law into Muslim cultures springs from a failure to understand the human terrain. *Sharia*,<sup>57</sup> the established legal system in Muslim lands, requires religious lawyers, or jurists, to interpret that law. Four centuries after Mohammed, four standard legal schools ( *Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali*) became accepted as mainstream interpreters of Sunni Islam. Their legal opinions became the standard of orthodoxy, and any departure from these established legal opinions were denounced as innovation (

*bida*

). Khadduri

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notes that the

*Quranic*

law “precedes the state: it provides the basis of the state.”

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It is therefore not God, but God’s law that really governs; and, as such, the state should be called nomocracy, not theocracy.

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In the Muslim view, Allah is ineffable and therefore not tainted by human interactions. What makes Islam a nomocracy is that a human ruler enforces the perfect, divinely-given law.

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The state exists solely to enforce the divine law and if it fails in that duty, the state “obviously forfeits its *raison d’etre* — the believer still remained under the obligation to observe the law even in the absence of any one to enforce it.”

62

Islamic law consists of obligations (

*faraid*

) illuminating the

*Sharia*

(the right path) to salvation.

*Sharia*

distinguishes between religious obligation (

*farid*

) and the religiously forbidden (

*haram*

). Between these two poles, the Muslim has the freedom to express faith positively (

*mandub*

) and to refrain from the unacceptable (

*makruh*

). There is also the category of

*jaiz*,

to which the law is indifferent and in which the believer has full freedom of action.

63

Khadduri explains that there are three vital characteristics of the divine law. First, the law is

permanent and applicable in all times and places. Secondly, the primary concerns of the law are the common interest of the *Umma*, thus the individual is protected only as long as the individual's rights coincide with the well-being of the Islamic community. Thirdly, the law must be sincerely followed in good faith.

64

One defining characteristic of Islamist ideologies is hyper-literal and stringent enforcement of *Sharia*

. AQ brought together strands of Arab nationalism and Islamist fundamentalism as interpreted by an Egyptian philosopher, Sayyid Qutb.

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Qutb radically critiqued the settled orthodoxy that Islam had become. His work was no less than a clarion call to overthrow what he perceived as pernicious Christian domination of the entire Islamic world.

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Qutb's purpose was to politically reunify all Muslims worldwide under a restored, rightly-guided Islamic Caliphate. His is a complete rejection of the Christian West and a reactionary view toward the progressiveness of the Islamic schools. "Qutb and the Islamists...pictured the resurrected caliphate as a theocracy, strictly enforcing *Sharia*, the legal code of the Koran."<sup>67</sup> This required a total rejection of all things non-Muslim.

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For the Islamist, Western rejection of the 1,300-year-old *Sharia* law and insistence upon substitution of a Western code of law verifies the "satanic" nature of the West.

A profound but unintended problem that Americans have created is that our disregard for the place of Islam effectively abandons the Muslim world to extremists. Dismissing religion as a proper basis for strategic interaction gives away the primary battlefield to our opponents. Strategically, Americans are fighting the wrong war — directly ignoring Clausewitz's dictum. Insistence upon replacing *Sharia* with a western law code does two self-defeating things. First it is an affront to all Muslims because it is (rightly) interpreted as an assault upon Islam. Secondly, it allows the Islamists to paint Western efforts as anti-Islamic, irreligious, and evil.

Further, to prejudicially stereotype all Muslims as those who combine their faith with violent political extremism is counterproductive. Such an attitude alienates the majority of Muslims who practice a religion the *Quran* refers to as "the middle ground religion" (*diin al wasata*) and who consider seeking the moderate position in all affairs to be an Islamic obligation.

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*Sharia* does not conform to a politically-correct Western worldview — especially in its limitation upon personal freedoms. However, its expression has ordered societies around the globe for 1,300 hundred years. A moderate expression of accepted and settled law is far more effective than the prospect of inserting a foreign code of law that will take generations to implement — if that is even possible.

The multiplication of personal freedoms is seen as the greatest good in our culture. The natural American assumption is that the entire world desires our way of life — its advantages, freedoms, prosperity and worldview. This simply is not the case. Muslims look over the shoulders of strategic leaders to view a Western society which they perceive as disordered and immoral. The thought of importing this lifestyle into their lands is deeply disturbing. However, Muslims do desire Western opportunity, education, prosperity and other religiously positive aspects of our culture.

We must recognize that Islamists are scary people to most Muslims (as they are to nearly all Americans) and regarded as incredibly disruptive to their societies. Muslims don't relish the thought of losing their already very limited freedoms. Further, Muslims resent being accused of apostasy for their particular expressions of their faith. Islamist assassinations of elders and tribal leadership causes cultural chaos; disordering established societies. Moderates also decry the extreme divisiveness that discriminates against Shi'ia and other non-conforming groups while harshly demanding conformity by all to narrow Islamist ideological and religious norms. The *Umma* realizes that radical ideological agendas are unlivable, and are destructive to their unique cultures. In many quarters of the Islamic world, the religiously medieval and repressive regime under Afghanistan's Taliban is viewed as extremism run amok.

Islam is a deontological religion — that is, the ends do not justify the means. The morality of an action is never dependent upon its consequences. This is true even if there are different recognized standards for Muslims and others. However, radical ideology usually leads to approval of terrible and forbidden actions justified solely on the basis of results. Thus we find the modern advent of the Islamic suicide bomber — whether the bomb is strapped to the person, carried in a vehicle, or loaded on an airplane. Ayman al-Zawahiri noted that “the method of martyrdom operations [is] the most successful way of inflicting damage against the opponent and the least costly to the *mujahidin* in terms of casualties.”<sup>70</sup> Traditional Muslim scholars argue that suicide is not Islamic; that it is an unpardonable sin and not a true martyrdom. “Naming a martyr is the business of Allah,” the scholar Amir Taheri reminds us, not of those “in pursuit of political goals...Muslims who implicitly condone terror know they cannot smuggle a new concept into Islamic ethics.”

Muslim strategic leaders perceive a very limited range of options for dealing with these issues. None of their options is acceptable within their national contexts. It is a nasty dilemma for Muslim strategic leaders to be presented with an alternative between “westoxification” or Islamist totalitarianism. Strategically, we can assist Muslim allies by not forcing them into an impossible or Hobson’s choice. There must be a middle way.

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### **Conclusion: Defining an Effective Strategy**

The strategic task for America's senior leaders is to communicate in explicitly religious terms an understanding of the Islamic dilemma and to assist Muslim leaders in finding a truly Islamic solution to their intractable predicaments. Strategic leaders must support the moderate ( *diin al wasata* ) elements regardless of the fundamental differences that exist with the West. The strategic task here is to make it possible for Muslim moderates to dominate normal religious discourse. A subtask is enabling moderates to ascend in the economic and political structures of Muslim society. American Strategic Leadership must support or at least cooperate with moderate Islamic elements. In this effort, Americans can afford to be the “heavy,” or the “bad guy” — doing things to defeat Islamists that might not be politically or religiously possible for Muslim leaders.

For Western minds it is difficult to understand that there is no separation of church and state in Islam. Political decisions, in Muslim nations, must be religiously conditioned and vetted. In Islamic nations, everything is stipulated by religion even if individual national leaders often proceed out of seemingly non-religious motives. The Islamist worldview is radically opposed to both Western and existing Muslim governments in the belief that religion is primary over all things. This may be a non-existent difference to Americans, but it is an enormously important distinction for Muslims. This primary conflict is an everyday reality in Muslim society. Western issues are a distraction for Muslim leaders, not the center of their attention.

While the prevailing interpretation of the U.S. Constitution enforces a strict separation of church

and state at home, there would seem to be less stringent American Law governing such actions overseas. It could be argued that the Constitution seems to allow leeway for U.S. policy to assist the development of moderate religious leadership abroad. Supporting a wide-ranging moderate Islamic culture would serve to crowd out extremists. This sort of effort may not directly contribute gaining allies in the Islamic world, but it certainly contains the potential for defeating our Islamist opponents. The old Middle Eastern adage applies — “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

The first principle of Just War must always be to settle disputes nonviolently (Mt. 5:25). To win without warring would be in keeping with principles of Just War (probability of success and proportionality). This ethical value has escaped many leaders who should have considered it very carefully. In order to avoid the necessity of armed conflict; our national listening skills must be developed. The Chinese warrior Sun Tzu’s principle is that the epitome of military skill is to win a battle without shedding blood.

That the officially secular American government should actively support religious factions in other nations may be controversial. Certainly, Congress should become involved by structuring effective legal authorization for such action. Strategic military leaders often find themselves acting in legal shadow lands<sup>72</sup> because there is no settled law for the existing situation. Through use of appropriate channels, America’s Strategic Leaders ought to request that the Executive, Congress and the Courts provide the legal authorization necessary for such a complex strategic design, and the actions necessary to insure its success.

Modern era conflict between Sunni and Shi’ia, exacerbated by Islamist ideology, is trending the *Umma*

toward its own internecine religious war(s). Religious diplomacy can serve to share the long and difficult lessons Christians learned during European religious strife,

<sup>73</sup>

and assist Muslim allies to avoid those mistakes. The West has learned much from indiscriminate slaughter during the Inquisition, Reformation, Counterreformation, 30 Years War, Cromwell’s England and other eras of European religious strife. European religious wars taught the West about the dangers of religious extremism, and about living in peace, pluralism and prosperity. This is not a struggle between faith and culture. It is effectively working out one’s faith through culture.

Strategic leaders must recognize the incredible resource available to them in our own military chaplaincies. While the narrative is little told, chaplains in recent military operations have, at times, made a decisive difference. Chaplain Patrick Rattigan, a Roman Catholic Priest serving

with Special Forces in the 1990's, broke a political impasse in Haiti. (Father Rattigan is fluent in several languages, including French.) He accomplished this by concelebrating the Mass with an influential Haitian Bishop while an A-Team sat in the front row of the standing-room-only Cathedral. Following this experience, the Bishop gave his blessing, thus enabling American effort in that nation. Another unsung chaplain was Dr. Lynn Brown,<sup>74</sup> who was fluent in Arabic. His reserve Civil Affairs Command often employed him during multiple tours in Iraq in direct "Holy Man-to-Holy Man" interaction. This sort of communication paved the way for effective work in their sector.

Dr. Chris Seiple,<sup>75</sup> recently speaking to Senior Army Chaplains, maintained that Chaplains are the "soft edge of American hard power." Chaplains are already fluent in the language of religious worldview. Most are also expert in people skills that are necessary for effective communication and negotiation. American military chaplains already successfully navigate the difficulties found in the secular American worldview, their particular denominational beliefs, and the pluralistic demands of military society. They possess skills that are largely absent (or atrophied) in our diplomatic corps and strategic leadership. Chaplains need not depart their own religious faith, for religious persons have respect for others who have long training and spiritual conviction. This occurs in much the same way that warriors generally have great respect for other warriors, especially their enemies. <sup>76</sup> They are professionals, and appreciate competent tradecraft.

Military Chaplains are arbiters of religious discourse. They ought to be immediately placed in the forefront of relations with Islamic counterparts. A small but significant number of senior chaplains, from each of the services have been trained in strategic skills at our war colleges. These soft-hard power skills can be enhanced by advanced training in diplomatic skills as well as development of language skills. Strategic leadership can learn the soft skills of religious dialogue from their chaplains. With all of this, the Chaplaincy remains the guarantor of the free expression of religion within the military. Military-to-Military (Mil-Mil), Pol-Mil, and military-to-civilian diplomacy will always remain a secondary but important competency for the Chaplaincy.

Strategic Leaders must learn effective pathways to be conversant in religious dialogue. As any religious person knows, faith and action are inextricably linked. For instance, Islamic people regard Friday as their holy day for worship; Jews reserve Saturday; and Christians keep Sunday. Aside from POL-MIL necessity, American strategic leaders will earn legitimacy by observing a Friday through Sunday hiatus to honor days of worship. Regardless of personal piety, Islamic people regard Americans who insist upon doing business on a worship day as irreligious or worse, atheist.<sup>77</sup> While this may be personally true (for both the Muslim and the American!), non-observance of a day of worship communicates disrespect for one's deity. If you have contempt for a person, it is very difficult to negotiate seriously with them. It is also quite

possible that more real business will be accomplished in the remaining four days with Islamic counterparts because of earned respect. Such action won't change U.S. — Islamic relations by itself, but it certainly is a beginning toward that goal.

This paper has explained and presented an effective strategic approach for our senior political and military leaders that conveys real, religious meaning to Islamic counterparts. It is critical that Americans truly understand and connect through their own religious traditions to Muslim religious sensibilities. In this manner, we may communicate that we also are a religious people whose civilization has a strong, morally-ordered society that possesses a knowledge of the divine.

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He also serves as the Command Chaplain for the Military Intelligence Readiness Command of the U.S. Army. He is a veteran of five conflicts and a master parachutist. In his Army career, Chaplain Johnson served in Honduras, Korea, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, Haiti, Germany, Afghanistan, and Iraq, as well as numerous locations in the continental United States.

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## **ENDNOTES**

1. *Umma* – all Muslim people of faith regardless of nationality.
  
2. It is currently fashionable in many academic and scientific realms to make an assumption that faith is irrational or non-rational. This assumption flies in the face of many millennia of philosophical consideration and study.
  
3. Truth – capitalized to convey the idea of ontological reality as opposed a temporary fact.
  
4. As well as in other religiously driven contexts.
  
5. As opposed to Western Cartesian and mechanistic assumptions as a basis of epistemology which assumes that religious discourse is non-rational and scientifically unverifiable..
  
6. Czege, BG Huba Wass de. "War With Implacable Foes: What All Statesmen and Generals Need to Know." (*Army*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2006): p. 9.
  
7. *Ibid.*, Clausewitz, p. 119.
  
8. *Ibid.*, Clausewitz, p.101.
  
9. Liang, Qiao & Wang Xiangsui. *Unrestricted Warfare*. (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999).
  
10. *Ibid.*, Czege, Traditional and Irregular War. p 14.
  
11. *Ibid.*, Clausewitz, p. 367 ff.

12. Many of the world's religions have considered teachings on just conduct during warfare. A pertinent example is Majid Khadduri's 'War and Peace in the Law of Islam.'

13. While the USA is officially a secular state, its culture and heritage are profoundly influenced by the Christian faith, and its majority population professes some form of Christianity.

14. Tarsitano, Louis R. "Waging Peace: War, Christianity & the Divine Order" (*Touchstone* October, 2002, <http://touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=15-08-031-f>, (accessed February 06, 2008).

15. *Ibid.*, Tarsitano.

16. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Genesis 1:27.

17. "He has also set eternity in the hearts of men." Ecclesiastes 3:11

18. American Strategic Leaders are those who are at the pinnacle of our national cultural, diplomatic, military and political, structures.

19. Popularly in our culture, Americans refer to Judeo-Christian traditions. However, for the purposes of this article, American religious heritage is identified as Muslims generally perceive it.

20. The USA is conceived as a *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (Latin for "New Order of the Ages," from the Great Seal) and has enshrined the separation of church and state in the 1st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

21. Arguably, even the USA is fundamentally driven by a religious world view. For example: American exceptionalism is a cultural conception Americans hold that the United States is a

unique nation specifically destined to lead the world community, rescue the oppressed and usher in an enduring world peace. It is a quasi-religious-secular devotion to the American way of life, originating from the Christian faith and routinely expressed as a secular belief.

22. For instance: the U.S. military routinely applies Christian Just War principles (codified in US and international law), neatly sanitized of religious substance, to determine if a particular action is in keeping with the accepted morality of the nation and western world.

23. Even radically atheistic nations like the former Soviet Union were never able to eradicate religious faith from their populations.

24. Do not confuse the assertion - It's all about religion - with individual denominational practice of faith, personal piety or religiosity. This is about predominant worldview and fundamental communication.

25. This term is used throughout the paper with a universal meaning, to include all religious belief.

26. A low level of religious understanding, when employed in negotiations, may rightly be interpreted as a disingenuous attempt to manipulate.

27. *Umma* - all Muslim people of faith regardless of nationality.

28. "...at the core of the project initiated by Descartes and Hobbes is a faith or self-confidence that an enlightened humanity can discover a ground for an apodictic or at least an effectual truth, and that this truth will provide the foundation for an unprecedented human flourishing." Gillespie, Michael Allen. *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008) p.257.

29. A fundamental concept from JP 3-24 – *Counterinsurgency Operations*.

30. The Bill of Rights. (*Charters of Freedom*, accessed 2 August 2009); available from [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html); internet.

31. CoG is not a military / political Holy Grail, or silver bullet - the discovery of which guarantees ultimate victory. The CoG is the locus of an opponent's strength - without which the opponent loses the power and will to continue resistance. The CoG ought to be the focus of our attention: it is where the location of the Main Effort ought to be and which will require creative responses for success.

32. Strange; Joseph L & Richard Iron. "Center of Gravity: What Clausewitz Really Meant" (*Joint Force Quarterly* : 2004; 35) p.7-8.

33. Clausewitz, Carl Von. *On War*. London: Penguin Classics, 1982 (1832), p.118-119.

34. Echevarria, Antulio J II. "Center of Gravity: Recommendations for Joint Doctrine" (*Joint Force Quarterly* 2004; 35) p.17. (Emphasis mine)

35. The Two Holy Places are Medina and Mecca, which are located in Saudi Arabia.

36. Benjamin, Daniel & Steven Simon. *The Age Of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002); p140-141.

37. Khadduri, Majid. *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), p. 94.

38. Johnson, Douglas V. and John R. Martin, "Terrorism Viewed Historically," *Defeating Terrorism: Strategic Issue Analyses*

. John R. Martin, ed. (Strategic Studies Institute, January 2002, 1-5); p.3.

39. Elshtain, Jean Bethke. *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); p.133.

40. DeRosa, CPT John. "Letters" section (*Armed Forces Journal*, July 2007).

41. Eleven players are normally fielded, seven players is the minimum a team must field or otherwise forfeit the game. Drinking the ice-cold sodas on a blistering hot day causes painful intestinal cramping that will temporarily disable even the most hardy person.

42. This personal story is included to help the American reader grasp the essential emotional and moral issues that the Islamic world so readily understands.

43. Consanguinity – a close relationship or affinity with another person, group, or tribe.

44. Friedman, Thomas L. From *Beirut to Lebanon* (New York: Anchor Books, NY 1989); p.89.

45. Muslims cite their scripture: "you are the best of all nations" *Quran* 3:110 [also repeatedly cited by Bin Laden] which Muslims believe is absolutely true but incongruent with their present circumstances.

46. Lewis, Bernard. "The Roots of Muslim Rage" (*The Atlantic*, September 1990, accessed February 03, 2009) available from <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199009/muslim-rage>; internet.

47. *Ibid.*, Lewis.

48. *Ibid.*, Lewis.

49. "Joint Operating Environment 2008: Challenges and Implications for the Future Joint Force." (United States Joint Forces Command, November 2008); p.35.

50. "O mankind, verily We have created you from a single [Pair] of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous." (*Quran* 49:13). We note that while this is the Islamic ideal, a classless society is not effectively practiced anywhere in Muslim lands.

51. Garfinkle, Adam. "How We Misunderstand Terrorism." (E-Note from FPRI. 11 Sep 2008. *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, accessed 08 March 2009).

52. In Iran and the Taliban controlled regions of Pakistan-Afghanistan precisely the opposite is true. There the state is subordinate to religious leaders. In any case, there is no separation of state and religion.

53. al-Zawahri as cited in Kiras, James D. "Irregular Warfare: Terrorism and Insurgency" *Strategy in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Strategic Studies*. Eds. John Baylis, James Wirtz, Eliot Cohen, Colin S. Gray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); p.164.

54. This is the title given to the first four successors to Mohammad.

55. Ibn Taymiyya refused to acknowledge any primacy of the state over Islam.

56. *Sharia* is the established legal system of Muslim nations for more than 1,300 years.

57. Islamic Law.

58. Professor Majid Khadduri (1909 -- 2007) Iraqi, founder of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies Middle East Studies program.

59. *Ibid.*, Khadduri, p. 23. Khadduri omits mention that the Muslim Law of Nations (*Siyar*) was not articulated for some 200 years after Muhammad, although it was founded upon Muhammad's example and the *Quran*

60. Khadduri, Majid. *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), p, 16.

61. *Ibid.*, p, 14.

62. *Ibid.*, p, 24.

63. *Ibid.*, p, 25.

64. *Ibid.*, p, 26-7.

65. Berman, Paul. "The philosopher of Islamic Terror" in the New York Times, March 23, 2003.

66. *Ibid.*, Berman.

67. *Ibid.*, Berman.

68. Qutb, Sayyid. *Social Justice in Islam* (Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications International, 2000); p.19.

69. Arman, Abukar. "The Making of Another Iraq." (*FPIF Commentary*. 3 January 2007).

70. *Ibid.*, Benjamin & Simon, p.29-30.

71. *Ibid.*, Elshtain, p.11.

72. As in the case of interrogation methods used on Islamists. This is the center of a very lively national debate in which each of the many viewpoints cites outmoded law from the perspective of their own legal opinion. Congress has yet to do the hard work of enacting legislation that will set clear boundaries and provide adequate protection for interrogators. See: Wittes, Benjamin. *Law and the Long War: The Future of Justice in the Age of Terror*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2008.

73. Proper care must be made not to blame all of the strife upon essentially religious conflict because a large percentage of the European 'Wars of Religion' were entirely motivated by political, tribal, and other considerations. During that turbulent period, it was as common for conflict to occur between coreligionists – i.e., Catholic against Catholic each with Protestant allies!

74. A very gifted USAR Baptist scholar-soldier who died suddenly in December 2008.

75. President of the Institute for Global Engagement, quoted by permission.

76. For example: "Salali-El-Din war with King Richard, the Lion-Hearted, the latter fell sick. Although those two kings were at war, they had respect and admiration of each other. Saladin

sent Ibn- Maimon [Maimonides] to Richard to treat him". Abouleish, Ezzat. *Contributions Of Islam To Medicine* ;  
available from <http://www.islam-usa.com/im3.html>; accessed 25 Dec. 2008.

77. While being an atheist is an American right, it is seen as terrible affront to Allah by Muslims.