

A presentation to the Union League of Philadelphia on February 4, 2008

by George Weigel

In the late summer of 2001, a stateless man of whom most Americans had never heard sat in a cave in the mountains of Afghanistan, surrounded by a few disciples, a satellite dish receiver, and a TV set. The TV wasn't working, so one of the disciples sought the BBC's Arabic service on a radio. There, he learned that an airplane had struck the World Trade Center in New York. He excitedly told the others, who broke into celebration; but their leader said, simply, "Wait, wait."

News came of the second tower being hit, and the leader wept and prayed; Osama bin Laden also stunned his disciples by holding up three fingers. When news of the strike on the Pentagon came, bin Laden held up four fingers, amazing his disciples even further. In this instance, they would be disappointed; because of the heroic actions of the passengers on United 93, the U.S. Capitol was spared. Yet in two hours, the landscape of twenty-first century public life had been radically changed.

Viewed through a wide-angle lens, the events of 9/11 were a particularly lethal expression of the globalization of religious passion. Yet those events were something else, and something more: for Americans saw that day represented a specific, mortal threat to our civilization. War had been declared upon us by an enemy whose motivations were utterly alien to the 21st century sensibility of the West.

That it has taken us some time to grasp this new and dominant fact of international public life should not have been a surprise. It was difficult to recognize it for what it was before it struck New York and Washington; an acute intelligence operative, studying fragments of information about al-Qaeda and its allies before 9/11, was like a biologist looking at a laboratory slide of some previously unknown virus. But now, six-and-a-half years after 9/11, we cannot not understand. For unless we grasp the character of this new kind of war, its religious and ideological roots, the passions that have grown from those roots, and our current vulnerabilities to those passions, our chances of prevailing against an adversary with a very different view of the human future – and a willingness, even eagerness, to die for the sake of hastening that future – are weakened.

The war is now being fought on multiple, interconnected fronts: there is an Afghan front, an Iraqi front, an Iranian front, a Lebanese/Syrian front, a North African front, a Gaza front, a Somali front, a Sudanese front, a southeast Asian front, an intelligence front, a financial-flows front, an economic front, an energy front, and a homeland security front. These are all fields of fire in the same global war, and they ought to be understood as such. Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States and on American diplomatic and military assets were, for example, planned in the Philippines and other parts of southeast Asia; places unknown to the vast majority of Americans – Waziristan comes to mind – are now among the most evil places on earth; what happens there has direct effects on our armed forces in Iraq and elsewhere, and could have devastating

effects on the homeland.

Bernard Lewis, reflecting on all this, noted the difference between our times and the days when he worked for British intelligence during World War II. Then, he said, “we knew who we were, we knew who the enemy was, we knew the dangers and the issues. It is different today. We don’t know who we are. We don’t know the issues, and we still do not understand the nature of the enemy.” Not knowing, however, is lethal. My purpose in this lecture is to identify what we should have learned, these past six-and-a-half years, about the enemy, and about us. Let me cluster the lessons we should have learned under three headings. Understanding the Enemy; Reconceiving Realism; Deserving Victory.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENEMY

Lesson 1. *The great human questions, including the great questions of public life, are ultimately theological.*

How we think about God – or don’t think about God – has a great deal to do with how we envision the just society and determine the appropriate means with which to build it. This means taking theology seriously, which includes others’ theologies as well as the theologies that have shaped the civilization of the West. If we have not learned this over the past five years, then one wonders if we have learned anything. Yet that very question – what have we learned? – arises every time a commentator or statesman uses “theology” or “theological” as a synonym for “superstition” or “mindless.” Such glib usages are an impediment to clear thinking about our situation.

Lesson 2. *The trope that describes Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as “the three Abrahamic faiths” obscures more than it illuminates, and ought to be permanently retired.*

There is an obvious truth here, in that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all trace their origins to Abraham, and that from the perspective of a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Shinto adherent, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam look perhaps more similar than different. But in fact the theological parallelisms are rather limited, especially with regard to Islam. It is often suggested that there is an affinity between Christianity and Islam that is virtually identical to what Rabbi David Novak calls the “common border” between Judaism and Christianity; Islamic regard for Abraham and Moses, Jesus and Mary, is often cited as an example of this affinity. Yet as Alain Besançon has pointed out,

The Abraham of Genesis is not the Ibrahim of the Qur'an; Moses is not Moussa. As for Jesus, he appears, as Issa, out of place and out of time, without reference to the landscape of Israel.... Jesus is indeed granted a position of honor in the Qur'an, but this Jesus is not the Jesus in whom Christians proclaim their faith. The Jesus/Issa of the Qur'an promulgates the same message as the earlier prophets. Indeed, all possess the same knowledge and proclaim the same message, which is Islam. Like the rest, Issa is sent to preach the oneness of God. He is emphatically no Trinitarian; 'do not say Three,' he protests. Nor is he the son of God, but a simple mortal. Nor is he a mediator between earthly men and their heavenly Father, because Islam knows not the concept of mediation. Nor...does he die on the cross; a double is substituted for him.

In addition to these dramatic discontinuities, Islam's deep theological structure includes themes that render the notion of "three Abrahamic faiths" less than helpful in understanding Islam's faith and practice – particularly if this trope is understood popularly as a matter of three legs on a single monotheistic stool.

Take the question of Islamic supersessionism: Islam's claim that it supercedes Judaism and Christianity, which are finally unveiled, in the revelation to Muhammad, as false religions. Despite the supersessionist claims that some Christians have made throughout history vis-à-vis Judaism, no orthodox Christian holds that God's self-revelation in Christ negates God's self-revelation in the history of the People of Israel. Islam, by contrast, takes a radically supersessionist view of both Judaism and Christianity, claiming that the final revelation to Muhammad de facto negates any prior revelatory value (so to speak) that might be found in the Hebrew Bible or the Christian New Testament.

Then there is the nature of the Qur'an itself. The mainstream Christian understanding of biblical inspiration was expressed by the Second Vatican Council: "To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own powers and faculties so that...it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more." That theological understanding of "inspiration" provides for the possibility of interpretation of the sacred texts, and indeed for the development of doctrine in light of an evolving understanding of the full meaning of Scripture. The Qur'an, by contrast, is understood to have been dictated by its divine source, word for word, so that there is much less question of "exegesis" or of a post-scriptural development of doctrine. The Bible is a moral teacher which calls faithful Jews and Christians to use their reason to understand the meaning and import of its teaching, including the commandments. Islam's holy book, by contrast, is described by an influential Egyptian Islamic activist in these terms: "the Qur'an for mankind is like a manual for a machine." Thus Besancon does not exaggerate when he writes:

Although Muslims like to enumerate the 99 names of God, missing from the list, but central to the Jewish and even more so to the Christian concept of God, is 'Father' – i.e., a personal God capable of a reciprocal and loving relationship with men. The one God of the Qur'an, the God Who demands submission, is a distant God; to call him 'Father' would be an anthropomorphic sacrilege.

Thus Islam is "other" in relationship to Christianity and Judaism in a way that Christianity and

Judaism cannot be to one another. The late Pope John Paul II recognized this. In the international bestseller *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul expressed his admiration for “the religiosity of Muslims” and his admiration for their “fidelity to prayer;” but prior to this he had cut to the theological heart of the matter:

Some of the most beautiful names in the human language are given to the God of the Qur’an, but He is ultimately a God outside of the world, a God who is only Majesty, never Emmanuel, God with us. Islam is not a religion of redemption. There is no room for the Cross and... the tragedy of redemption is completely absent. For this reason not only the theology but also the anthropology of Islam is very distant from Christianity.

That theological anthropology – Islam’s theologically-driven concept of the human person as one called to submission to a distant God of majesty – yields, in turn, a view of the just society that is dramatically different from that of Judaism and Christianity. Islamic theological anthropology is one root of what Efraim Karsh has termed “the fusion of religious and temporal authority” in Islam, which is not peripheral to Islamic self-understanding. That fusion has, in turn, led to what Karsh calls “Islam’s millenarian imperial experience” – and, one might add, the millenarian political expectations of some Muslims today.

Islamic theological anthropology also helps explain Islam’s difficulties in creating the cultural conditions for the possibility of social pluralism. Whether Islam can evolve into a religion capable of providing religious warrants for genuine pluralism is thus one of the great questions on which the future of the 21st century will turn.

Lesson 3. Jihadism is the enemy in the multi-front war that has been declared upon us.

There are many forms of Islam. Some of them, often called “fundamentalism” or “Islamism,” stress the need for a deep religious and moral reform within the House of Islam and the reestablishment of Islamic political power. The specific form of Islamism which threatens the West is best described as jihadism.

Jihadism was recently defined by Richard John Neuhaus: “Jihadism is the religiously inspired ideology [which teaches that] it is the moral obligation of all Muslims to employ whatever means [are] necessary to compel the world’s submission to Islam.” That, I suggest, is naming the enemy correctly: those who hold this view are, de facto, in a state of belligerency against the rest of the world. Neuhaus goes on to note, “It will be objected that, in the Qur’an, jihad can also mean peaceful spiritual struggle. That is true, as it is true that those Muslims who believe jihad means peaceful spiritual struggle are not the enemy.” Indeed, much of the history of this century will turn on the question of whether the jihadists’ definition of jihad becomes the most culturally assertive definition within the many worlds of Islam. But that the jihadists understand jihad as Neuhaus describes it cannot be doubted, since this is precisely what they claim.

Lesson 4. Jihadism has a complex intellectual history, the chief points of which must be grasped in order to understand the nature of the threat before us.

Modern jihadism is rooted in a profound Islamic sense of Islamic failure: the world has not

turned out the way it should. One can see traces of that sense of failure in the inertia of the Ottoman Empire before World War I. In fact, though, the inertia has a far longer pedigree, which involved a kind of turning-off of intellectual inquiry in a Muslim world that once found ample room within itself for an incorporation of the wisdom of the classical world, and helped transmit that wisdom to the medieval West.

The causal chain that takes us from medieval debates about Islamic law and theology to the caves of Tora Bora and 9/11 involves numerous figures, among them Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al- Halim ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328), Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703/4-1792), and two contemporary theorists, Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) and Sayyid Qutb (1903-1966). To make a long story desperately short: At a time when the Mongols had conquered much of the Islamic umma, ibn Taymiyya taught that the survival of Islam requires political power; that the pursuit of that power could, indeed should, be undertaken by the use of armed force; and that jihad involved both an absolute love of God and an “absolute hatred” for all that God proscribes, which includes “not only heretics, apostates, hypocrites, sinners, and unbelievers (including Christians and Jews)...but also any Muslim who tried to avoid participating in jihad. Ibn Taymiyya thus adumbrated the intra-Islamic civil war that has now spilled over into jihadism’s struggle against the rest of the world.

Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab emphasized the radical unicity (oneness) and lordship of God, whose relationship to the world is that of an absolute lawgiver: God is will, period, and there is no spiritual wrestling, so to speak, with the divine will – there is only submission. Yet Wahhab had little influence in his own time, however, or indeed for centuries afterwards; it would take a vast transfer of western wealth to Saudi Arabia to make Wahhabism a potent force in the world.

Hasan al-Banna, Egyptian founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, condemned the “mental colonization” of Islam under colonial rule, and urged a struggle against a West that he perceived as having thus far won a “ruthless war whose battlefield has been the spirits and souls of Muslims...” Al-Banna proposed an Islamic social reformation. The educational, social, economic, religious, and charitable activities of the Muslim Brotherhood would be one form of this reformation. Jihad would be another, for God had given Muslims the privilege and duty of saving the world from its errors. After cleansing the House of Islam, true Muslims would cleanse their territories of infidels and unbelievers, beginning with al-Banna’s own Egypt, and then move on, until, as he put it, “...all the world shouts the name of the Prophet and the teachings of Islam spread throughout the world. Only then will Muslims achieve their fundamental goal...”

Sayyid Qutb, whose formative experiences included being scandalized at the “decadence” he perceived at a church social in Greeley, Colorado, in 1949, brought these various lines of jihadist thought together in a singularly influential way. He, too, stressed the idea of God as Absolute Will, God as the unique lawmaker; thus, for Qutb, liberal political thought (even conservative liberal political thought), was a false religion, not simply bad politics. Like others before him, but in a harsher way, Qutb stressed that those Muslims who did not live authentic Islamic lives (as he understood the term) were enemies to be fought and, if necessary, killed; so were those Jews, Christians, and unbelievers whose existence was a permanent, unchanging, and necessarily aggressive threat to the success of Islam, exactly as it had been from the beginning. Here, then, was a mind literally frozen in time, in which the Crusades and the

Spanish Reconquista were present realities, summoning forth a perpetual struggle, violent if necessary, until the final, global triumph of Islam.

The power of jihadism derives from its theological roots. As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in his Regensburg Lecture in September 2006, the key theological move that underwrites today's jihadist ideology (and practice) is the identification of God as Absolute Will. If God is absolute will, God can command anything – even the irrational. And so, in an extension of the thought of Sayyid Qutb, contemporary jihadists believe that the murder of innocents is, not simply morally acceptable, but morally required, if such murders advance the cause of Islam. This deeply distorted understanding of the nature of the God of Abraham leads, in turn, to other theological distortions.

Mercy, for example, comes to be understood as weakness. Justice, one of the four cardinal virtues in Christian moral theology, is traduced by jihadism's defective concept of God into revenge. Given Sayyid Qutb's conviction that Islam, rightly understood, and modernity were "utterly incompatible," and given the defective theology that undergirds Qutb's worldview, what seems incomprehensible to many westerners – the "death cult" that forms "the core of al-Qaeda" and similar entities – begins, within a jihadist frame of reference, to make a certain perverse sense.

Jihadism thus creates a theologically warranted "world without limits" in which the battlefield "now spans pizzerias, buses, public squares, commuter trains...subway stations," and a Jewish center in Seattle; in which a Turkish film, "Valley of the Wolves," depicts an American Jew harvesting organs at Abu Ghraib for resale; in which the Palestinian state press mocks the Secretary of State of the United States for her race and appearance; and so forth, and so on, in a seeming infinity of variants on the instruction posted in Kabul by the Taliban's religious police: "Throw reason to the dogs – it stinks of corruption."

The line from Taymiyya and Wahhab that would later influence Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb came to one conclusion when Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden, an Egyptian and a Saudi, a veteran political operator and propagandist and a somewhat dreamy charismatic leader – joined forces to form al-Qaeda: the result was something new, and something terribly dangerous: global jihad.

Lesson 5. Jihadists read history and politics through the prism of their theological convictions, not through the prism of Western assumptions about the progressive dynamic of history.

Thus jihadists read the 1990s as a moment that revealed fatal Western weaknesses. To jihadists, the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan (irrespective of the fact that it was made possible by Western aid and technology), meant that modernity was on the run. This provoked new patterns of aggression, which were reinforced when the generally feckless response of the United States led to bin Laden's apotheosis as the jihadist champion who had taken on the Great Satan and prevailed. Then, when the U.S. failed to respond to the attack on the U.S.S. Cole in such a way as to ignite the war in Afghanistan in which bin-Laden hoped to trap the Americans (as, according to his own mythology, he had trapped the Soviets), he decided that something else

was required: as Lawrence Wright puts it, “he would have to create an irresistible outrage.” The result was a vast hole in the ground in Lower Manhattan, the loss of almost three thousand lives, and an economic cost of billions of dollars.

To understand that jihadists read history in a distinctive way leads to several other sublessons:

1. As Prime Minister Tony Blair insisted in a September 2006 address to the Labour Party, “This terrorism isn’t our fault,” and “until we shake ourselves free of the wretched capitulation to the propaganda of the enemy, that somehow we are the ones responsible,” we will not prevail.

2. Jihadism is not caused by poverty. Sayyid Qutb sailed to the United States in a firstclass cabin on one of the great trans-Atlantic liners. The nineteen death-cultists of 9/11 were middle-class and well-educated. Poverty, in and of itself, doesn’t turn men and women into jihadists.

3. Jihadism isn’t caused by the fact of the State of Israel. Israel is, for jihadists, the excuse not the reason, the “deadliest of all Arab alibis” in a political culture formed in part by an ideology of victimhood. Jihadis do not hate the West because of Israel, they hate Israel because it is part of the West – hence, that standard jihadist trope, “Zionist-Crusaders.”

It is a great folly to think that jihadism and the terrorism it underwrites are to be understood as a psychological aberration. Within their own theological frame of reference and the reading of history it warrants, jihadists are not crazy; they make, to themselves, a terrible kind of sense.

Lesson 6: *It is not “Islamophobic” to note the historical connection between Muslim expansion and conquest, or between contemporary jihadism and terrorism. Necessary truth-telling is the pre-requisite to genuine interreligious dialogue.*

In Pope Benedict’s Regensburg Lecture, the Holy Father gave the world an interreligious and ecumenical vocabulary to engage in a genuine conversation about the threat jihadism poses: the vocabulary of “rationality and irrationality.” Criticized at the time as a diplomatic “gaffe,” the Pope’s proposal has now drawn two responses from international groups of Muslim leaders, and a meeting in March [2008] at the Vatican is planned. It is not without interest that this newfound interest in senior Islamic circles in serious theological conversation with the Pope about the right-ordering of society (which Benedict XVI has insisted be the focal point of the discussion) followed, not the usual exchange of banalities and pleasantries that too often characterizes interreligious dialogue, but a robust critique of the theological roots of jihadism. Surely there are lessons here for the future.

One is that the western media acquiescence to Muslim complaints about “Islamophobia” should stop: it is not “Islamophobic” for the Pope, or anyone else, to pray in the presence of Muslims; to

defend religious freedom; or to condemn violence in the name of God – suggestions made by National Public Radio, the New York Times, the Associated Press, and the New York Daily News during Benedict XVI's December 2006 visit to Turkey. It would also be helpful if the Western press – and particularly that part of the Western press that reaches the Islamic world, like CNN and the BBC – would call things by their right names: murderers in Iraq are murderers and terrorists, not insurgents or sectarians; suicide bombers are, in fact, homicide bombers; and so forth.

Lesson 7. *This is a multi-generational struggle.*

The below-replacement-level birthrates that prevail throughout virtually the entire Western world are another factor in this global struggle for the human future. As the inimitable Mark Steyn puts it, given present demographic trends, “the Belgian climate-change lobbyist will [soon] be on the endangered species list with the Himalayan snow leopard” – a fact that, given Belgian parallels in the Netherlands, France, Spain, and elsewhere, has already changed the political landscape of Western Europe.

Yet Steyn notes that birth rates are already declining in some Islamic countries, such that the jihadists' demographic advantage will eventually decrease as well. So the historical window for the achievement of the jihadists' most ambitious goals will likely begin to close in, perhaps, twenty-five years or so. The demographics of the Islamic world, coupled with the staying power of the passions unleashed by jihadist ideology and distorted religious conviction, thus suggest that the current phase of the contest for the human future will last at least two or three generations. This is, indeed, a long war. It is important that we understand that, acknowledge it politically, gird ourselves for it, and plan both strategy and tactics accordingly.

RECONCEIVING REALISM

Lesson 8. *Genuine realism must avoid premature closure in its thinking about the possibilities of human agency in the world.*

Grasping the inevitable irony, pathos, and tragedy of history; being alert to unintended consequences; maintaining a robust skepticism about schemes of human perfection; cherishing democracy without worshipping it – these elements of the Christian realist sensibility associated with Reinhold Niebuhr remain essential intellectual furnishings for anyone thinking seriously about U.S. foreign policy in the war against jihadism. Yet realism must always be complemented by a commitment to the possibility of human creativity in history.

As Dean Acheson said at another moment when history's tectonic plates were shifting, the world which he and Harry Truman faced "only slowly revealed itself. As it did so, it began to appear as just a little bit less formidable than that described in the first chapter of Genesis. That was to create a world out of chaos..." Our task today is not dissimilar. In carrying it out, we would do well to remember the counsel of Charles Frankel: "The heart of the policy-making process...is not the finding of a national interest already perfectly known and understood. It is the determining of that interest: the reassessment of the nation's resources, needs, commitments, traditions, and political and cultural horizons – in short, its calendar of values."

The Bush Administration's efforts to accelerate change in the Arab Islamic world were determined by a realistic assessment of the situation after 9/11. Mistakes in implementation notwithstanding, the attempt to accelerate the transition to responsible and responsive government in the Middle East was a realistic objective, given an unacceptable status quo that was inherently unstable; that was unstable because it was corrupt; and that was producing terrorists and jihadists determined to challenge those corruptions.

Lesson 9. The objective in the Middle East is the evolution of responsible and responsive government, which will take different forms given different historical and cultural circumstances.

Bernard Lewis is, as usual, a wise guide here. As he recently wrote, "There is a view sometimes expressed that 'democracy' means the system of government evolved by the English-speaking peoples...I beg to differ from that point of view. Different societies develop different ways of conducting their affairs, and they do not need to resemble ours...Democracy is not born like the Phoenix. It comes in stages, and the stages and processes of development will differ from country to country, from society to society."

Professor Lewis's cautions, as well as his convictions that "there are elements in Islamic society which could well be conducive to democracy" and that the "cause of developing free institutions – along their lines, not ours – is possible" in Islamic societies suggests several sub-lessons from the still-unfolding drama of Iraq and the miscalculations of American policy there:

1. American policy-makers miscalculated the damage done to the fabric of Iraqi civil society by 25+ years of Baathist totalitarianism.
2. American policy-makers miscalculated the degree to which post-Saddam Iraq would quickly become a battlefield in the wider war against jihadism. The exposure of the "false world" within which Arabs had been living was intolerable – to the remaining Baathists in Iraq and Syria, to the forces of the status quo among the Arab leadership, to the apocalypticists in Tehran, and to jihadists everywhere. And thus it now seems, in retrospect, almost inevitable that Iraq became a "devil's playground:" its porous borders were a magnet for jihadists looking for a field of battle – Jordanians, Syrians, Lebanese, Saudis, Palestinians, Iranians, all of whom grasped the fact that, if America were to succeed in Iraq, and Iraq to succeed as a modern Islamic society, their various dreams would be dealt a major blow.

3. This we seemingly did not understand, or at least did not grasp quickly enough – that major combat in Iraq had only “shaped the battlefield” for what was coming next. Since March 2003, in fact, America has found itself fighting four Iraqi wars: the war to depose Saddam Hussein and create the possibility of responsible Iraqi government; the war against the remaining Iraqi Baathists and their allies; the war against jihadists, in which the late, unlamented Abu Musab al-Zarqawi played a deadly role; and the war between Shia and Sunni that erupted after jihadists destroyed the Shia Golden Mosque at Samarra in February 2006.

4. Inadequate resources were allocated for post-Saddam reconstruction in Iraq, a failure compounded by the American intelligence community’s failure to grasp just how much damage had been done to Iraq’s infrastructure and by a lack of bureaucratic coordination among American agencies involved in Iraqi reconstruction.

5. American policy-makers failed to devise an effective “hearts-and-minds” strategy for post-Saddam Iraq. After dominating the information dimensions of the first of the four Iraq wars (the war against the Saddam Hussein regime), the U.S. too often left the information field to sources of misinformation and disinformation like Al-Jazeera, with serious strategic consequences – some of which are now, thankfully, being reversed, thanks to the Petraeus counterinsurgency strategy.

The difficulties of post-Baathist political transition in Iraq should not, however, blind us to the fact that the war against jihadism and the quest for freedom are linked, and neither can succeed without the other. Moreover, and without gainsaying the difficulties involved, Bernard Lewis nonetheless encourages us to think that there is enough in the traditional culture of Islam on the one hand and the modern experience of the Muslim peoples on the other to provide the basis for an advance toward freedom, rightly understood. Trying, through a variety of instrumentalities, to support, and perhaps even accelerate, that advance is the only realistic course of action.

Lesson 10. *In the war against global jihadism, deterrence strategies are unlikely to be effective.*

This is perhaps most evident in Iran, or at least among Iranians like President Ahmadinejad who believe that they can hasten the messianic age by unleashing nuclear holocaust in Jerusalem. As Adam Garfinkle asks, “How does one deter people who...are willing and even eager...to turn their country and their entire religious sect into a suicide bomb?”

It should be clear that any deterrence value or dampening of jihadist enthusiasms that we might have expected to gain from Iraq will be lost if the outcome there is widely believed to be an American defeat. Such an outcome would be little short of a catastrophe, a point one wishes were better grasped on Capitol Hill and among certain presidential candidates. It may be that the final outcome in Iraq is not, ultimately, of our determining – that the immediate future of Iraq will inevitably reduce itself to the question of whether Iraqis want a state (even a loosely federal state) more than they want to kill each other. But the premature abandonment of the effort to prevent that nightmare scenario from playing itself out would be read by global jihadists as a

sign of fecklessness that will have untold, but surely awful, consequences.

DESERVING VICTORY

In my study, I keep a small postcard copy of a British World War II poster, in which Winston Churchill points a stubby finger at you over the emblazoned slogan “Deserve Victory!” What must we do, in remedying our own incapacities, to deserve victory in the war against global jihadism?

Lesson 11. Cultural self-confidence is indispensable to victory in the long-term struggle against jihadism.

The second part of Pope Benedict’s Regensburg Lecture was a reminder to the West that, if irrational faith poses one grave threat to the human future, so does a loss of faith in reason. If the West loses its faith in the human capacity to know the truth of anything with certainty, it will have disarmed itself intellectually, culturally, and morally, unable to give an account of its commitments to civility, tolerance, the free society, and democratic self-government. Saying “No” to radical skepticism and moral insouciance is very much part of homeland security.

Lesson 12. Islamist salami tactics must be resisted, for small concessions in the name of a false idea of tolerance inevitably lead to further concessions and to further erosions of liberty.

This process is well-advanced in Europe, where enclaves of shari’a law exist in Great Britain, France, the low countries and elsewhere – enclaves where the writ of local law does not run, even in the matter of “honor” killings. The path to legal surrender was paved by cultural surrender, as when (to take the most ludicrous example) “Piglet” mugs disappeared from some British retailers after Islamists complained that the Winnie the Pooh character offended Muslim sensibilities. The Danish cartoons controversy of 2006 was the most ominous expression of the problem to date, for here kowtowing to Islamist agitations led directly to the infringement of classic civil liberties.

The European experience of accommodation to Islamist and jihadist threats and demands has shown where the first concessions lead. Becoming a dhimmi, a second-class citizen, is not always a matter of accommodating to an imposed Islamic law. As the European experience demonstrates, self-dhimmitude is a danger when the nature of tolerance is misunderstood. Not only must the West defend its core values at home; it should intensify its efforts to promote religious freedom around the world.

Lesson 13. *We cannot, and will not, deserve victory (much less achieve it) if we continue to finance those who attack us.*

Therefore, an urgent program to de-fund jihadism by developing alternatives to petroleum-based energy as a transportation fuel is a crucial component of the current struggle. Global jihadism would not be a threat if it had the West not transferred some \$2 trillion in wealth to the Arab Islamic world since the Second World War – which, inter alia, has allowed Saudi Arabia to spend an estimated \$70-100 billion spreading Wahhabi doctrine all over the globe. The national security threat of oil dependency is obvious. It is also self-demeaning.

This is not the occasion to get into the details of various alternative energy strategies, but there ought to be broad agreement on former CIA Director R. James Woolsey's argument that "energy independence for the U.S. is...preponderantly a problem related to oil and its dominant role in fueling vehicles for transportation." In March 2006 testimony before the Senate Energy Committee, Woolsey proposed "two directions for government policy in order to reduce our vulnerability rapidly," in both cases using existing technologies, or technologies that can be brought into the market quickly and can work within our existing transportation superstructure.

Government policy should, in Woolsey's view, "(1) encourage a shift to substantially more fuel efficient vehicles...including promoting both battery development and a market for existing battery types for plug-in hybrid vehicles; and (2) encourage biofuels and other alternative and renewable fuels that can be produced from inexpensive and widely-available feedstocks – wherever possible from waste products."

A nation that created the Manhattan Project, Project Apollo, and the global revolution in information technology surely can, by analogous acts of will and leadership by both the public and private sectors, de-fund global jihadism by drastically cutting the transfer of funds related to petroleum imports for transportation fuel. It beggars belief that peoples who did not discover a resource, much less the means to exploit it and make it the source of vast wealth, have profited by its development in ways that now threaten the very possibility of world order. This is dhimmitude, if of a global economic sort, and it must stop, as a matter of self-defense as well as of self-respect.

Lesson 14. *Victory in the war against global jihadism requires a new domestic political coalition that is proof against the confusions caused by the Unhinged Left and the Unhinged Right.*

If we are indeed "present at the creation," once again, we would do well to adopt a lesson from Truman, Acheson, Marshall, and Vandenberg and create, if possible, a domestic political coalition that understands global jihadism and is broadly agreed on the measures necessary to defeat it. There is a serious question, though, as to whether the kind of coalition that was assembled in the late 1940s can be replicated today, given the dependence of the Democratic Party on the Unhinged Left for funding and the willingness of Republicans upset about deficits, "No Child Left Behind," budget-busting prescription drug benefits for seniors, and the administration's proposals for immigration reform to throw George W. Bush over the side –irrespective of what would happen, in real-world consequences and public perception, to his

administration's accurate identification of the principal threat to both U.S. national security and a minimum of world order. But were such a coalition to be formed, it should take as one of its tasks a rationalization of our homeland security policy.

We have not yet reached the point of Great Britain, where one of the country's most wanted terrorists slipped through Heathrow in 2006 by wearing a burka, as Scottish grandmothers bent over to remove their shoes at x-ray machines. But we could get there, unless we decide that effective counter-terrorism is more important than political correctness in devising airport screening measures. Risk-profiling and the development of trusted-traveler identification cards would be two important elements in rationalizing homeland security.

The rationalization of homeland security will also require effective measures to rein in those parts of the federal judiciary that put irrational obstacles in the way of detecting terrorism plots. On a 2005 ruling by a federal district court, the U.S. government can alert Scotland Yard and MI-5 if the National Security Agency intercepts a phone call from Peshawar to London in which jihadists plot to unleash a dirty radiological bomb in Trafalgar Square; but any such NSA intercept of a call between Kandahar and Chicago in which terrorists plot to set off a similar bomb at 16th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue is unconstitutional and records of it must be erased. This is, quite literally, insane. And it, too must stop.

Lesson 15. *There is no escape from U.S. leadership.*

The challenge of global jihadism cannot neither be avoided nor appeased. The war that has been declared against us – and by “us” I mean the West, not simply the United States – can only be engaged, and with a variety of instruments, many of them not-military. Whatever the post-9/11 incapacities identified above – and they are serious, and they must be addressed – the fact remains that there is no alternative to U.S. leadership in the war against global jihadism. As Michael Gerson has put it, “There must be someone in the world capable of drawing a line – someone who says, ‘This much and no further.’ At some point, those who decide on aggression must pay a price, or aggression will be universal.” That someone can only be the United States. The President must insure that, whatever else happens, he leaves the American people, at the end of his term, with a clear understanding of the nature of the threat, and the magnitude of the stakes on the global table. His successor, whoever he or she may be, will quickly learn that there is no escape from the burden of American leadership. That president, whoever he or she may be, ought also to see that burden as an opportunity for national renewal.

George Weigel is Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington and author of Faith, Reason and the War Against Jihadism: A Call to Action (2007). He also serves as Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for the District of Columbia. He gave this BookTalk at the Union League of Philadelphia on February 4, 2008. It was published online by the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI). FPRI is a U.S. non-profit organization devoted to bringing the insights of scholarship to bear on the development of policies that advance U.S. national interests, adding perspective to events by fitting them into the larger historical and cultural context of international politics.

This article is available on the web in print, video, and audio formats at:

<http://www.fpri.org/multimedia/20080204.weigel.faitreasonjihadism.html>

Copyright 2008 by the Foreign Policy Research Institute: www.fpri.org. Used by permission.

QUOTATIONS

All quotations are by the author except for the Lewis quotes:

“...unless we grasp the character of this new kind of war, its religious and ideological roots, the passions that have grown from those roots, and our current vulnerabilities to those passions, our chances of prevailing against an adversary with a very different view of the human future – and a willingness, even eagerness, to die for the sake of hastening that future – are weakened.”

In World War II, “We knew who we were, we knew who the enemy was, we knew the dangers and the issues. It is different today. We don’t know who we are. We don’t know the issues, and we still do not understand the nature of the enemy.” –Bernard Lewis, Cleveland E. Dodge Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University.

“The demographics of the Islamic world, coupled with the staying power of the passions unleashed by jihadist ideology and distorted religious conviction, thus suggest that the current phase of the contest for the human future will last at least two or three generations. This is, indeed, a long war. It is important that we understand that, acknowledge it politically, gird ourselves for it, and plan both strategy and tactics accordingly.”

“The President must insure that, whatever else happens, he leaves the American people, at the end of his term, with a clear understanding of the nature of the threat, and the magnitude of the stakes on the global table. His successor, whoever he or she may be, will quickly learn that there is no escape from the burden of American leadership. That president, whoever he or she may be, ought also to see that burden as an opportunity for national renewal.”

“It should be clear that any deterrence value or dampening of jihadist enthusiasms that we might have expected to gain from Iraq will be lost if the outcome there is widely believed to be an American defeat. Such an outcome would be little short of a catastrophe...the premature abandonment of the effort to prevent that nightmare scenario from playing itself out would be read by global jihadists as a sign of fecklessness that will have untold, but surely awful, consequences.”

