

# At Issue:

## *Do jihadists hate America because of its freedoms?*

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**S**unni jihadists do not hate the West; rather, they are contemptuous of the West. This contempt is often aimed less at our freedoms per se than at the triumph of secularism and irreligion, which we in the West tend to equate with freedom. Further, Sunni jihadists, being fundamentalists, are — above all — enemies of pluralism within Islam and in the world at large.

They do not accept the pluralistic shari'a of traditional, conservative, and classical Islam; do not accept Islamic spirituality (Sufism); do not recognize that Sunnis and Shiites are both Muslim; and do not maintain the respect for the "People of the Book" (Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Hindus) commanded by traditional Islam.

Some Western analysts persistently argue that our policies in the Middle East and elsewhere — rather than these issues — have caused us to be targeted. But Turkey, which opposed the U.S. intervention in Iraq, has been targeted; Morocco and Indonesia have been targeted, and even Saudi Arabia is now experiencing jihadist terror. U.S. policies have little to do with Turkish or Moroccan or Indonesian policies. These countries are targeted because their Islam is pluralistic and non-fundamentalist. Sunni jihadism is motivated by a totalitarian view of the world that hates individual responsibility, public accountability, popular sovereignty and pluralism in general. In this sense, they are fighting a war against the freedoms we cherish. All the rest is incidental.

Unfortunately, this religious totalitarianism originates with a movement that claimed to reform Islam: Wahhabism, emerging 250 years ago in the dank backwaters of the most remote and undeveloped area of the Arabian Peninsula, which, at Riyadh, is the heart of today's Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism set out to purge Islam of its civilizational achievements: art, architecture, philosophy, spirituality and compassion in the administration of law. In addition, it exemplified an Islam that had little or no contact with the great non-Muslim civilizations.

Unlike the Ottoman empire, which it fought, it did not govern millions of Christians; in contrast with the Persians, it did not draw on the immense wisdom of the East; and as distinct from the colossally rich Muslim states of India, it did not contend with the immense task of maintaining Muslim rule, by a minority, over millions of Hindus and other non-Muslims. It came from, and embodied, a void and had no incentive to accept anything about the rest of the world. That spirit is the same that inhabits Islamist terrorism today.

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**C**learly, Jihadists hate and attack America because of U.S. foreign policy in the Muslim world. But long after 9/11, America's late and tepid response is prolonged by politically correct and cowardly bipartisan leaders who insist the war is about the freedoms we enjoy. The enemy's core motivations are not mentioned: Unqualified U.S. support for Israel and presence on the Arabian Peninsula, the coddling of Muslim tyrannies, the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq and the perception that America is attacking Islam.

This assures U.S. defeat, and the leaders hawking it will be judged traitors for knowingly minimizing the size, power and resilience of Osama bin Laden's forces in order to side-step radioactive domestic issues, such as ties to Israel and Saudi Arabia, energy policy, borders, immigration and other topics. They also will be judged as killers who sent U.S. military overseas as targets, neutered by rules of engagement meant to curry world opinion and avoid the truth that war is about killing until the enemy surrenders or perishes.

Some Islamist leaders do hate us more than our policies. They consider U.S. society evil because it is not ruled by God. But they know Muslims in general do not yet hate Americans, so their dream of a Caliphate requires that Muslims believe Islam is under U.S. attack.

Thus, our policies give the Islamists a war-winning opportunity: Myriad young Muslims would die to attack U.S. policies — U.S. forces in Iraq or absolute support for Israel — but large numbers would not die to eliminate elections, R-rated movies or after-work Miller drafts. So, protecting the foreign policy status quo and repeating the "It's our society and values, stupid!" mantra is treasonous: It gives our foes aid, comfort and unlimited manpower.

The Founders taught us to see the world as it is, not as we want it to be. Today's leaders see the world clearly, but lie to Americans to protect sacred political cows. George Washington would have said: "They hate us for what we do, because of our policy. Let us fight but also debate a future policy course." Bush, Kerry and Clinton say: "They hate freedom, are a lunatic fringe, we can arrest them all, cling fast to the past."

Time will tell how much blood and treasure is spent before Americans see past the traitors to the mortal threat their nation faces — and if they see it before it is too late.