



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**A Religious War?
Part I**

Religion

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A Religious War? Report One

November 8, 2005, with May 12, 2008 and August 14, 2014 Additions

This week [the fall of 2005] I was reading the *Santa Fe Journal*. Santa Fe is located in America, a section of the nation where English is occasionally spoken. An abridged English version of the *Journal* is available and I was reading it. The story described why the Bush Administration was taking-on some of the foreign affairs practices of Realists while discarding some of the practices of the NeoConservatives (NeoCons).

Realists, Modern NeoCons¹, al Qaeda, and the Islamic State (IS)

I have been following the Realists vs. Modern NeoCons issue in a general way. My interest picked up after reading an article titled “Breaking Ranks,” (*New Yorker*, October 31, 2005) written by retired General Brent Scowcroft, Bush I’s national-security advisor, and the mentor of Condoleezza Rice.

Realists and Modern NeoCons are mentioned in this article several times. They represent different views on how to conduct America’s foreign affairs, and how to fight terrorism and insurgency. In an attempt to come to grips with this issue, I created two tables summarizing the main philosophies of these two political camps (shown on the next page). After finishing the Modern NeoCons’ table, I created a third table and labeled it, al Qaeda’s Views.

[These tables were created in 2005. They remain relevant. Recently, (in 2014) I added a fourth table, one that summarizes the views of a new contender for power: the Islamic State (IS), formerly known as The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).]

Is America in a Religious War?

With these table entries as a background, I pose what is obviously a delicate question; delicate in that many politicians and other public people avoid it: *Is America in a religious war?* Politicians who say yes are pilloried by the far-left. Those who say no are ridiculed by the far-right. I am not a politician, my views are moderate, and my IRA is intact, so let me go out on a limb and answer my own question.

Regardless of America’s public stand on the question, the statements and actions of al Qaeda and IS demonstrate these factions have declared war on the United States. Not only the United States, but anyone who might have a counter view about Islam. If the entries in the al Qaeda and IS tables lead you to think the Western world is not fighting a religious war, I ask you to read the text that follows these tables.

¹ See footnote 2 for clarification of *Modern* NeoCons.

Realists' Views

- Pragmatic (practical) approach to policies.
- Foreign policy is guided by strategic self-interest and struggle for power. Forced regime change in a sovereign nation is discouraged, but by no means excluded from policies.
- Tactically, moral considerations might be secondary to self interests, and democracy is not necessarily a universal goal.
- Focus is on globalization, competitiveness, development, and trust in international institutions and international law.
- Thus, trade with a dictator might be more important than human rights.
- Use of force is acceptable, but only as a last resort. Pre-emptive war is frowned-upon.
- Psychological/propaganda warfare is of primary importance, in practice and theory.
- Multilateral alliances with other countries are vital and convenient military agreements with despots are a necessary evil.

Modern NeoCons' Views²

- Ideological approach to policies.
- Foreign policy is guided by a moral obligation to export democracy, if necessary by force. Forced change in a sovereign nation to achieve democracy is desirable.
- Preemptive war is important to prevent enemy from attacking first.
- Focus is on ideology, politics, and security (and increasingly, religion), with a distrust in international organizations and international law.
- World is viewed in moralistic terms as good or evil.
- Increasingly rooted in Christian faith. Church and state are somewhat but not entirely separable.
- Mission and messianic oriented: "Must clean up the world."
- Psychological/propaganda warfare is an afterthought (in practice, if not in theory).
- Convenient military agreements with despots are a necessary evil, but unilateralism is preferred.
- Unilateral actions are more efficient than multilateral attempts.

al Qaeda's Views

- Ideological approach to policies.
- Policy is guided by a moral obligation to export radical Islam, preferably by force. Regime change in a sovereign nation to achieve an Islamic state is not only acceptable, it's mandatory.
- Goal: The establishment of an Islamic caliphate, governed by Sharia law.
- Preemptive war is important to prevent enemy from attacking first.
- Focus is on religion, ideology, security, and politics, with the rejection of international organizations and international law, unless they are based on Islamic precepts.
- World is viewed in moralistic terms as good or evil.
- Rooted in Islamic Sunni faith. Church and state are inseparable.
- Mission and messianic oriented: "Must clean up the world."
- Psychological/propaganda warfare is a forethought (in practice and theory).
- Convenient military agreements with infidels are evil. Killing non-Islamics is an honorable deed.
- Multilateral alliances with other (selected) Muslim sects are possible, but usually not successful.

² This is a 2008 footnote added after I wrote the 2005 essay: These views are not necessarily the same as the original NeoCons (although the moral tone is), who began their movement in the late 1930s and early 1940s at CCNY. My list describes the Modern NeoCons who have evolved in the past couple decades. For those interested, see Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads*, (New Haven, Yale University Press), 2006, 14-36.

IS's Views

- A splinter group from al Qaeda, and at odds with al Qaeda. IS is said by some to be more brutal than al Qaeda. Others say there is little difference, and it is a matter of fighting over power.
- Ideological approach to policies.
- Policy is guided by a moral obligation to export radical Islam, preferably by force. Regime change in a sovereign nation to achieve an Islamic state is not only acceptable, it's mandatory.
- Goal: The establishment of an Islamic caliphate, governed by Sharia law.
- Preemptive war is important to prevent enemy from attacking first.
- Focus is on religion, ideology, security, and politics, with the rejection of things Western.
- World is viewed in moralistic terms as good or evil.
- Rooted in Islamic Sunni faith. Church and state are inseparable.
- Warfare is more conventional than al Qaeda (tanks, checkpoints, taking over territories). IS controls vast areas in Syria and Iraq, a strategy rarely espoused or practiced by al Qaeda.
- Promises death to anyone who does not convert to Sunni Islam.
- Convenient military agreements with infidels are evil.

Comments on Table Entries

Realists. Realists are more pragmatic (less idealistic) in their foreign policy views than Modern NeoCons, and al Qaeda/IS. One might argue that Realists are not above forsaking principles for power, but that would be overstating the case. For decades, America followed a Realists policy, much of it principled.

Modern NeoCons. The original NeoCon movement in the late 1930s and early 1940s was largely a reaction to Stalinism. At that time, it did not make much ado about religion, but this stance appears to be changing as the evangelical movement grows and as the number of Christians who have a literal interpretation of the Bible gain more influence. Some Modern NeoCons say their approach is secular. Maybe so, but my readings of the tea leaves is that many NeoCons are Christians and their faith plays a significant part in their political views.³

Is this philosophy a help or a hindrance to America's fight against terrorism? It depends on if you are in the Red or Blue camp.

al Qaeda. The people representing al Qaeda believe regime change to achieve an Islamic state is mandatory. A basic premise of Islam is the melding of church and state. Therefore, in order to achieve an Islamic state, the state itself is subsumed to the religion. If killing is a necessary condition for making this happen, that premise is readily accepted.

IS. By taking over (controlling and administering) territory, IS in practice appears more focused on creating a caliphate: a (worldwide) Islamic state. Like al Qaeda, its emphasis is death to all things Western and even cultures that are not Western. IS has vowed the extermination of Iraqi/Kurdish Yazidis, because they insufficiently Sunni, and their supreme archangel is not Muhammad, but Melek Taus, the "Peacock Angel." As of this writing IS, is attempting to ethnically and religiously cleanse the Yazidis from the Kurdish region of Iraq.

Sharia Law

To amplify the information in these tables, it will be helpful to introduce the subject of Sharia Law. The word *sharia* refers to an Islamic moral code and well as religious law. It is based on the Quran and defines both religious and secular rules, as well as (sometimes) the

³ I suspect the "intellectual branch" of the NeoCons would take issue with this assertion; those people populating the corridors of power and influence in the America's capital (including K Street lobbyists) and the halls of academia.

penalties for breaking these rules. I may be stretching the analogy, but I think of it as an Islamic Constituion. To that end:

Some of the most powerful and enfluent passages in the United States Constitution deal with the right of people to practice the religion of their choosing. Even though not explicitly stated in the Constitution, the American courts have consistently ruled that Jefferson's "wall of separation between church and state" is fundamental to the governance of the United States.⁴

Is this essential foundation of America compatible with Sharia Law? It is not. They are at odds with each other. I would not be bothered by this difference if I believed the followers of one religion would always cut slack to those who practiced a different religion. But as often as not, the factions go about killing each other. Daily news releases provide ample documentation of my assertion.

Here's the rub. How can a country that separates religion and state integrate a religion into its fabric whose basic credo is the supremacy of religion over the state? It's akin to embracing a philosophy that if successful, will lead to the dismantling of Jefferson's wall. Having read many episodes of a wall not separating church and state, leading to the slaughter of millions of people, I cannot reconcile this dilemma.

Some countries that practice Islam allow courts to place Sharia jurisprudence over family law, while secular courts deal with all other matters. Even here, I am bothered. There is nothing in these systems about English or Common law. Jurisprudence is practiced from books that have been used by Muslim jurists ("fuqajaa") and judges ("qadis") for centuries. There is no Magna Carta legacy, the basis for English Law, nor anything pertaining to America's early attempts at democracy.

Some countries practice only Sharia law, in which all matters are covered by this code. This includes family and criminal law, personal beliefs, apostasy, blasphemy, and not praying. These countries criminalize any "breaches" against Sharia Law. If a person does not pray, the person can be sent to jail, maybe flogged, perhaps even killed.

I am writing these paragraphs reluctantly. My nature leans toward keeping out of others' pockets and letting them go about their affairs as they see fit. As I have just written, in the abstract sense, Sharia law may not allow me to practice this way of life. In the non-abstract sense, a significant number of people who practice Sharia law are determined to alter my way of life. A number of them are determined to end my life if I do not profess to be a believer and practitioner of Islam.

I do not think myself as being intolerant if I cannot cast aside my concern about this issue. Nor could Jefferson or Madison. They knew of the dangers of state over church and church over state. They knew the legacy of the Pilgrims in Europe and why they came to America. They and other forefathers' knowledge of church/state conflicts was a major reason America evolved to keep the church and state separate.

Other Observations about the Tables

A few more thoughts about the tables. Viewing events of the past few years, I do not see how one can help but draw two disturbing conclusions: 1. The radical Islamic militants are engaged in a religious war against anyone who is not Islamic. 2. The moderate Islamics are sitting on the sideline watching their religion being hijacked by malcontents and sociopaths.

⁴ See establishment clause in *Reynolds v. U.S.*, 98 U.S. 145 (1878); *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947); *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U.S. 421 (1962) [this case is central to the issues of this essay, as it deals with prayer in schools];

For many decades America has done deals with the “devil” to foster its long range interests. We did not like Franco, but we needed bases in Spain; Stalin’s Russia during WWII, and so on. That supreme devil basher, Ronald Reagan, traded grain to the Communists. Today, we continue to do business with despots all over the globe---oil-rich Saudi Arabia as one example.

I emphasize I am not equating Realists and Modern NeoCons to al Qaeda and IS. It appears to this writer that the tables themselves make this clear. But the tables were created by this very writer. What is clear to one who writes a sentence is often not clear to one who reads it. Therefore:

The tables cannot possibly convey the huge differences between the Realists/Modern NeoCons vs. al Qaeda/IS. NeoCon Condi Rice may disagree with Realist General Scowcroft about Iraq but she is not going to kill him because of their spat. The American troops may inadvertently blow up an Afghan home with civilians in it, but these same warriors are not going to fly a jet into a Kabul office building full of civilians. Realists and NeoCons are not demanding the Islamic citizens of New York City convert to Christianity or be killed. They do not ethnically cleanse mountain sides in North Utah of Mormons.

The United States takes Herculean measures to avoid killing noncombatants. In contrast, IS and other Muslim extremists have no qualms whatsoever about killing *anyone* who stands in their way...or *anyone else* who might be standing next to those who are standing in their way. They justify it with their readings of the Quran.

Can Zealots Come to Terms with One Another?

Notwithstanding these differences---and they are huge---both camps (Modern NeoCons and radical Muslims) demonstrate similarities in some of their approaches to advance their goals. I think it fair to say both camps are populated with zealots. In America, they did great damage to this country and many people in the Middle East by selling the second Iraqi war.⁵

Is zealotry a flawed trait to possess in this kind of war? That is a question all of us must answer within ourselves and a question we must pose to our political leaders. I am reminded of these quotes:

- *To be a zealot in defense of one's beliefs is to be true to oneself.* Who would disagree with this noble statement? But the claim is open to more than one interpretation:
- *To be a zealot in defense of democracy is to be a patriot.*
- *To be a zealot in defense of theocracy is to be a Jihadist.*

Once a person or a group of people approach the point of zealotry, there is usually no way to compromise, other than to wipe each other off the map---which really is not much of a compromise. If the other side is evil, how can one in good conscience negotiate with evilness? One can't. To do so is to disgrace one's deep seated philosophies.

⁵ I have conducted enough research into primary sources to have concluded that this second war was ordained *before* the issue of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction came to the table at the White House. I will post this material onto my blog...but then, anyone who does the homework can do the same. At the risk of writing slang and engaging in hyperbole: Sweet Mother Mary, look at the consequences of removing Sunni Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq.

Thankfully, some of our leaders say one thing and practice another. President Reagan declared the USSR to be an evil empire and was considered by radical conservatives to be their ideological savior. But Regan was far from being a Modern NeoCon. He was an idealist and a Realist. He negotiated extensively with the evil empire of the USSR. Sometimes he backed-off, other times he did not. I regret (not really) to deflate the Modern NeoCons' bubble but their hero Reagan was more of a Realist than a Modern NeoCon.

To repeat a point about al Qaeda and IS: It is one thing to unintentionally kill noncombatants. It is another to kill them on purpose. The al Qaeda/IS murderers can consult their holy book as often as they wish in order to rationalize what they have done to their fellow humans. But they can never justify their depraved behavior toward innocent people. Shooting soldiers is a human practice. Shooting civilians is a human barbarism. Clothed in so-called religious righteousness, these reptilians prey on *unarmed* men, women, and children. Their practices are the worst form of human cowardice and decadence.

The citizens of the Middle East have legitimate grievances against Britain, France, Italy, and Germany carving their lands into ridiculous, artificial states after WW II. A haunting legacy that has left---and will continue to leave---scars on the human landscape. That said, the underlying reactionary philosophy of many Middle East cultures is much to blame for their plight. Not to mention the despots who run some of their countries.

Who Started It?

I wish to make another point clear by asking and then answering a question: *Who started this madness in the first place?* Many of my evangelical and conservative readers will not be happy with my answer. If you disagree, I would like to know your reasons.

Answer: *The religious creeds written in the Quran and the Bible.* It was not just the European colonialists (who share a great deal of the blame). It was not just bin Laden (who also shares a great deal of the blame). It was two religious books. Report 2 of this essay returns to this subject.

The genie is out of the bottle. The battle lines have been drawn for a deadly religious melee.

Your on the Street Reporter

RIP
Except
for
infidels

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**A Religious War?
Part II**

Religion

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A Religious War? Report Two

November 8, 2005, with May 12, 2008 and August 24, 2014 Additions

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We continue the subject of whether the United States is engaged in a religious war---to which I have responded yes. I closed the first part of Report One with the statement that the Quran and the Bible have been used (by untold numbers of people through some twenty centuries) to justify aggression. Further, that these books are at the root of the present conflicts in the Middle East.

I suspected this statement would not be welcomed by many people, including some who receive weekly reports from "Your on the Street Reporter." (I did anticipate more flak than I received.) A few more words regarding this topic: I have written that the problem we humans face in dealing with religious beliefs is not so much the practice of religion. It is the malpractice of religion.

Passages in the holy books can be cited that countenance deadly, pointless aggression. A person who is so-inclined can extract selected passages from these books to justify any noble or ignoble deed he or she might wish to commit.

However, it is not only religion that is used to justify genocide, ethnic cleansing, shooting a pedestrian on the street, etc. Humans' killing for no other goal but to kill is part of the species DNA: Killing someone who speaks the "wrong" language. Killing someone who dresses differently. Killing someone who wears a coveted pair of tennis shoes, and so on.

You name it, and we humans will use it to kill one another. We have evolved to the point where we are hard-wired for pointless aggression; pointless in that aspects of our behavior have nothing to do with so-called "Darwinian survival."

The Christian Soldiers Say

Nonetheless, in spite of language, ornamental attire, color of skin, etc., religion remains supreme as the rationale humans make up for doing one another in. To buttress my argument about being in a religious war, I introduce other tables for this analysis. The first table in this report (Table 1) contains verses from the Bible and a question our society needs to pose to the Evangelical Militarists---a term I have coined to describe those who believe they have a mandatory obligation to convert the world to Christianity...and if necessary, to do so by force.¹

Christians who interpret the Bible literally (often designated as fundamentalists but also including some conservative evangelicals) believe a necessary forerunner to Armageddon is the return of the Jews to the Holy Land.²

The Zionist movement and the Jewish takeover of a region in the Middle East (Israel) are strongly supported by conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists as a prerequisite to the final battle between good and evil. Consequently, Israel can do no wrong in the eyes of a significant segment of America's population. Preemptive wars? Annexation of territory? Yes, they are

¹ A very small minority of practicing Christians, but the same goes for those who practice Islam. Stay with me, I will elucidate on this subject later.

² Jimmy Carter, *Our Endangered Values* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 17. This word-by-word reading of the Bible was explained by Jimmy Carter, "We received the Holy Scripture in its entirety as the revealed will of God, agreeing that the words and actions of Jesus Christ are the criteria by which the Holy Bible is to be interpreted."

justified in the context of a much larger cause: Armageddon and the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Table 1. Evangelical Militarists³

- Interpret the Bible literally, as in the requirement to convert: (Gospel according to Matthew): "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost....Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."
- (Gospel according to Revelation) "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon," where the final struggle between good and evil took place.

There are two problems with this philosophy. (1) How are the Christians going to convert the population of Muslims living in the Holy Land who are bent on doing a reverse conversion to the Christians? (2) Equally problematic, how are the Christians going to convert the Jews living in the Holy Land to Christianity? It is fair to say the Zionist movement did not begin with the idea that Jews would become Christians, and the Jewish settlers in Palestine are likely to be reluctant to discard the Torah for the Bible.

How does this conversion take place? By gentle persuasion? Jerry Falwell's sermons? The Salvation Army's band? The obvious way is by force. It will not happen by voluntary conversion. The only alternative is subjugation.

The Islamic Soldiers Say

The radical Islamic militants have their own version of Armageddon. They hold this view, "...the annihilation of Israel 'is not only a religious and national duty, but also a universal human duty, from which no Muslim or free human being can be exempt.'" ⁴

As I write this report, the news outlets have informed us that IS executioners have beheaded James Foley. For what? For being a combatant? No, for simply being James Foley: a non-Islamic/non-Sunni Western human being. The IS released this statement after the beheading.

Any attempt to deny the Muslims their right to live in safety under [an] Islamic caliphate will result in the bloodshed of your people. ⁵

Whose people? Mr. Foley was not in the Middle East representing a "people." He was there representing journalism. But not to the IS. He was far too Western, and far too non-Sunni.

The Islamic Soldiers Nay-Sayers Say

How can the IS create a caliphate? It is against Islamic creed. The majority of Muslims do not regard the IS as much more than a pretense:

³ Quotes from the Bible in this list: Matthew 28:19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28:20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...." And as described in Revelation 16:16 of the Bible: "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

⁴ David Remnick, "Danger Levels," *The New Yorker*, July 31, 2006, 22.

⁵ <http://www.wcvb.com/news/isis-video-appears-to-show-journalist-james-foleys-beheading/27619126#!bHeyhw>

Muslim scholars and movements from across the Sunni Islamic spectrum have rejected the caliphate declared by the Islamic State group, with the fighters receiving scathing criticism from both mainstream religious leaders, and those associated with their former allies, al-Qaeda.

Assem Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohamed al-Maqdesi, who was released from a Jordanian prison in June after serving a sentence for recruiting volunteers to fight in Afghanistan, called fighters loyal to the Islamic State group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "deviant."

Maqdesi, a supporter of the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, hit out at the Islamic State group for its brutal methods. "Is this caliphate a sanctuary for the vulnerable and a refuge for all Muslims, or a sword hanging over those Muslims who disagree with them," Maqdesi said.⁶

Witches' Brew

It is never my intention to offend my friends who read these reports. Some of my relatives are devout Christians, and some are Evangelicals. One of my former business partners is Muslim. One of my dearest friends is a Jew. I trust all you will keep the welcome mat out on your porch when I come a calling.

That said, it is well-known that a sizeable population in America takes the Biblical passages to heart. Each sentence in the Bible is viewed as literally correct. I find this approach to "using" the Bible troubling, because there are many passages in the book that are clearly inconsistent with one another or clearly at odds with known facts from ancient times.

As a believer in a presence beyond my presence, I am not troubled by these errors and inconsistencies:

...if the findings of historical criticism are right, then some kinds of theological claims are certainly to be judged as inadequate or wrong-headed. It would be impossible, I should think, to argue that the Bible is a unified whole, inerrant in all its parts, inspired by God in every way. It can't be that. There are too many divergences, discrepancies, contradictions; too many alternative ways at looking at the same issue, alternatives that are often at odds with one another.⁷

I am at ease with these ideas. But many people outright reject them. The biblical commands cited in Table 1 have been used for centuries to justify torture, imprisonment, rape, and slaughter. Coupled with the Modern NeoCons table entries (cited in Report One), the melding of religious and political belief systems makes for a formidable concoction for the rationalization of religious wars.

Nonetheless, the wanton slaughter of fellow humans by Islamic fanatics makes any recent Christian or Jew-led atrocities seem like faint noise in comparison to the killings from militant

⁶ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/muslim-leaders-reject-baghdadi-caliphate-20147744058773906.html>

⁷ Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Interrupted* (New York: HarperOne), 2009, 279.

Muslims. In the main, Christians and Jews have corralled their lust for religious wars. The Muslims have not.

To add to the witches' brew of the militant Muslim's broth, Table 2 summarizes the beliefs of an influential group called Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).⁸ The more recent activity of the IS adheres to similar goals, except the IS *is dedicated to violence*.

Note that some entries read as if written by a conventional political party. Others focus on spreading the Islamic way of life into all societies, including America.

Table 2. Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)

- Unify all Muslims.
- Establish a new caliphate.
- Primary loyalty is to Islam, not nationality, race, or ethnicity.
- Transform corrupt societies into Islamic societies.
- Replace Judeo/Christian-based state system with borderless umma, ruled by new caliph.
- Violent actions not elucidated; work is political, whether in office or not.
- Change public opinion to uproot "disbelieving imperialists" from all Muslim countries.
- If married, women's participation supervised by husbands.

I add two sources that speak to these goals and HT. First, here are direct quotes from the Web page of HT (note my comments in parenthesis, my footnotes, and my underlines of some of the text):

Its (HT) aim is to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey the Islamic (*way of life*) to the world.

The Party, as well, aims at the correct revival of the *Ummah* (Reporter's note: within Islam, the community of the faithful that transcends long-established tribal boundaries to create a degree of political unity) through enlightened thought. It also strives to bring her back to her previous might and glory such that she wrests the reins of initiative away from other states and nations, and returns to her rightful place as the first state in the world, as she was in the past, when she governed the world according to the laws of Islam.⁹

The political struggle, which is represented by the following:

- A struggle against the *Kufr* colonialist states which have domination and influence on the Islamic countries. The challenge against colonialism in all its intellectual, political, economic, and military forms, involves exposing its plans, and revealing its conspiracies in order to deliver the Ummah from its control and to liberate it from any effect of its influence.
- A struggle against the rulers in the Arab and Muslim countries, by exposing them, taking them to task, acting to change them whenever they denied the rights of the Ummah or neglected to perform their duty towards her, or ignored any of her affairs, and whenever they disagreed with the rules of Islam, and acting also to remove their regimes so as to establish the Islamic rule in its place.

⁸ The table entries are extracted from the Web page of HT (<http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org>) and also from Zeyno Baran, "Fighting the War of Ideas," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 2005, 68-78.

⁹ World? China, Japan, South America, the Vatican? As well, all parts of the world were "governed" long before Islam came along. Relative to the age of humankind, Islam is an infant.

Here are quotes from the *Foreign Affairs* article:

Islam and the West are not engaged in a clash of civilizations---at least not yet. But the West is being drawn into the clash of two competing ideologies within the Islamic world. Proponents of the first believe that Islam is compatible with secular democracy and basic civil liberties. Proponents of the second are committed to replacing the current world order with a new caliphate--that is, a global Islamic state. They are the ones who seek to trigger a true clash of civilizations, partly in order to force the more moderate Muslims to choose their interpretation of Islam.

Extremist Islamist organizations such as al Qaeda have become well known in recent years for trying to accomplish their objectives through terrorism and political violence. Less well known, however, are the complementary organizations devoted not to direct action but to ideological struggle. Of these, the most important has been Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT, or the Party of Liberation), a transnational movement that has served as radical Sunni Islamism's ideological vanguard. HT is not itself a terrorist organization, but it can usefully be thought of as a conveyor belt for terrorists. It indoctrinates individuals with radical ideology, priming them for recruitment by more extreme organizations where they can take part in actual operations. By combining fascist rhetoric, Leninist strategy, and Western sloganeering with Wahhabi theology, HT has made itself into a very real and potent threat that is extremely difficult for liberal societies to counter.

During the second stage of HT's grand plan---which the group has reached in most of the countries in which it operates---members from new cells try to create tension between governments and their peoples (Reporter's note: Recent riots in Paris?). Members are asked to modify their behavior so as to blend in with the population around them and infiltrate the government.

...all of its branches are devoted to the common goal of bringing about a global revolution.

HT has provided Muslims with a compelling explanation for why the Islamic world has fallen behind the West in recent centuries. (Reporter's note: How about the disenfranchisement of one half of their population?) It also offers a simple remedy: close the gap by destroying the existing order.

The first task (in combating HT) is to deprive HT of the ability to discredit the United States and its ideas. In the wake of the war in Iraq and the treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghrai and Guantanamo Bay, the credibility and moral authority of the United States in the Muslim world is at an all time low, and this will not be easy.

Final Quotes

We are involved in a religious war because the Islamic zealots' reading of the Quran *foreordains* it and the Christian zealots' reading of the Bible *encourages* it. The rigidities of these holy books, *if interpreted literally*, leave the readers no choice. *But I emphasize that Islam has not moved forward from the old times, to forsake violence for the sake of violence:*

Comments from Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Hirsi Ali is a known critic of Islam, and has this to say about Islamic faith and violence:

I think fortunately the majority of Muslims today will not commit acts of terrorism. But to argue that there is nothing in Islam that leads to violence---that would be a weak argument to a false argument, because if you define *Islam* as "submission to the will of Allah," then you find out what that submission

means...you find out that...the sixth obligation is to convert others to Islam, first by peaceable means, then by violent means.

So when Islam is violent---you can't argue...that it's not a violent religion. Then you will say, "What about Judaism? What about Christianity?" Now, adherents of these religions over the centuries have been pacified to understand and accept the separation of the divine and the worldly...Nowhere in the Muslim world has that profound pacification of Islam...taken place. And I think that is the difference.⁹

Comments from Charles Krauthammer. Charles Krauthammer, a columnist known for his conservative views, has this to say about Islamic faith and violence:

Hamas is fighting not to create a 23rd Arab state but, as its charter explains, to recover "an Islamic Waqf." Meaning? Territory claimed under the Islamic precept that "any land the Muslims have conquered by force...during the time of [Islamic] conquests" more than a millennium ago belongs to Muslims forever because "the Muslims consecrated these lands to Muslim generations until the Day of Judgment."¹⁰

Krauthammer's view is a sobering assessment. The Hamas declaration includes a substantial part of Europe, including Spain, which was conquered by the Muslims in the 8th century, and taken by the Christians in the 15th century.

The Disproportionate Ratio

The number of people who use religion as a tool to justify pointless, deadly aggression are few. The concern we should have is that one or a few of these sociopaths might eventually acquire unconventional weapons (weapons of mass destruction). They have no reservations about using them. Thus, they form a dangerous example of the disproportionate ratio: X:Y. A small number of humans (X) can do a great deal of harm to many humans (Y).

I do see one silver lining in the clouds. Those nations and organizations that have labeled the United States as the Great Satan, are coming to realize their support of some of these fringe groups has resulted in the creation of Great Satans in their own backyards. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, long known to support terrorists, are far from comfortable. They have also been attacked by their religious cousins.

Perhaps IS will be a wake-up call for the Middle East countries. Maybe my proposal for the creation of a Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) might actually come about. If Jews, Catholics, and Christians can form NATO, why can't Sunnis and Shias form METO?

I admit this last proposal will likely go nowhere. But I bring it up again, because some Middle Eastern countries have formidable military establishments. As of this writing, they are sitting on their collective derrieres and letting America bomb the IS troops.

One last idea: As long as Uncle Sam protects Iraq and the Saudis (and do not forget Shia Iran) from their Sunni brothers, Uncle Sam should be supported (with troops) and applauded. That will not happen of course. The Saudis warned the United States against its second war to remove Hussein. They proved to be correct, and I suspect they

are silently saying: *Uncle created the problem in the first place. It's not my job to clean up Uncle's mess.*

Wrap Up

What are your conclusions? Is America fighting a religious war against the Islamic terrorists? I look forward to reading your views. You can reach me at my blog, website, or email addresses, noted in the heading of this report.