

# The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events  
impacting the world's financial markets*

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Monday September 9, 2002

## THEY SAID IT

*"Fight them, and Allah will  
Torture them at your hands."*

The Holy Qur'an. Sura 9:14

**THE LONG BATTLE AHEAD.** As I said last week, I am optimistic that the United States will be successful in the upcoming confrontation with Iraq, not only in unseating Saddam but in carrying out the entire effort without creating any serious problems with its principal friends and allies in the world, or making the Middle East any more volatile than it already is.

This week, which marks the first anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, I would like to add that I am optimistic too about the eventual outcome of what President Bush calls his "war on terror," but what is actually a war against militant Islam. In fact, I have no doubt whatsoever that the United States and its allies will eventually win this conflict. In this case, however, I find I must temper my optimism with considerable concern that this will be a long, bloody, and costly war, fought on many fronts, with few occasions for clear-cut victories and numerous opportunities to grow weary of the fight.

My good friend Peter Probst, an internationally recognized expert on counter terrorism, argues that the word "war" is not even appropriate. He prefers to use the term "protracted conflict," which he defines as "an interminable struggle with long periods of seeming inactivity punctuated by periods of extreme violence."

I also fear that when this conflict is over, it will have radically changed the world in many ways that will not be to the liking of those who subscribe to the Enlightenment theory that human history represents a steady, linear progression toward an ever more perfect human condition.

My somewhat gloomy view on this subject springs from many sources, some trite, some practical, and some philosophical.

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On the trite level, I keep thinking of one the most commonly cited clichés in the counter-terrorism business, which is usually attributed to an Irish terrorist who is said to have told the British, “You have to be lucky all the time, we only have to be lucky once.”

On the practical side, I think the fact that the enemy is virtually everywhere makes this war very difficult, and likely to be extremely bloody even by 20<sup>th</sup> century standards. Militant Islam is resident all over the United States, from Brooklyn; to Dearborn, Michigan; to Chicago; to Bellingham, Washington; to Oklahoma City; to Richardson, Texas; to Kansas City; to Tampa; to the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., as well as to some of the most rural areas in southwestern Virginia; and on and on and on.

Militant Islam has a strong presence in virtually every major city in Europe. It threatens governments all over Asia, from the Philippines, to Malaysia, to Indonesia, to Pakistan, and throughout the vast regions of the old Central Asian Soviet Empire. And it has strong, reasonably secure bases of operation in numerous countries all over the Middle East and Africa. The U.S. government estimates that the Al Qaeda organization alone has representation in some 60 countries. As Peter puts it, “virtually all significant terrorism is now transnational.”

In short, militant Islam is a plague of biblical proportions. It is funded by criminal activities everywhere it exists, including fraud schemes, narcotics trafficking, counterfeiting, arms smuggling, document fraud, money laundering, extortion, white slavery, and petty street crimes. It also has “legitimate” funding sources all over the world, including the United States, where every year millions of dollars of “charitable contributions” and “money sent home to families” routinely end up in the coffers of terrorist cells in the Middle East and elsewhere.

In addition, militant Islam has many enthusiastic, wealthy patrons around the globe, including numerous members of the fabulously wealthy, so-called “royal family” of Saudi Arabia, which is the home of the malignant brand of Wahhabi Islam that is the petri dish of the pestilence.

It would be comforting to believe that militant Islam is nothing more than a large number of individualized groups of poor, uneducated, rootless fanatics who are linked together by their hatred and a warped interpretation of the Koran. But this is not the case.

It is becoming increasingly evident that within this amorphous mass of humanity there exists a well-tuned, global terror machine built around an organizational scheme that is unorthodox by historic standards but as modern and technically sophisticated as the telecommunication miracle that makes its existence possible.

The various groups and movements are largely independent from region to region, but they communicate via a wide variety of Internet sites, e-mail networks, and wireless devices. They routinely exchange intelligence, technology, terror techniques, as well as people with particular skills, and help each other, to various degrees, on both their terrorist and their criminal activities.

Some groups are older, more sophisticated, than others, and each has its own special complaint. But the common denominator for all is holy war, or *jihad*, against those whom they call

“infidels,” meaning anyone who doesn’t subscribe to their particular brand of hate-filled Islam. Another common denominator is that all cheered when some 3,000 Americans died on September 11, all wish to see it happen again, and all are working toward that goal.

The literature abounds with proof of this. I offer the following paragraphs from a paper dated September 24, 2001, entitled “Problems of Terrorism in Azerbaijan,” to illustrate the global reach and interconnectedness of these groups. The author is Arif Yunusov, who is with the Institute of Peace and Democracy.

The fact that Azerbaijan’s capital has become one of the staging posts of Muslim organizations’ terrorist network was testified to in the course of the April 1999 trial in Cairo for 107 extremists, nine of whom were sentenced to death, with 12 charged by Egyptian court to life with forced labour. One of them was Ahmad Salama Mabruk, head of “Jihad” military operations, who in his time served seven years in prison for complicity in murdering Anwar Sadat, President of Egypt, in October 1981. During the above court proceedings, Mabruk stated that once released he went to one of the Arab countries and then moved from one country to another visiting Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Albania, and, at last, Azerbaijan. Here, as noted above, “Jihad’s” secret cell was set up. Al-Zavahari, head of the organization, condemned, by the way, in Egypt to capital punishment in his absence, turned out to have repeatedly been to Azerbaijan, using forged documents. Moreover, it appeared that back in December 1996, Al-Zavahari went with a group of his organization’s activists to fight in the war in Daghestan across Azerbaijan but when passing the Azerbaijani - Russian border he was arrested. Al-Zavahari served almost six months in Daghestani prison until Bin Laden interfered and ransomed him from Daghestan authorities. The excuse Daghestan authorities tried to make later on was that the law enforcement bodies were not able to identify the head of “Jihad” as he had a false passport. And for this very reason, no one in Egypt ever knew anything about the person they had been seeking for a long time.

During ongoing court proceedings, Mabruk pointed out that his organization had chemical and biological weapons, which it was determined to employ against U.S. and Israeli representatives. According to his testimony, his organization had worked out plans for committing 100 terror attacks against U.S. and Israeli targets all over the world. All the details were recorded on a computer disk. However, as is turned out, in 1996-1998 the Azerbaijan Ministry of National Security and U.S. special services carried out secret joint operations as a result of which in 1998 Mabruk, his brother Isam Khafiz Mabruk and Yasir al-Sirri were arrested in Baku. The special services got hold of the above computer disk with the 100 planned acts of terrorism. Based on that information, the CIA performed a series of operations against terrorists. Azerbaijan authorities, in their turn, seriously reinforced the safeguarding of U.S. and Israeli Embassies in Baku.

Similar papers can be found that outline militant Islam’s malignant presence in the slums of Europe’s largest cities, the mountains of the Caucasus, the jungles of Indonesia and the Philippines, the backward villages of Yemen, and the streets of New York.

Now I would like to turn to what I call the philosophical sources for my grim outlook on the troubles that lie ahead in the war against militant Islam.

For starters, I think it is instructive to contrast this conflict with the long, difficult cold (and occasional hot) war against communism. This conflict was against an enemy that was, I believe, every bit as evil as militant Islam. The intent of the communist rulers was to destroy the Judeo-Christian concept that every person is important *as an individual creation of God*, and to substitute a system under which individuals would no longer be important *as individuals*, but would be subordinated to an omnipotent state, which would serve society not only as its material provider and arbitrator of all justice but also as a *de facto* godhead.

But Communism's claim to ideological supremacy was an economic, materialistic one. The idea was that mankind would benefit materially from collectivization and would be happier if religion were abolished. In the end, this left it vulnerable when neither prosperity nor happiness resulted.

Militant Islam is also a utopian movement, just as communism, socialism, fascism, and the other evil 'isms' of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were. But it makes no claim that victory will bring material comfort. The exact nature of the utopian world it envisions is unclear, although one supposes it would be something akin to the Abbasid Caliphate. In any case, this movement will not collapse because it does not deliver on its worldly promises. So it will have to be decisively run to the ground, as it has been every time it has reared its ugly head in the last fourteen centuries.

The central issue here, of course, is that this is a war against religious fanaticism rather than against an economic, political, or social ideology. A case can be made that militant Islam's fanaticism is bolstered by purely temporal feelings of envy at Western society's material success, in contrast to the poverty and squalor that exists in Islamic societies throughout the world. But it is its religious roots that, I believe, make militant Islam so formidable and deadly an enemy.

Among other things, these roots make it an enemy that contains among its ranks a significant number of individuals who are not only unafraid of death but are actually enthusiastic about dying in battle, believing apparently that this martyr's death will lead them to some grand sensual experience with a host of virgins in "paradise."

But even more importantly, militant Islam's fanatical religious roots make it an enemy that believes that the life of a non-Muslim, or infidel, has no value. This dehumanization allows the militant Muslim to kill women, children, the elderly and the infirm with no remorse or sympathy and to use methods of killing that would be considered anathema to civilized combatants.

This does not necessarily make this crowd any more difficult to kill or defeat than a group of individuals who are fighting for purely secular reasons, as mercenaries, on behalf of some sublunary ideology, or in defense of their families, property, or country. But it would seem to assure that to achieve victory the United States will have to decisively crush militant Islam everywhere that it exists, which in turn means that the end-game could be extremely bloody.

With this in mind, Peter notes that the conflict "could well come to resemble the 'Battle for Algiers,' with suicide bombings, vehicle bombs, and targeted assassinations being the tactics of

choice, coupled with attacks against critical infrastructure and the use of improvised weapons of mass destruction raising terror to unprecedented levels.”

But arguably, an even more troubling philosophical aspect of militant Islam’s dehumanizing of its enemies is that it could inevitably lead America to engage in a similar, dehumanizing process of dehumanizing its enemies. Not only would this be injurious to the ideals and principles that underlie the great American experiment, but as a strictly practical matter, it could lead, in the heat of the battle, to the use by the United States of some of the most devastating weapons of mass destruction in its arsenal, and in the process open a Pandora’s box of unimaginable horrors that would be difficult, if not impossible, to close.

This is too complex a subject to develop here, but I would offer the concerns of Carl Schmitt, a controversial, but nevertheless brilliant German political philosopher and legal theorist, who warned in the 1930s that the wars of the future would not be over property, political hegemony, or the definable, practical interests of the nations involved, but over “values.”

"Values," Schmitt argued, are different from traditional moral beliefs, which are rooted in religious teachings. Values, he noted, arise from cultures of individual self-assertion and therefore must be asserted against competing ones. This, he said, was not a mere academic exercise but a deadly confrontation, which could, if internationalized, easily lead to wars of unspeakable brutality, "for any consideration of the enemy must vanish, must become a non-value, when the struggle against this enemy is concerned with the highest 'value'. . . for the highest value no price is too high to be paid."

When placed within the context of Winston Churchill’s famous warning as he surveyed the disaster that World War II had made of his nation and of mainland Europe, Schmitt’s observation takes on an even stronger meaning.

“Certain it is that while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever-increasing and measureless speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvements as the centuries have rolled. The brain of a modern man does not differ in essentials from that of the human beings who fought and loved here millions of years ago. The nature of man has remained hitherto practically unchanged. Under sufficient stress--starvation, terror, warlike passion, or even cold intellectual frenzy, the modern man we know so well will do the most terrible deeds . . . We have the spectacle of the powers and weapons of man far outstripping the march of his intelligence; we have the march of his intelligence proceeding far more rapidly than the development of his nobility. We may find ourselves in the presence of the strength of civilization without its mercy."

And this brings me to a point I made early in this article, namely that when this conflict is over, I fear that it will have radically changed the world in ways that will not reflect well on the notion of universal moral progress.

I have always thought that Jimmy Carter’s “human rights” campaign was a clumsy, ill-considered attempt at easing some of the suffering that goes on in the world at the hands of

governments. Nevertheless, I have always believed that the United States does indeed have an obligation to use its considerable military strength and moral authority in a manner that promotes and supports what Carter called “human rights.” Given the real of demands of realpolitik, achieving even modest successes on this front is difficult, even during the best of times. My fear is that it will become almost impossible in the midst of a war in which America is forced to seek allies among some of the world’s most oppressive and murderous regimes.

**BLOODY ISLAM.** The following provides an insight into the kind of fanatical thinking that drives militant Islam. Scholars can argue whether the Koran justifies and supports this kind of fanaticism. But they can’t deny that it is the source of some of the bloodiest political rhetoric since *Mein Kampf*, which the Western world ignored at tremendous cost.

It comes from an Arabic website, [www.jihad.net](http://www.jihad.net), which is decorated with pictures of Osama and other cold-blooded killers. The translation is done by “The Middle East Media Research Institute,” which can be found at [www.memri.org](http://www.memri.org). The text is from an Al-Qa’ida affiliated on-line magazine called Al-Ansar. It is a discussion of one of many bloody Koranic verses, “Allah Will torture Them [the infidels] at Your Hands.”

The Annihilation of the Infidels is a Divine Decree. “Regardless of the norms of ‘humanist’ belief, which sees destroying the infidel countries as a tragedy requiring us to show some conscientious empathy and . . . an atmosphere of sadness for the loss that is to be caused to human civilization - an approach that does not distinguish between believer and infidel... – I would like to stress that annihilating the infidels is an inarguable fact, as this is the [divine] decree of fate . . .”

“When the Koran places these tortures [to be inflicted on the infidels] in the solid framework of reward and punishment . . . it seeks to root this predestined fact in the consciousness of the Muslim group, asserting that the infidels will be annihilated, so as to open a window of hope to the Muslim group . . .”

“Nevertheless, [this divine decree] has become, for some, a tranquilizing pill . . . When the enemy launches operations of colonialism and destruction, we find that a few [of the Muslims] refrain from entering the battlefield claiming that the elements of the collapse of Western civilization are proliferating [in any event].”

“Their conclusion is indeed true, but the way in which it is presented is misleading, and it is aimed at removing responsibility [to fight the infidels] from the Muslim, with the claim that Allah has already promised to take care of the infidels’ annihilation.”

Muslims Must Not Wait Passively for the Divine Decree to Just Happen. “. . . I would like to point out the danger of this analysis, because it . . . [may] make the Muslims passive and turn [them] into one who does not act to carry out [the commandments] of the religion or to dispel falsehood, but lives always in an atmosphere of passive waiting, that is cloaked - always - by a call to trust in the ability of Allah!”

“When Allah told us of the certainty of the annihilation of the infidels, He did not do so using ambiguous concepts. He clarified that this would be achieved in one of two ways: by means of a act of Allah . . . or by means of the Muslim group, which would, in accordance with the Islamic commandment, serve as an implement for carrying out [the divine decree], as it is said: ‘. . . Allah will torture them [the infidels] Himself or at our hands (Koran 9:52).’”

“Yes, perhaps it is predetermined that the infidel country will be annihilated. But [if the believers do not act] this kind of annihilation will never be in favor of the Islamic state. The infidel country will be annihilated in favor of an infidel country like it or even worse than it . . .”

“Therefore, the belief in ‘annihilating the country of heresy’ [only] opens up for us a window of hope, and sets for us a goal that is in the realm of the possible - but it does not annihilate the infidel country for us, nor does it even affect it!!”

“This is merely a belief, which, if unaccompanied by the words ‘at your hands’ that appear in the Koranic verse [9:14, ‘Fight them and Allah will torture them at your hands’] - it will remain in the wonderful realm of ideas that float in the theoretical universe, and is like beautiful dreams that arouse conscientious emotions - yet, when we awake, we find that the infidel country still exists, falsehood is not destroyed [by itself] in favor of the truth, [except when] the truth goes into action . . .

“The importance of the human effort to annihilate the infidels . . . is what Allah sought to teach the Muslims at the Battle of Uhud [625]. Then, there were [Muslims] who thought that because they were right they would most certainly defeat the enemy. The [Muslims] paid a high price for this . . .”

“By Means of Jihad - Allah Tortures [the Infidels] with Killing.” “The question now on the agenda is, how is the torture Allah wants done at our hands to be carried out? . . . This torture will not, in any way, be carried out by means of preaching [Da’wa], because preaching is activity of exposure, aimed at clarifying the truth in a way that makes it more easily acceptable. Preaching has nothing to do with torture; Jihad is the way of torturing [the infidels] at our hands.”

“By means of Jihad, Allah tortures them with killing; by means of Jihad, Allah tortures them with injury; by means of Jihad, Allah tortures them with loss of property; by means of Jihad, Allah tortures them with loss of ruling. Allah tortures them by means of Jihad - that is, with heated war that draws its fire from the military front . . .”

“The Tortures Will Bring the Infidels to the Path of Righteousness.” “Material power is [to be] confronted with material power, and ideological power is [to be] confronted with ideological power . . . It would be idiocy to rely on the power of the truth in the face of F-16s. Allah is capable of destroying His enemy without anyone’s mediation and without anyone’s help, as His capability is absolute and unsurpassed. In spite of all the characteristics of power at their command, these infidel states are no more than a

handful of creatures on the speck of dust called Planet Earth . . . [But] Jihad serves as a trial by suffering for the Muslims by means of the infidels, and for the infidels by means of the Muslims.”

“The Muslims’ trial by suffering is manifested in Jihad’s being the instrument by which it is possible to differentiate between the believers and the hypocrites . . . The infidels’ trial by suffering is manifested in Jihad being an exemplary lesson in values, delivered by a group of the pioneers of the Islamic nation, in a practical presentation”

“Many of the infidels will be shocked; their emotional entity will be shaken; and perhaps some of them will repent and learn their lesson. In addition, Jihad is a means of defeating them, and perhaps by means of this victory . . . the tortures will bring them back to the path of righteousness . . .”

The individual who wrote this, by the way, was someone who calls himself Seif al-din al-Ansari, which, while my Arabic is rusty, I have translated into English as “deranged nut case.”

**NEW COUNTER TERRORISM TECHNIQUE.** This has been an unusually serious newsletter. But, of course, this is an unusually serious week. Nevertheless, I think a little humor is not just appropriate but necessary in these troubled times. So I will close with one of those dumb e-mails that all of us get on occasion. This one, I think, is kind of fun.

Since the Taliban cannot stand nudity and consider it a sin to see a naked woman that is not their wife, this Saturday afternoon at 2:00 PM. Eastern time, all North American women are asked to walk out of their house completely naked to help weed out any neighborhood terrorists. Circling your block for one hour is recommended for this anti-terrorist effort.

All men are to position themselves in lawn chairs in front of their house to prove they think it's okay to see other women nude. And since the Taliban also does not approve of alcohol, a cold six-pack at your side is further proof of your anti-Taliban sentiment.

The United States of America appreciates your efforts to root out terrorists and applauds your participation. Come on guys, get out there and support the gals as they root out the terrorists hiding in YOUR neighborhood!!

GOD BLESS AMERICA!

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