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## THEY SAID IT

In this tragic moment, when words seem so inadequate to express the shock people feel, the first thing that comes to mind is this: We are all Americans! We are all New Yorkers, just as surely as John F. Kennedy declared himself to be a Berliner in 1962 when he visited Berlin. Indeed, just as in the gravest moments of our own history, how can we not feel profound solidarity with those people, that country, the United States, to whom we are so close and to whom we owe our freedom, and therefore our solidarity?

"We Are All Americans," (*Nous Sommes Tous Américains*), Jean-Marie Colombani, *Le Monde*, Sept. 12, 2001.

## In this Issue

We Are All Indians Now.

## WE ARE ALL INDIANS NOW.

Fareed Zakaria, the international affairs journalist and columnist for *Newsweek*, is quite possibly the best known and most respected mainstream analyst in the foreign policy game. And as a native of Mumbai, India, he has been *the* go-to guy in the aftermath of the brutal and bloody terrorist attack in his hometown. He is also, unfortunately, a case study in what is wrong with the mainstream, consensus, elite attitude toward and understanding of Islamist terrorism.

For starters, Zakaria seems to think that last week's attacks were, first and foremost, about him. Here, for example, is how he began his account of the attacks for his home publication:

My first memories of the Taj Mahal hotel are probably of when I was 8 years old, going to the Sea Lounge restaurant with its lovely view of Mumbai's harbor to eat sev puri, a savory Indian treat. I also remember passing through its grand ballroom a few years later, while it was being decked out for a dinner in honor of the president of Bulgaria—crystal chandeliers, ice sculptures, bouquets of roses, platters of shrimp carted around by liveried waiters. My family would celebrate special occasions at the Golden Dragon, one of the best Chinese restaurants outside of China. The Taj is a fixture in the life of Mumbaikers (or Bombayites as we used to call ourselves). Last week, those memories came flooding back as I watched from New York, and saw the Taj hotel on fire.

The terror attack on Mumbai has been called India's 9/11. For me there is another similarity; like 9/11, this attack hit close to home.

Blah, blah, ZZZZZZZZZZZZ . . . Huh? What's that?

Oh, sorry, we dozed off. Zakaria's trip down memory lane must have been a difficult one for him to make, but that does not mean that it is a good or even marginally interesting analysis. It's not. It's actually a rather poor analysis. Aside from being self-involved, it's unhelpful and potentially dangerous. This may come as a shock to Dr. Zakaria and his fans, but these attacks were not about him. And they were not about Mumbai. Truth be told, they were not even about India.

Nearly the entirety of the mainstream coverage of this horrible, bloody event – at home and abroad – has focused on everything but that which mattered. Where were the terrorists from? What is the Deccan Mujahudeen? Was Pakistan involved? Was its intelligence service? Why Mumbai? Was al-Qaeda involved? Who gave the orders? Etc., etc., *ad infinitum*.

It is not that the answers to these questions are not interesting. They are. The problem is that they are not relevant. Like we said, this is not about India or Mumbai. It is not about the Pakistan-India conflict or the ISI. It is not about the “baby-faced” surviving terrorist. It is about Islamism. It is about the Islamists' agenda, their global plan. It is about their ideology and their mission. The terrorists killed and targeted Indians. They killed and targeted Britons. They killed and targeted Americans and Jews. But all of this is relevant only in that it explains the broader struggle at hand.

Yes, yes. We know we've exaggerated just a bit to make a point. We know that this attack is about India because it happened to India. And the overwhelming majority of the victims are Indians. And we know that it is about India because it is part and parcel of the long-running India-Pakistan dispute. And we know that part of the reason that the terrorists were able to perform their iniquity so easily is because they were aided to some extent by both the Pakistani intelligence services and some number of India's own 150 million Muslims.

All of that notwithstanding, when boiled down to their essence, the answers to the really important questions all turn out to be exactly the same. And they all come back to radical Islam.

Why India? Because it is the world's largest democracy. Because it is one of the world's economic tigers. Because the combination of democratic governance, individual initiative and liberty, and determination are pushing India to the forefront of the globalized marketplace. And because Islamism hates all those things.

Why Mumbai? Because it is the center of India's economic rise. Because it is the hub of the nation's financial ascent. Because it represents new affluence, new power, and new tolerance and liberalism. And because radical Islam hates all those things.

Why target Britons, Jews, and Americans? Because they are, in the words of *National Review* editor Rich Lowry, the “jihadist's unholy trinity” of infidels. Because, in other words, radical Islam hates them all.

In his rather anemic attempt to explain the attacks, Fareed Zakaria tries to pin some of the blame on India's dominant, majority Hindu culture, writing:

Muslims there are disaffected and vulnerable to manipulation. They are underrepresented at every economic, political and social level – with a few high-profile exceptions. A perverse consequence of the partition of the Indian subcontinent is that Muslims are everywhere a minority – which closes off the chance at political power . . . They have not shared in the progress of the last two decades and face a Hindu nationalist movement, parts of which are ugly and violent.

This is the same old trope we've been hearing for years, in every hotspot on the globe, every time radical Islam rears its ugly head. They're desperate, we are

told. They have no other means to express their frustration. They are being left behind and are striking out at the world and at those whom they believe are leaving them behind.

Zakaria, of course, tempers his rationalization with the obligatory “None of this is to excuse in any sense the cruel choice anyone might make to join a jihad.” But what neither he nor his intellectual compatriots understand is that their mitigation is unnecessary and only speaks to their desperation to avoid the real issue at all costs. It is not that Zakaria et al. are wrong about the connection between the economic and political despair of Muslims and the rise of Islamism. It is that they have the causation completely backward.

They want us to believe that the Muslim people of India (and Afghanistan, and the Palestinian territories, and the Balkans, etc., etc.) are desperate, economically and politically enfeebled and thus turn to Islamism. Rather, it is that they have turned to Islamism and that leaves them economically and politically enfeebled. What else would one expect from an ideology that literally preaches the abandonment of fourteen hundred years of economic, technological, philosophical, and political progress? What else could be a result of an ideology that demands the abjuration of capitalism, of enterprise, and of individual value and ability; that rejects the equality of the sexes and races; that preaches that education serves no legitimate purpose but to facilitate the rote recitation of religious passages; and that demands the death or subjugation of all who dare stray from the path of righteousness? When the rest of the world hums along in the twenty-first century, insisting that the eighth century is the era that never goes out of style tends to leave folks a little behind.

You know, it’s ironic. For years now, the media and academic establishment types have mocked George Bush for his simplistic “they hate us for who we are, not what we do” shtick. But the fact of the matter is that Bush is right. They do, in fact, hate our freedoms and our diversity, and our respect for the individual, and our industry and our initiative. And this, above and beyond all else, is the message of Mumbai.

It doesn’t matter if you’re a Brit with a nasty history of colonial screw-ups in the Muslim world. It doesn’t matter if you’re a Jew or a “Zionist” infidel desecrating Muslim holy lands and exploiting the innocent and virtuous Palestinians. It doesn’t matter if you’re an American, a defiler of the holiest of holy lands, the land of Mecca and Medina. All that matters is that you stand athwart the Islamist vision of the world and that you promote and enable those values that the eighth century nostalgics find inimical.

Unfortunately, too few of those responsible for analyzing the attack in Mumbai and formulating policy responses to it seem to get this. They, like Zakaria, think that this is really just about India, or Pakistan or something other than the cancer that is radical Islam.

In his column published over the weekend, the inimitable Mark Steyn made a similar point. He put it this way:

Yes, the terrorists targeted locally owned hotels. But they singled out Britons and Americans as hostages. Yes, they attacked prestige city landmarks like the Victoria Terminus, one of the most splendid and historic railway stations in the world. But they also attacked an obscure Jewish community center. The Islamic imperialist project is a totalitarian ideology: It is at war with Hindus, Jews, Americans, Britons, everything that is other . . .

What’s relevant about the Mumbai model is that it would work in just about any second-tier city in any democratic state: Seize multiple soft targets and overwhelm the municipal infrastructure to the point where any emergency plan will simply be swamped by the sheer scale of events. Try it in, say, Mayor Nagin’s New Orleans. All you need is the manpower. Given the numbers of gunmen, clearly there was a significant local component. On the other hand,

whether or not Pakistan's deeply sinister ISI had their fingerprints all over it, it would seem unlikely that there was no external involvement. After all, if you look at every jihad front from the London Tube bombings to the Iraqi insurgency, you'll find local lads and wily outsiders: That's pretty much a given.

But we're in danger of missing the forest for the trees. The forest is the ideology. It's the ideology that determines whether you can find enough young hotshot guys in the neighborhood willing to strap on a suicide belt or (rather more promising as a long-term career) at least grab an AK and shoot up a hotel lobby.

After all of this, we are left with two questions. First, will the political powers in this country – the incoming administration specifically – grasp the distinction here and make the policy decisions necessary to fight and defeat the Islamist ideology? And second, if they do, how does one go about doing so?

We will begin with the second question, which strangely enough, is the easier of the two to answer. The way to defeat an ideology is simple, at least in theory. It does not necessitate “winning hearts and minds.” It does not mean killing all Muslims or converting them, *ala* Ann Coulter. It does not involve intellectual and cultural accommodation and inclusion directed at bringing the radicals within the system in the false hope of placating and co-opting them.

In order to defeat the ideology of radical Islam – or any such ideology, for that matter – it is necessary simply to make its embrace a less attractive prospect than its rejection. As we said, this is easy enough in theory, but likely considerably tougher in practice. But it is not as if it has not been tried and proven successful. Indeed, this is precisely the explanation for American victory in Iraq.

Through a combination of tactics and developments, some planned others merely fortuitous, the ideology of radical Islam was proven to be far less appealing than that which the Americans were selling. The austerity and backwardness of the Islamists, coupled with the increase in American troops, the increase in ignominious death or capture for those actively opposing the American forces, the increase in American efforts at reconstruction, and the actuality of democratic governance and actual power-sharing among all ethnic groups proved enough to turn the erstwhile unturnable tide. The much-ballyhooed Anbar Awakening, which marked the beginning of the end of the war in Iraq, was prompted not by military might or the promise of power alone, but by the rejection by the local sheiks and their constituencies of the radical Islamists. Given the potential alternatives, al Qaeda and its eighth century rejectionism was unappealing, to put it mildly.

Now, we will gladly concede that the strategy as executed in Iraq will not necessarily be replicable elsewhere and that there are, in fact, swaths of the Islamic world that would not reject the Islamists of their own volition. But the basic premise is sound, and the means by which it can be achieved need merely be adapted to specific situations.

And that brings back to the first question: Does the political establishment have the will to make the necessary adaptations? Or to put this another way, will the Obama administration do what it needs to do to defeat the ideology of radical Islam?

The answer to that question is complicated, of course. And there is reason to believe that it could change over time, as circumstances change. After all, the responsibilities associated with power tend to focus the mind. But from what we know of the political establishment in the Democratic Party and in the President-elect's circle, we're not optimistic.

For starters, the Obama administration would have to acknowledge that “terrorism” is a misnomer and thus the “war on terror” is a false and misleading label for

this twilight struggle. The West, including India, is at war with radical Islam, not “terrorism.” It is at war with an ideology, not a tactic. And in order to defeat this ideology, the enemy must, at the very least, be accurately and earnestly acknowledged.

Second, Team Obama would have to concede that radical Islam continues to be a very real and very serious threat. The argument made by many Democrats over the last four years is that President Bush and Vice President Cheney have exaggerated this threat and manipulated the public’s fear in a cynical effort to maintain political power and accumulate administrative power. President-elect Obama would have to reject this notion, at the very least.

He would also have to alert the public to the ongoing and globally interconnected nature of the threat. Most Americans it seems want simply for the “war on terror” and the war in Iraq specifically to go away. They don’t want to think about them and would rather focus on their own pocketbook concerns. That’s understandable, but it is also not conducive to defeating the Islamists and their ideology.

The fact of the matter is that today, in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks, we are all Indians, in that we stand with the Indian victims of the attacks, locked in the same battle against the same enemy. We are all also Chabadniks, given the singling out of Mumbai’s Chabad House. And both President Bush and President-elect Obama have an obligation to make Americans understand this. These attacks took place halfway across the globe, but they could just as easily have taken place across the street. And they could just as easily have been carried out in New York or Los Angeles or Detroit, *by the very same murderers* who attacked Mumbai.

Finally, President-elect Obama would have to dismiss the overwhelming majority of national security aparatchiks in his own party and abandon the idea that “terrorism” can be handled as a “criminal justice” matter. This is war, an unconventional war to be sure, but war nonetheless. And the pretense that the important questions center on where terrorists should

be housed, what kind of access they should have to the legal system, and how much authority the federal government should have to track suspected Islamists will ensure that the war is lost, or get very, very bloody before it is won.

You will forgive us for our pessimism on this point, but we just don’t believe that the Democrats (or a great many Republicans, for that matter) will even consider, much less implement the steps that will be necessary to win this war. And that’s a shame, for more reasons than one.

Several years ago, Peter Beinart, the center-left journalist and former editor of *The New Republic*, argued that the war on terror could only be won by a Democratic president because Democratic leadership of the effort would be the only thing that could conceivably convince other Democrats that the war is real and not just the racist, power-grabbing concoction of the fascistic right-wingers.

We now have the opportunity to put his theory to the test, even more so given that the Democrat who will soon be in charge of the war has Muslim heritage and a Muslim middle name. If a man named Barack Hussein Obama cannot wage war against radical Islam without being labeled a racist or without being accused of neo-colonial imperialism, then no one can. President-elect Obama has a real and a unique opportunity that, should it be squandered, will not likely be proffered again.

More to the point, if the war on Islamism is not engaged and engaged forthwith, then the West and its allies will continue to suffer and will continue to lose ground, as the loathsome ideology actually increases its appeal. As the author and analyst Melanie Phillips noted over the weekend, the Islamists are at war with civilization itself and with everyone and everything that sustains that civilization. As that civilization crumbles under the weight of terrorist attacks, its enemies grow stronger. Osama bin Laden himself declared that the people of the world prefer “the strong horse,” and with every successful attack, the Islamists’ horse gets stronger.

Al Qaeda may be destroyed or at least severely incapacitated. Bin Laden himself may well be dead. But all of this is irrelevant as long as the ideology survives and as long the West refuses to acknowledge the nature of the struggle. Melanie Phillips argues that the Western journalists covering the attacks in Mumbai simply didn't understand what they had seen. "The atrocities," she wrote "demonstrated with crystal clarity what the Islamist war is all about – and the western commentariat didn't understand because it simply refuses to acknowledge, even now, what that war actually is." We can only hope that our politicians are smarter than is Ms. Phillips' commentariat, or if not, that they will become so before it is too late.

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