

# Is Terrorism “Holy”?

by Alfred Adask

Terrorists are betting Americans have no spiritual foundation for our alleged “national character,” our patriotism or morale. Terrorists are betting their *lives* that without that spiritual foundation, American technology is a paper tiger. They believe they can defeat us in a “Holy War” with just box cutters, persistence and enormous faith.

“Holy war” sounds crazy to some, but so far, the terrorists have made their point.

## Hot, Cold or Holy?

Our government admitted from the beginning that the 9/11 assault was an “act of *war*”. And they haven’t backed off from that characterization. In fact, the Bush Administration has repeatedly warned, “This is a *war* and it will not be a short war. . . . There will be many casualties. The military is prepared for that. . . . This is not just an effort to get bin Laden. This is a *war* to wipe out terrorism all over the world.”

I think we should take the administration at its word. We are entering a *war*. A *world war*.

But I doubt that the average American can grasp this concept: WAR.

Get it?

No, no—not like the “war” on poverty or the “war” on drugs. We are entering a *war*. A *world war*. A *real war* complete with weapons of mass destruction, possibly detonating *here*—on American soil. People are going to die. Lots of ‘em. Maybe you or me or our kids.

Given that possibility, we must ask what *kind* of war we’re entering for—if we don’t know what “kind” of war this is—I don’t see how we can win or even sue for peace.

For example, in the 20th Century we had “hot” wars (WWI & II), “police actions” (Korea and Viet Nam), and a “cold” war. But America hasn’t engaged in a true “holy war” (fought for spiritual reasons) since the American Revolution.

Of course, our government insists this struggle is not a *holy war*.

They tell us we're not struggling against the forces of international Islam. We're reminded that there are *lots* of Moslem countries and Moslem leaders and Moslem Americans who support the USA 110%.

Maybe so. But me thinks our government doth protest too much.

Despite our government's repeated protestations, I guarantee the terrorists think this is a holy war. And I'm confident that most of the middle-east Moslems believe this is a holy war.

But no matter what anyone believes today, unless our government is extraordinarily judicious and lucky in the application of force in the pursuit of bin Laden, we will inspire more hatred, more fanaticism among the world's Moslems—which is exactly what the terrorists want. Even if it's not *yet* a holy war, it's almost certain that the current confrontation will soon escalate into a true "holy" war.

Similar escalation was demonstrated in the mid-1990's at Ruby Ridge and Waco when our government inadvertently "recruited" hundreds of thousands, perhaps a few million to the "patriot movement" by killing Vickie Weaver and the Branch Davidians. Based on those lessons, we can bet that for every Moslem we kill in pursuit of bin Laden, we may generate 1,000, maybe 10,000 more hard-core "terrorists" determined to wreak vengeance on the USA.

### **Wheels within wheels**

President Bush must navigate through an incredible political maze. He must apply great force, but not too much force. He must kill a mass of "evil-doers" without killing any innocents. He must act soon or risk losing American support, but he must not act so hastily that he does something unwise. And he must do all this in a way that placates the American people as well as the people and governments of the world without precipitating the use of ICBMs.

I don't envy President Bush. While he tries to "smite" bin Laden without bruising any innocents, terrorists may repeatedly strike

America. If that happens, American frustration may rise to the point where precipitous action is unavoidable, many *Moslems* will die, and the *Moslem world* will be galvanized into Jihad against the USA.

Although President Bush insists this is not a holy war, when he spoke to the nation on the

"National Day of Prayer and Remembrance," he concluded his speech by invoking God's blessing on America and implying that God was on *our* side. He repeatedly describes the terrorists as "evil".

But how can we claim our adversaries are "evil"—how we can invoke God's *exclusive* blessings on "our side" without confirming the terrorists' contention that this is a *holy* war? It's *not* a holy war, but terrorists are "evil" and God is absolutely on *our* side? C'mon.

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## Fear vs. faith

*Revelations 21:8* is a laundry list of sins that can earn you a ticket to damnation:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

While some of the “conventional” sins like adultery, sorcery, idolatry and lying are present, the top of the list is “the fearful”. It seems that merely being “fearful” might earn you a ticket to Hell. Why? Because fear is the opposite of faith. Insofar as you have fear, you have little faith. Likewise, if your faith is perfect, fear is impossible.

This relationship between fear and faith suggest that the terrorists presume that you have little or no faith or that your faith is in a false god. “Terrorists,” on the other hand, believe themselves to be intimately associated with the true “god”. Thus, misguided or not, all true “terrorists” are armed with the great faith of all true religious fundamentalists.

If so, the essence of all “terrorism” should be a “holy war”—a challenge by one faith to atheists or adherents of another faith. I.e., Moslems might challenge Christians for having “no faith” since (from the Moslem perspective) Christianity is a false religion. In fact, it’s even arguable that any weak or non-existent faith might *invite* the “terrifying” evangelism of the truly devout. Think not? Read the history of the Catholic Church in “saving” the indigenous peoples of Latin America. The Indian’s conversion to Catholicism was often terrifying and imposed on threat of death. More than a few Protestant evangelists

spread the “faith” to the natives of Polynesia with methods the natives probably found “terrifying”. At bottom, the modern notion of “terrorism” is never far removed from religious conflict. What is terrorism? In almost every instance it’s a challenge to an existing government waged by an alternative faith.

Evidence? There’s no doubt that the cornerstone of the Moslem hatred for the USA is America’s support for the State of Israel. And

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that's a *spiritual* issue.

In fact, if we bother to consider Israel's astonishing (some say "miraculous") military victories over its Arab neighbors in the last fifty years, it's clear that Israel is more than a political affront to Islam. Instead, Israel's survival and persistent victories implicitly challenge Islam's validity. How can anyone explain tiny Israel's spectacular victories over its larger Moslem neighbors without wondering if the God of the Bible favors Israel over Islam?

Israel's victories implicitly refute Moslem faith. As a result, Israel's existence has become a "terroristic" attack on Islam. That analysis might sound farfetched, but wouldn't you be scared, even *terrified*, if repeated and undeniable evidence (like inexplicable military defeats) suddenly shook *your* faith and exposed your lifelong religion as a fraud? Couldn't such fear be most profound among those who were previously most devout?

If so, it seems possible that to shield against a loss of faith, Moslems might look for alternative explanations for Israel's remarkable victories. For example, if Israel were supported by some powerful nation or demonic force, Moslems might be able to blame their defeats on that outside nation or demonic force rather than God's love for Israel (and contempt for Islam). Thus, I suspect some Moslems may be *desperate* to believe America *must be* the "great Satan" to explain Israel's seemingly supernatural victories.

See my point? Who else could (temporarily) resist Allah and the Moslem faith, except the "great Satan"? Without the blaming the "great Satan," Islam can't easily explain Israel's military victories without admitting that God favors Israel and Allah is a fraud.

"Terrified" by suspicions that their faith may be false, some Moslems may seek to validate Allah by attacking the "great Satan". After all, if America were defeated or prevented from supporting Israel, then Israel might be defeated, and full faith in Allah could be restored.

If Moslems are susceptible to that line of reasoning, they'd be compelled to engage in "terrorism"—not to *initiate* "terrorism," but to react defensively to the spiritual "terror" felt by every Moslem who's considered the implications of Israel's seemingly miraculous victories. If there is but one God and he is Allah, why's he let a handful of Jews kick Moslem butt every time they fight?

### **Oh, ye of little faith**

If this isn't a *holy war*, why doesn't it directly involve particular nation-states? Yes, Afghanistan has been semi-targeted, but this is not a "War Against Afghanistan"—it's a "War Against Terrorists" (who happen to be in Afghanistan). Everyone admits this "war" will take place *all over the world* but not against any one nation-state. Why the "multinational" flavor?

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First, although they claim to be “Islamic,” the governments of most middle-eastern countries are more secular than spiritual. Their leaders are living the “good life” and don’t want to screw it up with some damn “Holy War”.

Second, the “terrorists” are probably just as contemptuous of the hypocritical middle-east governments as they are of the USA. These middle-east governments claim to be Moslem, but they’re almost as “secular” as our own democracy. They talk of Allah, but trust in gold, oil and debt-based currencies. Thus, Moslem fundamentalists may seek the destruction of Syrian or Egyptian governments as opportunities to replace existing secular governments with theocracies truly dedicated to Allah.

Third, while the secular governments of the Middle-East may claim to “lead” their nations, they are more likely to “control” or merely “pacify” their people. While local politicians ride in limousines accompanied by chesty blondes, their impoverished people are reading the Koran. I doubt that the terrorists’ ultimate goal is to pit the existing, secular *governments* of the Middle East

against the USA. Instead, their goal is probably to gain the allegiance of the Moslem *people*—to bypass or overthrow the existing secular (hypocritical) governments and restore true Islamic theocracies throughout the Middle East.

This strategy is possible because most secular, middle-east governments don’t truly command the *spiritual* allegiance of their *people*. Just as in the USA, most secular Moslem “states” have been “separated” from their people’s “church”. Ordinary Moslems are just as troubled by that secular separation in Pakistan as Christians fundamentalists are troubled by that separation in America. Osama bin Laden doesn’t appeal for help to secular Moslem governments—he *threatens* them. He’s appeals directly to the Moslem *people* and thereby threatens to fan their religious fervor into revolution against their own secular governments.

President Bush constantly assures us that this is not a “holy war”. Likewise, the heads of secular Middle-East governments assure their people this is not a “holy war”. All the shakers and movers of the world—all the folks who routinely ride in limousines—will tell us, “It’s absolutely, positively *not* a holy war!”

But if you ask the Arab who cooks his daily bread on camel dung, he’ll quickly tell you it *is* a “holy war”. And if you ask an American cabbie, he might not be so quick to answer, but he also suspects we’re in a “holy war”. And the simple truth is that there are hundreds of thousands of ordinary Moslems and ordinary Americans who believe in holy war for every government official who swears this war

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can't possibly be "holy".

That's why every secular government in the world is anxious. Every secular "state" that's been successfully "separated" from its people's primary religion ("church") knows they're sitting on a powder keg. If the ordinary people discover this really is a "holy war," they will unite and act with a ferocity sufficient to topple *their own secular governments*. Right now, the governments of the Middle East aren't worried about being overthrown by the United States; they're worried about being overthrown by the unchained passions of their own fundamentalists.

And I'll bet our own secular democracy is just as worried. The 911 assault energized most American's sense of "patriotism" (allegiance to secular government). But inevitably, that "patriotism" will distill down to its essence: spiritual faith. And if America starts "waving the Cross" with the same enthusiasm they're now waving the flag, secular government may face some revolutionary internal pressures.

The only defense secular governments have against revolution fueled by their own fundamentalists is a persistent claim that "There ain't nuthin' *spiritual* goin' on here, folks—just go on home and watch TV!" Once governments admit there is "holy war," the secularists are finished.

Why? Because secularist can't fight fundamentalists. Secularists look for "centers of gravity" in their secular enemy's military, industry or communications systems. Their motto is "Show me the money!" Secularists are constantly trying to bomb their adversary's ball-bearing plants.

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But fundamentalists don't have ball-bearing plants. It's precisely because their church has been "separated" from the infrastructure of their secular "states" that fundamentalists don't have "centers of gravity" suitable for bombing. Fundamentalists have nothing but faith, heart and a few books like the Bible or the Koran.

Secularists are frustrated because they don't know how to target "faith". They can't enter the coordinates of a Koran or Bible in a cruise missile's computer. Worse, attacking a faith seems silly, superstitious, childish and even counterproductive. After all, how can you attack a faith without inadvertently legitimizing that faith?

### Fighting fire

"Terrorism" and "Holy War" are so closely related as to be almost synonymous. Holy War adversaries don't merely threaten each other's lives or property, they threaten each other's faith and hope for achieving an *eternal afterlife*. The Middle-East conflict is not a war between the political states of Israel and Syria or Israel and Egypt or Israel and Palestinians. It's a war between sibling religions to determine which faith God likes best. The losers don't face the prospect of mere secular defeat (followed up by generous financial assistance from the USA), they face the prospect of spiritual damnation. For true believers, that's an incredible incentive to fight and win at any cost.

In the same sense that "it takes a thief to catch a thief," I suspect it will take a Christian fundamentalist to stop a Moslem fundamentalist.

For example, if this really is a "holy war" between the Moslem and Biblical faiths, what should you attack to stop the Moslems? Their aspirin factory in the Sudan? Some tent-villages in Afghanistan? No.

I'm not a student of Islam, so I'm uncertain how dependant Islam is upon its "holy" relics. But if I were tasked with winning a *holy war* against Islam, I wouldn't target ball-bearing plants, I'd target every holy relic in the Moslem faith. I'd aim my missiles to hit every mosque and shrine around the world. My guess is that Mecca is Islam's "center of gravity" so I'd vaporize Mecca and the cubical "House of God" called the "Kaaba".

Would that attack infuriate the Moslem people? Absolutely. Initially, their rage would be astonishing. But once they saw that Allah could not protect his own holy shrines from the "infidels," their faith might suffer doubt. Such doubt would corrode their capacity to wage holy war ("terrorism"). It might take a few years for the Moslems to cool down, modify or convert their faith—but if Mecca and all other Moslem shrines were destroyed, their faith and will to wage Holy War might also collapse.<sup>1</sup>

Again, I'm not a student of Islam, but I suspect Moslems may be dangerously dependant on relics to sustain their faith. For example, bin Laden is allegedly infuriated by the mere presence of "infidels" (American G.I.s) on the "holy land" of Saudi Arabia. Moslems take the tangible evidence of their faith very seriously. But where would bin Laden take his annual pilgrimage if that big, stone cube in Mecca were reduced to dust blowing across the desert? Could bin Laden's faith survive the



loss of Islam's shrines? Could there be Moslems without Mecca?<sup>2</sup>

In any case, the terrorists' attempt to exploit the Moslem "separation of church and state" secularism seems to be working. We see proof in the fact that we aren't clearly struggling against a secular nation-state like Afghanistan or Iraq. Instead, we're struggling against a multinational *region* that is united by a common faith: Islam. We aren't fighting against the secular "Moslem" *governments*; we're fighting against the *people* of the Moslem faith. That's why our adversary offers no clear borders and few meaningful secular targets. That's why this confrontation is so dangerous. If we attack anyone within the Moslem world, that attack may be ignored by secular "Moslem" governments—but Moslem *people* everywhere will see that attack as a blasphemous assault on their *faith*.

While American foreign policy has undoubtedly offended several Middle-East countries on a political level, our foreign policy has also given political offense to Canada and Mexico. In fact, we've probably offended virtually every nation on a political level, just as all other nations have at one time or another offended us. But our *political* offenses against Syria, Afghanistan, or Pakistan aren't sufficient to provoke any one of their secular governments to declare war against us. But if we're perceived to have offended their *faith* and Allah, our "offense" may leave no alternative but holy war.

### WWIII

Much like the American Revolution, there is a high probability that our current "war" will be decided by superior faith rather than superior technology. Unlike most of post-WWII history, this "war" may be a contest in which *right* clearly makes might. This will be a guerrilla war fought much like Viet Nam, except—instead of being confined to an Asian jungle—the guerrillas will be hiding and sniping at us from all over world. Even from within the USA.

Unless our government is extraordinarily skilled, blessed or both—we may be on the verge a World War III complete with biological warfare and backpack nuclear bombs. If so, the devastation already seen in New York may be trivial compared to what follows.

But—contrary to popular opinion—when the goin' gets tough, *really tough*, it's not the "tough" that get going. (Those who are merely "tough" will cut and run.)

It's the *faithful* that get goin'. The spiritual. The devout. Those whose faith in God (even if misguided) is greater than their secular self-love. If America has men more concerned with right than might, we can win. If not, we're headed for a very difficult time.

And if this is holy war, there can ultimately be but one victor. The struggle may take two years, or ten decades. But holy war can't truly end until the losers convert or die. The chilling implications should motivate pragmatic politicians of all nations to avoid admitting that



this may be holy war. For once that admission is public, it may not only inspire all Moslem nations to unite against the United States and Western (Christian) World, it will compel the West to annihilate the Moslem World.

The 911 assault is forcing America to slowly sense that we're entangled in a spiritual conflict. Complete recognition may be postponed for months or years, but without intervention of the one, true God, terrorism is pushing us toward World War III. Nuclear war. Some say Armageddon. And not a secular war between nation-states, but a *holy war* between the forces of the one true God and forces of his adversary.

### Which "One World"?

We're certainly headed for a one-world government. But will it be the secular one-world of the U.N., democracy, debt-based "money" and the New World Order? Or will it be a spiritual one-world based on Islam, Christianity or some artificial compromise between the two? Will we have a one-world democracy or a one-world theocracy?<sup>3</sup>

Who'd've imagined? The New World Order's godless *democracy* may be challenged, even defeated in its quest for world domination by a one-world *theocracy*.

For those without faith—and thus unable to comprehend the nature of this emerging world war—the future may seem terrifying (godless). For those who have faith and believe they shall soon see God, the future may seem exhilarating.

The Cold War struggle between allegedly different political ideologies (communism and democracy) is over. Perhaps we'll now get down to basics: a worldwide struggle between competing religious beliefs. In this case, those competitors are democracy (atheistic collectivism) and theocracy.

If so, we're about to enter an era of war far more terrible than World Wars I & II, Korea or Viet Nam. Unlike the secular wars of the 20th Century (which could be "managed" to stop or go whenever the ruling parties said so), holy war can't be controlled. Holy war is not a *government's war*; it's a *people's war*. Maybe even God's war. Holy war can't end until everyone worships the same god or has been executed for refusing to do so. No surrender, no quarter, no permanent peace treaties in holy war. You don't win or lose, you win or die trying.

Our Republic was built on God. The English monarchy believed in God. The Holy Roman Empire believed in God. Given their faith, those political systems seemed to last. But collectivist systems (communism, socialism and democracy) seem to have fairly short life-expect-

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ancies. Perhaps the real question to be answered by this conflict with terrorists is whether any government (like our democracy) can survive without a theological foundation. Maybe no government lasts long without God.

<sup>1</sup> Of course, if I tried to destroy all Moslem relics and failed utterly, Allah would appear to be vindicated and the Christian faith of the Western World might be shaken or destroyed. Without that Christian faith, the West's political and economic systems would also collapse into chaos. That's the danger in "holy war". *Everything*—including faith in eternal salvation—is at risk.

<sup>2</sup> Both Islam and Judaism seem dependent on their ties to "sacred" land, shrines and relics. Both fight over those *tangible* objects which they regard as "holy". Both faiths seem hugely dependent on their shrines (Mecca for Moslems and the Wailing Wall for Jews). Just as the Moslems might be devastated by the loss of Mecca, what would happen to Judaism if a nuclear weapon vaporized Jerusalem? I don't think a "wailing crater" can replace the Wailing Wall. I doubt that Judaism could survive the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps I underestimate both religions, but Islam and Judaism seem vulnerable to attacks on their physical relics shrines.

Christianity, on the other hand, seems much less dependant on relics, shrines or sacred land. Would the Christian faith fail if someone bombed Bethlehem, Jerusalem or St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome? I know my faith would not be shaken. Terrorists might destroy every cathedral in the Western world, and what would I care? They're just buildings. They're not the Church.

In a sense, Christianity has great power precisely because it has so few physical relics. Where are the tablets Moses brought down off the mountain? Where's the Ark of the Covenant? Where's the cross on which Christ died? . . . Yes, there are some martyrs' bones, and fragments of wood that might've been part of the cross. There are other relics like the Shroud of Turin and the Dead Sea Scrolls. Undoubtedly, some people's faith is strengthened by those relics. But what Christian fundamentalist would lose his faith because someone destroyed some (or even all) Christian relics?

From that perspective, Christianity would have an enormous advantage over Islam or Judaism—having no physical relics, Christians have nothing to attack but their faith. Without a physical Christian "Mecca" to attack, Christianity is a difficult target and potentially dangerous adversary in a holy war. As long as just one Christian remains, the Church and faith survive. That may also be true for Judaism—but can there be Moslems without Mecca? I'm not sure.

<sup>3</sup> We can't have both since democracy is necessarily atheistic. However, international democracy might try to seduce the world with a phony "universal/ecumenical religion". ■

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