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INTRODUCTION

Many excellent writers can tell you in great detail about who, what, where, when, and how Islamic radicals are operating all around the world. They can describe political and economic conditions that are helping to create more radicals, but they often fall short of explaining the radicals' motives. In other words, you have received a lot of information about *what* radicals are doing. I am going to answer the question many westerners have asked: *Why* are they doing this?

I am going to answer that question from the point of view of a "religious radical." In other words, I acknowledge that radicals and terrorists also have political, economic, social, or psychological motives, but I am going to focus on the religious motive, which is the most powerful and the most dangerous factor. It is also the most ignored and misunderstood factor in the world media, so I believe I can make a useful contribution by focusing on it.

To journey inside the mind of a religious radical, we can read what the radical writers have left for us. Writings by some authors, such as Sayyid Qutb or Abul ala Mawdudi, are easily available in English. But other writings are still only available in Arabic, and even then they can be difficult to find. Sometimes academic people read them and discuss them, but the information rarely is packaged in a form that the public can use. In fact, most Arabic-speaking people have not seen these documents either.

My analysis of radical philosophy draws heavily from these hard-to-find documents. I think this book's most important contribution to the public debate is allowing more people to see the source material of radical thought.

I want you to have a deep understanding of radical thinking; therefore, this book gives you more than just a summary of their writings.

JOURNEY INTO THE MIND OF AN ISLAMIC TERRORIST

I describe the modern roots of Islamic radicalism and the backgrounds of the key writers before I describe their writings. Afterward, I show you the source of their philosophy by telling you how Muhammad practiced jihad, drawing from my doctorate degree in Islamic history and culture from Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Finally, the book ends on a note of hope because I believe there are ways to control radicalism and restore peace between Islam and the rest of the world.

The book is divided into the following sections:

SECTION 1: A WALL BETWEEN BROTHERS

To give you an idea of my perspective on this topic, I will tell you a little information about my personal experiences with radical Islamic philosophy. My best friend from childhood became a member of the most dangerous radical group in Egypt at the time, and the tragedy of his life is a microcosm of the havoc that these groups cause.

SECTION 2: THE ISLAMIC GREAT AWAKENING

This section tells the personal stories of the radical writers during the rise of modern Islamic fundamentalism. It moves through three generations of leaders described as the Founders, the Evangelists, and the Prisoners, and concludes with the Aristocrats, who are Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. You will also learn how Ayman al-Zawahiri, second in command of Al-Qaeda, uses Muhammad's example to justify suicide bombing.

SECTION 3: FIVE PILLARS OF RADICAL PHILOSOPHY

This section synthesizes radical writings into the key concepts that motivate their activity. I have identified those themes and present them to you as the "five pillars of radical philosophy." This material is original and unique to my book.

SECTION 4: WARNING ABOUT DECEIT

World leaders need to know that Muhammad taught that deceit is a powerful strategy of war. This section quotes his specific teaching and explains how deceit is practiced today. It also includes an entire chapter on al-Zawahiri's specific teaching about deceit, which I downloaded from radical Web sites in Arabic.

Introduction

SECTION 5: FOLLOWING MUHAMMAD'S FOOTSTEPS

History is relived in the present, and this section reviews Muhammad's use of jihad and how his example has been followed by Muslim leaders until the present time.

SECTION 6: HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

At some point as you read this book you might be tempted to think, *This is hopeless*. If you only look at the present, you can feel this way. But there are signs of hope coming from Egypt and the Middle East. For example, the grandfather of all radical groups, the Muslim Brotherhood, adopted a policy of nonviolence after Egyptian President Sadat released many of them from prison. Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyyah, which led a bloody campaign against the Egyptian government for more than fifteen years, declared a cease-fire in 1997. Based on this recent history, this section explores a two-pronged approach to stopping Islamic terrorism.

CONCLUSION

Though Islamic radicals may be successful at spreading terror today, they have no chance at all of winning against a world united against them. The great challenge is strategy. The purpose of this book is to provide information that will help create the best strategy.

PILLAR 4: JIHAD IS THE ONLY WAY TO WIN

The Islamic radical is a fundamentalist—he wants to practice Islam the way Muhammad practiced Islam. So his definition of jihad is based on Muhammad’s—both in word and by example.

Readers in modern times may struggle to reconcile the different teachings in the Quran regarding tolerance toward non-Muslims, but the first Muslim community had no such difficulty because they experienced that jihad was revealed in stages.

Qutb described the following stages:

1. For thirteen years after the beginning of his Messengership, Muhammad called people to God through preaching, without fighting or *Jizyah* (tax). He was commanded to restrain himself and to practice patience and forbearance.
2. Next, he was commanded to emigrate to Medina, and permission was later given to fight.
3. Then he was commanded to fight those who fought him and to restrain himself from those who did not make war with him.
4. Later he was commanded to fight the polytheists until God’s religion was fully established.¹

To put it simply, when the Quran speaks of living in humility and submission, it was a temporary condition. Stage 1 is past, and Muslim community is in stage 4 permanently.

Those who speak against jihad “speak clumsily and mix up the various stages,” complained Qutb. “They regard every verse of the Qur’an as if it were the final principle of this religion.”²

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION (ABROGATION)

The stages of jihad will become even clearer when you understand a principle of Quranic interpretation known as *nasikh*. *Nasikh* is the idea that revelation in the Quran is progressive. In other words, when there is a contradiction, newer revelations cancel out, or abrogate, older revelations. For example, drinking alcohol was first permitted any time, then permitted any time except during prayer, and finally forbidden at all times. The direction for prayer was originally Jerusalem, and then it changed to Mecca.

In the same way, the revelations about jihad abrogated the earlier verses that were about tolerance, such as Surah 2:109:

Quite a number of the People of the Book wish they could turn you (people) back to infidelity after you have believed...but forgive and overlook...

—ALI TRANSLATION

This verse sounds like tolerance embodied, but it was canceled out by a newer revelation known as the “verse of the sword.”

So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush.

—SURAH 9:5, SHAKIR TRANSLATION

Al-Jihad quoted an explanation of this verse from the classic scholar Al-Kalbi:

This indicates an abrogation to all that was previously given to the infidels of peace treaties, and pardon certificates, and avoiding them or being patient with the harm they cause. And the order to engage them in battle here is clear for all times and everywhere.

Pillar 4: Jihad Is the Only Way to Win

So in the Quran there are 114 verses from 54 Chapters (Sura), which all have been abrogated by his words: “slay the idolaters wherever you find them” and “fighting is enjoined on you.”³

You can still read the abrogated verses in the Quran, but they are no longer applicable as a guide for living.

The Quran contains a tremendous amount of teaching about jihad. In fact, I estimate that 60 percent of the Quran is related to the concept of jihad. Following are some examples of the verses that radicals like to quote.

KEY VERSES ABOUT JIHAD FROM THE QURAN

RESCUE THE OPPRESSED

Radicals believe non-Muslims who oppress them cause all their problems. Therefore, they readily identify with verses such as these:

And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause of Allah, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: “Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.”

—SURAH 4:75

Al-Jihad declared:

It has been imposed upon the Muslims the preparation of a strong army raising the banner of unification and going out in the name of Allah, to champion the religion of Allah, to soothe the wounds of the nation of Islam, and to repel the raping enemies who have plundered the land, and ransacked its wealth, and humiliated its people.

It has become compulsory upon Muslims today to fight and go to war to save the thousands of prisoners and the millions of weakened masses who are vulnerable and helpless.⁴

FIGHT WITH YOUR WEALTH AND YOUR LIVES

The Quran tells Muslims:

March forth, whether you are light (being healthy, young and wealthy) or heavy (being ill, old and poor), strive hard with your

wealth and your lives in the Cause of Allah. This is better for you, if you but knew.

—SURAH 9:41

PUNISHMENT FOR NEGLECTING JIHAD

The Quran condemned Muslims who avoided the duty of jihad.

O you who believe! What (excuse) have you that when it is said to you: Go forth in Allah's way, you should incline heavily to earth; are you contented with this world's life instead of the hereafter? But the provision of this world's life compared with the hereafter is but little. If you do not go forth, He will chastise you with a painful chastisement and bring in your place a people other than you, and you will do Him no harm; and Allah has power over all things.

—SURAH 9:38–39, SHAKIR TRANSLATION

This verse was revealed while Muhammad was preparing his people to go fight in the Campaign of Tabuk. Some Muslims hesitated to go and fight, so this verse warned them that Allah would punish the ones who refused to go and replace them with better people.

PREPARE FOR WAR

And We brought forth iron wherein is mighty power (in matters of war), as well as many benefits for mankind, that Allah may test who it is that will help Him (His religion) and His Messengers in the unseen.

—SURAH 57:25

This verse praises iron for its benefit in battle. Religious radicals are eager to use the best technology to fight jihad. *The Noble Quran*, published by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, presents this bold translation and explanation of Surah 8:60:

And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides whom, you may not know but whom Allah does know. And whatever you shall spend in the Cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you, and you shall not be treated unjustly.

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The Sheikh Abu Bakr Al-Jazeera explained this passage in practical and severe terms:

Muslims must prepare weapons and gather material and military equipment, and train men to the different arts of war, not to repel the attacks of the enemies only but to also enable them to conduct raids to the cause of Allah, and uplift His word, and to spread justice and mercy and good on earth.

Also the military draft should be enforced in the Islamic countries so that every man would be prepared for the military service...

Muslims must also establish factories to produce all kinds of weapons in the world with the latest innovations, even if this means that they have to sacrifice eating or drinking or clothing or dwelling except what is necessary, something which would place them rightfully in performing their duties for war to the fullest, otherwise they are guilty and would be subjected to the wrath of Allah now and in eternity.⁵

IN BATTLE, SMITE THE NECKS

The world was horrified by videotapes of beheadings in Iraq. People wondered why religious radicals would commit this grisly act. The answer is in the Quran:

Therefore, when you meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length, when you have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them)...

—SURAH 47:4, ALI TRANSLATION

REWARDS FOR JIHAD

In radical writings, the authors rarely mention rewards for jihad or martyrdom because it is such a widely accepted and understood principle. There is no need to justify it. The reward for being killed in jihad is guaranteed entrance to paradise, as the Quran states:

Let those (believers) who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter fight in the Cause of Allah, and whoso fights in the Cause of Allah, and is killed or gets victory, We shall bestow on him a great reward.

—SURAH 4:74

MUHAMMAD'S TEACHINGS ABOUT JIHAD

In addition to the words of the Quran, we also have Muhammad's example as recorded in hadith. Radicals like to quote a declaration Muhammad made while he was still living in Mecca:

Listen people of Quraysh, by the one who has the soul of Muhammad in his hand, I have come to you as a slaughterer.⁶

Al-Jihad said of this quote:

The community took his word seriously enough... to where the toughest of them would meet him with the best words there are... So by saying, "I have come to you as a slaughterer" he paved the straight way which contains no argument and no wheedling with the leaders of disbelief and the patrons of infidelity.⁷

Later Muhammad would make good on his words when he came with an army of Muslims ten thousand strong and defeated Mecca.

In the last recorded sermon before his death, Muhammad confirmed the place of the sword in Islam. Radicals like to quote him saying:

I descended by Allah with the sword in my hand, and my wealth will come from the shadow of my sword. And the one who will disagree with me will be humiliated and persecuted.⁸

MODERATE MUSLIMS CHALLENGE JIHAD

Moderate Muslims who do not want to fight a physical jihad need to find alternative explanations for the teachings about jihad in the Quran and hadith. However, religious radicals always push back against any moderate teachings that say jihad is not primarily a physical fight. Here are three examples.

GREATER JIHAD AND LESSER JIHAD

Moderate Muslims often say that the highest meaning of jihad is a spiritual struggle within oneself to follow the teachings of Islam. Where do they get this idea? They point to a story recorded in the hadith:

Muhammad was returning from a battle when he told one of his friends, "We are returning from the little jihad to the great jihad."

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His friend asked him, “O prophet of Allah, what do you mean by the small battle and the great battle?”

Muhammad replied, “The small battle is the battle we just came from where we were fighting the enemies of Islam. The great battle is the spiritual struggle of the Muslim life.”⁹

In other words, the story says that the lesser jihad was the physical battle and the greater jihad was the spiritual battle within. This phrase “greater jihad” is used often by liberal Muslims.

There are some challenges to this hadith that you should know about.

1. Most importantly, it is inconsistent with the other teachings of Muhammad and the Quran. The Quran gives Muslims many guidelines for living, but the Quran never describes the struggle to follow these guidelines as “jihad.”
2. The documentation that links this story to the actual life of Muhammad is weak. Orthodox Muslim scholars believe that Muhammad never said this. Sheikh al-Elbeni, the most respected scholar of hadith in the world, lists this as a weak hadith, even though it comes from otherwise reliable historians. Ibn Al Qayyim blasted the story as an “invented statement. And those who invented it aimed at nothing except to belittle the importance of the sword.”¹⁰

CATEGORIES OF JIHAD

Some moderates say that jihad is divided into three categories (per Islamic scholar, Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim):

1. Jihad of the soul
2. Jihad against Satan
3. Jihad against the infidels and hypocrites

They say jihad of the soul and jihad against Satan must be completed before starting jihad against infidels and hypocrites. Faraj scathingly responded:

This dedication by some shows total ignorance and/or total cowardice, because Ibn Al-Qayyim divided jihad into categories, not stages. Otherwise we would have to stop struggling against Satan until we have finished the struggle of the soul. The fact is that all three of these categories go hand in hand in a straight line.¹¹

SELF-DEFENSE

Moderates often argue that jihad was only used to defend the homeland of Islam.

Qutb pointed out that the goal of the first caliphs was to spread Islam as far as they possibly could, which included offensives against Roman and Persian powers whether they were a threat or not. The purpose of jihad was to make way for the preaching of Islam, unhindered by an infidel government, says Qutb.¹² Whether it is true or not, Qutb insisted that any non-Muslim government will hinder the teaching of Islam.

A jahiliyyah system will put obstacles in the way of preaching Islam.¹³

Political powers . . . prevent people from listening to the preaching and accepting the belief if they wish to do so.¹⁴

THREE IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

In addition to refuting arguments against physical jihad, radical writers also clarified other concepts about how to practice jihad. Below are three of the most important ones.

1. JIHAD IS AN INDIVIDUAL DUTY, NOT A CORPORATE DUTY.

Radicals seek to prove that jihad is obligatory to every Muslim. There are two types of duties in Islam—individual and corporate. Individual duties, such as prayer, fasting, and giving alms, are required of every Muslim. Corporate duties, on the other hand, must be fulfilled by some, but not all, Muslims.

So if jihad were a corporate duty, then only some Muslims would be required to participate. However, radicals argue that the verse “fighting is prescribed for you” is an individual duty.

An individual duty does not require permission from any other person to be binding. Therefore Faraj, who wrote his book at the age of

twenty-six, took this opportunity to open jihad to young people even if they did not have permission from their parents.

Let it also be known that if jihad is an individual obligation, then parents' permission is not warranted for going to jihad, as the scholars have said. In this case, it is similar to the individual duties of prayer and fasting.¹⁵

2. WAR IS FOR POLITICS, NOT FOR PREACHING FAITH.

Many people believe that the goal of jihad is to force non-Muslims to accept Islam. Many radicals also think that jihad is for making converts. But Sayyid Qutb insisted that jihad is used to overthrow a government, but preaching—not jihad—is used to make a convert.

Qutb complained that Muslims confused the purpose of jihad with the invitation to accept Islam. They are two separate principles.

The purpose of jihad is to change systems and institutions by force and to bring Muslims and non-Muslims under Islamic law. In contrast, an invitation to accept Islam is voluntary. Qutb wrote:

This religion forbids the imposition of its belief by force, as is clear from the verse: "There is no compulsion in religion" (Surah 2:256).

Whatever system is to be established in the world ought to be on the authority of God, deriving its laws from Him alone. Then every individual is free, under the protection of this universal system, to adopt any belief he wishes to adopt.¹⁶

Freedom for Qutb means living under Islamic law but having the ability to choose whether or not to accept the Muslim faith personally. However, if you read the chapter about Islamic law, you understand that living under Islamic law is no kind of freedom.

3. WHERE TO FIGHT

In Islamic thought there is a concept of the "near" enemy and the "far" enemy. The near enemy has been the Muslim governments who are not implementing *sharia* to the satisfaction of the radicals. That is why the early radical groups focused on assassination of people associated with Muslim governments.

As time passed and assassinations were unsuccessful at changing governments, the groups changed their targets, focusing on ways to

cause trouble for the government, such as attacking tourists and hurting the tourist industry.

This caused harm to their countries, but it still didn't change the government. Then Al-Qaeda came up with a new strategy: attack the "far" enemy. Al-Qaeda decided that the secular Muslim governments stay in power because of support from the United States. So it began attacks on U.S. interests overseas and then stunned the world by attacking people within the U.S. border on 9/11.

CONCLUSION

If you were able to meet a suicide bomber on his way to blow up himself or herself, you might say, "You are going to kill yourself and many innocent people. Why? What are you looking for?" They will start their answer with a quote from the Quran:

O you who believe! Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a painful torment? That you believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), and that you strive hard and fight in the Cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives, that will be better for you, if you but know! (If you do so) He will forgive you your sins, and admit you into Gardens under which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings in 'Adn (Eden) Paradise; that is indeed the great success. And also (He will give you) another (blessing) which you love,—help from Allah (against your enemies) and a near victory. And give glad tidings (O Muhammad) to the believers.

—SURAH 61:10–13

These verses describe a contract between Allah and Muslims. Why is this contract so important? Because of Islamic teaching about paradise.

Through the prophet Muhammad, Allah told mankind to believe in him and follow his law in order to enter paradise. But no matter how hard he tries, every Muslim makes mistakes and commits sin. No direct assurance comes from Allah that his sins will be forgiven. In fact, Islam closes almost every door for Muslims to have that assurance. It doesn't matter how many times they pray or how many good things they do; there is no assurance of forgiveness of sins.

In the midst of that teaching, Islam left a small window open for Muslims to experience assurance of forgiveness. That is the promise from Allah found in this last passage, telling Muslims about the

Pillar 4: Jihad Is the Only Way to Win

perfect trade. The Muslim must believe in Allah, keep his law, defend Islam, and fight jihad. In response, Allah grants forgiveness of sin and entrance to paradise. The Muslims provide a service for Allah, and Allah pays the price.

On July 7, 2005, four young Muslims blew themselves up on a London bus and on subway trains, killing more than fifty people and injuring more than seven hundred. Do you know why? Because they signed the agreement with Allah.

While the Western media try to figure out all the political and economic reasons for these attacks, the radical Muslims know exactly what is going on. It is a matter of faith. That is why the next and final pillar of radical Islamic philosophy is titled "Faith Is the Reason." Radicals call on Muslims to prove their faith by participating in jihad.