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“Jihadists” and the War on Terrorism

On September 10, 2005, a report in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* described a document produced by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS). This document expressed the opinion that “individuals who have attended terrorist training camps or who have independently opted for radical Islam must be considered threats to Canadian public safety for the indefinite future.”¹ The story goes on to indicate the central problem: these people believe “it is actually moral to commit acts of violence to fulfill one’s religious obligation and the highest morality is that of a martyr.” In his book about a nineteen-year-old Canadian, Mohammed Mansour Jabarah (Sammy to his friends), Stewart Bell noted: “For a terrorist to confess is not to admit to sins: it is the opposite, to say proudly before God that he is not only a believer but one who has acted on his faith.”² Sammy had been arrested in Oman in March, 2002, and eventually was returned to Canada. Before that, he had trained at the Al Farooq camp near Kandahar where a senior Canadian diplomat was recently killed. Sammy had also pledged *bayat*, personal allegiance, to Osama bin Laden in the summer of 2001. Kandahar is, today, the theatre of operations for the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry, on its second deployment to Afghanistan. Previ-

ously, the Patricias had fought alongside the U.S. 101st Airborne and the 10th Mountain divisions in Operation Anaconda. Canada’s special operations unit, Joint Task Force Two, has also been deployed in Afghanistan pretty much continuously since December 2001.

Parochialism alone does not dictate beginning this essay with reference to Canadian sources and actions—though it is probably fair to say that most Canadians, like most Americans, are unaware of what the Canadian military has done in support of the United States. Rather, it is to draw attention to the most significant practical feature of the story of Sammy Jabarah and the problem to which the CSIS report and Stewart Bell direct our attention. Specifically, some terrorists are of the opinion that acts of violence against civilians are “moral” and that martyrdom, even including the suicide of the alleged martyr, is “the highest morality.” Both of these matters carry implications that extend far beyond the borders of North America.

There is a robust common sense about the CSIS view of the problem, but it is one that needs to be conceptually refined. In-

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stead of “radical Islam,” the term militant “salafist” or militant “Islamist” is probably more accurate, for two reasons. First, it has an intelligible intellectual history that can be traced back to a distinctive thirteenth-century school of *sharia* interpretation developed by Ibn Taymiyya, who was himself a member of the already strict Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence. Second, the adjective “militant” indicates that those who support an Islamist or salafist ideological position are also engaged in “direct action,” to use an evocative military term.³

There are additional distinctions worth bearing in mind.⁴ For example, some Palestinian and Iraqi terrorist groups are *secular* militants. And most Islamist groups are not militant (in the sense of employing terrorist direct action). Some—including the Shiite Hizb al-Dawah and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq—are allies of the United States. That is, radical Islamists are not necessarily militant Islamists, even if they both use the same or very similar language. Among the militant Islamists, furthermore, some such as Hamas and Hezbollah are pursuing classic so-called “national liberation” objectives rather like the Tamil Tigers or the Irish Republican Army. Others, notably al-Qaeda, are transnational or ecumenic.

Sometimes Islamist militants are referred to as “jihadists,” though this term is misleading in the same way that “national liberation” is misleading. With the latter, there was never any question of liberty being involved; with the former, there is nothing sanctified in the war that is being conducted. For so-called jihadists, there is simply armed struggle (including terrorism) against an existing regime. What most are engaged in is really “*hirabah*”—unholy war—not jihad. Finally, there is the issue of Wahhabism: not all Wahhabis are militants or “jihadists,” but most “jihadists” are Wahhabi. There are exceptions: the first

“jihadists” grew out of the radical (but not militant) Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and the Taliban are not Wahhabi at all.

The intellectual pedigree of radical Islam, which, as mentioned, can be traced back to Ibn Taymiyya and his response to the Mongol destruction of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258, does not explain how terrorist direct action came to be understood as enacting the will of God. To begin with, it is highly improper on traditional Islamic grounds to identify martyrdom with indiscriminate violence, much less suicide. How the Islamist militants or salafist terrorists came to the conclusion that killing the innocent by means of suicide attacks was moral or was evidence of martyrdom is particularly surprising because the salafists take their name from the *al-salf al-salihin*, or “pious forefathers.” We shall see, however, that they have nothing in common with the pious forefathers or, more broadly, with what, in the absence of a Muslim orthodoxy, is often referred to as Koranic Islam.

The problem of terrorism is not confined to militant Islamists. On March 20, 1995, a Japanese terrorist group called Aum Shinrikyo undertook a sarin attack on the Tokyo subway system. This was the first use of “weapons of mass destruction” by terrorists. Sarin is a poison gas first used by the Nazis: Aum used a Soviet recipe. The results were twelve dead and more than 6,000 injured. Many academic analysts of terrorism took this to be a harbinger of the future. The “new terrorism” debate of the next few years focused on the fear that “next time” some kind of nuclear or biological weapon would be used. As the 9/11 Commission’s report noted, this debate was evidence only of a “failure in imagination.” This is probably correct.

A perhaps more interesting question is: Why did Aum Shinrikyo undertake the attack? The conventional and commonsense

reason is that the leader of Aum, Shoko Asahara, had been humiliated in the 1990 Japanese general election and the attack was part of a two-year pattern of retaliation; more immediately, the attack was intended to disrupt an ongoing police investigation. This is not, however, the whole story. On his own terms, Asahara had decided to *poa* his society, which, he said, would not only improve it but also prepare for an apocalyptic battle with the U.S. that only Aum would survive. *Poa* is a Tibetan meditative technique used near death to provide good karma in the cycle of reincarnation.⁵ Asahara turned *poa* into an active verb, and sent his followers into action, drawing the attention of the Japanese police who, understandably, saw in the sarin attack not *poa* but premeditated murder. Eventually the police tracked Asahara down, discovering him in a closet sitting on a pile of gold and money.

The Aum Shinrikyo attack and its justification by Asahara illustrate several themes that reappear in the actions and words of the salafist terrorists. The first is that Aum Shinrikyo acted in the commonsense, everyday, or real world by poisoning their fellow citizens. Second, Asahara justified himself and was inspired by distorting religious scriptures and symbols. The contrast between murderous action and its justification corresponds to what Eric Voegelin, borrowing from Robert Musil and Heimeto von Doderer, called the difference between common or first reality and second reality. A “second reality” is the result of an initial and deliberate act of the imagination. Human beings can imagine themselves to be subhuman or superhuman—enjoying a direct line to God or to the meaning of history. In contrast to this reality of the imagination is the commonsense experience of being human that, in turn, is elaborated in several distinct but equivalent symbolizations.⁶

The point of developing a second reality is to obscure or screen the common or “first” reality of human experience. The invariable result is friction between commonsense reality—in the Aum example, a dozen homicide cases to be dealt with by the Japanese police—and the second reality of the imagination: in this instance the notion that Asahara had the capability to *poa* his fellow human beings. Typically, a second reality is not pure fantasy. In order to eclipse first reality, the second reality must incorporate a sufficiently appealing aspect of first or commonsense reality to make the enterprise acceptable—at least to those to whom, after special preparation, it is addressed. At the same time, however, it takes a very peculiar mode of consciousness to accept the notion that murder using poison gas is really a meditative transformation of existence. So one is compelled to ask: What kind of consciousness must exist in the mind of Asahara and his followers that allows them to think they can *poa* others?

The term used by Voegelin, which he borrowed from Schelling, and which I used in *New Political Religions*, is “pneumopathological.”⁷ Literally, a pneumopathology is a spiritual sickness, in contrast to psychopathology—a psychological disorder. The difference between the two is that psychopaths cannot tell the difference between good and evil, whereas pneumopaths can tell the difference perfectly well and go out of their way to hide what they know—typically by using religious symbols and language to intoxicate themselves into oblivion with respect to what they know. Aum Shinrikyo, for instance, had an extremely demanding regimen involving sleep deprivation, drugs, diet, and so on, the purpose of which was to prepare members to accept Asahara’s teaching with respect to *poa*, among other things. The two concepts—second reality and pneumopa-

thology—are related inasmuch as the pneumopath exists imaginatively in a second reality that both screens his commonsense awareness of first reality and justifies the action he takes in the common world. Thus, Asahara was “sincere” in his attempt to *poa* other people even while he knew it was impossible. When analyzing terrorist acts, therefore, it is essential to distinguish commonsense grievances that terrorists seek to exploit from the imaginary goals they seek to achieve. The goals are almost always riddled with pneumo-pathic elements, and the grievances are almost always at hand in the commonsense world.

Most analysts of terrorist activity do not deploy these terms even though they often come to similar conclusions. There is, for example, a theoretically astute Clausewitzian understanding of al-Qaeda and the conflict between that organization and America. There is no “war on terrorism,” as President Bush has claimed, because, the Clausewitzians say, you cannot wage war against a method of waging war. You conduct war against an enemy: in this instance, al-Qaeda. This war is, accordingly, a variant of asymmetric warfare. Considered externally, this is accurate enough. Al-Qaeda is a Clausewitzian organization insofar as its leadership understands war-making as serving political purposes. By this interpretation the political goal of al-Qaeda is to create (or restore) the caliphate to the *dar al-Islam*, first by demonstrating the vulnerability of the U.S. and then by forcing a response that would either increase the contempt of the *ummah*, the Muslim community, for America or increase its hostility. Either way, al-Qaeda thought it would benefit. Those goals are not preposterous, so it is conceivable to think that a restored caliphate was akin to the IRA goal of a united and republican Ireland, and to develop a multiphase blue-

print for how to achieve this goal. Less plausibly, but still within the range of possibility, the goal would be an ecumenic caliphate under the rule of God’s *sharia*.⁸

The great insight that follows from a hard-nosed Clausewitzian interpretation of al-Qaeda is that it clarifies a lot of needless ambiguity. By attacking relatively soft targets in Europe, as compared to post-9/11 America, for example, we conclude that the previous al-Qaeda estimate regarding the win-win response by the U.S. was wrong. Not only has America fought back, but in doing so it has not inspired an increase in effective hostility—and ineffective hostility does not count for much. Moreover, it is probably accurate to say that al-Qaeda had no post-9/11 strategy, no follow-on assassinations or organized upheavals in the Arab and Muslim world, in place.

The political goal of establishing an ecumenic caliphate, we must also note, has nothing to do with Iraq, Afghanistan, or Palestine as motivating factors for salafist militancy. As we shall see, the political goal of an ecumenic caliphate ran into a number of commonsensical objections from the more practical kinds of Islamist militants for whom the interests of Palestinians, Iraqis, and Afghanistans actually mattered. For the al-Qaeda leadership, these pragmatic instances of injustice or perhaps simply of grievance are opportunities to be exploited, not issues to be settled by negotiation.⁹

Before considering the elements of second reality in the aspirations of al-Qaeda, let’s consider the more common pneumopathological aspects of militant salafism.

Several years ago Bruce Hoffman noted that terrorist killers almost always see their purposes as altruistic.¹⁰ In the terms we have been using, they can do so by creating a second reality where murder is seen as sacrifice—and where the terrorists are seen as exceptional human beings. This is no

surprise since genuinely altruistic martyrs are always exceptional. If we accept that there is bound to be a pneumopathological element involved in the creation of a terrorist's second reality, there are additional problems to be discussed beyond the issues raised by a Clausewitzian understanding of asymmetric war in service to a historically remote or, indeed, imaginary ecumenic caliphate. Whatever the extent to which al-Qaeda and other transnational or ecumenic salafist militants may agree with the view of Western analysts that they, the Islamists, see the conflict as asymmetric war, there is, as with Aum, an additional problem to be analyzed.¹¹

The depravity or moral perversity of traditional, old-style terrorists such as the IRA was accompanied by some highly rational cost-benefit calculations. They were engaged chiefly in “propaganda by deed,” to use a nineteenth-century formula. Or as Brian Jenkins said in 1975: “Terrorists want a lot of people watching and a lot of people listening, and not a lot of people dead.”¹² Thirty years ago, terrorism was a kind of brutal negotiating technique. But to negotiate with someone you have to be reading the same book, even if you are not on the same page. Or, to use another analogy, you have to be playing the same game. Traditional terrorists calibrated their violence more or less in light of an intelligible political objective. This cannot be said either for Islamist militants—whether local or transnational—nor, indeed, does it easily apply to Aum Shinrikyo. This is why these are better understood in terms of pneumopathology and second reality than of the perverse normalcy of a brutal but still pragmatic opposition. In this sense, the salafist terrorists are similar to certain late-medieval Christian heretics who also thought they were doing God's work. Or, as Brian Jenkins said in 1996: “If God tells you to do it, God knows you did it. You

don't have to issue a communiqué.”¹³ In short, we are not dealing with any form of negotiation.

There are three further points to be made: first, to indicate the origin of the salafist narrative; second, to detail a few examples of how it has been degraded with second realities; and third, to suggest how this state of affairs can be used to resist and destroy terrorist networks.

The salafist narrative is based on an understanding of Islamic history that is widely shared in the *ummah*. It is important for political scientists to distinguish, however, the history of Islam from Islamic history. The former is similar to the history of gunpowder or the history of the Republican Party of Ohio. In contrast, Islamic history is the story of God and humanity. It is a story of successive revelations of God's will for human beings through the “Abrahamic” religions. This story starts with the Jews and the Old Testament, continues with Christians and the New Testament, and ends with the final revelation to the Prophet Mohammed, which is the text of the Koran.

For traditional Muslim believers, this is a simple truth; for scholars of Islam, and especially for political scientists, it is a theological account that has a history similar to that found in Judaism and Christianity. For a traditional Muslim, God gave him a duty to succeed. God told him that Jews and Christians were also Muslims, though they did not yet know it. But they would someday. Moreover, the early triumphs of the Arab armies seemed to confirm God's will. Of course, there were similar experiences in Judaism and Christianity. Tertullian, for instance, said it was God's will at work in the establishing of the Roman empire because it allowed Christianity to spread more easily along the Romans' fine military highways.

Likewise, early Islam or “classical” Islam was also a time of great philosophical devel-

opment and poetry. The great change in the fortunes of Islam to which I alluded earlier came with the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. One response to the Mongol depredations was mystic Sufism; a second was to convert the conquerors, which eventually led to renewed conquests; the third, the jurisprudence of Ibn Taymiyya, which combined a strict and dogmatic understanding of *sharia* and its vigorous enforcement by the sword, was the most important in the present context. The formula was resurrected practically to the letter in the eighteenth century by Abd al-Wahhab and simplified further by the detribalized “Muslim Brotherhood” in the nineteenth. For five hundred years the fundamental assumption that law in the Muslim world was holy and thus immutable resulted, in the felicitous phrase of Roger Scruton, in a “confiscation of the political,” which has never been overcome.¹⁴

The contact between Western ideological movements such as nationalism and socialism and Muslim self-understanding in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries are usually discussed in terms of modernism and the complex reactions to it. In addition, however, there is an obvious trend towards dogmatic simplification, so that by the time you get to a mid-twentieth-century figure such as Sayyid Qutb, often called the godfather of jihadist terrorism, you have a religiously untutored fanatic calling for the use of violence as what is essentially a magic implement to create a new world.

The story of “what went wrong,” to use Bernard Lewis’s formulation, is familiar from Western political thought as well as from the experiences of the Middle Eastern and Arab world. The reason is that the process of social and political disorder engenders typical responses among human beings, which means the variegated political, cultural, or religious traditions of hu-

manity are secondary in the sense that they express or symbolize recognizably equivalent experiences. The spiritual disruption of Muslim immigrants to the West, and especially to Europe, has been exhaustively analyzed by Olivier Roy in *Globalized Islam*. The more general argument is relatively straightforward: first of all, political, social, or spiritual disorder places in question the received structures and institutions of life that provide stability and meaning for most of us, most of the time. When things fall apart, we are on our own, and usually that means we are lost. This seems to be what happened to Sammy Jabarah. In theological language, when God seems to disappear from the world, when God seems to cease supporting his people, human beings characteristically evoke substitutes—second realities—that are symbolized in a language that is close to the original, genuinely religious, evocation. In the cases of Asahara, al-Zawahiri, or bin Laden, the language is crude and dogmatic.

Consider a few of the second realities evoked by jihadist—or hirabahist—terrorists. The analogies here will be with the transfiguration of religious symbols such as *poa* as undertaken by Asahara. The chief addition made by militant salafists is to have combined murder and suicide. The notion of a martyr (*shahid*) is common in many religions. A martyr is one who bears witness to truth, usually by suffering. In the Islamic tradition, determining who is a martyr is a decision taken by the religious leadership with respect to those who die for the sake of the *ummah*. The process is similar to becoming a saint in the Catholic Church, though the details obviously differ.

Then there is the notion of suicide (*intihar*). Suicide is prohibited by Islam. It is prohibited indirectly in the Koran and directly in reliable hadiths, the well-attested “sayings” of the Prophet.

Finally there is the new doctrine: self-martyrdom (*istishad*). This was simply invented one fine day during the 1980s by Sheik Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, a spiritual leader in Hezbollah. By the time you get to religious ignoramuses such as al-Zawahiri or bin Laden, you find them speaking of routine “martyrdom operations.” This is equivalent to Nazi language regarding “public hygiene” as a euphemism for murdering Jews or homosexuals. As Roy puts it, “al-Qaeda’s cadres are individuals who join an imagined community only through death.”¹⁵

In addition to substituting their own meanings for well-attested traditional ones, the Islamist militants, particularly the transnationalist ones in al-Qaeda, have created their own narrative to explain their actions. This narrative is in conflict with the narratives of the nationalist and, relatively speaking, more pragmatic militants, as well as with those of nonmilitant salafists.

Following both Qutb and his successor, Abdal Salam Faraj, the proper focus of salafist militants was to be on the “near enemy,” the allegedly apostate regimes of the Middle East. It remained that way during the 1980s and the early 1990s. The initial deployment of militants to Afghanistan was as much to gain experience that later would be used at home as it was to deal with the “far enemy,” the U.S.S.R. The slogan, “the road to Jerusalem goes via Cairo,” perfectly expressed the starting-point of Islamist militants such as Ayman al-Zawahiri: the liberation of Palestine was impossible until there were Islamist regimes in control of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. The change in strategy began in the early 1990s partly in response to political repression of the nationalist Islamist militants or “religious nationalists,” as Fawaz Gerges calls them.¹⁶

This was also the period when bin Laden

and al-Zawahiri digested their experiences in 1980s Afghanistan and created a narrative to make sense of them. For both “nationalist” militants and al-Qaeda, Afghanistan was *the* experience of a community of armed believers united against the infidel—a classic “defensive” jihad. Despite the theological tensions between the so-called “Afghan Arabs,” most of whom were Wahhabi, and the more relaxed Hanbalis and Deobandis of Afghanistan, and despite their different political agendas (the Afghans wanted to get rid of the Soviets, not turn their country into a training camp for a global jihad), the chief result of the Afghan war was the creation of “a new mobilized seasoned and professionalized transnational force composed of Muslim fighters and freelancers who became addicted to the jihad business.”¹⁷ The Afghan war also provided al-Zawahiri, even more than bin Laden, with an occasion to rethink his own place in what he came to see as an ecumenic jihad against the “far enemy,” America.

Meanwhile, the division between the nationalist Islamists in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda continued to grow. Al-Zawahiri criticized his former colleagues and allies in the Muslim Brotherhood for engaging in electoral politics—because such activity gave tacit support to the notion that laws were made by human beings rather than directly, once, and forever by God; they were also in error to think that non-Muslim citizens of Egypt were equal to Muslims. In short, the position developed by al-Zawahiri was a recipe for the endless creation of enemies. Gerges summarizes this quick march to an intellectual and political dead-end: “They [al-Qaeda] seem to be making a last stand against an alien world, including Muslim reality and society, that does not fit into their narrow textualist reading of the sacred texts, one that is detached and divorced from that of the Muslim community.”¹⁸ By the time bin

Laden and al-Zawahiri declared war on America in their notorious 1998 pseudo-fatwa issued against the “Jews and Crusaders,” most national militants considered the move to be imprudent in the extreme, and further distanced themselves from al-Qaeda. The response by al-Zawahiri and bin Laden to Islamist criticism was to become even more abusive, which may remind students of the early Soviet Union of polemics between Stalin and Trotsky.

Such acrimony is, in fact, a symptom of a real problem for the Islamist militants. The *mujahid* (in terms of his own self-understanding) looks over his shoulder and sees nothing but infidels and apostates, *kafir*, in the very places in the Muslim world that he, by his own lights, is striving to protect. These *mujahadeen* see themselves as fighting on a frontier to protect a center that has no room for them. They are not protecting any particular piece of territory but, so to speak, the idea of a nonexistent and imaginary *ummah*: “they are besieged in a fortress they do not inhabit.”¹⁹ The symbol of an uninhabited fortress is the perfect expression of the pneumopathological aspect of militant pseudo-jihad: their spiritual journey is simply to fight, and dying is proof of success.

In December 2001, al-Zawahiri wrote a justification for the 9/11 attack: *Knights under the Prophet’s Banner*. The victory in Afghanistan, he said, occurred because the *mujahadeen* were instruments of God. It meant a recovery of the golden age of Islam. “Like their glorious ancestors,” writes Gilles Kepel, “the Afghan jihadists believed that they too had brought down one global superpower, and now these modern-day knights must recommit their efforts to wreaking havoc on the remaining one, the United States.”²⁰ This is why in their famous October 7, 2001, broadcast from the caves of Afghanistan they were dressed in “costumes that regularly appear on Egyptian

soap operas about the Prophet’s life.”²¹ Here, Western analysts might be reminded of Hitler’s fondness for Wagner’s operatic exuberance, including the *Götterdämmerung* vision of Valhalla.

The contents of al-Zawahiri’s text depicted ordinary Muslims as “passive, sickly, and devoid of conscience,” for which the only cure was an apocalyptic jihad. Then, following the exemplary attacks on the far enemy, “some unspecified process would lead to the collapse of ‘apostate’ regimes and the creation of Islamic states. These states would form the core of an Islamic caliphate that would eventually rule the planet.”²² A second pamphlet published a year later, also in a London Arabic-language newspaper, was called *Al-wala wal-bava*, “Loyalty and Separation.” It argued that Muslims could befriend only other Muslims. Al-Zawahiri quoted Ibn Taymiyya and Qutb, but the message was simpler even than the simplifications of Qutb: resentment at the humiliation of Muslims is justified, and al-Qaeda will continue to evoke a mighty revenge.

We know well enough from events post-9/11 what this meant: in May 2002, in Casablanca; in October 2002, in Bali; in March 2004, in Madrid; in July 2005, in London; to say nothing of the thousands of other terrorist attacks by what are now referred to as al-Qaeda affiliates. Al-Zawahiri’s promise was not idle. “Al-Qaeda, in a sense,” writes Kepel, “has become a franchise, with bin Laden merely the logo for small-time operations managed by independent micro-entrepreneurs working under license to purvey terrorism.”²³ A more technical description is that al-Qaeda is a network. The great advantage of a network, as white supremacist militiaman Louis Beam put it, is that its people “know what they have to do.” So do Osama’s, even when they ignore operational security, as

did the 7/7 attackers in London, or were simply incompetent, as were the terrorists involved in the botched attack two weeks later. They know what they have to do because they subscribe to an animating narrative, not because bin Laden or al-Zawahiri gives them an order. This aspect of a network explains why al-Qaeda is a social-capital-intensive organization: its operatives trust one another because they participate in the same imaginative story.

Even if the operational capability and strategic threat of terrorist networks is in decline, the practical question remains: How does one kill a network? Whatever practical direct action is needed, in this context the contribution of political philosophy is to analyze the master narrative that animates the terrorist network and, in the case of al-Qaeda, to describe its pneumopathological core.

More specifically: the animating story of the salafists is a lie, and they know it. This is the core of the salafist pneumopathology. In the most commonsense way, Prime Minister Blair made this point in a July 26, 2005, news conference—in fact he made the point several times, though it is not clear the press understood what he was saying.²⁴ First, he said, the salafist terrorists were *not* like the IRA. Their demands “are just none that any serious person could negotiate on, and that’s just an end on it.” Second, the problem is “not just their methods, but their ideas.” He repeated this several times. Third, “it is just a lie when they say that people have got no option but to engage in terrorism. They do have an option.” And fourth, it is particularly foolish to think that “if we did something different, these people would react in a different way.”

These are not the words of a political philosopher but of a pragmatic and politically responsible British prime minister. Quite frankly, they are accurate. The terrorist killers know that killing the innocent

is wrong. They are not psychopaths who cannot distinguish good and evil or innocence and guilt. That is why they create rationalizations that, to a commonsensical politician such as Tony Blair, are nonsense.

A second way of dealing with the salafist story is rather like the advice of St. Thomas Aquinas to his fellow Dominicans as they trudged across the Pyrenees to deal with heretics (i.e., Muslims) and Jews in Spain: argue on the basis of scripture. This has in fact been done in bin Laden’s backyard, at Sanaa in Yemen, by a very brave Islamic judge and scholar, Hamoud al-Hitar. He made a deal with some jailed terrorists: if he could show them on the basis of the Koran that terrorism was wrong, they would stop. If they could show him they were right, they could get out of jail. By and large, according to a *Christian Science Monitor* report in February of 2005, al-Hitar has persuaded former al-Qaeda to renounce violence and get a job.²⁵ As a longer-term strategy there is the problem of the historicity of the Koranic text to deal with. A discussion of this problem, however, would take us far beyond the space of a short article.

There are a few conclusions to be made, and not just a list of problems. First, terrorist consciousness, however unusual it seems to be, and however violent and, indeed, evil are the actions that result from it, is not for those reasons unintelligible. Nor is it understandable only from the outside, as a threat to the United States and to the West, a response to globalization, or anything analogous. Such an interpretation can account for terrorism on Western terms; undoubtedly, terrorism poses a genuine political problem that will remain important for the foreseeable future. In addition, however, terrorist consciousness, which is expressed in the texts that are meant to interpret their acts, is the intelligible expression of a universal human experience. Political disorder in the modern Islamic

world has evoked a genuine horror at the structure of reality. From this experience arises a desire to escape reality or transform it along the lines of a second reality more congenial to the pneumopathological terrorist imagination. We in the West have encountered such forms of consciousness before in the great ideological movements of the last two centuries, and we shall no doubt see it again after the last member of al-Qaeda has been killed, or retired, or converted to peaceful Sufi mysticism.

1. Colin Freeze, “Terrorists are Perpetual Threat, CSIS says.” *Globe and Mail*, 10 September 2005, A12.
2. Bell, *The Martyr’s Oath: The Apprenticeship of a Homegrown Terrorist* (Mississauga, Ont.: Wiley, 2002), 170. On the other hand, as Olivier Roy reports, the families of the al-Qaeda killers “were more ashamed than proud.” *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 51.
3. I have discussed much of the intellectual history in *New Political Religions: An Analysis of Modern Terrorism* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004).
4. Stratfor, “Making Sense of the Post-Sept. 12 ‘Islamist’ Terminology.” *Daily Terrorism Brief*, 28 October 2005. Available at: <http://www.stratfor.com> (28 October 2005). See also Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 112, 254.
5. *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 85ff.
6. On the concept of “second reality,” see, for example, Eric Voegelin “On Debate an Existence,” in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. 12, *Published Essays, 1966–1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: LA, 1990), 36–51. See also “Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History,” *ibid.*, 115–133; and “The Eclipse of Reality,” in *Collected Works*, vol. 28, *What is History? And Other Late Unpublished Writings*, eds., Thomas Hollweck and Paul Caringella (Baton Rouge: LA, 1990), 111–162.
7. For an extensive analysis, see Jerry Day, *Voegelin, Schelling and the Philosophy of Historical Existence* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 24–25; 33–36.
8. Yassin Masharbash, “What al-Qaida Really Wants,” *Spiegel Online*, 12 August 2005. url:<http://www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,36944,00.html> (17/08/2005); Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 4–5.
9. Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 57.
10. Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 43; Walter Laqueur, “Postmodern Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 5 (1996), 31; Christopher C. Harmon, *Terrorism Today* (London: Cass, 2000), 190.
11. For an account of the asymmetric war thesis that adapts it (in my view, erroneously) so as to include the perspective of the Islamist militants see: Haim Malka, “Must Innocents Die? The Islamic Debate over Suicide Attacks,” *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring 2003). Available at: <http://www.meforum.org> (7 November 2005). Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005).
12. Brian Jenkins, “International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict,” in *International Terrorism and World Security*, eds. David Carlton and Carlo Shaerf (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 15.
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14. Roger Scruton, “The Political Problem of Islam,” *The Intercollegiate Review*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Fall 2002), 5.
15. Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 179.
16. Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 29–30; 65–66.
17. Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 84.
18. Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 113.
19. Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 289.
20. Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*. Tr. Pascale Ghazaleh. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 74.
21. Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, 75.
22. Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, 98.
23. Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds*, 141; Roy, *Globalized Islam*, 323.
24. Available at: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page7999.asp> (28 July 2005).
25. Available at: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0204/p01s04-wome.htm> (28 May 2005).