Africa and the Middle East
The Expanding Threat of Terrorism

I thank the Subcommittee for inviting me to speak on Islamic fundamentalism. This is a subject that is fast becoming the most important, captivating, wrenching and dramatic geopolitical story not just of the present but for the next century. For what we are witnessing is a drama being played out throughout the world with real life and death consequences for entire nations and peoples.

By way of background, I am an author, journalist, documentarian and specialist in the areas of terrorism and the Middle East. I am the author of four books dealing with U.S. national security and the Middle East, have written extensively for national publications and newspapers during the past 15 years, and have served in various journalist positions, including correspondent for U.S. News and World Report and CNN.

For the last two years, my field of specialty has been radical Islamic extremist networks around the world and, in particular, their links throughout the United States. This investigation has taken me to more than 25 foreign countries as well as to more than 200 American cities, municipalities, and communities. Together with my colleagues, I have collected more than 150,000 documents, records, videos, tapes, manuscripts and publications, and reports dealing with the issue of radical Islamic fundamentalism, constituting probably one of the largest archives of primary radical Islamic intelligence material in the West. These documents include tens of thousands of telephone toll records of the World Trade Center bombing defendants, internal Hamas reports, maps of Sudanese terrorist training camps, hundreds of hours of videos showing clandestine radical Islamic terrorist conferences and recruitment sessions (many taking place in the U.S. unbeknownst to U.S. law enforcement authorities), and thousands of original Islamic terrorist manuals and missives.

During the past two years I, together with several colleagues, have conducted hundreds of interviews with officials in U.S., European and Middle Eastern law enforcement and intelligence. Perhaps even more important have been more than 700 interviews conducted with Muslim citizens (both secularist and religious), Islamic militants and radical fundamentalists, *mujahideen* leaders and terrorist chieftains in North Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States. In addition, I have been to more than two dozen radical Muslim conferences, held abroad and in the United States.

Last November, in the first of a series of journalistic projects resulting from my investigation, I served as the executive producer and correspondent for a PBS documentary entitled *Jihad in America*. The film documented the hitherto unknown infrastructure of radical Islamic networks on American soil featuring leaders of the most militant movements in the world today, including of Hamas, Hiz'b al-Tahrir (the Islamic Liberation Party), the Sudanese National Islamic Front, Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Palestine Islamic Jihad, Egypt's Gamaa Islamiyah and others.

The broad emergence of militant Islamic fundamentalism can be considered an extension of the struggle for the heart and soul of Islam, a faith that is the most vibrant, fascinating and energetic religion in the world today. Yet, Islam is currently being wrenched by existential confrontations pitting modernists versus fundamentalists and secularists versus militants in a duel-to-the-death challenge over mankind's most primal competition: to determine whose God will reign supreme—which is only a guise for a more worldly competition of whose state will reign supreme.

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At the very outset of my statement, I would like to state that militant Islamic fundamentalism is not synonymous with Islam the religion. The overwhelming majority of the world's more than one billion Muslims do not condone violence or militancy. It is only a small minority of Muslims who are militant. Moreover, throughout its history, Islam has expressed itself in a wide variety of trends, from a pragmatic and tolerant inward-looking approach to a militant one. It is, therefore, vitally important to point out that contemporary Islamic groups that claim to represent pure fundamental theological doctrine of Islam are merely advancing a modern totalitarian interpretation of Islamic theology.

The issue facing the West today is not whether to "declare war on Islam" as some U.S. academics and fundamentalist spokesmen have characterized the debate over U.S policy; rather, the issue is whether the U.S. will recognize that what fuels violence and extremism is the militant's interpretation of Islam. And understanding the militant's interpretation of Islam—unhindered by the prism of our liberal Judeo-Christian values or the deliberate obfuscation by militants preying upon Western naiveté—

is the only way U.S. policy makers and the public will ever be able to arrive at an effective and viable solution to this dilemma.

My film, *Jihad in America*, is only a snapshot of a far more extensive phenomenon in the U.S., which is the increasing support networks of radical Islamic fundamentalists within the United States dedicated to advancing extremist goals and militant agendas. As a deliberate corollary, the militants' objectives also include the destruction of any embryonic roots of Islamic secularism and reformism in the United States. Radical Islamic networks now constitute the primary domestic—as well as international—security threat facing the FBI and other law enforcement agencies.

On a more visceral level, the documentary shows beyond any doubt the true, yet often hidden, agenda of Islamic militants. In contrast to the wholly disingenuous statements of Islamic radical propagandists (several of whom are in this hearing room today and who tried last November to suppress broadcast of my film), the documentary shows the unvarnished and unfiltered views of the world's senior radical Islamic fundamentalist theologians and military leaders. Their views express an unmitigated rejection of the West and its systems of secularism, pluralism, democracy and the separation of church and state, as well as unremitting hatred of Jews, Christians, moderate Muslims and any thing or institution that is perceived to be a surrogate of the West.

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Finally, and perhaps most important and relevant to today's hearing, is the fact that the film shows that radical Islamic fundamentalism has become such a widespread development that it cannot be delineated anymore by conventional geographical or national boundaries. Although there is no evidence that any type of pyramidal Islamic fundamentalist hierarchy exits such as with the old style Comintern or Politburo structures, the myriad Islamic fundamentalist movements share a basic agenda in promoting the resurrection of early doctrinal Islam. Even thoughh there is no formal collaborative structure, the groups that exist under the Islamic fundamentalist umbrella often collaborate on an ad hoc basis, sharing resources such as support networks, money, *da'wah* (Islamic missionary propaganda), recruitment, military training, and even weapons acquisition.

Today, radical Islamic fundamentalist spokesmen attuned to the negative connotations of "fundamentalism" shrewdly try to avoid the term. Some Islamic groups in the Washington area go further, asserting that mere use of the term "fundamentalist" is "biased" against Muslims and that any discussion of radical Islamic movements is inherently "racist". The group leading this intimidation campaign against anyone who criticizes the militants is a Washington-headquartered organization called the Council on American Islamic Relations, known as CAIR.

In fact, CAIR, according to federal law enforcement sources and internal documents, is a radical Islamic fundamentalist front group for Hamas. The executive director of CAIR, Nihad Awad, served for several years as a senior official of the Hamas support group in Texas called the Islamic Association for Palestine. That group has been designated by federal law enforcement as one of Hamas' headquarters in the U.S. today and has been involved in promoting Hamas terrorism. CAIR, the stepchild of the Islamic Association for Palestine, was created in 1993 from radical Islamic fundamentalist "donations," including money believed to have come from traditional sources of Hamas funding. In Washington, CAIR, besides rationalizing Hamas terrorist attacks and criticizing negotiations with the "Zionist" entity, has hosted, sponsored or arranged visits and press conferences of leading Islamic fundamentalist militant officials from the Sudan, Malaysia and Jordan, who have articulated rabid anti-Semitic and anti-Christian views. One visiting Islamic fundamentalist leader from Jordan, whom CAIR hosted in Washington last year and arranged to meet staffers from the Senate and State Department, is on record in a speech to fellow radical fundamentalists in the U.S. as encouraging Islamic militants to kill any Jew they see in Jordan.

It is important that this Subcommittee make fully aware to the American public, and in particular to the Muslim public, that CAIR and other groups like it have a hidden agenda in promoting a radical vision of Islam that has nothing to do with the essence of Islam. The purpose of groups like CAIR is to legitimize the activities of Islamic militants and to neutralize opposition to Islamic extremism.

Seif Ashmawi, the Egyptian-born U.S. publisher of the Voice of Peace and an opponent of radical Islamic fundamentalism, told me in an interview: "Groups like CAIR do not really represent Islam or American Muslims; they only claim to represent them. In reality, these groups represent only extremists. Yet no one seems willing to challenge them, to demand who funds them, to force them to reveal their true militant beliefs and their political connections to radical terrorist groups. Perhaps because we Muslims are such a new community in the United States, you cannot expect us to fight it out publicly; but what surprises me is how gullible the American media and government are. How can you blindly accept their statements? If you cannot detect an extremist group in your backyard, how can you ever hope to contain extremists in the Middle East?"

Mr. Ashmawi's comments are important for this Subcommittee to ponder. His point about deception is one that goes to the heart of understanding the authentic agenda of the militants.

Militant Islamic fundamentalists seek to impose 7th and 8th century doctrinal Islam (as revealed by Allah to the Prophet Mohammed and contained in the Islamic Holy Book, called the Qu'ran) upon contemporary life. For these fundamentalists, original Islam must be reinstituted throughout the Muslim and non-Muslim world, regardless of the circumstances of the modern world or the evolutionary changes in Islam that have occurred in its 1400 year old history. Although there are some fundamentalists who accept the notion of pluralism and accommodate changes in history, militant fundamentalists categorically reject the notion of religious diversity.

In 20th century Islamic history, the failure of Arab nationalism, corruption of Arab elites, and repression of authoritarian regimes increasingly drove the masses to embrace Islam as a refuge and a source of comfort. Because secularism had been imposed from above by illegitimate authoritarian modern regimes, the public and intelligentsia overwhelmingly rejected it. (In the West, the opposite occurred, as secularism became a mass movement; religion was rejected because it was identified with the ruling elites.) The final, and perhaps most important, factor perpetuating the legitimacy of militant Islam has been the absence of a religious "reformation" in Islam unlike the experiences of Catholicism (St. Augustine) and the Protestant Church (Luther). One of the major problems faced by Muslim reformers is that their brand of moderate Islam is categorically rejected by leading traditional Islamic theologians.

The West is not prepared to meet this threat. Modern democracies are unwilling to engage in the type of conflict that characterized religious wars of previous ages. Nor should they. Failure to perceive the nature of the conflict stems from the Western tendency to errantly apply a Judeo-Christian frame of reference to Islam. Christianity and Judaism, in their history, have undergone reformation, separating church from state and giving up the use of violence in the name of God.

Militant fundamentalist Islam, by contrast, has not yet undergone the same historical evolution. In militant Islam, there is no separation between mosque and state, between the realms of the sacred and the secular, or between religion and politics. Rather, they are all one and the same. Which means, in practice, that the militant Islamic cleric is also a political and military leader, and his mosque may serve as a venue for violent *jihad* activities.

Observing militant Islam in Afghanistan or the Middle East, citizens of democracies do recognize the role of religion in the conflict. But when they view the same phenomenon within their own society, bound by their Western democratic values and morals, as well as by their legal principles, they fail to understand the crux of the problem: *any* religion, when abused by militant fundamentalists, may serve not only as a source, but as an

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organizational framework for violence and aggression in the name of God. This is the case with aberrant Jewish militant groups that have engaged in violence over the past few years, with the Branch Davidian Christian fundamentalist cult, and with militant anti-abortion activists. This is also the case with the more popular militant Islamic movements.

To some observers, Islamic fundamentalism appears as a religious phenomenon in that it demands restoration of the fundamentals of faith. But in reality it is an all-encompassing political movement as well, demanding: (1) re-creation of the Muslim Empire known as the *Khalifa*; (2) absolute

rejection of Western systems and values such as capitalism, Marxism, democracy and separation of church and state; (3) re-imposition of the old social and religious order in accordance with the *shaari'ah* (Islamic law), under which second-class citizenship would be formalized for women and non-Muslims; and (4) inalterable rejection of the West.

Politically shrewd fundamentalist spokespeople explain away the manifestation of Islamic extremist movements as simply a reaction to Israeli and Arab repression. The reality is that Islamists articulated their rage at the West before the Jewish state was established. Then, as now, they viewed central principles of American society as anti-Islamic. Egyptian Muslim fundamentalist ideologue Sayid Qutb, recognized as an architect of "Islamic revivalism," wrote a piece about the West in the Egyptian cultural magazine *al-Risala* in October, 1946: "…All these Westerners are the same: a rotten conscience, a false civilization…How I hate these Westerners, how I despise all of them without exception." Qutb later visited the U.S., which only reaffirmed his hatred of Western culture as well as his racism: "[The American's] favorite music is Jazz, " Qutb wrote in 1951. "This is the kind of music the Negroes invented to satisfy their primitive inclinations…it rouses their animal instincts…."

During the past 16 years, radical Islamic fundamentalist movements have proliferated beyond the local regions and cities where they had been simmering since the 1940's. From their bases in the Middle East, these movements have spread into Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan and Nigeria, as well as into the U.S., Europe and large parts of the former Soviet Union.

Although portrayed in the media as a force that has developed in response to widespread poverty, repression and corruption in the Middle East, the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism is a far more complex phenomenon whose origins and agenda transcend these temporal conditions. Islam itself has 72 fiercely independent sects.

Among Islamic fundamentalists there are differences of opinion. Some groups, like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, have been represented by "legitimate" political parties within their countries. Other groups like the Hizbollah (Party of God) in Lebanon, the Hiz'b alTahrir (Islamic Liberation Party) in Jordan, and the FIS in Algeria have opted to field representatives for their respective parliaments while continuing to carry out violent political intimidation in pursuit of their Islamist agendas. Still another variety of fundamentalist groups, such as the underground Gamaa Islamiyah in Egypt and the Palestinian Hamas, eschew all official political participation as religiously illegal. Their political strategy consists of winning over the hearts and minds of Muslims at the street level, while simultaneously waging holy war against the "infidels."

Yet the bottom line shared by all militant fundamentalists, regardless of their diversity, is the centrality of Islam in serving as an all-encompassing way of life; its adherents seek to enforce the rule of the *shaari'ah* which, according to their own official proclamations, rejects secular systems and culture as well as any political entity perceived as a "surrogate" of the West.

The tenets of militant Islamic fundamentalism not only mandate adherence to a strict religious lifestyle, but provide "Islamic" views on politics, economics, social behavior, personal conduct and nearly everything else in daily life. Some militant Islamic fundamentalists openly demand confrontation with any non-Muslim or secular system until it is superseded or replaced. Others state that they are willing to accept the West if the West "accepts and respects" Islam.

From the Western perspective, the Islamist agenda has provoked a major debate. Can those—such as the FIS in Algeria—who claim that they are committed to "democracy" be trusted once they acquire power? Or are they simply manipulating the system in order to take over and impose their Islamist views on everyone else in society? Is the answer simply to allow Islamists to take office and let them face the wrath of an angry population if they are not responsive to the needs of the people?

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Although there are no simple answers to these questions, the fact remains that the common denominator among all radical Islamic fundamentalist movements is that they draw no dividing line between the realms of the sacred and the secular, between politics and religion, between church and state—the basic principles of Western culture and modern life. Radical Islamic fundamentalists see the West as a threat to Islam and as part of an ongoing international conspiracy, stretching back to the Crusades, to subjugate and repress Islam.

The bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 was a deliberate act of political violence, motivated by an ideology that justified such violence as a necessary response to "Western imperialism" and "aggression" against Islam. Fundamentalist literature and dogma is replete with calls to overthrow the West. Last year, at a conference at Wembley Arena in London, more than 9000 Muslim militants demanded "death to Jews" and an end to the "evils" of British government, democracy and "Western conspiracies." In December, 1992, Kamal Helbawi, a militant Islamic leader originally from Egypt and now based in Pakistan had the following to say to a crowd of 3000 fundamentalists in Oklahoma City, OK:

> O Brothers, the Palestine cause is not a conflict of borders and land only. It is not even a conflict over human ideology. And not over peace. Rather it is an absolute clash of civilizations, between truth and falsehood, between two conducts: one Satanic, headed by Jews and their conspirators, and the other religious, carried by Hamas, the Islamic people in general and the Islamic movement in particular.

Fundamentalist leaders proudly proclaim—and they do not exaggerate—that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world including the West. In fact, fundamentalists have been particularly successful in recruiting new generations of disaffected and impoverished Muslim youth.

The Muslim population of the world today stands at more than one billion—the largest of any religious group. In many parts of Africa, Asia and the former Soviet republics, Islam has established itself as the official state religion; in various Western countries, such as France and England, Islam is the second largest religion. When this demographic phenomenon is added to the mix of political alienation and socio-economic deprivation, the result is a dangerously combustible mixture that can ignite at any time.

To be sure, resentment and hatred of the West is not rooted in an entirely mythical plot—the history of Christianity's and the West's attitude toward Islam during the past nine centuries is replete with dark periods of imperialism, repression, and attempted domination of the Islamic world. Yet, in 1995—eight-hundred ninety-seven years after the First Crusade—radical fundamentalists still believe in the existence of an ongoing Western "conspiracy" against Islam: the Western alliance between various Arab states and the U.S., the existence of Israel, the Western defeat of Saddam Hussein, unwillingness to intervene militarily to save Bosnian Muslims, the Israeli-PLO agreement, and even the proposed counter-terrorist legislation are all cited by fundamentalists as evidence of the West's desire to destroy Islam.

One of the core sources that fed the ranks and appetite of Islamic militant fundamentalists was the victorious *jihad* (holy war) launched by the *mujahideen* against the Soviet-imposed regime of Afghanistan. Ironically, it was largely U.S. aid (as well as that of Saudi Arabia and, to a far lesser extent, Iran) that made the military prowess of the holy warriors so brutally effective. But following the successful eviction of the Soviets, Iranian and Sudanese fundamentalist leaders have successfully redirected the rage of the newly-trained Islamic forces against a new enemy: Western "infidels."

In the West Bank and Gaza, Hamas has grown exponentially since the beginning of the *intifadah* in 1987. Feeding on the nationalist Palestinian rebellion, Hamas leaders have called for the killing of all Jews, the reunification of the Muslim *ummah* (Islamic nation) and the recreation of the Pan-Islamic state. In fact, Hamas sees itself as much larger than a nationalist religious movement fighting against Israel: Hamas leaders have declared that they see themselves as the vanguard of a worldwide Islamic fundamentalist rebellion against the West. Hamas, like other radical fundamentalists, has vowed never to compromise with Israel or the West.

The savagery of Hamas' atrocities against both Jews and brother Palestinians is infamous: victims are routinely mutilated and executed in the most ghastly ways possible; beheadings, strangulations, pouring of acid, burning of victims, cutting off limbs, and gouging out of eyes are just some of Hamas' imprints. The viciousness of the mutilations is not an accident; it is a reflection of the movement's fanaticism.

Hamas is not alone in spearheading violent attacks. The level of violence committed by other fundamentalist groups against Arab regimes, as well as the violent reprisals against the groups, have reached unprecedented proportions. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, parent organization to Hamas,

is deeply entrenched in many parts of society. In Upper Egypt, especially in the area near Asayut, fundamentalists control large chunks of Egyptian territory. Most alarmingly, some intelligence officials have raised serious questions about the degree to which fundamentalists have infiltrated various levels of Egyptian internal security services.

In Algeria, the rise of fundamentalism elicited a brutal government takeover, which many see as only short-lived. In 1992, the fundamentalist FIS was on the verge of gaining electoral control of the Algerian government. Despite the fact that it had professed a commitment to democracy, the question of whether it would have carried out that commitment has been the subject of a great debate in Middle Eastern and European political circles. Now, of course, it may be too late: the secularists took the reins of power in a military coup, and fundamentalist hatred of the present Algerian military government seems beyond peaceful accommodation in the long run. Assassinations in Algeria of "secularist" doctors, lawyers and scientists happen almost every week.

In Lebanon, the fundamentalist Hizbollah scored dramatic electoral victories in parliamentary elections in 1992. There, too, the Party of God (Hizbollah) has assiduously built a two-track system on its way to power: a terrorist network that attacks Israeli targets and a popular social-political-religious infrastructure consisting of schools, clinics, youth associations and sports leagues throughout southern Lebanon.

Across the Gulf, the Saudi Royal Family, in an effort to keep the dagger pointed in the opposite direction, provides hundreds of millions of petrodollars to radical fundamentalist movements in the Muslim World. Sudan, placed on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist nations in 1993, has become a de facto satellite of Iran, used both as a training base and as a conduit for money and weapons to radical Islamic groups throughout the world. Even in Jordan, now at peace with Israel, the Islamic Bloc openly sponsors Hamas.

Militant Islamic fundamentalists have now declared all-out war on their most bitter enemies: "secularist activists" and all those who would accept co-existence with the West. In Egypt, Algeria and Turkey, more than 200 prominent "secular" writers, journalists, doctors and intellectuals have been attacked and killed by fundamentalists in the past three years. Their crime? Advocacy of separation of church and state, a heresy reviled by Islamists as worthy of death. Sheikh Mahmud Taha, the 87-year old religious leader of a Sudanese Islamic movement that championed humanism and pluralism, was hung by the Sudanese regime for committing "apostasy" against Islam.

It is not difficult to see why Islamic fundamentalists have been able to exploit the near-total social breakdown in the Arab world. Radical fundamentalists thrive on social deprivation and mass economic deterioration, thus providing convenient scapegoats: it is the fault of the evil West, of Christians, of democracy and capitalism, and, most importantly, of the despicable Jews who rule the world. At the same time, competing and possibly alternative ideologies such as nationalism, pan-Arabism, and Communism have been discredited one by one. These expressions, rarely heard unfiltered

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in the West, are rampant in fundamentalist sermons, lectures, publications, and videos in both the Middle East and the United States.

Yet the growth of fundamentalism is not merely rooted in economic frustration, nor is it limited to the lower economic strata. Two years ago, the Egyptian government busted a ring of militant fundamentalists who had carried out murderous terrorist attacks. Those arrested were engineers, lawyers and doctors. Perhaps even more significant is the growing internationalization of the Islamic fundamentalist network in an increasingly interconnected clandestine infrastructure.

Status in Africa

Islamic radicalism has not, in any large measure, taken hold among the 265 million Muslims who constitute one fourth to one-third of Africa's population. This is due to a variety of deep-rooted reasons—economic, sociological, and ecological—all of which seem to predict that this will be the case in the future as well. The continent does not seem to be the platform for any violent Islamic resurgence. The two big waves of Islamic revival in the 1980s were the emergence of Islamic Iran and the victory of Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan, both of which shook the Arab and Muslim world, but have left Africa virtually untouched.

However, one should not be too complacent. Africa must be seen not as a continent, but as an entity constituted of very different parts. Taking a closer look at each of these constituent parts, one may find some very serious causes for worry—signs of embryonic growth of militant Islam.

What are the general characteristics of those areas which do pose a threat? Geographically we are talking primarily about North Africa, from east to west (including the Sudan). Demographically it is mainly the non-black population. Ethnically it is not only Arab Muslims in North Africa, but also Lebanese Shi'ites in West Africa and some Indian Muslims in South Africa. Religiously it is primarily Sunni Muslims, with the exception of Lebanese Shi'ite Muslims in Central Africa.[1]

Equally important to understanding the general characteristics of these countries that are susceptible to radical Islam is a familiarity with the specifics of each potentially dangerous locale. For many of these same reasons—geography, ethnicity, religion, politics, and history—each country faces its own unique situation, and often times dilemma, countering the threat of Islamic fundamentalism burgeoning on its home territory.

There are reports of the emergence of a new Shi'ite-oriented fundamentalist Islamic organization, Qiblah (meaning praying towards Mecca). There is also solvent information that the Iranian embassy in South Africa is active in Muslim communities in Johannesburg. On the other hand, one of Ramzi Ahmed Yousef's co-conspirators, Ishtiyaq Parker, a Sunni Muslim of Indian origin, is a member of the Indian Muslim community of South Africa. According to recent reports, this is a very radical community in whose mosques radical accusations were made about Parker, calling him a traitor to Islam for handing Ramzi Ahmed Yousef over to U.S. authorities.

Lebanese Shi'ites have been in the business and economic lives of Central African countries. Members of the Muslim communities there, however, have been involved with Hizbollah for some time. In 1985 one of them was the distributor of timers and detonators for later terrorist acts, such as the French UTA plane blown up over Niger in September 1989. We do not have information on more recent terrorist attacks, but Hizbollah is no longer a Shi'ite Lebanese based organization as we knew it in the past. Rather, it has become an international terrorist organization with communities and operatives on five continents: North America, South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. Because of this, Hizbollah operatives in Central Africa may emerge at any wholly unpredictable moment to endanger Hizbollah targets.

Sudan, under the spiritual and practical leadership of the Sheikh Hasan al-Turabi, remains one of the most dangerous terrorist regimes, not only in Africa, but in the entire Muslim world. Sudan, sponsored by Iran, managed to acquire some support from Iraq and has turned out to be the center of *mujahideen* networks and activists who were forced to leave Pakistan. It is also the training and logistical headquarters for *mujahideen* wherever they fight in the 1990's (Egypt, Kashmir, Bosnia, Palestine, the Philippines, and Algeria) and for militant Islamic opposition groups throughout the entire Arab Muslim world. The PAIC (Popular Arab and Islamic Conference) is an organization which Turabi created to serve his ambitions to lead the Sunni world of Islam and to substitute for the conservative Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) led by Saudi Arabia. It convened last week for its third convention[2]. As in the first two delegates, this conference too united over the anti-Western, anti-Christian ideology targeting primarily the United States and its allies. Scores of terrorist organizations and militant groups—primarily Muslim—participated, but strangely enough even some Christian groups were invited. Reports from the conference are underway. It is very important to recall in this respect the emerging role of Turabi's Sudan in the second plot of The World Trade Center conspiracy, in which members of the Sudanese delegation to the United Nations were apparently directly involved with one of the leading perpetrators, another Sudanese, Siddig Ibrahim Siddig Ali. Above and beyond that, new information strongly suggests that the roots of the conspiracies in Pakistan and the Philippines reveal a Sudanese role in the WTC bombing. There are also leads pointing to the involvement of Usama bin Laden, the ex-Afghan Saudi *mujahideen* supporter now taking refuge in the Sudan.

Today, Sudan serves as host and provides training and sanctuary to militant Islamic groups such as Palestine Islamic Jihad and Hamas. Both groups have also received weapons and partial funding from the Sudan. Hamas terrorists who have fled Gaza and the West Bank are known to receive full support in the Sudan. One Hamas leader, Sheikh Muhammad Siyyam, is now headquartered in the Sudan. Another senior Hamas leader, Mousa Abu Marzuk, has been known to travel frequently to the Sudan. According to U.S. and European intelligence services, there are at least one dozen training camps for such terrorists. Iranian support for other Islamic insurgent military camps has also been confirmed by U.S. intelligence. European and U.S. intelligence officials have found that Sudanese diplomatic missions have been used increasingly to provide material support to indigenous radical Islamic movements. Sudanese diplomatic passports have been given to known terrorists—both Islamic and secular—for international travel.

Last September, in an effort to test the assurances of Sudanese officials that they would investigate all reports of terrorist camps on their soil, the U.S. Ambassador provided proof to Sudanese Foreign Ministry officials of a large terrorist base at the Merkhiyat Popular Defense camp, northwest of Khartoum. But the Foreign Ministry ignored the information and never responded to the Ambassador.

If there was ever any question about Turabi's view of Islamic terrorism, it was answered by his comments in October following the deadly suicide Hamas attack on a downtown Tel-Aviv bus, which killed 22 persons: Turabi praised the attack calling it "honorable."

When Turabi visited the United States in 1992—and was hosted by several American front groups—he secretly met with Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman to coordinate the training of demobilized *mujahideen* warriors from Afghanistan. According to intelligence officials, both men agreed that Sudanese camps would accommodate new warriors from the Gamaa Islamiyah, who would train in the Sudan for infiltration into Egypt. Sheikh Abdul Rahman himself, before moving to Brooklyn in 1990, used Sudan as a temporary headquarters.

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In interviews with Western journalists and before sympathetic academicians, Turabi denies that he is anti-democratic, that he supports terrorism, or that his regime engages in any human rights violations. Amnesty International, however, has found that the Sudanese regime is a flagrant violator of human rights. Its recently published report, "The Tears of Orphans," is a chilling documentation of a massive pattern of political imprisonment, torture, and execution of large sections of the population deemed to be "opponents" of the regime. To quote from the opening chapter:

Anyone suspected of opposition to the government or its policies is at risk of arrest. This is as true in the major cities and rural areas of northern Sudan as it is in the war zones. Displaced southerners, refugees, members of Muslim religious orders that do not conform to the government's interpretation of Islam, lawyers, members of the military, women protesting at the cost of living, students protesting at changes in their allowances, trade unionists, political activists, journalists, foreign nationals, musicians, artists, and many others have been detained. Some have subsequently been convicted of political offences at unfair trials; the majority have simply been held without charge for weeks, months and sometimes years.

Year after year, detainees report experiencing or witnessing torture in "ghost houses " and security offices. Some have died as a result. The authorities claim they take a firm stand against torture and ill-treatment, but the reported pattern of beatings, burnings, harsh physical exercises and grotesque forms of humiliation remains consistent.

One of Turabi's Islamic soul mates is Rashid al-Ghannoushi, leader of the militant Islamic Tunisian fundamentalist group, al-Nahdah. He lives in exile in London, having been sentenced to death in Tunis for his alleged role in orchestrating lethal terrorist attacks in which one American was killed. He travels on both a Sudanese passport (under the name of Muhammad Said) and an Iranian passport.

Ghannoushi, in interviews with Western journalists, has repeatedly affirmed his commitment to "democracy," "human rights," "pluralism" and "tolerance." Recently, a Wall Street Journal article referred to Ghannoushi as one of Islam's new generation of "reformers." The reason Ghannoushi has assiduously cultivated such a moderate image is that his only hope of gaining power is through expressing to the West a commitment to "democracy"—one of the sure ways of eliciting Western sympathy and support. Besides, being out of power, Ghannoushi has nothing to lose and everything to gain by affirming his belief in democracy and pluralism. Whether he is sincere in this commitment is another story. A closer inspection of Ghannoushi's statements in Arabic to closed Islamic conferences, held primarily in the West, show that Ghannoushi's real views are diametrically different than the image he projects to the West.

Let me cite just a few of Al-Ghannoushi's statements made at radical Islamic conferences.

Three years ago, Ghannoushi appeared at a conference in Chicago sponsored by the Islamic Committee for Palestine, a Tampa, Florida based support organization for the notorious Palestinian terrorist group, Islamic Jihad. At this conference, which featured leaders of radical Islamic movements from around the globe, Ghannoushi made this statement:

The Zionist movement does not only target Palestine. It does not only target Arabs and Muslims. It targets the entire world. It targets goodness. It targets the entirety of positive values that have crystallized in humanity. This Zionist movement confronts not only Muslims, but all humanity, and all its values of truth and goodness, that humanity has produced in its history, and the values of the family and solidarity, all these values are threatened by the Zionist project. There is no doubt about this. And Zionism drives all these Western societies into division and disintegration, and finishes off whatever values of religion have remained in this humanity. Every evil in the world, the Zionists are behind it. This is no exaggeration. There are so many evils in this world, behind which are the Children of Israel.

At another radical Islamic conference in 1989, held in Kansas City, Ghannoushi was one of the top speakers alongside actual Hamas terrorists who regaled the Islamic crowd with details of Hamas executions and operations. That Ghannoushi was invited to serve as a featured speaker at this Hamas convention—at which actual would-be terrorists were recruited to carry out operations against Israelis—indicates the mutual constellations of interests between Ghannoushi's al-Nahdah, Hamas and other radical groups. Ghannoushi made the following comments at this conference:

> O brother and sister *mujahideen*, I salute you and transmit to you greetings from your brothers in Tunis, including those who are behind bars, imprisoned in the pastiew days following a tempestuous march of solidarity with the triumphant march of the people of the *intifadah*, in its second commemoration, and peace be upon you, and mercy of Allah, and his blessing.

> The Islamic Ummah: Once again it embarks upon the salvation of humanity, confronting the Zionist project in Palestine, seeking to save the civilization of mankind, the salvation of the Islamic Ummah. Humanity has surrendered to the Zionist project today, and there is no hope for the civilization of man, there is no hope for goodness and mercy and justice except that the vanguards of the Islamic Ummah lift away the damage forever.

> What you are embarking on is not just a regional project. It is not merely the liberation of one land of the many well-known lands. Rather, you are embarking on the salvation of man, by the salvation of Islam—the salvation of the civilization of humanity—because the Zionist project is a danger to all goodness in the entire world.

> And the Arab regimes have already shown their complete inability to embark on this immense project, because of the estrangement of the Arab regimes from the spirit of this Ummah, andirom its Islam, because their repressive political system has estranged them from the multitudes, and they [the regimes] have become allies of the enemies of Islam.

Although the last few months marked the success of the Egyptian military in accomplishing some major victories over militant terrorist organizations of Egypt, the Gihad and the Gamaa Islamiyah (primarily in the Cairo metropolitan area), the general clash between the regime and militant Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt has become much more serious. This very dangerous development is reflected in the fact that a half-year ago, the regime fumed for the first time against the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood, created in the late 1920's, for many years (and especially in the last decade) constituted the more conservative, mainstream Islamic force in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood has been gravitating toward extremism for several years now, culminating a half-year ago when some revealing facts showed that the Muslim Brotherhood colluded with the extremists, precipitating the government's turn against it. This shift indicates an escalation of the threat of militant Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt.

In the face of this development, the Egyptian regime is trying to acquire support from every constituency in Egypt, embracing both members and policies of the old-time nationalists and Nasserists. At the same time, the regime is attempting to court Iran by supporting its drive for nuclear capability, in the hope that Iran, in turn, will decrease its support of terrorist groups in

Egypt. Sufi Islam is another constituent group the regime is trying to encourage through support of its traditional organization, the Tariqas.[3]

To what extent the Egyptian regime succeeds in this third approach is a question to be determined in the future. In the meantime, it's more like running trains one against the other, or a brinkmanship policy. Egypt's approach seems to repeat the late President Sadat's strategy of pitting one group against the other, such as when he released Muslim Brotherhood activists from jail in order to fight his war against the Communists. Today, Mubarak seems to do the same by pitting the secular, nationalist, Nasserists against the militant Muslims. In Sadat's case, the Muslims he supported turned against him and assassinated him. Will that be Mubarak's fate, at the hands of the radical nationalists he supports now? One cannot know. In any case, the situation is getting graver every month.

In Morocco, though the regime succeeds, through harsh measures, in curbing threats and opposition, from time to time we do hear of terrorist outbursts. Some of these occurred in 1994 and 1995, targeting tourists and a Jewish synagogue in Casablanca. It is noteworthy that the operatives were members of the *mujahideen* network of Afghanistan who came back to Morocco, went to fight in Bosnia, and then again resumed, one of whom was arrested in Germany. This again shows the transfer of terrorist activities into Europe.

On January 21, 1995, Interior Ministers of North African Arab Muslim countries met in Tunis with European Interior Ministers from France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, to coordinate effective measures and policies against the fundamentalists in all of western North Africa.

In Algeria, the general trend is more difficult to ascertain. The regime seems to have consolidated its hold in the main cities, which constitute the majority of the secular, Westernized, and cultured population willing to fight against militant Islam. The army seems determined, together with the regime, to unleash violent, brutal, and merciless attack, especially since it appears supported by parts of the population that will not give in to militant Islam. Another important element of the Algerian regime's relative success is the determined, extremely significant encouragement it gets from France, including great financial support (e.g. one billion dollars to help pay its debts).

All of this seems to bear results in the fact that some opposition groups are now willing to conduct a dialogue with the regime. Such a dialogue, however, may only intensify the struggle because the militant groups will become desperate. Moreover, the FIS (considered the more conservative and moderate Islamic movement in Algeria), finding itself isolated, may join the more radical elements simply to preserve its power.

With respect to the situation in Algeria, one should always bear in mind that the biggest threat it poses to the West is that it exports the struggle to European countries; not only to France,

but also Belgium and Germany, where some Algerian militants operate. Belgium was threatened after the arrest of several GIA (Armed Islamic Group) operatives and the confiscation of some of their weapons.

At present, the debate about Algeria's future has the United States in the middle, with a slight preference given to the Islamic opposition forces.

As the number of those killed exceeds 40,000, with atrocities committed both by the military and by the Islamic opposition, it is hard to know which side is worse. Escalation of the fighting between the regime and its Islamic opponents has unleashed a murderous nightmare in Algiers. As the government ruthlessly attempts to wipe out its opponents, Islamic groups have increasingly assassinated intellectuals, secularists, journalists and feminists—including those who would not don the *hijab*. Who is responsible for this horrendous state of affairs?

> *As the Algerian government ruthlessly attempts to wipe out its opponents, Islamic groups have increasingly assassinated intellectuals, secularists, journalists and feminists—including those who would not don the* hijab.

To some democratic pundits, the fact that the regime twice canceled elections sure to result in Islamist takeovers is proof positive that the stolen elections lead directly to the radicalization of FIS and other groups.. This seemingly rational explanation is abetted by the exceptionally moderate-sounding statements of various FIS leaders—in particular, Anwar Haddam, FIS' American based representative. Haddam has, for the most part, routinely condemned acts of violence and terrorism while calling for a peaceful, democratic transition into power. (Haddam did not, however, condemn the recent car bombing in Algiers; in a speech he openly supported the attack, claiming it was aimed at a military target.) Haddam's stance, together with politically restrained comments made by other leaders of FIS, have led the United States to press the current Algerian regime for a negotiated settlement with the FIS.

Coincidentally, American citizens and diplomats have been spared by the GIA death squads, which have brutally killed European "infidels" as well as Algerian secularists and feminists. This is more than happenstance: GIA's decision not to attack American targets originated from the recognition that FIS needs to sustain American support; any attacks on Americans could turn the U.S. against FIS. This demonstrates that there may in fact exist some type of arrangement between FIS and GIA—a relationship both groups deny.

Although FIS contains moderate elements and officials—Anwar Haddam seems to be one of them—the fact remains that long before the canceled elections, FIS leaders had publicly expressed radical views, including exhortations to their followers to kill all Jews and Americans.

On January 12, 1991, Paris International Service reported from Algeria on a rally led by FIS leaders, Abassi Madani and All Belhaj.

> "A war in the Gulf could be considered a war against Algeria," said Abassi Madani at the Mosque of Kouba in the outskirts of Algiers yesterday. After having observed a long silence on the development of the situation in the Gulf, Belhaj and his colleague Madani came out to ask the 6,000 loyal supporters gathered for the prayer, as well as all the FIS sympathizers, to take action. "To the question of what to do at the critical moment, the answer is simple: Attack U.S. and Jewish interests anywhere in the world. In attacking Saddam, the Americans and their allies aim at depriving the Muslims of the Iraqi military potential, useful for the forthcoming decisive war which the Muslims will wage against the Jews," said All Belhaj, referring to and once again interpreting the Koran as he wishes.

In August 1990, Abassi Madani spoke to Algerian journalists about the position of the FIS on the Gulf War. Madani claimed:

> What is taking place in the Gulf is a new form of Crusades, in addition to the fact that it is a violation of Islamic sovereignty and an aggression against the sanctity of the two holy mosques, given the flagrant U.S. presence and the Saudi regime's hasty permission for it to be there. This regime has allowed itself to interfere in Allah's will and manage the country as if it owned it. It does not. It is Allah's land, the land of Islam, the land of all Muslims. Therefore, they had no right to open its doors and allow the Americans to bring their colonialist forces into it. Third, the Islamic nation cannot endure such regimes anymore, regimes which are trading in their countries and consecrating the borders, which were drawn by colonialism in order to split them. Therefore, the FIS is calling upon the Islamic nation as a whole to prepare itself as one to abolish such borders and topple such regimes whose collusion with colonialism has become flagrant.

All Belhaj also revealed these views on the Gulf War:

> The issue here is not merely the issue of the Gulf. The issue here is an issue between Islam and blasphemy. The struggle is now between Islam and the crusade. It is not a simple struggle over a piece of land. The enemies of Islam, including the rancorous crusaders and the cunning Zionists, whenever they see, brothers, Islamic peoples trying to return to Islam, they carry out such actions aimed at diverting the people's attention from the soundpath and their goal.

At a Tehran Conference on Palestine in October of 1991, an Iranian correspondent for Ettela'at asked Benazuz, another FIS leader, to explain the FIS view of the Madrid conference. Benazuz explained:

> We reject whatever the Arab rulers decide on Palestine, both in general and in particular, because they receive orders from the East and the West. We oppose all these solutions. Our initial principle is *jihad*. The problem of Palestine and of the Muslims can only be resolved by blood and weapons. Neither conferences nor the press can determine the fate of a nation. Pretending to shed tears over the Palestinian problem is only a waste of time.

As an indication of what FIS may have done had it assumed power, it is interesting to note that in July, 1990, after taking control of the city council of Constantine, FIS banned co-ed schooling and closed all bars and nightclubs. In the tourist resort of Tipaza the city council prohibited the wearing of shorts and swimming trunks in order to "preserve Arab-Islamic traditions and to defend public morality." In the city councils on the Oran coast, FIS banned, upon assuming power, "all cultural activities of no benefit to citizen's lives" as well as "all festivals organized in Oran towns it controls viewed as 'not conforming to the morals and precepts of Islam.'" This included banning a festival of modern Arabic music known as Rail—FIS instead substituted Islamic religious songs.

It is important to note that the fundamentalist movements are no "agents of change" in these developing societies. Rather, they advocate throwing society into the past—not toward modernity, development, or progress, but toward regression. While militant groups claim violation of their democratic rights, focusing on the "hijacking" of elections in Algeria, one must recall that democracy does not consist of elections alone. Instead, it is a cluster of values which, in addition to elections, includes pluralism, equality, freedom of speech and religion, and respect for one another's beliefs and views. Militant Islamic regimes conveniently stand for only one facet of democracy—elections—in order to advance their ability to take over. Such elections are not "free" in the Western sense of the word, but represent an oath of allegiance to Allah. Therefore, the West should not be misled or fooled into allowing militant Islamic groups to take over the reins of power by espousing only one element of the package, only later to apply a fundamentalist ideology which ignores the remaining aspects of democracy.

Another often-raised argument in favor of the militant Islamic movement is its commitment to the social needs of the community (for example: welfare, medical treatment, and education). While this commitment is appreciable one should not forget the attached ideological motivation. In that sense one could praise the European totalitarian movements such as Fascism and Nazism for a similar social commitment, as well as for the economic development they precipitated in their countries, restoring human pride to millions of unemployed citizens and recreating their societies during the 1920's and 1930's. If commitment to social needs were the only criteria by which we assess the contributions of a movement, notwithstanding attached values and ideology, then Nazism would have been considered no less positive a movement—an absurd thought.

Notes

1. Iranian involvement in and support of various Sunni Muslim states and societies such as the Sudan, communities in South Africa, and fundamentalist organizations in Egypt reflect the Iranian ecumenical approach toward the Sunni world of Islam rather than simply the existence of the Shi'ite population there.

2. The first was in April 1991, immediately after the Gulf War, the second in December 1993.

3. Sufi Islam is the Hasidic-type popular Islam which is primarily self-oriented and non-violent. It was organized in past centuries in communal organizations called Tariqa—something one could very generally compare in organization to Christian Orders.