

August 29, 2001

**THE WORLD'S GREATEST THREAT:
ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS
ARE ENERGY STOCKS A BUY?**

*War is a divine blessing, a gift bestowed upon us by God.
The cannon's thunder rejuvenates the soul.*
— Khomeini, September 1980

After a 22 year-old suicide bomber killed 21 Israelis at a Tel Aviv discotheque this past June, his father announced: "I am very happy and proud of what my son did, and frankly a bit jealous...I wish I had done it myself."

On the *Children's Club*, a Sesame Street-like children's program on Palestinian Television, a young boy sings: "When I wander into Jerusalem, I will become a suicide bomber."

Another repeatedly shown television clip calls on children to "Drop your toys. Pick up rocks." And in yet another, the words to a children's song go: "How pleasant is the smell of martyrs, how pleasant the smell of land, the land enriched by the blood, the blood pouring out of a fresh body."

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With the decline of Marxism-Leninism, fundamental Islam now stands as the world's leading anti-American ideology.

Islamic fundamentalists despise the West with fervor and near obsession. **Today, they are unquestionably our number-one enemy.** ¹

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The problem we face is not Islam (the religion) but fundamentalist Islam (an ideology). We can oppose the ideology, while respecting the faith; this is, after all, what many anti-fundamentalist Muslims do.

Many Arab supporters deny this claim. John Esposito, one of America's foremost interpreters of Islam, argues that fundamentalists pose no real threat to the West, for most of them are moved by a down-to-earth search for values, such as probity and individual responsibility.

The problem with this argument is that it ignores the fundamentalists' politically ambitious spirit: *Its adherents claim to know God's truth, and therefore have no need for elections. They freely impose their views on others and repress dissident voices. To improve their society, they turn it inside out; to spread their brand of virtue, they murder and terrorize.*

Like Stalinism or Nazism, fundamental Islam is an autocratic ideology.

Other pro-Arab supporters argue that fundamentalists merely resent current politics—America's imperialism, its tyrannical efforts to preserve its oil supplies. **But the truth is, that Islamic fundamentalists hate the entirety of our civilization.**

Most adherents of Islam detest Western culture. They dismiss our accomplishments ("Western civilization is not a civilization but a sickness") and threaten us ("The struggle between the emergent civilization of Islam and the decadent civilization of the West will occupy the center-stage of history for most of the 21st century.") **These people do not wish us well.**

A Tunisian convicted of setting off bombs in France in 1985-86, killing thirteen, declared to the French judge handling his case: "I do not renounce my fight against the West which assassinated the Prophet Muhammad... We Muslims should kill every last one of you [Westerners]."

Islamic fundamentalists have come to accept violence as a religiously sanctioned and legitimate political tool.

In order to understand the intensity of the Islamic threat, a brief review of the growth of Islamic radicalism is helpful.

The Origins of Islamic Radicalism

Camp David—The Death of Moderation:

Many Middle East historians look to the Camp David Accords as the turning point—the onset of the Islamic rejection of moderation.

The Camp David Accords initiated a violent backlash against those leaders in the Middle East that were seen as bowing to Western culture and tradition. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who had initiated the Accords with Israel in a dramatic departure from standard Arab policy, was among the first to feel the wrath of the newly formed Arabic religious identity in the form of Islamic jihad (holy war).

A statement issued in 1975, during the course of Sadat’s shift towards moderation, asserted that “the Palestinian problem must be taken out of the narrow regional framework and again placed on the broad Islamic horizon...The soil of Palestine in its entirety is usurped Islamic soil. For this reason, the jihad is obligatory and is in fact an individual obligation for the Muslims.”

This statement summarizes the shift that was taking place in the hearts of Islamic traditionalists. **Islamic extremists were no longer receptive to negotiating a peaceful coexistence with Western powers; instead, they had crystallized into a violent enemy of even any trace of intrusion of Western civilization in the Middle East.**

Sadat’s assassination in October of 1983, fueled the power of these extremist religious factions, and sparked a further radicalization of the growing fundamentalist resurgence.

His assassins were lionized. According to Islamic ideologues, Sadat’s assassins were not committing murder, but rather fulfilling a duty and obligation required of pious Muslims. In the words of Islamic radical, Sheik Khamis, “Sadat was against Islam...he deserved to be killed. Sadat’s main sin...was Camp David.”

The Iranian Revolution—The Onset of Islamic Insurgency:

In 1979, Islamic fundamentalists gained remarkable momentum with the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran.

Dissatisfied with the Westernization of the Shah, the masses revolted. In the Shah's place, they established a "true" Islamic state governed by Islamic belief and Sharia (Islamic law).

The impact of the Islamic Revolution was enormous, both in bolstering the power and popular opinion of Islamic revivalism and in heightening the political stature of Islam in the Middle East. Additionally, the establishment of the Islamic Republican party (IRP) in Iran gave Islam access to the world political arena, gaining more power, recognition and legitimacy with the installation of a religious-based regime.

The "Jihad Doctrine" – Religious Justification for Terrorism:

The years following Camp David, and the Iranian Revolution, saw the rise of a militant ideology that sanctioned the use of violence against Muslims and non-believers alike.

The "Jihad Doctrine" allowed radical Islamic movements to legitimize violence and terror against "enemies of Islam," both domestic and foreign.

The essence of the doctrine is "the existence of one single Islamic state...It is the duty of the *umma* to expand the territory of this state in order to bring as many people under its rule as possible. The ultimate aim is to bring the whole earth under the sway of Islam and to expatriate disbelievers."

The internationalization of Islamic religious radicalism through the proliferation of the "Jihad Doctrine," created the basis for greater membership and a wider audience for Islamic propaganda and politics.

As the Islamic radicals grew in strength, they soon turned their violence directly towards Westerners. The 1983 suicide bombing of the Marine Barrack in Lebanon, resulting in the death of over 300 American soldiers marked the onset of terrorists acts aimed directly towards the Western socio-cultural infrastructure.

In the past two decades, the threat of Islamic radicals has become a global concern, one no longer contained within the Middle East.

The most visible manifestation of this expansion of Islamic violence against the West was the World Trade Center Bombing of 1993.

The perceived success of these and countless other acts of terrorism against Western secularism has bolstered the fundamentalists' support of such radical actions.

The Islamic masses now believe that they can effectively lash out against Western power and society. This realization had led to an increase in popular support for the forces of Islamic radicals, garnering them prestige, financial backing, power and a much broader venue to espouse their desired return to a state of Islam.

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A multitude of factors—psychological, demographic, and cultural—are accelerating the worldwide Islamic threat.

**❖ Islamic fundamentalism provokes an untouchable loyalty among its adherents:
“Islam is the only solution.”**

Islamic fundamentalism has a non-quantifiable appeal to its followers. All humans have an insatiable need to belong to something, and it is just this vulnerability to which the movement appeals. Young boys craving a sense of purpose, the disenfranchised, the poor and uneducated, all of them find their identity in the Islamic cause. They are empowered by their hatred for the West. The millions suffering in poverty in North Africa, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, the Philippines, and elsewhere, flock to the cause of Islam as a panacea for their current ills.

But more dangerous than enlisting absolute loyalty to the cause, Islamic fundamentalism succeeds in channeling its followers' fanaticism into extreme behavior—behavior outside the realm of law and decency.

❖ Islamic fundamentalists strive to isolate the Islamic population from outside influence and progress, thereby further assuring loyalty towards the Islamic cause.

For example, just last week, Afghanistan's Taliban militia, or movement of "Islamic students," banned the Internet to "prevent un-Islamic influences from infiltrating the country." The Taliban ordered the religious police to punish Internet-users according to Islamic law.

The Taliban seized Kabul in 1996 and now controls most of the country. It has also banned television, cinema and music, aimed at creating a pure Mohammedan state free from non-Islamic influence.

❖ The Islamic threat is growing due to falling Western birth rates and a rapidly rising Muslim population.

The Koran, the Muslim holy book, does not dictate large families. In fact, the prophet Muhammad declared, "The worst problem is to possess plenty of children with inadequate means." Additionally, many leading Islamic clerics support family planning. However, in many countries in the Islamic world, circumstances hamper population stabilization. Many Islamic countries are developing nations, plagued with high illiteracy rates and low incomes—key contributors to larger families.

Birth rates remain high in many Islamic nations. For example, the total fertility rate (TFR) in Yemen is 6.7, 6.1 in Afghanistan and 5.6 in Pakistan. The World Bank calculates their respective adult female illiteracy rates at 79%, 82%, and 75%. World Bank also calculates Pakistan's per capita GDP at \$502, and Yemen's at \$223. (Afghanistan's GDP is unknown due to the devastation of the country by years of civil war.)

By comparison, the West is experiencing a catastrophic baby bust. In much of the developed world, the total fertility rate has already sunk to 1.6, well below the 2.1 replacement level. At 1.19, Italy has the lowest rate of the developed nations. The U.S., at 1.9, is at the highest levels of the developed countries.

Writing in the *Spectator* several years ago, Charles Moore recalled T.S. Eliot's caution of "hooded hordes": "Because of the obstinate refusal to have enough babies, Western European civilization will start to die at the point when it could have revived with new blood. Then the hooded hoarded will win, and the Koran will be taught, as Gibbon famously imagined, in the schools of Oxford."

❖ The prospect of cultural submergence is the most alarming Islamic threat, even more so than Muslim missiles and hostage-takers.

Millions of Muslims immigrate each year to the U.S. and Europe. In fact, of the current six million American Muslims, 77.6% are immigrants versus 22.4% U.S. born.

According to the U.S. Department of State, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the U.S.

By 2010, America's Muslim population is expected to surpass the Jewish population, making Islam the country's second largest faith after Christianity.

In the U.S., there are nearly 2000 mosques nationwide, as well as numerous Islamic day schools.

Unbelievably, the U.S. has become the rearguard headquarters for fundamentalist terrorists. With almost no oversight, they collect and launder money here, provide communication links and spew out propaganda.

❖ Islamic terrorism has a worldwide reach.

Eleven of the 29 groups labeled by the U.S. Department of State as "foreign terrorist organizations" are Islamic. Likewise, 14 of the 21 groups outlawed by the British Home Office for links to terrorist activity abroad are Islamic.

What was once the tool of rogue states is now a deeply rooted phenomenon, drawing most of its funding from ordinary Muslims.

Stafano Dambruoso, an Italian magistrate who uncovered Islamist networks in his country, notes, "it may seem strange, but apart from the proceeds from illegal activities such as drug trafficking, one of the main source of income for the groups is contributors."

Dambruoso continues, "this means that Islamic terrorism in Europe is a deeply rooted phenomenon that regenerates itself continuously." **This far-reaching sponsorship adds greatly to the reach of Islamic violence.**

❖ The enemy at home is often the most lethal.

Many Islamic radicals tend to be well acquainted with the West, having learned its languages, studied its cultures, or even lived there. Ayatollah Khomeini had a well-known fondness for Shakespeare.

A disproportionate number of Islamic radicals are engineers. In a statement from his Manhattan jail cell, the mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing pointedly cited Newton's laws of physics.

This points to an important fact: **However much Islamic fundamentalists hate the West, they are nonetheless deeply connected to it.**

The men wear T-shirts reading "Islam is the solution." The women wear blue jeans under their chadors and shout "Death to America." Even while ostensibly rejecting the West, they accept it.

According to Daniel Pipes, an expert on the current state of Islamic fundamentalists, this simultaneous acceptance and rejection has two significant implications.

First, the Islamic dream of expunging Western ways from Muslim life is doomed. It is simply not going to happen.

But secondly, the resulting hybrid—the Western-immersed, anti-secularism—is potentially lethal.

As Pipes argues: "Opponents of Islam, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, too often dismiss it as a regressive effort to avoid modern life, comforting themselves with the prediction that it will be left behind as modernization takes place. This expectation is mistaken, because Islamism appeals most compellingly to Muslims coping with the challenges of modernity...Hence, its totalitarian utopianism has huge potential to do damage."

Steve Herbits, a brilliant thinker and former advisor to top government leaders, argues that the biggest problem facing the West in its handling of the growing Islamic threat, is the lack of voice. **There is no "Voice of America" speaking out against the Islamic fundamentalists.**

When we decried the Communist threat we did so with vehemence. The West was united against the “Reds.” The Media popularized our sentiments—the villains in movies were from the Communist block; even cartoons introduced the anti-Russian sentiment to children. (Think Boris and Natasha from *Rocky & Bullwinkle*.)

But we do not dare speak out against the Islamic fundamentalists. Religion is taboo, in large part due to the barrier between religion and state. It is simply not politically correct to attack a state in the name of religion. So the menace grows, ignored by the West.

Ironically, Moslem governments are far ahead of their non-Moslem counterparts in understanding the profound menace of radical action in the name of Islam. Leaders in Tunisia, Turkey, and elsewhere, have taken serious steps to combat this modern day totalitarianism.

What lies ahead?

A danger exists that Islamic fundamentalists will acquire weapons of mass destruction, with incalculably dangerous results. Indeed, Osama bin Laden may already possess enriched uranium, a vital component for exploding nuclear bombs.

The most immediate concern is of course the Middle East.

Herbits believes that the Middle East is on the cutting edge of the battle between Islamic fundamentalists and the West. **The conflict is not really between the PLO and Israel...the real issue is the Islamic fundamentalists. Similarly, at the core of the anti-Semitism, which defines the Palestinians’ actions, is an intractable odium towards the West.**

Herbits believes that Arafat could not make peace even if he wanted to. ***In reality, Arafat is not in control; the real force behind the PLO is the Islamic fundamentalists.***

Yesterday, the Iraqi military claimed to have shot down a RQ-1 Predator in the southern no-fly zone.

The U.S. media reports the incident as an alarming indication that Saddam Hussein’s military has improved its air defenses. In fact, for most Americans, our problems with Iraq are largely a consequence of Saddam. Take out the crazy man in the beret, and everything

would be a lot smoother. But, here again this attitude betrays the truth. As with Arafat, Saddam is not the true threat.

Islam is the official religion of Iraq. Over 95% of Iraqis are Muslim.

Consider the enormous outpouring of pride expressed by Iraqis in reaction to the downed RQ-1.

“All Arabs should be happy when they see that despite all the power Americans have we can still confront their aggression,” declared Adel Jassim, a storeowner in Baghdad.

“This slap on America’s ugly face was a surprise to its arrogant administration. The Americans will have to retire these kind of planes and stop them from harming our proud nation,” said an editorial in al-Jumhuriya newspaper.

The official INA news agency quoted Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, as saying Iraq “is determined to inflict more losses on the U.S. and British aggressors.”

The tone of these statements reveals deep-seeded hatred—an anti-American rage far greater than mere irritation over any U.N. trade sanctions. The hostility and antagonism echoed here reverberate throughout the growing Islamic population. The West is the aggressor, the “enemy to Islam,” and it must be stopped.

The time is now for Westerners to understand that Islamic fundamentalism presents a truly global threat. We must devote the mental energy and material resources to fight it.

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The future of energy prices?

As the Islamic fundamentalists threat continues to grow unchecked and the situation in the Middle East escalates, energy prices could well come under even greater upward pressure.

The severity of the current Middle East crisis suggests that a full-fledged war might not be outside the realm of possibility.

And if a war does erupt, it seems likely that it would be a long-term conflict. Unlike the Persian Gulf War, peace may require many years of fighting.

The Islamic fundamentalists can be extremely intimidating.

Many countries in the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia and Jordan, are already fearful of the Palestinians. **Not because they fear the PLO, but, because the Saudis and Jordanians recognize that Arafat's organization has become a vehicle for the Islamic fundamentalists.**

It is not inconceivable that Palestine's oil-rich neighbors, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, could be bullied into limiting their oil supplies to the West.

Energy prices are already high due to lower output and rising demands. If events turn more hostile in the Middle East, substantially higher oil prices are likely.

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