

GLOBAL JIHAD-A PERSPECTIVE

“Viewed through history’s wide-angle lens, the events of September 11, 2001, were one legal expression that contrary to secularization theory and the widespread assumptions of the world’s elites, the 21st century will be one in which rapidly advancing modernization coincides with an explosion of religious conviction and passion.” So said George Weigel (Faith, Reason and War) in 2007. Despite the many faces of Islam, Weigel says the main form is Jihadism, messianic and involves nothing less than a global Islamic state. Richard Neuhaus defines Jihadism ‘as the religiously inspired ideology (which teaches) that it is the moral obligation of all Muslims to employ whatever means necessary to compel the world’s submission to Islam.’ And in my temerity I have often argued with our leaders over strategy and definition of the enemy and goals: it is uncompromising true Islam. Yet, we muddle along and hope it will change or fade away.

The war we find ourselves in began before 9/11 when fatwas (Arabic rulings on questions of law) authorizing the murder of all Americans were issued from the caves of the Hindu Kush, or when American embassies were bombed in East Africa, the USS Cole attacked in Aden, the earlier attack on the World Trade Center. Multiple fronts no doubt connected abound: Afghan, Iraqi, Lebanese/Syria, Gaza, Somali, Pakistani, North Africa/Maghreb, Sudanese, Southwest Asian, intelligence, financial flows, economic and energy. And so it goes. Bernard Lewis, the English-speaking world’s preeminent scholar of the history of Islam reflecting on his WWII experience in British intelligence where ‘we knew who we were, the enemy and the issues. Not knowing and not wanting to know is lethal.’

It is said that bin-Laden wanted to trap the Americans in Afghanistan(as mythologically he had trapped the Soviets), but settled on a 'irresistible outrage'-a hole in the ground in lower Manhattan, the loss of 3000 lives, an economic cost of a billion dollars, and the laceration of the American psyche. Since his declaration of war against America in 1996, his wish has been to ignite an American retaliation, laying the groundwork of Global Jihad. Intent seems to be exacerbated by events.

To capture the moment we have not declared war on anyone,- presumably chased an element of true Islam (Taliban) out of Afhanistan; they are back-confronted real problems on the border of Afghan-Pakistan which seem connected while conducting a quasi-successful counterinsurgency tactical operation in Baghdad and environs laying the groundwork for military turnover as political and sectarian accommodation looms. Yet despite the talk of time-tables, pull-back of US and coalition forces, the ogre of a patient, ever-encroaching arm of true militant Islam lurks there and elsewhere. Neither of our presidential hopefuls has sunk their teeth, let alone his mind into Global Jihad and its continuing movement and threat. Perhaps an inkling is there, rationalized in the fear of a political gaffe, the upsetting of the status quo, and the fence sitting of so-called 'normal Muslims'-often silent and circumspect.

Weigel argues for victory against Global Jihadism by a strong bi-partisan coalition comparable to the time of Truman-Acheson, and Marshall-Vandenberg whose presence 'at the creation' provided the modus vivendi and the rationale to take on the militant Soviet threat. Time is of the essence.