

# **The Power of Ideas: Sayyid Qutb and Islamism**

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## Introduction

For Americans sheltered by the security of a modern culture that respects individual lives and embraces freedom, the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001 was a catastrophic event that defied reason. The real reason behind the attack is almost as difficult to bear as the attack itself. Numerous theories abound attributing the attack to America's foreign policy, economic prosperity, or religious pluralism. All of these theories have merit, and each can be seen as a factor in the attack, but they are secondary factors at best. The primary purpose of the death and destruction of September 11 was to attack the pillars of American society: America's devotion to reason and belief in the perfectibility of man. These twin pillars are universal principles that uphold the systems that sustain modern American culture: liberalism, capitalism, and secularization. As the most powerful representative of these universal principles, America has become the target for Islamists who use Islam as a weapon in an attempt to replace modernity with their doctrine of collectivity and totalitarian faith throughout the world.

Islamism is the ideology adhered to by the September 11, 2001 attackers. As a radicalized, politicized anomaly of the Islamic religion, Islamism rejects modernity and the societies that exemplify it. Islamism's philosophical foundation is that mankind is limited in his capacity for knowledge, so he is incapable of usurping God's position as judge and jury in this world. According to Islamist doctrine, mankind cannot be trusted to implement just socio-political systems. Without transcendental guidance, mankind will inherently be driven into temptation by animalistic desires, and will inevitably create an immoral social system. Only God is capable of ascertaining the best life for man, and strictly adhering to the dictates of Koranic revelation is the only way for man to achieve the best life. To find salvation through God, mankind must submit completely to His sacred law, or *Shari'ah*, which He revealed in the Koran.

The modern world, in direct opposition to the philosophical foundation of Islamism, believes man to be not only capable of knowing the world around him, but he is also capable of judging right from wrong and implementing socio-political systems that will be mutually beneficial for all of mankind. These human-centered ideals and institutions have created a secularized culture, which, due to its success, has spread throughout much of the world. With modernity's secularization of much of the world, particularly the West, Islamists believe that mankind has climbed into bed with Satan. For what they believe is a rejection of God, Islamists hold a deep contempt toward other religions and social systems. Rejecting all man-made political, cultural, and judicial systems, Islamists intend to reinstate the Koranic notion that religion, politics, culture, and law are indissoluble. It is their goal to destroy the ideological foundation of modernity, which is embodied by the most powerful country in the world—the United States.

The Islamist ideology was planted in the seeds of religious revivalism centuries ago. Slowly developing over the years, Islamism culminated as a revolutionary movement in the early twentieth century and was perpetuated decades later by men like Sayyid Qutb. Taking advantage of a growing sense of frustration in the Muslim world with the social systems popular in Arabic nation-states during the twentieth century, Qutb enunciated the drastic philosophical differences between Islamic and modern worldviews. By condemning the modern worldview, whether in liberal-democratic or socialist form, Qutb was able to endorse Islamism as a viable and just alternative.

## Historical Relationship between Islam and Western Civilization

### Inception of Islam (600-1600)

Although the vehemence against American modernity seems sudden, it has been developing in the Islamic world for centuries. The first thousand years of Islam were profoundly successful for Muslims. Currently with millions of followers worldwide, Islam began in 610 with just one man. While meditating alone in a cave in the Meccan mountains, forty-year old Muhammad experienced a divine revelation. As God's reluctant messenger, Muhammad proclaimed that Christians, Jews, and pagans were living in a state of ignorance, or *Jahiliyyah*, because they had distorted God's original message in the scriptures. Wanting to give humanity another chance, God instructed Muhammad to spread Islam (translated as "submission") across the known world. According to Muhammad he would be the last Prophet, and the Koran would be God's last revelation. God's revelation to Muhammad incorporated not just religious belief and moral righteousness; it also revealed direction for all aspects of human life.

Forced to leave Mecca because of his attempts to spread Islam, Muhammad went to Medina where his divine message was readily accepted. Previewing John Calvin's experience in Geneva, the people of Medina gave Muhammad a free hand to implement the socio-religious system decreed in the Koran. Everything, including family relationships, laws, and worship was constructed according to Koranic vision. With Medina firmly under his charge, Muhammad returned to Mecca as the conquering hero. Muhammad remained the sole political and religious guide of the Muslim community, or *ummah*, until his death.

After Muhammad's death, a Caliphate was established. The Caliph stood in Muhammad's stead as God's representative on earth. Like Muhammad, the Caliph was the sole ruler of the *ummah* and was bound by the dictates of the Koran. Within fifty years of Muhammad's death, the Caliphate had expanded over three continents. The *ummah* prospered in many ways. Intellectual inquiry was encouraged by the Caliphate, which led to innovations in mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Religious toleration within the early Islamic empire far surpassed the religious intolerance occurring in Europe during the same era. A variety of religions and ethnicities existed in relative harmony under the Islamic Caliphate.

Life was not perfect for the Caliphate, however. Internal disturbances and corruption were a constant source of irritation for the community, and the Mongols successfully invaded parts of the vast Islamic empire in the fourteenth century. The Caliphate overcame most of its problems during this period, even managing to convert the Mongolian leaders to Islam. One persistent problem began to fester during the era of the Caliphate—a gradual decrease in intellectual inquiry would slowly infect all of Islam and eventually assist in the downfall of this amazingly successful empire by the fourteenth century. With God's declaration that Islam was inherently superior to all other social systems, and considering that Europe had been intellectually stagnant for most of Islam's rule, the Caliphate felt no need to examine intellectual developments in foreign lands. Even so, the Islamic Empire, with its great military might, was still the world's most powerful civilization. With the rise of the Ottoman Turks, the new seat of the Islamic Caliphate, Islam continued to conquer new lands and expand its territory.

Early Islam and Christendom were spiritual rivals. Like Islam, Christianity holds the belief that its religion is universal, requires active conversion of non-believers, and is God's final revelation. For many centuries, Islam held the upper hand in battle and spiritual conversion. Throughout the Dark Ages and the beginning of the Middle Ages, Christendom was riddled by

religious intolerance, internal wars, and intellectual stagnation, making it an easy target for Islamic invasion. Some areas of Christendom, including Southern Spain and Southeastern Europe, were incapable of defending themselves from Islamic invaders. In many cases, the Christians in defeated territories found their lives much improved under their new Islamic rulers. Converts to Islam were common during this period. In an attempt to prevent further conversions to Islam, monks began to study the Koran so that they could argue against its viability as an alternative source for salvation.

### **17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries – “The Birth of Modernity”**

The Islamic empire had previously been unable to conquer Vienna. With battlefield losses mounting for the Ottoman Empire, they attempted once again, in 1683 to take Vienna by force. Vienna, however, held its ground and the Caliphate experienced a humiliating loss. The defeat at Vienna was a historical turning point for the Ottoman Empire. A sense of weakness and confusion began to trickle through the Empire. Suddenly, or so it seemed, Europe was now a threat to Ottoman power. As well, Egypt, North Africa, and the Balkans were becoming increasingly independent. The surmounting problems hit a peak with Napoleon’s successful invasion of Egypt in 1798. The Ottoman Empire began to look for the source of its growing weakness. Where had they gone wrong? How could they return to the unrivaled power and glory that they had held for so long?

According to the Koran, a righteous Islamic community would receive worldly favor from God. The Christian infidels couldn’t become more powerful or prosperous unless the Islamic Empire had somehow neglected God’s direction. Some Muslims began to view their continuing failures as divine retribution. Attempting to purify Islam, religious revivalists argued against any deviation from Islamic principles. There was a growing belief that Western Civilization was a plague infecting the purity of Islam. Very few Muslims traveled to Europe during this period. Even trips taken for political necessity were kept as short as possible. This reluctance to objectively assess Christendom and its possible advantages would eventually hasten the Ottoman Empire’s demise.

As Islam was facing its first real experiences with failure in the seventeenth century, Western Civilization was embarking upon the Age of Reason and Enlightenment. The European worldview began to place emphasis on reason and the perfectibility of man. This new respect for man’s mind created a growing interest in scientific inquiry. European intellectuals began to examine the natural world, which led to an explosion of agricultural, medical, and military advancements. Europe’s scientific revolution helped increase production of valuable commodities and boost international commerce. With commerce on the rise, Western economies began to prosper. Inspired by curiosity, new wealth, and enthusiasm for adventure, a number of Europeans began to travel to Arabic lands. The West was quickly becoming the most advanced civilization in the world. The widening gap between Islam and the West would become increasingly evident throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as Europe began to retrieve some of the lands that it had lost to the Islamic Empire.

The French Revolution played an important role for the development of modern thought in Islam as well as Europe. The French Revolution was inspired by the ideologies of men such as Voltaire and Rousseau. These two unique worldviews (Voltaire’s liberal enlightenment and Rousseau’s primitivist socialism) gave rise to a revolutionary movement that cried out for “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” in France. Viewed as an unchristian movement, the French

Revolution raised eyebrows in a Muslim world that was looking for an ideology that would resurrect its former glory without sacrificing its Islamic value system. This was a difficult task, however, given the Ottoman Empire's insulation from modernity. In a God-centered world, where the products of man's mind were viewed as a usurpation of God's omniscience, innovations in human knowledge were morally questionable, and sometimes condemned as sinful. Out of fear of divine retribution, the Islamic Empire banned the printing press for many years and set strict limitations on the diffusion of knowledge. Without an open venue for disseminating innovations in human knowledge, the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity never came to complete fruition under the auspices of Ottoman rulers.

### **1800 – Post-WWI**

In the late nineteenth century, Britain and France held colonies within the Ottoman Empire. This period is commonly referred to as the age of European Imperialism. European expansion had been gradual, and culminated in the spread of European culture and ideals within the Ottoman Empire. Within their colonies, Britain and France introduced secular ideology and modernization. The consequences of Islamic modernization proved to be both positive and negative. Many Muslims felt threatened by the spread of Christianity by European missionaries. As well, the professional men of religion relied on to interpret Islamic law according to scripture, or *ulema*, began to lose their social and spiritual influence as modern justice and educational systems were introduced. Not all of the consequences were negative, however. During the colonial period Islam experienced many positive changes: chattel slavery was abolished, emancipation of women began to be discussed, restrictions on polygamy were implemented, and non-Muslims began to be afforded equal rights. As well, modern technology introduced Islam to municipal electricity, streetlights, more advanced agricultural techniques, advancements in health care, modern communication, and implementation of the factory system of production. Regardless of the benefits, however, many Muslims were disconcerted with foreign occupation of their lands.

Over the previous two centuries, Islam had essentially ignored, with the exception of France, the advance of Western Civilization. Having falsely believed that no society could ever surpass its own in prosperity or power, the Islamic empire had isolated itself, closed the doors on intellectual inquiry, and suffered for its lack of intellectual openness. Having embraced stagnation, the Islamic Empire was now at the mercy of France and Britain, which sought to expand their territories even further within the Islamic empire. At the end of WWI, Europe agreed to dismantle the German-friendly Ottoman Empire. A few years later, the Muslim reformer and leader of Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, abolished the Caliphate. The long-standing symbol of Muslim political and spiritual unity had been dismantled before their eyes. Split into a number of nation states decided upon by the Europeans, almost the entire Islamic world came under the control of France and Britain.

### **WWII – Present**

Frustrated with colonization, Islamic radicals began to organize revolutionary groups that were aimed at openly opposing the Western powers that had infiltrated their lands. The growing anti-Western sentiment caused most of the Islamic nation-states to side with Germany during World War II. At the end of World War II, major shifts in world-organization and power occurred. First, the liberal-democratic United States became one of the two leading nations in the world. Secondly, Israel was formed in 1948 after the British mandate over Palestine had

expired. Lastly, France and Germany agreed to end their colonization of the nation-states of the old Ottoman Empire. Even with the reinstatement of Islamic political independence at the end of WWII, modernization would remain a permanent part of the Muslim world.

When colonization ended in the Islamic world, some Muslims encouraged the continued modernization of Islamic lands, believing that freedom, equality, and intellectual inquiry were the keys to success. Other members of the Muslim community, however, viewed modernization as tantamount to apostasy. These purists would enflame the sparks of religious revival, culminating in an even more radical ideology—Islamism. According to Islamist thought, the only way to resurrect Islam’s former glory was to sanitize their land, schools, and culture from Western influences largely represented by the United States. Following the lead of Islam’s first generation, the Islamists intended to reestablish a unified Muslim community and reinstate the rule of the Caliphate guided by the *Shari’ah*.

Averse to the “Christianized” democracies of the United States and Britain, many Arabic rulers had embraced the unchristian views of nationalism during the 1930s. Arab nationalists placed heritage, language, and culture as the unifying factors of society. To the chagrin of religious fundamentalists as well as the more radical Islamists, religion began to take a back seat in Muslim life. Most of the nationalist states were increasingly embracing secularization and encouraging modernity. The 1967 loss of Nasser’s Arab nationalism to Israel in the Six-Day War, however, brought a decisive end to the popular support of Arab nationalism. Democracy and Islamism vied for dominance until the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his Islamist followers usurped governing control of Iran from the Shah and implemented their own government based on a strict interpretation of *Shari’ah*. This victorious Islamist revolution, once again, turned the focus of Muslim society back to religion as the unifying factor in the Islamic world. Following Iran’s lead, the goal for many Muslims became the realization of a *Shari’ah* state.

When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Muslims from all over the world traveled to Peshawar, Pakistan, to gain access to the fighting. Hailed as a *jihad*, the war attracted a large number of Islamists as well. Peshawar would eventually become the primary breeding ground for the current Islamists that have unleashed their fury on the West. The Islamist’s confidence to attack the West was derived from their victory over the invading Russian forces in Afghanistan. According to Montasser Al-Zayyat, a member of an Egyptian Islamist group, “There is much to suggest that this victory [in Afghanistan] gave the Arab Afghans a taste for the possibility of victory over Western hegemony on the global level” (xviii). The Afghan victory was seen as divine proof of the efficacy and righteousness of the Islamist movement.

Taking into account the historical relationship between Islam and Western Civilization, the more perceptive Islamists understood that the battle line had been drawn between two radically different philosophies. A religious revolution could not be accomplished if the Muslim community found any value in the West’s devotion to reason or belief in the perfectibility of man. To succeed, Islamism needed intelligent, energetic thinkers to denounce the elements of modernity: democracy, capitalism, and religious plurality. Simultaneously, these Islamist ideologues would need to encourage acceptance of Islamist ideology, which requires acceptance of totalitarian rule, material sacrifice, and the sacrifice of individual rights to the collective Muslim community.

There were a number of early twentieth-century radical revivalists, including the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan Al-Banna, who wrote prolifically and gathered support for the Islamist cause. Sayyid Qutb's works and martyrdom, however, far surpassed his predecessors' attempts to focus Muslim frustration into an active Islamist movement. Qutb's revolutionary message has resonated across national and racial barriers, and has brought Muslims together under the collective banner of religion. Whether they are in the Sudan, Egypt, Pakistan, Russia, or even the United States, Islamist organizations all over the world are still dedicated to Qutbian ideals.

Because of his personal knowledge of the United States and great Western thinkers, Sayyid Qutb's denouncement of modernity, anti-American sentiments, and calls for revolution have held a great deal of weight with Muslim radicals across the globe. Leaders of Islamist organizations quote Qutb regularly and use Qutb's philosophy to formulate their mission. Even lower-level members of these groups are familiar with Qutb's ideology, and often cite it when they are arrested for their revolutionary activities. Qutb's writings have long been a cornerstone for the current Islamist movement. In particular, *Milestones*, which is the *Mein Kampf* of Islamism, is often seen as the Islamists' philosophical guide, and, as such, is required reading for all Islamists.

## Sayyid Qutb

### Biography

Sayyid Qutb was born in a small town (Musha) in Upper Egypt in 1906. Although they were not rich, Qutb's family, including two younger sisters and a younger brother, Muhammad, lived comfortably. An intelligent child, Qutb did well in school and even managed to memorize the Koran by the age of ten. Qutb's father sent him to Cairo, well known for its scholastic excellence, to live with his uncle while he attended secondary and post-secondary schools. While training to become a teacher, Qutb filled his leisure time writing poetry. During his stay in Cairo, Qutb's father passed away and his mother moved so that she could be closer to her son.

After successfully finishing school, Qutb accepted a position with the Egyptian Ministry of Education. His desire for writing, however, never subsided. For a while, Qutb worked on the side as a literary critic. He also continued to write poetry and published a rather unsuccessful first novel. In 1948, at forty-two years of age, Qutb received a subsidy from the Egyptian Ministry of Education to travel to the United States for further education. Qutb stayed in a small, conservative community in Greeley, Colorado while he studied for his Masters in Education at Colorado State Teacher's College.

Qutb's hatred of the United States seems to have manifested itself during his stay in Greeley, Colorado. As a foreign minority in a small conservative town in 1948, it is reasonable that Qutb would feel alone and isolated from the people, community, and social customs that surrounded him. The feeling of alienation that Qutb experienced quickly mutated to anger and disgust. Speaking of himself as a hero buried quietly within the enemy fortress, Qutb proudly "took the position of attacking the Western Jahiliyyah, its shaky religious beliefs, its social and economic modes, and its immoralities" (Qutb 138). Qutb refused to have his pristine spirit tainted by the impure culture that surrounded him, regardless of its temptations. This mindset would be laid out in his work *Milestones*, and would be adopted by the terrorists of September 11, 2001 who lived inconspicuously in America before their attack.

According to Qutb, America's secularization, man-made laws, and individualistic notions, had created a nation of desire-driven sub-humans. Seeing sexuality everywhere he looked, Qutb believed that American men were brutish animals and the women were whores. Qutb criticized the freedom of American women to make choices without a man's approval. Without the guidance of a man, the American women had become objects of sexual promiscuity:

The American girl is well acquainted with her body's seductive capacity. She knows it lies in the face, and in expressive eyes, and thirsty lips. She knows seductiveness lies in the round breasts, the full buttocks, and in the shapely thighs, sleek legs—and she shows all this and does not hide it (qtd. in "Sayyid Qutb's America" 2).

While attending a church sock-hop, Qutb was incensed at the sexual nature of an event occurring within a supposedly holy place:

They danced to the tunes of the gramophone, and the dance floor was replete with tapping feet, enticing legs, arms wrapped around waists, lips pressed to lips, and chests pressed to chests. The atmosphere was full off desire (qtd. in "Sayyid Qutb's America" 2).

Qutb's malevolent perceptions of a church sock-hop in a conservative town that prohibited the consumption of alcohol until the late 1960's seems, at the very least, exaggerated. These perceptions, however, would become one of the main focuses of Qutb's anti-Western rhetoric.

Even lawn maintenance didn't escape Qutb's condemnation. According to Qutb, America's green lawns were not a sign of self-responsibility, or even a sign of caring for God's earth. Instead, green lawns were symbolic of America's voracious greed. Qutb's anger at the United States was enflamed even further when he read the February 13, 1949 *New York Times* article reporting the death of Muslim Brotherhood leader Hassan al-Banna. The *Times* had referred to al-Banna as a terrorist. Qutb was indignant that a man he viewed as righteous and noble was openly condemned by a nation of sinners.

Having received his Masters in Education, Qutb was too disgusted with American civilization to remain for his doctoral training. In 1950, Qutb returned to Egypt and his post with the Egyptian Ministry of Education. In 1952, after several ideological disagreements with his colleagues, Qutb left his position at the Ministry and soon after became the ideological figurehead of the Islamist group The Muslim Brotherhood. As the Chief Editor of the Brotherhood's newspaper, Qutb began to solidify the ideology that would become the foundation for his manifesto, *Milestones*.

Founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brotherhood initially began with the intent of preaching social reform. The tide turned in the 1940s, however, as a strain of more radical thought began to disseminate between Brotherhood members. This violent streak escalated under the tutelage of Sayyid Qutb. Rejecting Nasser's pan-Arabism, the Brotherhood sought to reinstate Islam as the foundation of Egyptian society. They wanted to overthrow the regime and seize control of Egypt. After an assassination attempt on Nasser, hundreds of members of the Brotherhood were arrested, including Qutb. Qutb's brother, Muhammad, also a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, escaped arrest by fleeing to Saudi Arabia, where he began to teach at King Abdul Aziz University.

Convicted of conspiring to assassinate Nasser, Qutb was sentenced to 15 years in prison. While in prison, Qutb wrote incessantly. The works written during Qutb's imprisonment would make him the most revered ideologue in the Islamist world. Prison life in Nasser's Egypt was extremely harsh, and within ten years, Qutb had grown ill. After Nasser received a request for Qutb's release from Iraqi President Abd al-Salaam Arif, the Nasser regime exhibited a rare glimpse of mercy and released Qutb. Shortly after his release, Qutb published *Milestones*, and within a year, he was re-arrested on charges of treason. This time there would be no mercy. Primarily using passages from *Milestones* as evidence, the Egyptian government secured Qutb's conviction. To the dismay of his supporters around the world, Qutb was executed by hanging on August 29, 1966, less than two weeks after his conviction. According to one of his supporters, Ahmed El-Kadi, M.D., "Sayyid Qutb was smiling when he was executed, showing his conviction of the beautiful life to come in paradise" (El-Kadi 2).

### **Theology and Ideology**

Sayyid Qutb was not the first Islamist ideologue. A long line of radical ideology had been passed down for generations in the Muslim world. Many of these men influenced Qutb's worldview. Ibn Taymiyya (1268-1328) is still considered to be one of the most important figures in the development of anti-Western ideology. Taymiyya, wishing to resurrect the purity of early Islam, spoke out against all deviations from the Koranic social vision. His views, which often opposed the Islamic government, eventually led to his arrest and imprisonment.

Another important figure in the growth of Islamist ideology is Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), a Saudi theologian and co-founder of Saudi Arabia. Wahhab demanded purification of the Islamic world. Believing Western influence to be corruptive to Muslim purity, Wahhab encouraged his followers to revive the Koranic vision of Islam. Wahhab's ideas would turn into a movement called Wahhabism. Since its inception, Wahhabism has been financially and politically supported by the Saudi regime. Wahhabism's strict rejection of modernity, ascetic vision, and religious intolerance has held great appeal for contemporary Islamists throughout the world.

One of Qutb's peers, Mawlana Abu'l-A `la Mawdudi (1903-1979), helped shape Qutb's Islamist ideology. Mawdudi was a Pakistani journalist, politician, and the founder of the Islamist group *Jamaat-I-Islami*. Mawdudi focused the Islamist rejection of modernity on a narrower rejection of imperialism and the infiltration of Western culture in Islamic lands. Believing western economics, politics, and culture to be a threat to the survival of Islam, Mawdudi and his *Jamaat-I-Islami* encouraged the resurrection of a strictly Islamic society, which adhered to the dictates of *Shari'ah*. Even though Taymiyya, Wahhab, and Mawdudi were all influential in Qutbian thought, Qutb's enormous popularity arose from the simple eloquence of his works, and his ability to incorporate his own, unique views with traditional Islamism. More radical and subversive than his predecessors' ideologies, Qutb's ideology would become the foundation of Islamist groups all over the world.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Qutb proclaims Islamism to be in the midst of a philosophical war. He does not attribute the war to economics, religion, or socio-political systems alone. Qutb warns his followers: "The enemies of the Believers may wish to change this struggle into an economic or political or racial struggle, so that the Believers become confused concerning the true nature of the struggle" (Qutb 159). It is vital that the Islamists not be distracted from the goal of resurrecting the ideal of a God-centered world under a sole governing

power that would act as God's representative on earth. To form an Islamic state capable of world domination, Qutb's strategy is to undermine the philosophy that Western Civilization is built upon. The Islamic worldview must be identified and exalted, while modernity must be denigrated beyond repair. For Qutb, "this is a natural struggle between two systems which cannot co-exist for long" (Qutb 73). There is no room for compromise. After centuries of struggle with the infidel, the battle has come down to all or nothing.

In an attempt to keep his followers focused on the goal, Qutb first articulates the philosophical basis for a violent revolution. Describing the philosophy of the Islamist revolutionary movement, Qutb says, "The struggle between the Believers and their enemies is in essence a struggle of belief, and not in any way of anything else" (Qutb 159). The root of this revolution is a definition of humanity that delineates man's relationships to all things in this world and the next. Islam dictates that every facet of human life, including relationships, laws, and social systems, is derived from God alone. Modernity, on the other hand, is a creation of humanity, and, therefore, directly opposes Islam. Qutb's philosophy establishes the necessity for rejecting modernity entirely: "[It] manifests itself in various modes of living which are nevertheless all based on one thing, and that is giving human thought the status of a god so that its truth or falsity is not to be judged according to God's guidance" (Qutb 111). Any system that relies on man's judgment is inherently sinful. The sins of Islam, and its fall from Grace, are a direct result of modernity's venom being forcibly injected into its veins. The line of demarcation is unyielding: to achieve victory, Muslims must expel modernity's poison from their blood. According to Qutb, the philosophy of Islam is fair, just, and righteous. Should the malevolent forces of modernity come into contact with Islam's pure state, the revolution will fail.

Qutb clearly identifies the enemy to justify why it is worthy of being destroyed. The enemy, common to all Muslims, is a new *Jahiliyyah*. Qutb's experience in secular America caused him to condemn any society based on reason instead of faith as the enemy. According to Qutb, "any knowledge, the foundation of which is not based on faith, is outside the definition of that knowledge which is referred to in the Qur'an" (Qutb 115). Modernity's devotion to reason is not only antithetical to the faith of Islam—it also intends to destroy Muslim faith. In order for their faith to survive, Muslims must first reject modernity so that they can proceed to defeat it. Any means to achieve this end, including all levels of violence, are justified. The war against modernity supersedes everything, even life itself, because "life's pleasures and pains, achievements and frustrations, do not have any great weight in scale" (Qutb 151) when compared to the survival of Islam.

By equating the modern world with the pagan world of Muhammad's era, Qutb creates a psychological link between contemporary Muslims and the exalted first generation of Muslims. Enhancing the connection to early Islam, Qutb claims: "Jahiliyyah is evil and corrupt, whether it be of the ancient or modern variety. Its outward manifestations may be different during different epochs, yet its root is the same. Its roots are human desires, which do not let people come out of their ignorance and self-importance" (Qutb 132). Allowing men to guide their own lives, modern society has become as corrupt as the old *Jahiliyyah*. By initiating a biblical condemnation of modernity, Qutb creates a justification for violence against a collective evil—Western Civilization.

Qutb does not condemn only Western Civilization as *jahili*, however. To the chagrin of some Arabic governments, Qutb equally condemns the entire Muslim society. Any Muslim society that

has assimilated western norms, and does not adhere to the Koranic social ideal is a part of *Jahiliyyah*. Qutb places these Muslim societies in the House of War “among jahili societies not because they believe in other deities besides God or because they worship anyone other than God, but because their way of life is not based on submission to God alone” (Qutb 82). In Qutb’s estimation, all current Muslim governments are tainted by modern culture. Even if a Muslim government claims adherence to Islam, it nonetheless is “Jahiliyyah, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought are also constructs of Jahiliyyah” (Qutb 20). With his sweeping condemnation of all Muslim societies, Qutb explicitly calls for the destruction of their rulers and usurpation of political power by Islamists: “The foremost duty of Islam in this world is to depose Jahiliyyah from the leadership of man, and to take leadership into its own hands” (Qutb 131) even if “it be in his birthplace” (Qutb 124).

According to Qutb, the most important deviation of *jahili* societies, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is their refusal to implement *Shari’ah*. *Shari’ah* is a socio-religious concept that disregards man-made laws and unifies politics and law with religion. Qutb describes *Shari’ah* as:

(T)he Islamic beliefs and concepts and their implications concerning the attributes of God, the nature of life, what is apparent and what is hidden in it, the nature of man, and the interrelationships among these. Similarly, it includes political, social and economic affairs and their principles, with the intent that they reflect complete submission to God alone. It also includes legal matters . . . It deals with the morals, manners, values and standards of the society, according to which persons, actions and events are measured. It also deals with all aspects of knowledge and principles of art and science (Qutb 107).

Living according to *Shariah* requires a total rejection of all man-made social systems. Accepting no debate or dissension, this totalitarian system demands complete loyalty in every sphere of human life. For Qutb, anything less is heretical.

By resurrecting the Koranic vision of The House of War (*Jahiliyyah*) and the House of Islam, Qutb creates a common enemy for Muslims. Qutb proposes that if Islam is the only righteous society according to God, then any other society must be against God. Based upon human judgment, which is derived from whimsical desires, *jahili* societies foster human vices. Although these *jahili* societies bring pleasures to mankind, these pleasures are sinful and mankind forfeits a blessed afterlife by adhering to these desire-driven, temporal systems. Because Islam is a blessed religion that incorporates all aspects of life, enmity toward *Jahiliyyah* should be natural for all faithful Muslims.

After Islamists have rejected *Jahiliyyah*, the official war will begin. Qutb acknowledges that this war is going to be long and arduous. *Jahiliyyah* “controls the practical world” (Qutb 46), and will, therefore, be difficult to destroy. In a battle with *Jahiliyyah*, many Islamists will die and many more will suffer. Wanting Islamists to see past their individual desires for safety and security, Qutb creates an apocalyptic atmosphere between Islam and *Jahiliyyah*. Qutb explains, “Jahiliyyah is based on rebellion against God’s sovereignty on earth . . . the result of this rebellion is the oppression of His creatures” (Qutb 11). As the embodiment of evil, *Jahiliyyah* must be defeated regardless of its earthly power. Islamism, on the other hand, is the antithesis of *Jahiliyyah*, and, therefore, ordained by God to destroy it.

Focusing on *Jahiliyyah* as an enemy held in common encourages Muslims to set aside their differences, and to organize a collective Muslim community of the same mind. It is Qutb's aspiration that this universal movement will have no nationality or race: "The people who are really chosen by God are the Muslim community which has gathered under God's banner without regard to differences of races, nations, colors and countries" (Qutb 126). Plagued by centuries of infighting, unification of the whole Muslim community is a lofty goal. Qutb believes, however, that reconstructing the *ummah* is the only way to achieve victory:

Muslim society . . . cannot come into existence simply as a creed in the hearts of individual Muslims, however numerous they may be, unless they become an active, harmonious and cooperative group, distinct by itself, whose different elements like the limbs of a human body, work together for its formation, its strengthening, its expansion, and for its defense against all those elements which attack its system (Qutb 48).

This unification has just one qualification: complete submission to the Islamic State. The Islamic State is the embodiment of God's will on earth. Faith and duty to God are the ties that bind the *ummah*. Qutb considers the bond of Islam to be stronger than any other. It is the only bond capable of destroying the philosophical base of Western civilization.

To lead the *ummah* into battle, Qutb incorporates the Marxist-Leninist notion of establishing a Vanguard. For the *ummah* to gain world domination, "It is necessary that there should be a vanguard which sets out [to revive Islam] and then keeps walking on the path, marching through the vast ocean of *Jahiliyyah* which has encompassed the entire world" (Qutb 12). Qutb relies on this small group of elite men to remain strong and pure in the face of temptation, so that they can provide a good example for their followers. The vanguard must separate itself from society, which is enmeshed in modernity and immorality. Qutb calls for "a group of people [whose] beliefs and concepts, whose devotional acts and laws, are completely free of servitude to anyone other than God" (Qutb 79). Only a group free from the taint of modern civilization can organize a true Islamic uprising that will be capable of achieving victory.

With the establishment of a vanguard, the *ummah* will be ready to wage *jihad* against the forces of modernity. Jihad, according to Qutb, is not an internal war of spirituality, nor is it a defensive war. Qutb justifies a violent *jihad* as the only means to Islamic victory and a duty for all able-bodied Muslims. By means of a violent *jihad*, Islam will expand its dominion and regain its place as the world's most powerful empire. Qutb justifies the violence of *jihad* with Holy scripture: "In the verse giving permission to fight, God has informed the Believers that the life of this world is such that checking one group of people by another is the law of God, so that the earth may be cleansed of corruption" (Qutb 64). The Koran declares that Islam is the "only true faith in God's sight" (3:19), and is, therefore, intended by God to be the ruling system of laws, morals, and religion on earth. God proclaims the use of *jihad* so Muslims can actively combat the forces of evil. With God's support, it is Islam's right to rid the world of man-made social systems (Qutb 75).

Recognizing Western civilization's military supremacy, Qutb encourages Islamists to use unconventional warfare to defeat the enemy: "The Islamic Jihad has no relationship to modern warfare, either in its causes or in the way in which it is conducted" (Qutb 57). To achieve victory, the Islamist movement cannot fight *Jahiliyyah* face-to-face on the battlefield. Qutb states that unconventional methods and strategies are commensurate with Islam:

(T)he method of this religion is very practical. This movement treats people as they actually are and uses resources which are in accordance with practical conditions. Since this movement comes into conflict with *Jahiliyyah* which prevails over ideas and beliefs, and which has a practical system of life and a political and military authority behind it, the Islamic movement [has] to produce parallel resources (Qutb 55).

Islam must be creative in its use of its limited resources. Unconventional warfare will give the weaker Islamist movement the element of surprise, which will help to even the odds of the war.

Qutb bolsters a violent, unconventional war by encouraging martyrdom. According to Qutb, martyrdom is a viable method, because the men who die in the midst of fighting the Islamist *jihad* are honored by God: “It is God’s choosing and honoring a group of people who share death with the rest of mankind but who are singled out from other people for the honor—honor among the noblest angels, nay, even among all of mankind” (Qutb 151). People within the *ummah* should not selfishly cling to a temporal world when God is awaiting their arrival in Paradise. What better way to prove devotion to God and His will than to die while fighting against the embodiment of evil in His name? The martyr will not only gain heavenly rewards, but his name will become legendary on earth, and the entire *ummah* will honor him. Indeed, Qutb embraces martyrdom as a heroic death.

Unlike the Islamists before him, Qutb supports the development of science and technology. Establishing his own interpretation of Koranic text, Qutb claims that scientific development is considered “under certain conditions as worship of God and one of the purposes of man’s creation” (Qutb 8). If scientific inquiry is an act of worship, then it is no longer a heresy as the Caliphate once believed. Instead of being heretical, scientific knowledge is a divinely ordained duty for all Muslims. This radical twist to traditional Islamism does not, however, mean that Qutb supports modernity. On the contrary, trying to reconcile modernity’s scientific advancement with his rejection of modernity, Qutb qualifies his position: “It becomes incumbent on us, while learning purely scientific or technological subjects for which we have no other sources except Western sources, to remain on guard and keep these sciences away from philosophical speculations, as these philosophical speculations are generally against religion” (Qutb 116). Acceptance of the products of Western science is justifiable as long as Muslims reject the philosophy of Western science. Supporting authoritarian control over scientific inquiry, Qutb wants the products of modernization without the value system that has been the backbone of scientific advancement since the Enlightenment.

Qutb’s goal is not merely to recreate a flourishing Islamic nation. Instead, he wishes to depose modernity from its throne, thereby clearing the way for a transcendental, Islamic worldview that places all of mankind in submission to God. Once *Jahiliyyah* has been defeated, Islam will “take the leadership [of the world] into its own hands and enforce the particular way of life which is its permanent feature” (Qutb 131). As the world leader, Islam will be able to enforce its ideology in every land. As a Moroccan Islamist, Abdessalam Yassice, puts it: “We demand power” (Pipes, “God” 6). Without power, world domination is impossible. In order to gain enough power to achieve their goals, Islamists must win the war against the culture of modernity.

Wanting to appeal to religious fundamentalists and Muslim modernizers who have inherited a legacy of vocabulary that exults the modern notions of liberty and freedom, Qutb claims that

Islamic world domination will free mankind. Qutb's notion of freedom in a *Shariah*-governed world, however, is a Hegelian notion of freedom. The Hegelian notion of freedom states that true freedom cannot be achieved through individuality. Instead, freedom is achieved by integration into a collective spirit, embodied by the state. As Qutb explains, "This freedom does not mean that they can make their desires their gods, or that they can choose to remain in the servitude of other human beings" (Qutb 61). Qutb's version of freedom is forcible removal of man's individual rights, which will free him from his animalistic desires, material comforts, and the temptations inherent in uncontrolled intellectual inquiry. Man will then, according to Qutb, be free from worldly distractions so that he may worship God.

With the strength of his faith-based rhetoric, use of modern language, and ability to combine science with Islamic purity, Qutb has become the source for contemporary Islamist doctrine.

## **Qutb's Influence on Contemporary Islamism**

### **General**

Qutb's ideology has been passed down to the current generation of Islamists, who consider *Milestones* to be the cornerstone of their revolution. Qutb wrote twenty-four works, including several novels, books on literary art critique, education, and religion. Qutb's most impressive work is a 30-volume commentary on the Koran, *In the Shade of the Koran*, which, like *Milestones*, was completed during his imprisonment. Translations of Qutb's work exist in virtually every Arabic language, but regrettably few have been translated into English. According to one of Qutb's supporters, "The main translations [of Qutb's works] into Farsi have been done by the Rahbar of the Islamic Republic, Ayatullah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, himself" (Bangash 3), who was appointed as Iran's Supreme Leader after the death of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.

The wide dissemination of Qutb's works has helped to heighten his popularity among Islamists who already considered him to be a virtuous martyr. Islamist groups all over the world frequently cite Qutb as a major influence in their own ideologies. For example, "The blind sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, now in prison in the United States for conspiracy to commit terrorism, [is] a disciple [of Qutb's work]. The leaders of many of the major terrorist groups—such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad—regularly cite his works" (D'Souza 1). Qutb's influence is also manifest in the language of contemporary Islamists. Islamist militant recruit, Abu Mahaz, told CNN in 1993: "We are terrorists, yes we are terrorists because it is our faith" (Bergen 73-74). Mahaz, like many of his fellow Islamists, echoes Qutb's vision of a violent *jihad* approved by God.

The intellectual mastermind of the Bali bombing, 33-year old Imam Samudra, also exhibits Qutbian influence. In an interview with *Channel Nine TV* in Australia, Samudra declared that he did not feel sorry for the Australian victims because they were "brutal." When the interviewer asked him why he felt that Australians were brutal, Samudra responded, "The [Americans, Jews, and their allies] want to control Muslim people. They make us weak and they take our people to bars. They want to control all of us, not just in Indonesia but all over the world" ("Global Jihad" 2). This Islamist, like Qutb, condemns modernity within the collective Western world. By creating a collective movement focused on a common enemy, Qutb has enabled Islamists to view their actions as attacks against an ambiguous, collective entity, not as attacks against individual human beings. Islamism's collective identity removes the barrier of individualistic motivations, fears, and desires, and places the focus of every Muslim's life on defeating the enemy. The battle

line remains as Qutb drew it. The enemy, known as modern civilization, is still consumed by man-made laws that oppress and cause immorality; Islamism remains dedicated to the Qutbian ideal that Islam must save mankind from itself.

### *Al Qaeda*

Qutb's influence is explicitly evident within *al Qaeda*, the Islamist organization behind many terrorist attacks on the United States, including the one on September 11, 2001. *Al Qaeda's* leaders, Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri clearly identify with Qutb's ideology. During his time at Saudi Arabia's King Abdul Aziz University, bin Laden studied under Sayyid's brother, Muhammad Qutb, and Muhammad's close friend, Abdullah Azzam. Both professors taught their students Qutbian philosophy and encouraged bin Laden's revolutionary spirit. Along with his professor Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden went to Peshawar, Pakistan when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Bin Laden gained the wide-spread respect of other Afghan-Arab fighters by giving generous amounts of his large inheritance to the Afghan *jihad* and for his willingness to face death in battle against the notorious Soviets. Since the Afghan-Soviet war, bin Laden's attacks on the world's major powers and his seemingly endless generosity have turned him into the Muslim world's Robin Hood. Canonized by most Muslims, bin Laden's image has been replicated throughout the Arabic world on posters and postcards.

Ayman Zawahiri is often considered the brains behind *al Qaeda*. According to one Islamic historian, "In a historical context, bin Laden is the Hindenburg to Zawahiri's Hitler" (Knowlton 3). The spark of radical ideology that would eventually become the driving force of *al Qaeda* surfaced early in Zawahiri's life. Zawahiri was an Egyptian student at the time of Qutb's martyrdom. Zawahiri's uncle, Mahfouz Azzam was Qutb's long-time friend and attorney. Being close to his uncle, Zawahiri was deeply impacted by Qutb's death, and he formed his first militant group directly after Qutb's execution. While earning his medical degree, Zawahiri became one of the leading members of the Islamic Jihad Group. Invoking Qutbian thought, Zawahiri encouraged *jihad* against Anwar Sadat's government. In 1981, an Islamic Jihad member assassinated Sadat. The government arrested many members of the Islamic Jihad, including Zawahiri, who spent three years in an Egyptian jail for weapons possession.

Ayman Zawahiri met Osama bin Laden in Peshawar, Pakistan. Having gone to Peshawar to offer his medical services to the Afghan Jihad, Ayman began to work with bin Laden and Azzam in their efforts to recruit militants. With Azzam's fatherly guidance, bin Laden's rhetorical flair, and Zawahiri's impressive intellect, the seeds of *al Qaeda* had been planted.

Since their introduction to Islamism, Zawahiri and bin Laden have written extensively expressing their Islamist views. The *al Qaeda* leaders' writings clearly show a predilection for the Qutbian brand of Islamism. As Montasser Al-Zayyat puts it, "Zawahiri's love for Qutb is clear in that he quotes him in almost everything he publishes" (24). In his book *Under the Banner of the Prophet*, Zawahiri clearly names Qutb as his philosophical inspiration:

Sayyid Qutb underscored the importance of monotheism in Islam, and that the battle between it and its enemies is at its core an ideological difference over the issue of oneness of God. It is the issue of who has power: God and his His shari'a or man-made, materialistic laws . . . . This message fanned the fire of

Islamic revolution against the enemies of Islam at home and abroad” (Zayyat 24-25).

Qutb’s influence on Zawahiri is also evident in an interview he gave in 1997 to *Agency France-Presse* (AFP): “[Zawahiri] was asked whether he was against any initiative to stop the military conflict between his group and the Egyptian regime; Zawahiri answered, ‘The military conflict and all other kinds of resistance whether ideological or on the media level between the mujahideen who are vanguards of Islamic awakening and the regime will stop when the regime hands the rule to Muslims’” (Zayyat 47). Zawahiri’s statement reiterates Qutb’s view that a vanguard is necessary to win the philosophical war against modernity, including the modernity of Muslim governments. In the titles alone, Qutbian philosophy can also be found in Zawahiri’s *America and the Illusion of Power* and *Muslim Umma, Unite in Your Jihad on America*.

In June 2001, Zawahiri’s Islamic Jihad and bin Laden’s *al Qaeda* group formally merged into *Qaeda al-Jihad*, commonly referred to as *al Qaeda*. This new, non-national group is responsible for the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States. Speaking for *Qaeda al-Jihad* in November 2002, bin Laden published a letter to America, which clearly defines his perception of the Islamist war with America. He demands that America “Embrace Islam . . . stop your oppressions, lies, immorality, debauchery . . . discover and admit that America is a ‘nation without principles or manners’ . . . Do not interfere in our politics and method of education. Leave us alone, or else expect us in New York and Washington” (qtd. in Lewis, *Crisis* 158). These demands reinforce Qutb’s view that it is not merely foreign policy, religion, or economics driving the Islamist war against the United States. By demanding moral transformation, bin Laden is demanding philosophical change. Only a change of philosophy, a change in worldview, could reframe the moral code of the United States.

Like Qutb, bin Laden frequently quotes the Koran to lend divine approval to his cause. One of bin Laden’s preferred Koranic references is: “I shall cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads, strike off the very tips of their fingers” (8:12). By using statements like this, and similar ones from the Koranic chapters “Spoils” and “Repentance,” bin Laden is able to call upon Muslim faith and fear of divine retribution to support his cause. As Qutb did in *Milestones*, bin Laden imposes his own views into the Koranic message. After being pressed about the deaths of innocent women and children in the September 11, 2001 attack against the United States, bin Laden responded, “I agree that the Prophet Muhammad forbade the killing of babies and women. That is true, but this is not absolute” (“Transcript” 1). Bin Laden’s relative interpretation of the Koran enhances the Qutbian view that virtually any means are allowable to achieve the desired end, including unconventional warfare. It is important to remember, however, that this relativity is reserved for the members of the vanguard alone.

Zawahiri and bin Laden have created an organization that Qutb envisioned over a half of a century ago. Not only does *al Qaeda* focus its enmity against modernity, and America in particular, it is also a universal organization. *Al Qaeda* is an umbrella for thousands of separate terrorist groups all over the world—even in the United States. These separate groups are relatively autonomous, and only look to the leaders of *al Qaeda*, who are the vanguard of the Islamist movement, for training and guidance. Even though the majority of Muslims are not terrorists, all of the members of *al Qaeda* are Muslim. There are no distinctions between *Shi’a* and *Sunni*, white or black, American or Jordanian within *al Qaeda*. This Muslim unity, the creation of an *ummah*, was one of Qutb’s first initiatives.

## Contemporary Ideological Warfare in Islam

### Islamists

Contemporary Islam is filled with reformers on both sides of the ideological map. Some reformers carry on the radical, Qutbian tradition of Islamism, while others embrace liberal reform within the Muslim world. The popularity, long history, and close-mindedness of Islamism have made it difficult for liberal, modernizing reformers to gain support, but they persevere nonetheless. Simultaneously, a number of intelligent, energetic Islamist ideologues, along with Zawahiri and bin Laden, have continued the Qutbian legacy. Even though they believe that Islam has failed by importing foreign culture, morals, and statecraft, Islamists still encourage technical advancement as a means to establish Islamic world-domination. Contemporary Islamists are as modern as the technology they seek from the West. Not only do many of the Islamists come from financially secure, if not wealthy, backgrounds, many of the Islamists are college-educated, holding degrees in such areas as computer science and engineering. Some of the influential men that have carried the Islamist message through the twentieth century include the following six men.

**Abdullah Azzam** (1941-1989) was bin Laden's Islamic Law professor and a friend of Muhammad Qutb. A Palestinian Islamist, Azzam was the founder of the Afghan-Arab terrorist training camps in Peshawar, Pakistan during the Soviet-Afghan war. While training Holy Warriors in Afghanistan, Azzam instructed the new recruits with scholars such as ibn Taymiyyah, al-Wahhab, and Qutb (Zawahiri 1). In a speech given by Azzam at the Al-Farrok Mosque in Brooklyn on Atlantic Avenue in 1988, Azzam said: "The Jihad is not limited to Afghanistan. Jihad means fighting. You must fight in any place you can get. Whenever Jihad is mentioned in the Holy Book, it means the obligation to fight" (qtd. in Emerson 2). Azzam's *Join the Caravan* and *Defense of Muslim Lands* have become required reading for Islamists around the world. Azzam was assassinated in 1989 along with his two sons.

**Dr. Kalim Siddiqui** (1931-1996) was born in Sultanpur, India. A journalist and social activist, Siddiqui wrote prolifically about reaching the moral high-ground, which he believed "requires actual control over the human, material and spiritual resources of the world" (Siddiqui 3). Like his fellow Islamists, Dr. Siddiqui used Qutbian denunciation of Muslim *Jahiliyyah* in his works: "The storming of the existing centers of corruption, the governments of the nation-states and their political, economic and cultural systems that are subservient to the west, is what is now known as the Islamic revolution" (Siddiqui 4). His works include: *Functions of International Conflict* and *Conflict, Crisis, and War in Pakistan*.

**Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah** (b. 1935) is a *Shi'a* cleric and *Hizbollah's* religious advisor. Returning to his family home in Lebanon from his birth place in Najaf in 1966, Fadlallah began to encourage *jihadist* revolution: "As Moslems we consider politics to be part of our whole life, because the Koran emphasizes the establishment of justice as a divine mission . . . In this sense the politics of the faithful is a kind of prayer" (Esposito 157). For Fadlallah, the unification of politics and law with the Islamic religion is the motivation for violence against the infidel. Fadlallah has written a multivolume commentary on the Quran. He has also written several influential books, including *Islam and the Logic of Force*, and *The Islamic Resistance*.

**Abdul Magid Zandani** (b. unknown) is a popular Islamist ideologue and the leader of the *Al Islah* Party. While living in Yemen, Zandani has established close ties to Islamists Hasan Turabi and Osama bin Laden. Zandani supports tyrannical control of intellectual inquiry in Yemen: *The*

*World Press Freedom Review* of 1997 reported that Zandani initiated legal action against two brothers, `Abd al-Jabbar Sa`ad and `Abdullah Sa`ad for writing and publishing a series of articles critical of Zandani in their weekly opposition newspaper. Each man was sentenced to 80 lashes with a thin wooden stick, banned from working in journalism for a year, and their newspaper was fined 200,000 rials (1). Zandani also encourages violence against the West. During a lecture for an anti-war protest in March, 2003, Zandani told the protestors that *al-Islah*'s ideology calls "for young Yemenis to heed calls for 'jihad to come to the help of the Iraqi people, whose blood is being spilt for oil'" (Mounasser 1).

**Muhammad Abdel Salam al-Farg** (unknown – 1982) founded *Jama'at al-Jihad* after becoming disenchanted with the Muslim Brotherhood's passivity. A vibrant orator, al-Farg organized support for Islamist groups in universities, syndicates, sporting clubs, and poor areas (Zayyat, 115). This Islamist ideologue wrote *The Neglected Obligation*, "which draws heavily upon Qutb's view of jihad" (Esposito, 143). In his book, al-Farg argued that Muslim governments must be overthrown if they are not guided by *Shari'ah*. Al-Farg was executed by the Egyptian government in 1982.

**Dr. Hasan al-Turabi** – (b. 1932) Turabi, a Sudanese religious scholar and lawyer, became the ideologue for Sudan's military regime. Turabi is "the man behind the notorious 'ghost houses' and the brutal persecution of his country's large Christian minority" (Pipes, "Western" 1). Turabi has degrees from the Universities of London and The Sorbonne. In 1961, Turabi took advantage of a U.S. taxpayer-funded program that subsidized tours of America for foreign student leaders. Turabi formed the National Islamic Front, an Islamist organization, in 1985.

## Modernists

The voices of Islamists are not the only voices to be heard in the Islamic world. Willing to argue for democracy, equality, and toleration, many Islamic modernizers have faced expulsion from their homelands, injury, and even death in an attempt to free Islamic society from the chains of violence and oppression. Historian Bernard Lewis describes the modernists:

Those known as modernists, or reformers . . . level their criticism against fanaticism. It is to fanaticism and more particularly to fanatical religious authorities, that they attribute the stifling of the once great Islamic scientific movement, and, more generally, of freedom of thought and expression" (Lewis, *What* 157).

Some of these influential modernizers include:

**Qassim Amin** (1863-1908), an Egyptian by birth, received his university education in France and went on to become an attorney, judge, social reformer, and well-known writer. Amin was a strong advocate for women's rights, particularly Islamic women who have been subjected to barbaric oppression by religious fundamentalists. Even after his death in 1908, Amin's book *The Emancipation of Women* continued to be hailed as one of the greatest reformist works of the modern era.

**Farag Foda** (1945-1992) was an Egyptian writer known for his secularist views and strong criticism of Islamism. In 1992, Foda was assassinated by a member of the Islamist Group, or *al Gama'a al Islamiyyah*. Reiterating Islamist totalitarianism, the gunman, Abdul Shafi, proudly admitted to the assassination and claimed, "We had to kill him, because he attacked our beliefs" (Glazov 1). Foda's most popular work is *To Be or Not to Be*.

**Naguib Mahfouz** (b. 1911) was the first Arabic writer, and only Egyptian Nationalist, to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (1988). When Salman Rushdie was condemned to death by Islamists for his *The Satanic Verses*, Mahfouz openly defended Rushdie's right to free speech. For defending Rushdie and supporting speech that dissented from accepted Islamist doctrine, Mahfouz was stabbed in the throat by a member of the Islamist group *al-Jihad* in 1994. Although Mahfouz survived, he has since stopped writing. Two of Mahfouz's more popular works are *Kifah Tibah* ("The Struggle of Thebes"), and *Layali alf layla* ("Arabian Nights and Days").

**Mahmud Muhammad Taha** (1907-1983) founded Sudan's temperate religious party The Republican Brothers in 1945. An advocate of women's rights and religious toleration, Taha publicly opposed the Sudan government's implementation of *Shari'ah* in 1983. Two years later, the seventy-six year old Taha was arrested and executed for apostasy. One of Taha's students, Dr. Abdullahi Ahmed an-Na'im fled the Sudan, coming to the United States as a refugee. Na'im continues, through professorship and speaking engagements, to spread Taha's message of equality and toleration. Before his execution, Taha published his novel, *The Second Message of Islam*.

**Dr. Taha Husayn** (1889–1973). Even though Husayn was blinded at the age of two by illness, he persevered and became a Professor of Arabic Literature at the Cairo University. Heavily influenced by Greek literature and philosophy, Husayn wrote many novels and socio-political essays. An advocate of modernization, Husayn promoted literacy, reliance on reason, and women's emancipation throughout Egypt. Since his death in 1973, Husayn's autobiography, *al-Ayyam* ("The Days") has gained worldwide attention.

**Irshad Manji** (b. 1969, Uganda) Manji moved to Vancouver in 1972 when Idi Amin expelled all South Asians from Uganda. A citizen of Canada, Manji attended the University of British Columbia under a full academic scholarship, and graduated as the first liberal arts major to win the medal for top graduate. A few of Manji's activities include journalism, writing, and television personality (Manji 1). Manji's support of *ijtihad*, or independent interpretation of the Koran, as well as liberalism, has triggered numerous death threats from Islamists around the world. Manji's most recent work is *The Trouble With Islam: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith*.

**Liberal Daily Newspapers in Egypt** – On October 22, 2003, media mogul Emad Adib began to run a weekly liberal newspaper, *Nahdet Misr*, or *Egyptian Renaissance*. By May, 2004, Adib began to run this paper daily. On June 7, 2004, a group of prominent Egyptian businessmen, including Salah Diab, Ahmed Bahgat, and Naguib Sawiris began another liberal newspaper, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*. These privately run papers were the first independent dailies in Egypt in more than 60 years.

**Hashem Aghajari** (b. 1959) is a History Professor and lecturer at the University of Hamadan in Iran, journalist, and member of the Islamic Revolution's *Mujahideen* Organization, a reformist group. He openly condemns Iranian oppression, and has no qualms about condemning the barbarity of state-supported religious leaders in Iran. Aghajari's ideological attacks on fundamentalist Islam have earned him a death sentence by an Iranian court ("Monkey" 1). An advocate of women's rights, the separation of church and state, and religious toleration, Aghajari has become the most prominent voice of freedom in the closed, Iranian society. His aim is to create Islamic Protestantism.

The future of Islam is in the hands of these intellectuals and activists. Whether Islamist or Modernist, Muslims all over the world look to these men and women for their philosophical guidance. The strength and pertinence of their ideas will decide the course of the Arabic world and the Islamic religion.

## Conclusion

It is difficult for Americans to comprehend the mindset of terrorism—the mindset that encourages mass slaughter of innocent victims. As American Ambassador Scheiffer says, “Sometimes we look at these terrorists and try to attribute some sympathetic cause to their crimes. Surely, they did this because they were poor, or oppressed or somehow misunderstood. We are disturbed that our fellow human beings could have so little regard for another life. But we must be careful not to rationalize with our value system acts that are essentially irrational” (4). Since September 11, 2001, it has become clear that the terrorists are not simply a small group of uneducated fanatics. Islamism is a popular revolutionary movement in virtually every country, and consists of many college-educated, middle- and upper-class individuals. It seems to defy reason that well-educated, reasonable individuals would support a violent ideology that disregards the sanctity of human life. How, then, has Islamism become so prevalent in the Muslim world and what is the best approach to the war on terror?

There are several factors contributing to the proliferation of Islamism. First, there is a general sympathy in the Muslim world for the Islamist cause. Even if they do not agree with the means that the Islamists use to achieve their ends, many Muslims have been indoctrinated throughout their lives to view America as the “Great Satan” that has devastated their lives, homeland, and religion. The primary vehicle for spreading the “America only wants to hurt you” mentality is the *madrassas*, or religious schools attended by most Muslim children in the Arabic world. While being taught that no one can question the Koran or the instruction of the clerics, Muslim children listen attentively as their teachers repeatedly tell them that American modernity is evil. An eighteen-year old student at a *madrassa* recently said to an American journalist, “Everything you do is wrong. America’s wealth, its resources are in the hands of Jews, and they are not using it for a noble cause” (“Spreading Hate” 1). Having heard his whole life that America is a cesspool of immorality, this student has internalized the Qutbian notion that America, the embodiment of modernity, is Islam’s enemy.

Another reason for the proliferation of Islamism is that Islamism is a conformist ideology supported by a number of influential, powerful individuals in the Islamic world. Whether they wield the power of state, church, or academia, Islamist ideologues like Sayyid Qutb and his long line of supporters and imitators tell Muslims that they must support the Islamist ideology completely if they are true Muslims. Most Muslims have no reason to distrust the well-respected authority figures known for their knowledge of Islam and its application to world affairs. When the authority figures teach Muslims that sacrificing oneself to the Islamic community is good, then it seems reasonable that if the Islamic community is under attack by an evil force, a good Muslim will defend the community with his life.

As fear breeds conformity, the threat of physical violence is another motivation for many Muslims to accept the Islamist ideology. Islamists demand that Muslims support the Islamist cause or they will be condemned to the House of War along with the infidels. This condemnation, or accusation of apostasy, means that dissenters and their families face assassination. The constant threat of physical violence for even appearing to disagree with the

basic tenets of Islamism is enough for the average Muslim to support it, even if they do not agree with it. On the flip side, if a Muslim actively supports the Islamist cause, he knows that he will be the beneficiary of peer support and, according to Islamists, God's grace.

Although America is known as the primary defender of modernism, modernity has been the driving force of civilization since the European Enlightenment. Modernity's devotion to reason and the perfectibility of man, which depends upon man's inalienable right to guide his own life, are universal principles that have been accepted throughout much of the world. American Ambassador Scheffer elucidates the value of modernity: "Democracy, tolerance, free speech and a free press are in the ascendancy. Freedom of religion has never been more important. These universal values—values that have brought a lasting peace to much of the world—are values that appeal to the best in human beings, not the worst. They foster hope, not hate" (Schieffer 7). When the principles of freedom are absent, cities, countries, and continents become bastions of violence and oppression. Collectivist ideologies resembling Islamism have repeatedly shown that they breed hate and violence. Russian communism produced gulags that annihilated over twenty million people. Nazism produced the Holocaust that annihilated over six million Jews and nearly six million others. These collectivist ideologies, and many like them throughout the world, steal men's souls. By destroying the individual, collectivism destroys man's respect for life.

The environment of dependency, conformism, and hate embodied by Islamism is as destructive to Islam as it is to the West. In this environment, progress is impossible. By attacking their own governments, Islamists put an enormous financial burden on their communities and create a constant state of instability. By condemning and killing innovative thinkers within their communities, Islamists eradicate the possibility of technological and ideological advancement. By forcing women into a submissive role, Islamists effectively extinguish the benefits that half of their human community can bring to the Muslim world. If the Islamists persist in their destruction, "there will be no escape from a downward spiral of hate and spite, rage and self-pity, poverty and oppression, culminating sooner or later in yet another alien domination" (Lewis, *What* 160).

The prospect of a prosperous future for the Arabic world is not gone, however. Good societies come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. The one common feature of good societies is that they all revere freedom. These societies understand that freedom is not debilitating—it is essential to human life. When reason reigns, the perfectibility of man is accepted, and individuals are free to reap the natural rewards gained through self-improvement, then all of mankind benefits. The Arabic world is filled with strong, intelligent, and innovative individuals. If they can focus their energy on the development of their culture through individual ability and respect for their fellow man; if they can embrace freedom, creativity, and innovation as the means to stabilize and enhance their lives; if they can accept responsibility for the present and future and reject the blight of victimhood, there is no doubt that they will once again be a major force on the world stage.

It is imperative for the safety and security of American society that we not passively wait for our aggressors to recognize and institute the values of freedom. America's passivity in the face of past aggressions has been a catalyst for the recent increase in attacks. The lack of response to such atrocities as the *Cole* bombing and the quick withdrawal from Somalia have created the illusion that we are a much weaker nation than previously thought, and therefore, we are prime for destruction. Responding to atrocities, however, entails more than military action. Although

military action is necessary to physically defend our nation, it is not enough to alter the philosophical war that has been ongoing for centuries.

America's first task is to encourage the education of its citizens. Islamism's great achievement, which has given them immeasurable insight into American culture and allowed them to formulate the successful strategies for attacking us, is their familiarity with American culture. Sayyid Qutb's trip to America is an excellent example of Islamist knowledge of America. Not only did Qutb study at an American college, he was also able to study the people and culture surrounding him during his stay. Qutb's revolutionary ideology was borne from his direct knowledge of American culture. On the other hand, it is startling how little Americans know about the Middle East. Unfamiliar with Middle Eastern geography, politics, religion, and culture, it is impossible for Americans to understand the motivation of Islamist aggression and how to combat it successfully. Once Americans fully understand what they are facing with Islamist aggression, proper strategies can be devised that will extinguish the ideological enmity emanating from the Islamic world toward the West.

The war on terror is above all an ideological war that must have an ideological solution. The proper strategies to win this philosophical war must include ideological change that will encourage respect between Islam and the West. One way of achieving ideological change is to help the seeds of freedom in the Islamic world to grow by supporting the brave men and women modernizers who seek a brighter future for the Islamic world by opposing Qutbian ideology which calls for a puritanical, closed social system that arbitrarily uses violence to maintain its position of power. Although promoting the ideals of a liberal-democracy will bring enormous benefits to the Muslim world, it is essential that we not force American ideals down anyone's throat. Instead, discussion needs to begin with a common ground. Once a common ground has been ascertained, intellectual debate can ensue. It is within honest, intellectual debate that the answers to the problems of the world are solved. Even in the event that an agreement is not forthcoming from intellectual debate, the doors of communication have been opened and the building blocks for respect and future deliberation have been introduced.

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