

Jihad Al-Kuffar

A COLLECTION OF THREADS POSTED IN 2010

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RELIGION IS NOT THE REAL ISSUE

September 19, 2010

If we refer to the most widely accepted meaning of the terms *terrorism* and *intolerance*, there is no denying that terrorist activities and violations of human rights can often be ascribed to organizations and institutions which define themselves as *Islamic* and claim to act in the name of God: the same God who revealed the Koran to the Prophet Muhammad, according to Muslim tradition.



A typical example of terrorist propaganda is found in a document which was published in London in 1998. At that time, Osama bin Laden, together with other members of the (self-proclaimed) "World Islamic Front", issued a *fatwa* "in compliance with God's order" and stated that "the ruling to kill the Americans and their allies (civilians and military) is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it *in any country in which it is possible to do it*".

For those who are interested in the whole document, an English version can be found on the web page (still available in October 2011) www.library.cornell.edu/collddev/mideast/wif.htm.

Another significant example (which gives clear evidence of fanatic thinking) is concerned with the statements of Mullah Omar in 2001, when the Taliban blew up the Bamiyan statues of Buddha. The destruction took place in accordance with the ruling of the Supreme Court of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In the Mullah's opinion, it was necessary to demolish the statues because the objective of the Emirate was to implement the "Islamic order". Further details can be found, e.g., on the web page (still available in October 2011) www.rawa.org/statues.htm.

Now, if we read some books concerned with the Islamic religion, we often find people (especially Western analysts) who portray Islam in negative terms and try to prove that its nature has nothing to do with the concepts of peace and tolerance. To this aim, they usually quote specific verses of the Koran and specific Hadiths (reports about the life of the Prophet Muhammad) which seem to prove their thesis.

Naturally, when we read religious essays coming from the Muslim world, we find completely different opinions. A much-heard statement is that the Koran is often misquoted and that many would-be experts living in the West do not even know what they are talking about. The self-evident conclusion is that Islam is a "religion of peace".

Despite some interest in the subject, I don't even think about taking part in a debate over the main features of any religion. I would never dare to do so, because the force of reason and the force of logic have no power when we deal with questions of faith: nothing can be proved or denied with absolute certainty. In addition, sacred texts usually consist of so many words that different arguments can be supported on the basis of convenient citations.

So, instead of focusing on disputable explanations, I prefer to talk about objective facts, which, in my opinion, are of fundamental importance in this context.

Fact #1. Most religious movements are inspired by "sacred texts" which can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the historical period, on personal interests, on current ethical principles. If this were not the case, it would be impossible to understand the "reasons" behind centuries of persecutions (of the pagans, of the Cathars, of the Jews) and centuries of atrocities (e.g., Massacre of Jerusalem in 1099, Massacre of Constantinople in 1204), which were systematically committed by Christians in the name of God (although today an overwhelming majority of Christians claim that it is absurd to wage wars in the name of a religion).

Fact #2. All civilizations were always characterized by a significant religious component. Unlike other key elements of any culture (architectural motifs, grand operas, dress codes, martial arts, which heavily depend on local historical developments), the religious spirit is the common heritage of different peoples, even when they never came into contact with one another. Just think about the Ancient Egyptians, the pre-Columbian settlements in America and the Hindu communities that lived in Asia over two thousand years ago. In addition, religious authorities (pagan priests, rabbis, bishops, imams,

brahmins, shamans) have always had a dominant role, everywhere. This is also evident when we consider the Indian society of the past and its traditional "varnas" (social classes). Not surprisingly, brahmins were members of the highest caste.

Fact #3. Also in recent times, new religious movements had remarkable success (e.g., Mormonism since the early 19th century, Jehovah's Witnesses since the late 19th century, Unification Church since 1954).

Given the above FACTS, I am inclined to assume that:

1. Even in a modern age, it may well happen that a smart, brilliant preacher succeeds in building a large following through an innovative approach which is related to religious issues.

2. Proselytes are likely to mushroom when religious arguments come together with social diseases (typical of countries filled with radical militants) and patriotic feelings (frequently inspired by the disgraceful legacy left by the Colonial Age).

3. The chances of winning support seem excellent when a religious movement (or a self-proclaimed religious movement) has something in common with a well established doctrine. A good example of successful religions is given by the history of the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, who are miles away from the mainstream of Christianity, but are inspired by the teaching of the Gospels.

Last but not least, it should be observed that in many circumstances faith and religion just serve as efficient weapons in the hands of cunning preachers, who are ready to shout "This is the will of God," as probably happened at the time of the crusades. Sure enough, chronicles often mention unscrupulous leaders and warlords who did not hesitate to exploit the religious spirit, which is inherent in mankind, in order to satisfy personal ambition and thirst for power.

So, my obvious conclusion is that PERSONAL AMBITION and THIRST FOR POWER, not religious arguments, are the driving forces when terrorism comes into play. Religion (or "pseudo-religion") is just a tool. No more.

Therefore, I believe that one thing is Islam, another thing is an "ad hoc doctrine", whose purpose is to create world-famous leaders out of individuals who would be destined to remain ordinary people if they did not succeed in manipulating the minds of desperate men and desperate women. Of course, this is just a point of view.

However, as I said before, we should possibly talk of FACTS instead of insisting on disputable opinions. And there are some facts which appear to be of special interest:

Important fact #1. Far too often, suicide bombings, aggressive attitudes and outrageous statements fill our lives because there are terrorist organizations that act in the name of a God.

Important fact #2. Whether we like it or not, more and more Western people tend to associate grisly events to the religion which suicide bombers, radical militants, fundamentalist leaders continue to present as their own source of inspiration. And this attitude (this *natural reaction*) of an increasing number of Western people is a threat to peace and a major cause of mutual misunderstanding.

Important fact #3. More and more innocent Muslim believers (who have nothing to do with terrorist attacks) feel offended by an oppressive climate of diffidence. And this sense of unease (this *natural reaction*) of many innocent believers is another threat to peace and another cause of mutual misunderstanding.

In the West, most opinion makers and political pundits are quite concerned with religious beliefs and often make a stand against their fellow citizens who associate Islam with violence.

In principle, I have nothing to object. However, I get a bit puzzled when I realize that politically correct gurus continuously try to stop hostile statements against Islam, but never have anything to say to Muslim believers. As far as I can judge, it would be much better if these believers were encouraged to openly express their disgust (and dissent) when alleged Muslims commit certain crimes.

To put it in a nutshell, I can understand that furious crowds take to the streets when a Pope quotes Emperor Manuel II Paleologos or when a Florida pastor talks about burning the Koran, but it would be great to see the same crowds show their rage when Christians are killed in Pakistan or Somalia. And it

would be even greater if it were possible to make a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious effort in order to have zero tolerance on rabble-rousers who promote criminal behavior, as happens whenever an extremist is allowed to spread a message of this kind: "Europe, you will pay. Your 9/11 is on its way".

Of course, I might be wrong, but I am firmly convinced that a major contribution to mutual understanding and reciprocal trust can only be made through a common will to crackdown on the people who call for hatred and violence.

After all, this is a simple question of "fair play". If each person should be granted the right to preach violence in the name of freedom, it must be acknowledged that (again in the name of freedom) each

person should be granted the right to say what he wants about key aspects of any religion. Conversely, if individual liberties can be denied whenever there is a risk of offending religious groups, the same individual liberties should be denied as soon as fundamentalist militants start to express radical opinions with the aim of inciting more and more extremists to violence and hatred.

This issue has always been in my mind. And when I started writing the preface of *Jihad Al-Kuffar*, I thought it deserved at least a brief comment:

Some might object that there is no point in considering opinions that sound like fabrications of sick minds and should be dismissed as irrational by-products of individual pathologies. This kind of remark would be in harmony with well-established diplomatic practices, but it does not seem wise to downplay the role of terrorist propaganda and recruitment procedures, since collateral damage (also outside the Western world) is not negligible. In fact, we are talking of "pathologies" that have tangible consequences in terms of human lives; for example, about two hundred casualties in Bali, Indonesia (October 2002), about ninety in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt (July 2005), about two hundred in Mumbai, India (November 2008), not to mention the massacres in countries like Afghanistan or Iran or Iraq or Pakistan, where radical views have been accepted or even encouraged for decades. Certain "fabrications" are also likely to build undesired walls between people who feel threatened and those innocent, open-minded believers who are unjustly associated with unscrupulous criminals responsible for gross misinterpretations of religious teachings (as repeatedly stated by leading Islamic scholars).



COMMENTS

Remark by Danny MD on 10/15/2010 at 05:46:15 AM

Subject: **Religion is not the real issue.**

Content: You talk about hundreds of casualties in Indonesia, Egypt and India. What do say about the bombs dropped in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Gaza? Have you ever thought about their effect? Did you know that the number of civilians who got killed is much more than a few hundred people? Have a careful look at reports and statistics before giving random numbers.

Remark by sam b. on 09/26/2010 at 10:16:39 AM

Subject: **Religion is not the real issue.**

Content: I liked your comment about pseudo-religious sentiments. I'll share a story with you - nothing to do with Islam, but suitable to the context. I've known a bunch of crooks for many years - people who support religious charities, never miss a religious exercise, but their behavior, gosh - lies, fraud, fake documents.

Tell you what. I could swear blind they don't believe in their god. Nor do they believe that their god will ever judge their sins. Their religious affair looks like a business - a support to their professional activity, when they need consultants, need accomplices in public offices, need people who will protect them from law enforcement, etc.

Remark by Ironside **on** 09/25/2010 **at** 06:32:39 AM

Subject: Religion is not the real issue.

Content: You made a point. But I would be more careful while talking about religious spirit. You seem to suggest that religion and business are the same thing. It is not true. At least, it is not always true. Make specific examples, if you wish to maintain your opinion. There's an awful lot of business going on, I agree on that. However, plenty of people around the world do show what solidarity really means and do not get a single penny out of it.

THE BOMBING OF DRESDEN

September 19, 2010

I am referring to a devastating attack that was launched in 1945, between February 13 and February 15. Details can be found, e.g., on the web page (still available in October 2011)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Dresden_in_World_War_II.



Even though more severe air raids had already hit German towns (such as Hamburg), the Bombing of Dresden was a mind-blowing event that left a wake of controversy, probably in view of the special beauty of the historical site (also known as the 'Florence on the Elbe'). Later, when the war was over, a long debate took place on whether that massive destruction had been the terrible cost of a strategic military operation or the inevitable effect of a deliberate act of wanton aggression. Actually, I remember reading that even Winston Churchill talked about the Dresden events with a disgusted tone.

Nowadays, a similar attack could hardly be conceived by any military power of the Western world. With an increasing concern over the loss of human lives, and after the development of smart bombs, the tactics of the past have become completely obsolete. As everyone knows, the purpose of today's airstrikes is to hit sensitive targets: military installations, power plants, airports, bridges, industries, and so on. In a war scenario, innocent civilians still get killed, but there is no reason to believe that they might become the designated victims of systematic carpet bombings. A proper example appears to be the NATO attack on Serbia in 1999. No matter if you agree or disagree on the decision to launch air raids, civilian losses were substantially limited despite the huge number of bombs.

However, when moral standards come into play (assuming that moral standards have ever had a real role in war games), we notice different approaches, depending on where we turn our heads. Ironically, and tragically, moral standards can turn into a deadly trap for many unfortunate victims, including civilians—including Western people. In fact, vast regions of the world do not share the humanitarian concerns of the West and succeed in transforming ethical principles into a powerful weapon against the West itself: against its military, against its economy, against its resources, against its citizens, who often become victims of terror attacks just because it was not possible to get rid of fanatic fighters (owing to strict moral standards). The gist of the argument is that self-imposed rules of engagement shape a future which is full of unknowns and contribute to the development of a world which looks like a minefield, since terrorists cannot be targeted when the lives of their fellow citizens are at stake. The Western moral code does not allow attacks on civilians ("innocent civilians" by definition, even when they openly support, help and protect terrorist groups which collect weapons, prepare explosives and launch Qassam or Katyusha rockets). The most immediate consequence is that the alleged military power of the West seems to be pure myth.

Let me put things straight: the Western world is already a hostage to terrorist organizations and to leaders who are widely recognized as active sponsors of international terrorism. There is plenty of evidence, as we learned during military operations of the recent past. Just remember the case of rocket launchers that were placed in densely populated areas, or the case of women and children who were put in the line of fire, or the case of terrorists who used to hide in residential areas. Not to mention the case of nuclear plants which are being built near large towns.

That said, the end result is obvious: in such a context, terrorist organizations, as well as certain regimes, cannot be defeated. In fact, the Taliban still have a grip on several regions of Afghanistan and their radical fighters cannot be seriously challenged, because we live in constant fear of harming civilians or alleged civilians. Similarly, the ghost of Saddam Hussein is still lurking in Iraq and the entire country is packed with al-Qaeda affiliates, because in 2003 it was not even conceivable that the borders could be sealed and that everything moving within twenty miles from Iran or Syria could be immediately hit with an airstrike.

Mind you, I do not intend to speak with nostalgia of the time of Tamerlane, when the people of Baghdad and Isfahan were massacred either because they had failed to surrender without fighting or because they had failed to pay taxes. Nonetheless, I am convinced that the West should feel free to destroy any safe haven and any sanctuary that could be used by terrorist groups. And surgical military action should start as soon as possible—no matter how much it is going to cost. Even when the cost is to be assessed in terms of human lives. In my opinion, it is a question of survival. In the long term, it may also be a way to save lives, because the Earth has always been full of people who have no qualms about implementing aggressive policies as long as they are allowed to do so. But sooner or later they

might cross a critical threshold and the consequences might be much more dramatic than the effects of preventive military action. It already happened in the past, when men like Gamal Nasser, Slobodan Milosevic, Muhammad Omar and Saddam Hussein thought they could do whatever they wanted. And no one should ever forget the case of Adolf Hitler. All these leaders were encouraged by a "pacifist" trend, but eventually something happened: either a sudden change of mood around the world or the unexpected presence of enemies who were disposed to choose the military option.

At this stage, there is not much to say, but I would like to make a final remark about some feelings that appear to be popular across the world—especially in the Western world . To this purpose, I will make use of the words pronounced by a radical fighter (a character of Jihād Al-Kuffar), who appears to be extremely satisfied with the future prospects for his "holy war":

We can face any battle with optimism. After all, if diplomacy is not enough, there is no problem either. We can resort to human shields. Success is guaranteed, thanks to the Western moral code, which is so often our blessed key to victory. The age of the bombing of Dresden is gone forever. Today's rules of engagement are different: the infidels abhor the idea of harming civilians, who are innocent by definition, even when they openly help and protect mujahideen. In accordance with common morals, we are entitled to kill without being killed. To get it straight, the West has decided to be defeated. We just need to put women and children in the line of fire in order to prevent the attack of the enemy and feel safe.

COMMENTS

Remark by D. Shaleaki on 10/21/2010 at 04:36:20 PM

Subject: How to deal with the terrorist threat?

Content: Think of how many people died during the violent attack on Lebanon and Gaza. Enough is enough. Let's stop state terrorism rather than thinking about the damage caused by a few rockets in Ashelon. And let Iran build its power station. There's nothing to fear. It never sent a bomber to drop bombs on innocent civilians, as happened in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Vietnam, etc.

Remark by TheRacer on 09/20/2010 at 04:34:23 PM

Subject: The bombing of Dresden.

Content: Actually, the victims of NATO raids in 1999 were much less than the victims of inter-ethnic fighting. It would be nice to know statistics about the number of casualties per day (per day of NATO strikes as well as per day of inter-ethnic struggle). Can anybody help?

Remark by Bob, SA on 09/20/2010 at 11:59:05 PM

Subject: The bombing of Dresden.

Content: That's absolute nonsense. A human life has no price. Think about it the next time you put down your thoughts.

Remark by Marcel, F on 09/20/2010 at 08:36:37 AM

Subject: How to deal with the terrorist threat?

Content: Agree. It is time to change. We can't be blackmailed all the time and surrender to a bunch of terrorists.

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

September 25, 2010



If I am asked about *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, my answer will be immediate and there will be no hesitation in my voice. I am fully convinced that a man like Saddam Hussein had to be stopped. One way or another. Definitely, a diplomatic solution would have been much better. However, when diplomacy failed, war (unfortunately) was the most reasonable option.



Some will certainly object. Some will mention the huge loss of human lives. Some will mock the propaganda mill of high-ranking officers who continued to issue dire warnings about the deadly effects of those famed weapons of mass destruction that were never found. It is all true and undeniable, but, in my opinion, there are good reasons to look at the problem from a different perspective.

First, the decision was taken less than two years after the September 11 events. At that time, a military attack was the natural choice of a US president or a UK prime minister who could not afford mistakes related to security. They might fail to discover sarin or other toxic gases, but they could not run the risk of an attack against the United States or the United Kingdom (and, possibly, against other European countries). No matter

if many opinion makers, still today, continue to believe that we should wait until the arsenals of terrorist groups are rich enough to blow up the West or until "Iran and its Hezbollah allies have all they need to wipe Israel off the map" [words copied from Jihad Al-Kuffar].

Second, when we deal with the dramatic issue of the death toll, it is obvious that a civil society is called to make any effort to save lives rather than promote destruction. However, when *Operation Iraqi Freedom* was launched, Saddam Hussein had already committed horrible crimes. To say the least, it was hard to believe that he would redeem himself. It was hard to believe that he did not pose a serious threat to the West. After all, he had even waged a war on Iran. So, before making remarks about the number of people who have died in Iraq since the US-led invasion, it might be interesting to have a look at the statistics related to the Iran-Iraq War.

It is also worth noting that most casualties in Iraq (in the aftermath of the attack launched in 2003) were caused by gunmen who refused to accept a democratic process. Think about it. Isn't it a relevant point? In my view, it tells a lot about the so called Iraqi Resistance (and its foreign accomplices, all eager to fight after the fall of Saddam Hussein, on the pretext that they wanted to get rid of an invader). In short, I find no difference between the support that someone might give to these insurgents and the support that someone else might have given to the fascist militias after the fall of Benito Mussolini while Italy was being invaded by the Allies.

As if it were not enough, Saddam Hussein's regime is also well known for the systematic killings of the Kurds (including the chemical attack on the town of Halabja, even though there is speculation that chemical weapons might have been used by Iran, despite the open support given by the Kurds to the Tehran government during the Iran-Iraq War). And don't forget the Dujail Massacre in 1982, which was committed after a failed attempt by Shiite militants to assassinate the Iraqi president in that city. Later, in 1990, it was the time of the war against Kuwait...

At this stage, I have some questions. When people like Saddam Hussein are involved, isn't it likely that sooner or later they might soil their hands with more blood? How could anyone believe that their aides or their descendants or their disciples would not commit similar atrocities? Shouldn't we fear new conflicts, which might be much more devastating than the invasion of Iraq in 2003? Although the scale of tragedy is quite different, isn't it possible to agree that *Operation Iraqi Freedom* had stark similarities with World War II? Is it crazy to claim that Roosevelt and Churchill aimed to put an end to an era of dictatorship and oppression? Probably, it would be hard to talk about that war in a positive way, if we did not place emphasis on this objective: no doubt, WWII was the most horrible conflict in terms of human lives, indiscriminate bombings and destructive power of the weapons that were employed.

So, I am firmly convinced that President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair did what was reasonable and adequate in the circumstances, for the security of their Countries and the security of the West. In addition, they also spread the seeds of democracy, as well as their predecessors had done in Europe and Japan some sixty years before.

It can be argued that something in Iraq did not work properly. This is absolutely true, but also quite natural, because the international scenario has always been of great help to the insurgents, since the first winds of war began to blow in Iraq. Instead, the political scenario was completely different in the forties, when the Nazis and the Fascists practically vanished in thin air: in those years it did not happen that the majority of the free world continued to call for peace. At that time, most of the free world was extremely determined to fight until the unconditional surrender of the enemy. And the result is still visible: it's never happened before that so many regions of Europe enjoyed such a long period of peace.

My viewpoint on this matter is summarized in the preface of *Jihad Al-Kuffar*, when I mention the wars against Saddam Hussein:

I agree that any protester or any political pundit was free to deplore military action, starting with the Gulf War in 1991, if that protester or that political pundit believed that peace was to be maintained at all costs. Similarly, anyone can praise the insurgents who tried to avenge the fall of Saddam Hussein and opposed free elections in 2005, when the majority of Iraqis decided to cast their ballots despite terror attacks and violent intimidation. However, I do not think that people who hold these beliefs have the moral right to celebrate events like the war on Nazi-fascism or the partisan struggle against Mussolini and his supporters from 1943 to 1945. Otherwise, they do not simply express their opinions. They go far beyond: they cross the border of hypocrisy.

COMMENTS

Remark by knight Najam on 10/19/2010 at 07:58:52 AM

Subject: Iraqi Freedom

Content: Every day there is an excuse for an absurd show of force by Jewish and US forces. Bombs (often cluster bombs) = terrorism = apartheid. Isn't it enough? No circumstances can justify the hardships of refugees in Palestine.

Remark by John B. on 10/12/2010 at 06:20:15 AM

Subject: Operation Iraqi Freedom

Content: That's a damn good remark, LDK! You mean that Saddam had a right to slay Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south. An excellent idea, but let me raise a question - are you absolutely sure that the Kurds and Shiites agree with you?

Remark by LDK D on 10/11/2010 at 03:10:01 AM

Subject: Operation Iraqi Freedom

Content: After ten years of sanctions and air raids in the no-flight zone (by USAF and RAF), Saddam Hussein was within his rights to rebel and set up what the westerners call 'terrorist organizations'.

Remark by Light7 on 09/26/2010 at 03:31:42 PM

Subject: How to deal with the terrorist threat?

Content: Actually, the claims about the Iranian connection in Halabja look like pure fantasy. Have a look at this site: <http://hnn.us/articles/1242.html>.

Apparently, even Tariq Aziz admitted using chemical weapons against the Kurds. Yet, someone still cries on that war and regrets the execution of Saddam Hussein!!!

SOLIDARITY



September 26, 2010

After reading the first comment about my note entitled *Religion is not the real issue*, I thought that I needed to explain something more clearly. And I really felt sorry as I realized that my words might be interpreted in the wrong way.

As a matter of fact, when I posted that note, my only aim was to focus on a potential risk (which easily turns into a serious risk when the purpose of religious or pseudo-religious doctrines is to promote violence). The word for that risk is *brainwashing*. And *brainwashing* has lethal effects in many circumstances, especially when terrorist activities come into play.

That said, I have deep respect and admiration for so many people who assist the poor, take care of orphans and are always ready to give relief to the victims of natural calamities. I also feel sure that solidarity is a necessary step in the fight against underdevelopment. More importantly in this context, it is obvious that a large number of people involved in aid projects are inspired by religious sentiments (no matter their religion).

When I made my comments in the previous post, I just wished to point out that positive sentiments (not necessarily religious sentiments) might be exploited by unscrupulous crooks. Positive sentiments might easily become a weak spot. And a cruel enemy might be there, ready to strike. Whether we like it or not, the world is full of people who are too generous, too naive—people who have blind trust in some institutions (religious and non-religious). People who do not realize how many charities are quite different from what they look like. Everything can be transformed into a double-edged weapon: a religion, a political party, an environmental charity, a medical unit, etc.

No doubt, the best and safest way to provide aid is to do it personally. When this solution is unpractical (as often happens), it might be a good idea to choose transparent organizations and learn about the details of money flows: does a certain institution need \$1 for its survival (out of \$100 received from donors) or does it need \$99 for the "bare necessities of life"?

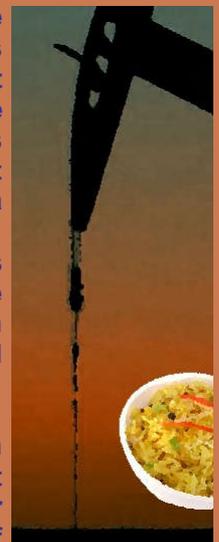
After all, I don't think there is anything wrong in encouraging people to be careful when they give money. Even better, I believe that any legislation should enforce strict controls on institutions and common citizens, whenever money is raised for humanitarian purposes. It would be great, for the sake of donors and for the sake of honest charities.

So, coming back to the point, I do not certainly want to deny the positive impact of many secular and faith-based organizations that promote solidarity and actively help the needy. And I do know that their success is due to the intrinsic nature of man (including his religious spirit). I just feel that a bit of caution is advisable and might improve the system: the contribution of honest organizations would be publicly acknowledged and aid projects would be more successful.

I apologize for some opinions which probably require a more diplomatic approach. But I usually prefer to go straight to the point, because history is filled with many sad examples. In my view, it would be silly to ignore the problem.

I have always had these feelings in my mind. And when I started writing the preface of *Jihad Al-Kuffar*, I decided to put down some words about this topic:

before sharing the enthusiasm of welfare organizations, we should remember that donations sometimes wind up in the wrong hands. Sure enough, big money can do a lot of good but it may also become a lethal temptation. The Oil-for-Food Program seems to be another instructive page of history.



COMMENTS

Remark by Rocky Shimshon on 10/27/2010 at 05:06:24 PM

Subject: Solidarity

Content: The Oil-for-Food Program needs some comments. At that time, Saddam Hussein also gained political power and plenty of cash for his needs. As far as I know, one way of getting money consisted of buying humanitarian goods from companies that were ready to give kickbacks to his corrupt officials. Another source of illegal earnings was a surcharge on the Iraqi oil. The deal was clear. Do you want our stuff, mate? Well, add some bucks, and fill our pockets. Next, there were the Muslim brothers - the generous countries around Iraq. Nothing could be easier than selling oil (and, maybe, other merchandise) to Jordan or Syria. By the way, do not forget Turkey. What is more brilliant, however, is that Member States of the United Nations had full knowledge of the trafficking. I'm sure I read something about their connivance. Anyway, if we bring together all different aspects of this extraordinary business, we probably see the main reason behind the idea of an Oil-for-Food program.

Remark by mike on 10/02/2010 at 07:33:28 AM

Subject: Solidarity

Content: Basically agree, but you seem to forget one thing. In countries with high levels of corruption, who actually receives financial aid? Who controls local bosses?

Remark by manuel77 on 09/29/2010 at 07:26:40 AM

Subject: Solidarity

Content: Too many charities run out of any control . And we often discover that they are virtually free to support terrorist groups.

MID-TERM ELECTIONS

November 3, 2010

Mid-term Elections 2010

In the aftermath of the Election Day, there seems to be serious concern (dismay) among many politicians and voters who have been dreaming of a new Golden Age since November 2008. Two years later, an unexpected reality has surfaced: nice words, eloquence, fluency, elocution are not enough to face and solve any specific problem. And the task of solving problems is particularly hard when the destiny of a nation is at stake.

Two years later, however, there are probably people who do not care a damn about the Mid-term Elections and have good reason to be happy with recent political developments. I am thinking of the personalities who had to grant the Nobel Prize for Peace in 2009. Apart from some panic and chaos caused by the surge strategy in Afghanistan a few months after the Nobel Prize ceremony, everything is working according to plan. Whoever sticks to politically correct principles can rest easy. He just needs to take a quick look at the headline news.

Radical leaders and terrorist organizations start to feel confident and make their presence felt on any possible occasion. Iran is making progress in Iraq and Lebanon. In Turkey, Ataturk's secular system is falling apart and Ankara's National Security Council has recently stated that Israel is a central threat to Turkey's security (while Iran and Syria are not even mentioned—as well as the terror attacks of fundamentalist groups that continue to strike Turkey). Military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are carried out by giving the highest priority to the safety of civilians or alleged civilians: no matter the cost of human lives when victims are Western soldiers or local troops. Syria is increasingly undermining Lebanon's political independence by offering continuous support to Hezbollah. Fundamentalism is flourishing in Pakistan. Last but not least, the Taliban are constantly assured that Afghanistan will soon turn into a safe haven because the US will pull out its military forces by the end of 2013.

Coming back to the Mid-term Elections and its fallout, I am sure that something important (something positive) is going to happen: the US Administration will do its best to find a new route in an attempt to solve domestic problems (maybe starting with a massive intervention to help a failing economy). There are still two years to go before the next Elections and, with an adequate policy, more favourable winds will certainly start to blow. However, it might also be worth thinking about security. After all, any initiative to provide a better future is inevitably useless in a world where Evil is free to roam without restriction—is free to roam without credible countermeasures.

We will see. In the meantime, good luck, Mr. President.

I would like to make a further remark and say a couple of words about international politics, even though this issue did not play a crucial role on November 2. Personally, I tend to look at the Republican Party with more confidence and, as I said before, I am convinced that security comes first: in a world struck by terrorist attacks, a naive approach can be quite dangerous. And when I think about international politics, I continue to feel the influence of the decisions taken by statesmen like F.D. Roosevelt or J.F. Kennedy or L.B. Johnson. In 1945, despite Winston Churchill's efforts, there was no way to seriously consider the threat posed by the Soviet Union: half of Europe was candidly handed over to Stalin. In the early sixties, all possible action was taken to start the Vietnam War and, later, all possible action was taken to fight that war in the worst possible way. Back to the forties, I think that H.S. Truman should have made an effort to provide a remedy to previous mistakes and should have tried to deal with Korea more efficiently. Next, fifty years later, between 1994 and 1996, the support given to the Taliban by the US Administration was far from being a good choice. And what about the period between 1977 and 1980? Well, the only reasonable option is to draw a veil over the whole sorry affair. It's much better to think about the period between 1981 and 1988—it's much better to think about the exceptional ability of the Americans to get out of the tunnel when times get hard.

As for today, it's too early for me to draw any conclusions. I prefer to wait and remain true to the feelings I had some months ago, when I revised my manuscript for the last time. Although I regretted that J.S. McCain (and, before him, R.W.L. Giuliani) had lost the opportunity to win the White House, I was favorably impressed by the Afghanistan troop surge which was ordered by President Barack Obama in 2009. My attitude is reflected in the comments of a radical militant, the alleged author of the diary. His words, according to the story, date back to January 2000 (when G.W. Bush took office as US President) and are taken from chapter 7 of *Jihad Al-Kuffar*. The militant does not like the new president and looks forward to better times for his business:

The Great Satan might soon fall in the hands of statesmen who hate military actions and abhor the idea of sending troops overseas. It is a reasonable and likely event, since more and more Western people, including the Americans, tend to support certain political views.

No need to say that what seems good to a radical militant is, in my opinion, a curse to the Western world. And vice-versa. So, if the militant is happy with political leaders who 'abhor the idea of sending troops overseas', an Afghanistan troop surge should definitely be considered, in my view, a positive event—provided that it comes together with a proper overall strategy.

COMMENTS

Remark by Samuel on 11/13/2010 at 09:13:35 AM

Subject: Elections

Content: Quite an experience for the GOP, but it did not pick up the Senate. Anyway, the big issue is economy and jobs. I think that the Western world should start to see its limits. It cannot get involved in military action. We simply can't afford it. Worse luck, right now the United States doesn't drive anything seriously. For years America has been in the hands of China, which continues to give money to Washington.

THE AXIS OF EVIL



November 27, 2010

Jihad Al-Kuffar, undoubtedly, is a book that focuses on the persistent threat posed by radical militants who feel inspired by religious or, possibly, pseudo-religious sentiments. However, as clearly pointed out on several occasions, *Jihad Al-Kuffar* aims to draw attention to any regional development

that undermines the security of the West, to any international scenario that is potentially dangerous, to any example of self-destructive policies that were implemented by Western governments and to any valuable contribution given by farsighted leaders to the defense of their homelands.

Even though I am well aware that my viewpoint is not popular and will never be part of the mainstream of modern diplomacy, I feel obliged to mention the continuous efforts of a US Administration that was fully committed to providing a satisfactory level of protection to America and Europe. I feel obliged to pay tribute to one of the few world-leaders who have clearly identified the key enemies of the Western society and have seriously worked to stop the flood that is preparing to devastate our civilization: President George W. Bush.

It can be (rightly) claimed that President George W. Bush and his Administration did fail to achieve many important aims. For instance, Iraq is still in complete turmoil, Afghanistan is more than unstable and the entire Western world was hit hard by a severe economic crisis in 2008. Nonetheless, the US policy in the years from 2001 to 2008 gives evidence of a sound and clear vision of the major problems that were likely to be a roadblock on the way to progress and civilization. And these problems fall under the label of 'Axis of Evil' (January 2002).

By now, one problem has been practically removed: despite the troubles that still affect the Iraqi Region, the Western people who really care for their safety should (hopefully) understand that Iraq is not a global minefield any more—as it used to be years ago. In addition, some Western people might also take notice of a remarkable side effect: terrorist organizations (together with their sponsors) felt the 'moral' duty to put a lot of resources into the Baghdad area and eventually were unable to properly plan new attacks in the West. Instead, two problems still exist and one of them has come out in the form of artillery shells. After the last deliberate act of aggression (or, more precisely, after the last deliberate act of terrorism) in the Island of Yeonpyeong, the true nature of the adventurers who still belong to the Axis of Evil is evident. Unfortunately, it is also evident that there are only two immediate (practical) solutions—either the unconditional surrender of the West or a military action. It might be objected that a third solution does exist (a possible change of the Korean context when we arrive at the fourth or fifth generation of the Kims dynasty), but this is not a practical solution—of course, in my opinion. Given the present international scenario, the unconditional surrender appears to be the most likely outcome of the crisis. However, in the near future, new developments might be possible. Even China might become an ally (at the very least, a silent ally) and return a favor. After all, China still owes a debt of gratitude to the rest of the world, which did not lift a finger when Tibet was invaded. Perhaps more importantly, the Chinese people should feel obligated to the Western world in view of their economic boom. In fact, there is no denying that the outstanding economic progress of China is due to the skill and efforts of its citizens, but it is also true that everything changed when the Beijing government decided to take a lesson from the capitalist system. This fact is briefly mentioned also in the preface of *Jihad Al-Kuffar*:

as soon as possible, East Europe, and even China, probably unhappy with the poor performance of the communist doctrine, started to develop a different economic model.

COMMENTS

Remark by Steven on 12/06/2010 at 12:23:51 PM

Subject: Axis of Evil

Content: James, you are quite right. However, as I looked at articles concerned with the new Korean defense minister on the Foxnews website, I found at least some comments about the shelling of the Island of Yeonpyeong and about the words of the new minister, which seem to be encouraging.

Remark by James K. on 12/04/2010 at 05:19:37 AM

Subject: Axis of Evil

Content: Several remarks seem to be appropriate. Despite the US-Korea drill, there is a global effort to ignore the problem. Apparently, the ultimate aim is to make the public forget the North-Korean attack. I have been browsing through the cnn, foxnews, bbc, jerusalem post etc. websites for days and I never found a single comment. Today I had a look at the <www.koreaherald.com> website. All I could find was an article about the new defense minister - not a word about the reason behind the appointment of a new minister!

IRAN: A NUCLEAR POWER



December 23, 2010

The case of Iran is an emblematic example of Western policy. In a climate dominated by a strong desire to preserve peace at all costs, no one ever took the decision to solve the problem at a time when a military operation could be carried out without the risk of spreading nuclear material. After all, the search for peace has always been a key objective of liberal democracies: the majority of the people can hardly accept that it is wiser not to exceed a certain threshold. With rare exceptions, criminal regimes can work undisturbed and are given a free hand. History repeats itself. Unfortunately, there is a common effort to ignore significant events of the past. How many people are willing to reflect on the Munich Agreement in 1938? How many people are willing to reflect on the attitude of the advocates of peace who did not want to die for Gdansk in 1939? How many people are willing to reflect on the long talks with Milosevic, which were held in the nineties with the aim of maintaining peace? [At that time, the diplomatic wrangling simply allowed new massacres to take place and eventually failed to prevent the bombing of Serbia.] How many people are willing to reflect on the huge number of diplomats who induced Saddam Hussein to believe that Iraq would never be attacked?

Some will certainly object that Iran has been a peaceful republic for a long time and has never perpetrated an act of aggression against its neighboring countries. The glaring obvious reply is that Iran is, at the very least, behind Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations, especially the ones that operate in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iran was also involved in the *Karine A Affair*, in 2001, when a ship loaded with missiles, rifles, mines and explosives was seized by Israel's Navy: the crew was Palestinian, the cargo was to be smuggled to Gaza and the weapons came from Iran. Finally, Iran is openly committed to wiping Israel off the map.

However, there seems to be no point in discussing the policy of a country that might pose a serious threat. As a rule, the Western establishment always takes a stand against military attacks, even when the political scenario creates the opportunity to rein in the dangerous practices of rough states. No one is blinder than he who will not see. Or, to put it in another way, no one is deaf than he who will not listen. So, it came as no surprise when everyone was ready to turn a deaf ear to the voices from the Arab world, especially from Saudi Arabia. After all, there was no need to wait for the cables released by *Wikileaks* in order to understand the dominant feelings in the Middle East. The message was clear (and is still clear). A strong Iran is not welcome, because it is an unreliable country with over seventy million people and an efficient military apparatus. In addition, the education level is high (and everybody knows that education at the service of terrorism is a further potential danger). As if it were not enough, most Iranians are Shiite, while the vast majority of Muslims are Sunni. So, there is one more thing that should be considered before opposing any form of radical intervention: probably, in the Islamic world, just a few allies of Iran would seriously complain about an attack on its nuclear facilities.

That being said, the voice of reason might send an important warning: *'Remember that it is not possible to take certain initiatives without the approval of China and Russia. Therefore, any Western power must forget any military operation in Iran, even if it gets the green light from Saudi Arabia or, maybe, from the majority of the Arab world. In this specific case, there is a further obstacle, as Russia is directly interested in the Iranian nuclear program.'* It is all true, but it is also true that Russia has a wide interest in Chechnya. And China has a wide interest in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (which, by the way, is well known for its oil reserves and natural gas production facilities). Let me get this straight: I would be really surprised if China and Russia were not glad to deal a fatal blow to the military capabilities of the major sponsor of international terrorism. I admit that they would never openly approve an attack, but I firmly believe that a fair deal could be easily struck: a few air raids in exchange for a few stern notes of protest.

I close with some words from Jihad Al-Kuffar (Chapter 11). They probably look cynical, but I am pretty sure that they reflect a well accepted way of thinking. The scene is in the West Bank and the alleged author of the diary (a radical militant) is talking about the Palestinians: desperate people, at the mercy of leaders who have always imposed miserable living conditions in order to create an international problem—in order to have a perpetual pretext for condemning Israel. The comment in the diary is extremely explicit:

[in the present context, the Palestinians might even die] under nuclear bombs dropped by Iranian ayatollahs

who are used to sending their children on minefields and have no reason at all to bother about a possible genocide of Palestinians if there's just a chance to get rid of Israel by exploiting weapons of mass destruction.

COMMENTS

Remark by MMan on 12/24/2010 at 07:35:00 AM

Subject: Iran

Content: I would not be surprised if I heard that some Palestinian leaders (especially the ones who live outside Palestine, in golden exile) earnestly pray for the Iranian nuclear problem.

A WORLD OF SAFE HAVENS



December 31, 2010

The media has given little attention to a recent episode. So, most readers are probably not aware of a diplomatic incident between Brazil and Italy. At the end of 2010, the relations between these countries became rather tense because the Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva refused to extradite an Italian citizen, Cesare Battisti: a communist hardliner who was pretty active in the late seventies. Born in 1954, this militant was jailed in 1972 (on a charge of robbery), in 1974 (robbery and kidnapping), in 1977 (robbery). Later he joined a terrorist organization (or, if you wish, an extreme left subversive group) known as *Armed Proletarians for Communism*. In the years 1978-1979 he was involved in the killings of four people, including a police officer and a counter-terrorism agent. According to the investigators, he took part in three murders and had a key role in the planning of the fourth assassination. After being arrested in 1979 and after escaping from jail in 1981, he spent some time in France and Mexico.

Back in France, he could live a life of bliss under the protective umbrella of a far-sighted doctrine conceived by President François Mitterand. This left-wing leader came up with the great idea of opening the doors of France to a large number of hotheads who had been condemned or were likely to be convicted in other countries. When Jacques Chirac took office as president of France, things changed. However, every problem was easily solved: Cesare Battisti simply vanished in thin air. Still in good shape, he reappeared in Brazil, where someone succeeded in putting obstacles in his way: in 2007 he was even arrested. But it was just a snag. Brazil is a country full of resources and the story had a happy ending. On December 31, 2010, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva took his historical decision. There will be no extradition and a Happy New Year is ahead.

As often happens, France and Brazil are the first countries that are forced to pay for their naive policies, which aim to help various criminals (or, at the very least, are forced to pay for their policy of extreme tolerance). I am sure that everyone remembers the civil unrest in France (October-November 2005, November 2007) and the shootout with traffickers during a police operation in Rio de Janeiro (November 2010). After all, when certain people are given a free hand, sooner or later they impose their will. Not surprisingly, the Wahhabi and the Taliban were free to develop their theories in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, respectively—and the effect of their presence is often visible in these very countries. However, I do not want to insist on this subject. I prefer to speak in general terms. Most of all, I wish to point out that many governments, for one reason or another, tend to protect criminals of any kind. And these criminals often receive any possible benefit that can be granted by the law.

Let's take the case of Italy. Today (December 31, 2010), its President, its Prime Minister, its Foreign Minister and a myriad of dignitaries express feelings of surprise, disgust, dismay because Brazil has refused to extradite a militant who was convicted in absentia of murdering four people. But...

If Italy were able to deal with prisoners in a more efficient way, there would be no problem, since the convict would have never escaped (or, maybe, would have been legally set free by an Italian judge after a few years in detention, as already happened in the past to many murderers—especially killers involved in terrorist activities). In addition, Italy itself is an overgenerous country that often made a great contribution to the freedom of people who might have deserved to go to jail.

Jihad Al-Kuffar puts emphasis on this issue. In fact, the main characters spend some time in Italy and the book discusses several interesting episodes related to the Italian judicial system. Here, I just wish to mention the case of Youssef Magied al-Molqi, a terrorist who was one of the hijackers of an Italian cruise liner in 1985, killed a disabled passenger, was sentenced to prison in 1986, escaped in 1996, was seized again a few weeks later and was ultimately released for good conduct in 2009.

Jihad Al-Kuffar brings the 1985 hijacking into focus, especially in Chapter 6, when a radical militant starts speaking to a young brother in arms about the attack on the Italian ship. According to the story, the two fighters talk to each other in October 2000. Suddenly, the second militant makes some comments:

You're You're talking of the Achille Lauro, the Italian cruise liner—yes, I remember. My parents used to mention Youssef and his sensational outbreak of virtue. They were crazy about that fearless man who had glorified the world of mujahideen. He is the one who killed a disabled Jew in front of his wife and threw him out

of the ship together with his wheelchair. At that time, all of us felt a sense of power, especially when we heard about a sound defeat of the United States, just after the hijacking of that ship. Believe me; I will never forget those wonderful days of pride and victory. The Americans had intercepted an Egyptian aircraft and forced it to land at a NATO airfield in Italy. They wanted Abu Abbas and the hijackers who were on board. No way! The Italian government had a strong desire to protect our fighters and didn't allow the Yankees to capture any militants. It preferred to give freedom to Abu and his fellow mujahideen. It was farsighted enough to know that the nations of the Middle East are next-door neighbors of the Europeans and are like an ocean that is welling up []. And if a storm begins, the dimensions will not stay limited to Palestine; Europe may get hurt [*]. Anyway, our brother Abu is still in Baghdad, as free as a bird.*



[*] Sentence copied from a statement by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as reported by an article dated October 20, 2006, posted on the web page <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/10/20/iran.europe/index.html> (still available in October 2011)

COMMENTS

Remark by Marco on 06/09/2011 at 01:43:16 PM

Subject: Out of jail

Content: Sorry for being too enthusiastic last month. At that time the Brazilian authorities were just pretending to serve justice. By now, Cesare Battisti is out of jail and free to start over again. It's fresh news. Everything is confirmed.

Remark by Marco on 05/17/2011 at 02:38:42 AM

Subject: Still in jail

Content: Apparently the Brazilian Authorities have just decided to keep Cesare Battisti in jail. At this stage, I would not complain that the convict is still in Brazil, since in Italy he might find an easy way to be released or forgiven or even praised (at least by some politicians) for his revolutionary activities.

Remark by Marco on 01/17/2011 at 05:00:39 AM

Subject: Italy and Brazil

Content: Great news from Italy. While an army of judges, public prosecutors, policemen are involved in a massive campaign to investigate some friends of the Prime Minister (who is guilty of winning a vote of confidence on December 14, 2010), an alleged 'Ndrangheta boss (an alleged leading figure of a criminal organization located in Southern Italy) has been released from jail after serving about four years of a 24-year sentence. Why? Because it took four years for a judge to register the judgment (instead of 90 days, as prescribed by law). I am sure that the judge had more important things to do, but there seems to be one more reason for Italy to solve its judicial problems before complaining with Brazil or other countries. By the way, another convict (condemned to a life sentence) was released less than a month ago as a result of a procedural error.

Remark by Jimmy63 on 01/02/2011 at 01:51:38 PM

Subject: Achille Lauro and more

Content: No doubt, many people expressed outrage at the early release of terrorist Al-Molqi, in view of its crime: the assassination of Leon Klinghoffer, a disabled passenger who was killed just because he was a Jew. Interestingly enough, a few years later an Italian terrorist (Mrs. Silvia Baraldini, jailed in the US) was allowed to move to an Italian jail after a strange agreement between the United States and Italy. No wonder she was soon released on the pretext of health problems. Later she was also given a job by a local administration!!! I really do not see any reason for Italy to argue with Brazil over this Cesare Battisti!!!