

Ideas That Make People Kill.
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Between the 16th and 18th centuries, Europeans engaged in mutual slaughter over religion: the Catholic-Protestant wars. Religion was not the only issue; the birth of nation-states added poisonous nationalism to the fray. The scientific and industrial revolutions added another element. Catholic states were fighting a rear-guard action in defense of the feudal world. The Protestant states, over time, advanced all the ideological changes that we value: participatory governance, religious tolerance, emancipation of women, and an economy that produced middle class majorities.

Fighting over borders is straightforward; fighting over ideologies is not. When people are "true believers" in anything, even death is no longer an impediment. Otherwise rational human beings can become mindless fanatics seeking the death of all who do not share their belief and willingness to die for the cause. Suicide bombers illustrate this process.

Islam is a religion with no central authority (such as a Pope). Over the centuries, many different schools (interpretations) of Muslim jurisprudence sprang up as the religion spread across the globe. But early in the 20th century, a new form of Islam emerged, an ideology influenced by Fascism, and based on reviving the 7th century Islam of the Prophet Mohammad and his companions. These fanatics believe that they must revive early Islam's mission to convert non-Muslims by force, persuasion, or terror when necessary, defending every horrifying attack by citing Islamic history and religious texts.

The new wrinkle is that they use modern weaponry, modern medicine for their leaders, and modern means of communications and propaganda. Saudi Arabia's bonanza of oil money has taken this campaign global, supporting it with money, mosque building and staffing, and brainwashing schools throughout the Muslim world. They unconvincingly profess alliance with us in our "war against terror."

Ordinary people following Islam are in the middle of this war. A growing number of Muslims living in the west are "cultural" Muslims, like most Jews and Christians in the modern world. They revere the best in their religions and do not literally practice the worst. Some do not follow religion at all. But others living around the world are foot-soldiers carrying out terror attacks against ordinary Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, and modern states. This is not precisely a religious war, but it is a war based on one interpretation of that religion. The terrorists are true believers. The cynical leaders of ISIS, al Qaeda, al Shabab, Boko Haram, Hamas, and others, recruit and brainwash young men and women who find out too late that they have been used. Defection from these cults, like defection from early Islam, is punished by death. Decapitation has returned from the dark ages, along with slave markets.

But there is light at the end of this tunnel. It has been too little noted that the forces of Muslim modernity are finally fighting back. The long awaited Islamic reform movement has begun in the US. Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser has founded the Muslim Reform Movement, representing 14 other Muslim reform groups. Their declaration of principles includes human rights, secular governance, and rule of western law. This modern declaration conflicts with the Cairo "Islamic Declaration of Human Rights," which defines human rights as anything that Sharia law mandates: child marriage, stoning for sexual offenses, amputation of limbs for theft, lashing for criticism of the state, and death for "insulting Islam." Cairo Human Rights are an "alternate system" that the UN has not challenged.

This "alternate system" is creating martyrs of women, journalists, bloggers, homosexuals, judges, and artists. The punishment for "insulting Islam" is death. A Pakistani court acquitting a Muslim mob of 155 that torched homes in a Christian neighborhood in Lahore because a Christian man had supposedly "insulted" the Prophet. This fits Cairo's "Human Rights" standards.

The Islamists have overreached. Their attacks on the US, India, Britain, Spain, France, Belgium, Australia, Indonesia, and Germany should remind us what Israel has always known. This is not just an Israeli/Palestinian conflict over turf. It is a global conflict over whether Western values or those of murderous nihilists will prevail. We defeated the Nazis and Communists. We will win this one too.

682 words

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