

Let Us Now Praise Muslim Apostates

Fred Siegel and Sol Stern write in [*Why I Am Not a Muslim*](#) (modeled after Bertrand Russell's [*Heretic*](#), Ayaan Hirsi Ali recalls how she came to realize the price that she would have to pay for exercising her free-speech rights: "From the moment I first began to argue that there was an unavoidable connection between the religion I was raised in and the violence of organizations such as al-Qaida and the self-styled Islamic State . . . I have been subjected to a sustained effort to silence my voice." In 2004, Theo van Gogh, Hirsi Ali's collaborator on a Dutch film about Islam's oppression of women, was stabbed to death on a street in Amsterdam, where she was then living. The Islamist killer, Mohammed Bouyeri, left a note warning that Hirsi Ali was next. She now travels with bodyguards, while Ibn Warraq writes under a pseudonym—prudent precautions, since apostasy remains a capital crime in 13 Muslim-majority nations, including Somalia and Pakistan, the native countries of the two writers.

Outrageously, Ibn Warraq and Hirsi Ali have found no sanctuary in America's centers of higher learning, where they regularly find themselves denounced as "Islamophobes." But they have shrugged off the calumnies and continued to think about the most serious threat facing the Western democracies since the end of the Cold War. Their two recent works, Ibn Warraq's [*The Challenge of Dawā: Political Islam as Ideology and Movement and How to Counter It*](#), encourage readers to reflect on the striking parallels between the ideological challenges that America and its allies confronted during the long struggle against international Communism and the current battle against jihadist terrorism.

It might seem counterintuitive to see similarities between an avowedly atheistic revolutionary movement, promising salvation

on earth, and the religion of Islam, which guarantees its adherents a sweet afterlife. In reality, Communism was a quasi-religion for its true believers, and Islam has doubled as a totalitarian political system. The West's victory over Communism was achieved primarily not on battlefields but through a war of civilizational ideas. Millions of people in the free world were once seduced by the utopian allure of Marxism and its kindred ideologies. Communism's progressive apologists finally had to face the truth in part because of the testimonies of courageous men and women who had witnessed totalitarian movements from the inside. Like today's Muslim dissidents, Communism's apostates were denounced by many Western liberals as "reactionaries" and "warmongers."

A signal event in what historians came to call "the cultural Cold War" was the 1947 publication of [*Leaving Islam*](#), a worthy successor to *The God That Failed*. These chilling accounts of Islamist practice from within could serve as a predicate for mobilizing other Muslim reformers to join the struggle against Islamist expansionism. Such a counteroffensive of ideas—a new cultural Cold War—must proceed by way of evidence-based examination of the historical and religious roots of today's violent Islamist movements, undeterred by false accusations of "Islamophobia." As Ibn Warraq announces in his new book's title, the task ahead for this reform movement is to reveal the "Islam" in Islamic terrorism—not to persecute innocent people but to call things by their right names.

The first step in this project is to challenge the "root causes" explanation of jihadist terrorism, which remains all too prevalent among Western commentators. Neither poverty, nor lack of education, nor the Arab-Israeli conflict, nor American foreign policy, nor the Crusades can explain the Islamist war against the Western democracies, Ibn Warraq writes. Jihad is a fundamental expression of the Koranic doctrine of "commanding right and forbidding wrong," he argues, and thus disconnected from contemporary social circumstances.

Islamists themselves seldom invoke poverty as a major grievance. In 1979, the Ayatollah Khomeini explained that “economics is a matter for the donkey. Our people made the revolution for Islam, not the Persian melons.” After the Manchester suicide bomb attack in May, the ISIS agitprop website Dabiq told the truth, for once: “The fact is, even if you were to stop bombing us, imprisoning us, torturing us, vilifying us, and usurping our lands, we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam.”

In *The Islam in Islamic Terrorism*, Ibn Warraq refutes dominant narratives in the Western media and in the universities that portray Islamic terrorism as a response to poverty and oppression in the Arab world—or regard it as part of the revolt against economically exploitative Western imperialism and colonialism or a reaction to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land. He also derides the view—shared by the Bush and Obama administrations—that the United States is fighting a war against some kind of generic “terrorism” or “violent extremism” and that the Muslim faith is in no way implicated in this planetary struggle. Americans are not the only ones devoted to this fallacy. After several jihadist attacks in Britain during the month of Ramadan, the furthest Prime Minister Theresa May would go was to call the atrocities a “perversion of Islam.”

Jihad is an expression of the Koranic doctrine of ‘commanding right and forbidding wrong,’ Ibn Warraq argues.

Perhaps May should read Ibn Warraq’s book. He shows that Islamic terrorism against infidels, as well as against fellow Muslims, has broken out periodically over the past 1,300 years, typically during one of the faith’s recurring “purification” campaigns. The West, Ibn Warraq demonstrates, now confronts a threat as serious as—and, in some ways, similar to—twentieth-century fascism and Communism. In a

striking passage, Ibn Warraq offers a kind of Islamism 101: “[T]here is a seamless path from the acts of the Kharijites in the seventh century, passing, *en route*, the violent religious riots in ninth-, tenth- and eleventh-century Baghdad, fifteenth- and seventeenth-century Istanbul, eighteenth-century Najd (Arabia), and the nineteenth-century Wahhabis of India known as the Hindustanee Fanatics, to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and the modern *jihadists*.”

The author of ten books on Islam and the editor of three others, Ibn Warraq integrates vast knowledge of the Koran, Sunna, and Hadith with modern scholarship on Islamic thought. He studied in England under W. Montgomery Watt, an eminent scholar of Islam. When Islamic fundamentalists issued a fatwa against Salman Rushdie after he published *The Satanic Verses* in 1988, Ibn Warraq adopted his pen name—Ibn Warraq literally means “son of a papermaker” in Arabic, though it is more generally known as “son of a bookseller”—fearing that he, too, might be targeted for his writings on Islam.

Western apologists for Islam employ various strategies to obfuscate the ties between Koranic doctrines and religiously motivated murder. Following the Manchester terror attack in May, a reporter for Canada’s *Globe and Mail*, for instance, blamed the killing of 23 concertgoers on anti-ISIS and anti-Assad bombings in the Levant. Other journalists pointed to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the rhetoric of Donald Trump, and England’s failure to assimilate the bomber, Salman Abedi, an ISIS devotee of Libyan origins. (Anyone who reads Ibn Warraq’s book won’t be surprised to learn that Abedi lived off the generosity of the British welfare state—he never worked and never attended college, despite receiving a government education stipend.)

As Ibn Warraq observes, the section of the Koran known as the “Verse of the Sword” abrogates all other verses on war and peace and sets the tone of hostility toward Jews and Christians that runs throughout the religious text. The

section reads, in part: "Fight [q`atil`u] those among the People of the Book [Jews and Christians] who do not believe in God and the Last Day, do not forbid what God and His Apostle have forbidden, and do not profess the true religion [Islam] until they pay the poll-tax out of hand and submissively." In a more contemporary vein, the Hamas Covenant makes clear that Israel must be destroyed not merely because it is a "Jewish state" but also because of the enduring Islamic principle that any territory once controlled by Muslims must be returned to Islamic dominion. Similarly, Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, declared that it is the right of Muslims to "restore to the Islamic empire its glory."

Islamic anti-Semitism is not a twentieth-century doctrine given additional potency by the Nazis, Ibn Warraq shows. It is deeply embedded in all the religion's sacred texts, including the Koran, the Sunna, and the Hadith. For American and Western policymakers, this textual connection is key to understanding the motivation of Hamas (also known as the Islamic Resistance Movement) and its close ally, the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Islamic holy texts are even relevant for understanding the sources of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to Ibn Warraq, it is in the life and works of the founding father of Palestinian nationalism, the Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Hussaini, that one clearly sees the confluence of the original Islamic commandments and modern Arab and Palestinian Jew-hatred. Relying heavily on the scholarly work of Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, Ibn Warraq notes that the mufti not only succeeded in Islamicizing the Palestinian resistance to the Zionist project; he also was responsible for radical Islam's survival in the 1950s and 1960s and its 1970s revival.

In *The Challenge of Dawa*, Ayaan Hirsi Ali adds heft to Ibn Warraq's historical analysis of Islam with practical suggestions on how the West can launch an ideological counterattack against the jihadists. As a Muslim apostate and an American patriot, she has deliberately remained politically

neutral and bipartisan, calling out both the Bush and Obama administrations for their responses to the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath: “Two successive administrations have approached the problem of political Islam with a completely flawed strategy: the illusion that a line could somehow be drawn between Islam, ‘a religion of peace,’ adhered to by a moderate majority, and ‘violent extremism,’ engaged in by a tiny minority.”

Neither administration understood that Islamist terrorism is driven, not by a few “bad actors” or poverty and oppression, but by Islam’s key doctrine of *dawa*, which Hirsi Ali defines as “the organizational infrastructure . . . that Islamists use to inspire, indoctrinate, recruit, finance, and mobilize those Muslims whom they win over to their cause.”

Yet Hirsi Ali sees possibilities for a change. She singles out and quotes Donald Trump’s August 2016 campaign speech in Youngstown, Ohio, in which he made this dramatic promise to the American people: “Just as we won the Cold War, in part, by exposing the evils of communism and the virtues of free markets, so too must we take on the ideology of Radical Islam. . . . Our administration will be a friend to all moderate Muslim reformers in the Middle East, and will amplify their voices.”

Trump pledged that, if elected, he would establish “a Commission on Radical Islam—which will include reformist voices in the Muslim community.” This was candidate Trump’s best speech on terrorism and the Middle East. Hirsi Ali believes that the new administration can be persuaded to adopt a strategy of directly confronting the ideology and religious roots of radical Islam, which would begin by recognizing that “the primary goal of *dawa* by Islamists is to destroy the political institutions of liberty and replace them with strict sharia.”

Hirsi Ali also takes note of the parallels between the fight

against Islamist terrorism and the cultural Cold War against Communism. "Dawa is to the Islamists of today what the 'long march through the institutions' was to twentieth-century Marxists," she writes. "It is subversion from within—the abuse of religious freedom in order to undermine that very freedom." But she also cautions that the international Islamist apparatus has unique advantages in carrying out its proselytizing mission in non-Muslim countries. Islamist mobilization, she explains, enjoys protection as an ostensibly "religious" activity—thus, it succeeds by deception.

Hirsi Ali backs her conclusions by taking readers into the heart of darkness of Islamist movements in the United States and Europe. From the earliest days of Islam, the concept of *dawa* was used to persuade unbelievers to accept—with the help of violence, if necessary—Muhammad as the messenger of God and the Koran as the literal word of God. "Dawa," she writes, "had the purpose of acquiring a following so devoted to Muhammad and his mission that they would not only live as Muslims but sacrifice their homes, their ties to their kinsmen, their wealth and offspring, and even their lives to follow Muhammad."

Flash-forward to twenty-first-century Islam. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the world's leading Sunni clerics, unapologetically proposes that *dawa* should become the instrument by which Islam conquers the West and reestablishes "the Islamic caliphate system." To achieve this goal, al-Qaradawi encourages the true believers in the United States and Europe to "have their own religious, educational, and recreational establishments" and "to have your small society within the larger society" and "your own 'Muslim ghetto.'" "

Hirsi Ali believes that the *dawa* project is proceeding on schedule. Europeans and Americans expected that the Muslim immigrants they welcomed would assimilate and adjust to democratic values. That hope has effectively been shattered in Europe. Hirsi Ali cites reliable opinion surveys showing that

the vast majority of European Muslims believe that Muslims should return to the roots of Islam and that there is only one interpretation of the Koran. That does not allow for much secularism or democracy.

As for the U.S., the 2.6 million Muslims in the country today are projected to expand to 6.2 million by 2030, an annual rate of growth twice as great as France's Muslim population. These new Americans, Hirsi Ali observes, will arrive mostly from Muslim countries where the overwhelming majority continues to believe that sharia is the revealed word of God and that apostates from Islam should be put to death. Absent an aggressive, government-supported effort to challenge these beliefs, Hirsi Ali sees only danger ahead for her adopted homeland.

Hirsi Ali signals out the Dutch intelligence agency AIVD for producing one of the most revealing reports on the menace of radical Islam in the West. This is particularly significant because the Dutch, as ruled by political correctness as any population in Europe, aren't exactly friendly to truth-tellers trying to warn them about the Islamist threat to their society. Indeed, Hirsi Ali was stripped of her Dutch citizenship under a false pretext, precisely because she was an outspoken critic of Islam. The report, "From Dawa to Jihad," unequivocally identifies seemingly innocent-sounding Muslim groups as agents of an Islamist agenda. "In particular," it states, "Dawa-oriented radical-Salafist organisations and networks from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states strongly emphasize 're-Islamization' of the Muslim minorities in the West. . . . Their efforts are purposefully aimed at encouraging Muslims in the West to turn their back on Western values and standards."

Change the date of the Dutch intelligence agency's report to the post-World War II period, and substitute the KGB and its subversive networks in the West for the networks of the *dawa*. This would produce an accurate summary of the international

Communist movement's plan to undermine European and American democratic institutions during the Cold War. The essential question is whether Western political leaders can learn the lessons of the Cold War. Will our elected leaders finally reject the doctrines of political correctness that have so far prevented them from enlisting Muslim apostates like Hirsi Ali and Ibn Warraq for the long-term ideological conflict with militant Islam? Such a project will also require recognizing that the concept of "Islamophobia" is a hoax, though it has been used effectively by leftist apologists for Islam in the West. (See "There's No Such Thing as Islamophobia.")

In 1947, *Foreign Affairs* published a 7,000-word essay, "[CIA covertly funded](#) some of these groups. Legitimate ethical issues were raised about whether aid to the anti-Communist organizations should have been advanced by America's spy agency. Yet there is little question that bolstering the pro-democracy groups, particularly in confronting the far more sinister and clandestine foreign operations carried out by the Comintern and KGB, paid off in the life-and-death struggle against Soviet totalitarianism.

In their latest works, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Ibn Warraq have produced a call to action in the United States and the free world that one might call, Kennan-like, "The Sources of Islamist Conduct." Now is the time for the U.S. and other Western democracies to recognize that combating Islamist terrorism by military means alone will not work, and that a full-scale cultural counterattack is needed to convince Westerners of the danger—and to convince Muslims in the West that Islamism is a dead end for their own communities, as well as for the entire Muslim world.

Fred Siegel is a City Journal contributing editor, scholar-in-residence at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, and the author of [Breaking Free: Public School Lessons and the Imperative of](#)

[School Choice.](#)