
ELEVENTH ANNUAL BARBARA K. OLSON MEMORIAL LECTURE

By Michael B. Mukasey*

I thank Gene for that kind introduction, and of course the Federalist Society for the singular honor of delivering this lecture. This is actually the third time I have been invited to speak at a Federalist Society convention—I'm a little bit like the tenor called out for his second encore who is feeling pretty good about himself until he hears someone in the balcony shouting, "You'll keep singing it until you get it right."

And this time I had better get it right, both because of whom this lecture is named for and who has preceded me to this podium. Regrettably, I never got to meet Barbara Olson, and so have come to know her only through her writing, which sets as high a standard for candor and clarity as any writing I have ever seen. If it is possible for work to be both of its time and timeless, hers is.

Not long ago we commemorated the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attack, and although the observance was certainly not short on solemnity, it was remarkable for the near absence of any discussion of who had perpetrated the attack, and what it is we were and are in fact dealing with. One might have mistaken what was being commemorated for some natural disaster like a flood or an earthquake.

That raises again a question that has been with us since long before 9/11, which is how a nation defined by a Constitution that sets strict metes and bounds on the government's relationship with religion can confront a totalitarian ideology based on a religion, and that regards the whole idea of self-government as a sacrilege.

Part of the reason why this question persists may be that hope persists in human affairs that bad things aren't going to happen, and if they do, they aren't going to happen again. Ever since Dr. Johnson described second marriage as the triumph of hope over experience, and likely for some time before that, people have scratched their heads over the persistence of unreasoned optimism in human affairs. And not only in private affairs.

On this very day, November 11, we mark the 93rd anniversary of the end of what was supposed to have been the war to end all wars.

In our own time, or at least in the time of some of us, a British prime minister was able to say with a straight face that a certain man with a trench coat and a toothbrush mustache was a person who could be reasoned with, and had given his assurance that he had no further territorial demands.

After the death of Joseph Stalin, we heard that each of a string of his successors gave us reason to hope that the new premier was a man of peace. Usually, that pronouncement came first from some U.S. politician returning from the funeral of the predecessor of whoever had come to power. They had spoken

to the new guy, and he had convinced them that he was indeed a man of peace. Often that had at least in part something to do with the fact that the new guy drank scotch, or listened to jazz, or had some other highly significant life attribute. And then over time, the optimism faded.

And so it is now, with what I think has been too quickly called the Arab Spring, a phenomenon that I will get back to a little later on.

But right now I want to talk about how it is that ten years after 9/11, and in fact more than sixty years after one of the early Islamists declared that our society was incompatible with his religion, more than twenty years since the first act of violence in this country traceable to Islamism, and more than fifteen years after Osama Bin Laden made specific what was already apparent by declaring that he and others like-minded were at war with us, we still seem to grapple with what it is we are dealing with.

In a sense, we are constitutionally ill-equipped to deal with it. Perhaps because of bitter experience with the role of religion in public life in the 17th and 18th centuries, our Constitution in its very body—not just in the much-celebrated Bill of Rights—in Article VI, barred any religious test as a qualification for any public office. And then of course there is the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which as currently interpreted reads religion out of the public arena to the point where even a prayer at an official school function—be it a graduation or a football game—is forbidden. We tend to think of religion, if we think about it at all, as only one aspect of a person's life, and a private aspect at that.

So in a sense it is natural for people who live in such an atmosphere not to be on the lookout for attack from others to whom religion is not simply a part of life, but is life itself, and life in which religion has a heavy political component. But that is where the attack is coming from, and 9/11 certainly was not the beginning.

Actually, as a matter of history, Islamism, insofar as it holds this country in a weird combination of awe and contempt, has been incubating for about as long as we knew about the other two "isms" that we successfully beat back in the last century.

As a movement distinct from the religion of Islam itself, Islamism traces back to Egypt in the 1920s when the loosely organized Muslim Brotherhood was established by a man named Hassan al-Banna, a primary school teacher. Al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood as a reaction to the modernizing influence of Kemal Ataturk, who had dismantled the shell of what was left of the Muslim caliphate in Turkey, banned fezzes and headscarves, and dragged his country by the lapels—and it had to be the lapels because he wanted men wearing suits, not robes—into the 20th century.

Al-Banna's principal disciple was also an educator—a bureaucrat in the Education Department of the Egyptian government named Sayyid Qutb, who caused enough trouble in Egypt to get himself awarded a traveling fellowship in 1948, the year al-Banna was killed in violence generated by the Muslim

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Brotherhood. That fellowship was intended to have the benign effect of getting him out of the country.

It did have that effect, but regrettably for us, he chose to travel to the United States, and in particular to Greeley, Colorado. Now I think it would be hard to imagine a more sedate place than post-World-War-II Greeley, Colorado, but for Sayyid Qutb it was Sodom and Gomorrah. He hated everything he saw—American haircuts, enthusiasm for sports, jazz, what he called the “animal-like mixing of the sexes,” even in church. His conclusion was that Americans were, as he put it, “numb to faith in art, faith in religion, and faith in spiritual values altogether,” and that Muslims must regard, as he put it, “the white man, whether European or American . . . [as] our first enemy.” He said Muslims must make this “the cornerstone of our foreign policy and national education.”

Qutb went back to Egypt, quit the civil service, and joined Hassan al-Banna’s Muslim Brotherhood.

Qutb and the Muslim Brotherhood continued to agitate for a return to Fundamentalist Islam. They welcomed Nasser’s coup against the corpulent and corrupt King Farouk in 1952, but then became disillusioned when Nasser failed to institute Sharia Law or even ban alcohol. Qutb opposed Nasser, and was arrested and tortured. However, he continued to write and agitate for Islam and against Western civilization, particularly against Jews, whom he blamed for atheistic materialism and said were to be considered the worst enemies of Muslims. He was released for a time, but eventually was re-arrested, tried for conspiracy against the government and hanged in 1966.

Many members of the Brotherhood fled to Saudi Arabia, where they found refuge and ideological sustenance. Qutb’s brother was among those who fled and taught the doctrine in Saudi Arabia. Among his students were Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian who would become a leading Al Qaeda ideologist, and a then-obscure Osama Bin Laden, the pampered child of one of the richest construction families in the country. And the rest, as they say, is history.

That history did not come to these shores on September 11, 2001, or even on February 26, 1993, when a truck bomb went off in the basement of the World Trade Center, killing six people, wounding hundreds, and causing millions of dollars in damage in what would eventually come to be known as the first World Trade Center bombing. Rather, it came at the latest in the 1980s, when a couple of FBI agents spotted a group of men taking what looked like particularly aggressive target practice at a shooting range in Calverton, Long Island.

When the agents approached, they were accused of what we now call racial profiling and backed off. In November 1990, one of those men participating in the target practice, El-Sayid Nosair, would assassinate a right-wing Israeli politician named Meir Kahane after Kahane gave a speech in the ballroom of a Manhattan hotel. The shooting was treated by the Manhattan DA as the lone act of a lone gunman.

When the 1993 World Trade Center bombers demanded freeing Nosair from jail, it became apparent that the Kahane assassination was not the lone act of a lone gunman. In fact, when authorities reviewed the amateur video of Kahane’s speech the night he was killed, they discovered that one of those 1993 bombers had been in the hall when Kahane was shot in 1990,

and further investigation disclosed that another was driving what was supposed to be Nosair’s get-away vehicle. And when they retrieved from a warehouse shelf materials that had been seized from Nosair’s apartment but had gone unexamined, they saw that it included documents that called for the destruction of Western civilization by toppling tall buildings.

The man who served as the spiritual advisor to Nosair, and to the 1993 Trade Center bombers, and who had issued the fatwa that resulted in the assassination in 1981 of Anwar Sadat, Omar Abdel Rahman, the so-called Blind Sheikh—who later would issue from jail the fatwa that authorized the 9/11 attack—was tried before me, along with Nosair and several others, and convicted for participating in a conspiracy to conduct a war of urban terror against this country that included the Kahane murder, the first Trade Center bombing, and a plot to blow up other landmarks around New York, and to assassinate Hosni Mubarak when he visited the United Nations. The list of unindicted co-conspirators in that case included Osama Bin Laden, the pampered rich kid who had studied at the knee of Sayyid Qutb’s brother in Saudi Arabia.

All of this was treated as a series of crimes—unconventional crimes, maybe, but merely crimes. In 1996 and again in 1998, Osama Bin Laden declared that he and his cohorts were at war with the United States, a declaration that got little serious attention.

In 1998, our embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, were almost simultaneously bombed, and again the criminal law was invoked with the usual mantra of bring them to justice, this time in an indictment that actually named Bin Laden as a defendant.

Apparently he was unimpressed, or at least undeterred, because in 2000 his group, Al Qaeda, bombed the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen, killing sixteen U.S. sailors, and would have carried out the bombing of another naval vessel, the USS The Sullivans, but for the fact that the barge carrying the explosives was over-loaded and sank.

And then of course came September 11, 2001, and to the call bring them to justice was added the call bring justice to them, and we were told, finally, that we were at war—more than fifty years after Sayyid Qutb determined that Islamists would have to make war on us, about fifteen years after Islamists had made it clear that they were training for war with us, and five years after Osama Bin Laden made it official with a declaration of war.

If Islamism were simply about folks who want to blow up things and people, that would be bad enough, but it might be something we could deal with. After all, we have an intelligence network that sometimes, although not always, detects our enemies, and a robust military. But the violence is simply a means to an end. The end is the imposition of Sharia, which is a comprehensive framework that has spiritual aspects, to be sure, but is supposed to regulate all behavior—economic, social, legal, military, and political. Because it is all-encompassing, and lays claim to being divinely inspired, it regards the notion that people can determine the rules that govern any aspect of their lives, either themselves or through elected representatives, as anathema. Which is to say, Sharia is totalitarian, and profoundly anti-democratic.

Hints of this comprehensive framework come peeking through even in the episodes of violence and support for violence that have been the subject of prosecution in the civilian courts of this country. And so in the terrorism trial over which I presided, in which the defendants were charged with participating in a conspiracy that included bombing various landmarks in New York City—a conspiracy that was infiltrated by an informant, so we had tape-recorded discussions among the participants—there was one recorded conversation between the informant and one of the defendants as they shopped on Canal Street in New York for an electronic device that could be used as a detonator. The defendant commented that the society in this country was one in which anything was available—detonators, pornography, anything. He made the observation not out of admiration but out of contempt, and in the belief that such a society was rotten to the core and would collapse easily under pressure from militant Islam, which represented to him a source of purity.

And in the terrorist financing trial of an entity called the Holy Land Foundation in 2008, there was introduced in evidence a document entitled “Explanatory Memorandum: On the General Strategic Goal for the Group.” The group apparently refers to the Muslim Brotherhood in America. The document was written in 1991 by Mohamed Akram, a senior Hamas leader in the United States, and explains that the Islamist movement is what the memo refers to as a “settlement process” to establish itself in the United States and, once established, to pursue a “civilization jihadist” mission led by the Muslim Brotherhood, what the author Robert Spencer has described, and I think aptly, as “stealth Jihad.”

The document itself describes what it calls a “civilization-jihadist process” as a “kind of grand Jihad in eliminating and destroying the western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated and god’s religion is made victorious over all other religions.”

A case study in how this works can be found in the career of a man named Abdurrahman Alamoudi, who came to this country in 1979 and became a naturalized American citizen in 1996. He eventually used his role in nearly two dozen Muslim organizations to gain access to the White House during the Clinton Administration, to help President Clinton and the ACLU develop a presidential guideline entitled “Religious Expression In Public School,” to provide talking points to then-First Lady Hillary Clinton for a newspaper column, to help establish the Muslim Chaplain Program for the Department of Defense, and to set up one of two organizations that then were authorized to approve and endorse Muslim chaplains. He served on an unpaid basis for the Department of Defense from 1993 to 1998 screening Muslim chaplain candidates for the military. One of the chaplains he hired was James Yee, who was arrested in 2003 on charges he supported jihadists detained at Guantanamo. Those who worked with Yee at Guantanamo, uniformed and contract employees, were convicted on charges that included mishandling classified information and espionage.

Although Alamoudi would help place others in government, his own career flamed out beginning in October

2000, when he was videotaped at an anti-Israel rally outside the White House, where he noted that he had been labeled a supporter of Hamas and asked whether any in the crowd were supporters of Hamas; when he received an approving response, he added, “We are all supporters of Hamas; I wish they had added that I am also a supporter of Hezbollah.”

In 2003, he was arrested at Heathrow Airport on his way back from Libya carrying more than \$300,000 in cash he had gotten from the late Muammar Qaddafi to finance an Al Qaeda plot to assassinate then Crown Prince, now King, Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. He was extradited to the United States and pleaded guilty in the Eastern District of Virginia to terrorism-related charges. He turned out to be a senior Al Qaeda financier. He is now serving a twenty-three-year federal sentence.

How has the threat from people like Alamoudi been met? Not very well—and that applies to Administrations of both parties. After Alamoudi’s fall, his responsibility for approving Muslim Chaplains was transferred to the Islamic Society of North America—ISNA—one of the largest Muslim Brotherhood fronts in this country, named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the terrorist funding case against The Holy Land Foundation. ISNA and its subsidiaries are the certifying authority for Muslim chaplains not only in the military but also in the U.S. Bureau of Prisons, whose institutions house, as I am sure you know, a large population of potential recruits who constitute, as it were, a captive audience.

ISNA’s president, Ingrid Mattson, was invited to the White House to attend President Obama’s Iftar dinner at the end of Ramadan in 2010. You may recall that event as the one where the President announced his support for construction of the mosque near Ground Zero in New York.

Another Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organization, the Council on American Islamic Relations, or CAIR, which was also named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the Holy Land Foundation case, was until 2008 a target of outreach by the FBI, and has systematically tried to place interns on such sensitive congressional committees as Armed Services, Homeland Security, and Intelligence. The evidence from The Holy Land Foundation case established that CAIR is a Hamas front.

Obviously, there isn’t time here for a detailed exegesis on the tenets of Islam. It is sufficient to this discussion to report that the totalitarian code of Sharia that imposes itself on all aspects of a person’s life draws its legitimacy from four sources—the Quran, which Muslims believe to be direct divine revelation; the Sunna, believed to be indirect divine revelation manifested through acts and words of Mohammed; the Ijma, which are the consensus rulings of past clerics that, once they became the consensus, became part of the body of Islamic Law; and finally the use of analogy to apply an accepted principle or assumption in order to arrive at a legal ruling. According to Sharia, all of Islam is subsumed within this comprehensive code. Sharia is the law of the land within what is referred to as the Dar Al Islam, or the home or realm of Islam.

That is not, by the way, simply in Muslim countries; it is any place where Muslims can and do exercise control, or ever have. And so in some neighborhoods in European cities where Muslims exercise control, notably in France, somewhat in England, and even in Sweden, Sharia is practiced and enforced

in contravention and with the suppression of local law, with the result that some of those neighborhoods have become “no go” zones for police and fire fighters, unless they have secured the explicit permission of the local enforcers.

And Spain is regularly referred to as Andalus, a place to be reclaimed. Interestingly, the proposed mosque near Ground Zero in New York was to be named Cordoba House, after the site of a mosque built to commemorate a Muslim victory in the conquest of Spain.

The implementation of Sharia in the Dar Al Harb, which is the abode of war, or the places where Sharia is not fully implemented, is the goal of jihad. All of this is readily accessible, among other places, in a volume called “Reliance of the Traveler,” which is actually endorsed for its accuracy by Al Azhar University in Cairo, a seat of learning founded in 975 A.D. that gave us Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the cleric tried before me who was the spiritual authority behind the Sadat and Kahane assassinations and both the first World Trade Center bombing and the 9/11 attack. Al Azhar University also happens to have been the place chosen by the President to deliver his famous Cairo speech in 2009, to which he invited members of the Muslim Brotherhood, much to the consternation of the government in Egypt, then headed by Hosni Mubarak.

Sharia itself contains the obligation to wage jihad against non-believers. Jihad is obligatory on every Muslim, and it is not, as some in the West would have it, simply a personal struggle for self-improvement. It is the obligatory struggle to impose Sharia world-wide. That doctrine regards truces and treaties as simply temporary pauses in the struggle until Muslims can resume the struggle; it permits, indeed urges dissembling for the sake of Islam; there is even a word for it—taqiyyah. Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, was challenged at his sentencing by the judge when he professed his hatred for and opposition to the United States. She asked, didn’t you take an oath when you became a citizen of this country. His response was yes, but I didn’t mean it.

Are there then no moderate Muslims, none who are willing to live in peace long term with their neighbors? Of course there are, and millions reside among us in the United States as loyal Americans, and millions more reside around the world. There are even places where they are in power—notably in Indonesia, which is the most populous Muslim country in the world. Most of them simply disregard the requirements of Sharia, and are to that extent not so much reformist as unobservant.

But a brave few are actually struggling to create within the religion a theoretical and doctrinal basis for combating supremacist Islam. They include in the United States Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, who heads the American Islamic Forum for Democracy. At Princeton’s James Madison Program, an Australian academic, Abdullah Saeed, recently delivered a lecture arguing that there are ways in which one can use passages in the Quran and episodes in the life of Mohammed so as to oppose the classical Sharia. The lecture is published in the November issue of *First Things* under the title “The Islamic Case for Religious Liberty.”¹ But the regrettable part of this is that *First Things*, as I am sure many of you know, is a Catholic, not a Muslim, publication.

There was also recently published a compendium by the late Islamic scholar Abdurrahman Wahid, who was once the

president of Indonesia, who also led an organization called Nadlahtul Ulama, the world’s largest Muslim organization, with 40 million members. That organization and other Indonesian moderates have clashed directly with the Muslim Brotherhood and argued that Islamic Scripture does not require the establishment of a world-wide Islamic caliphate or the imposition of Sharia jurisprudence, which they argue is a matter of private conscience.

But make no mistake, as numerous as they may be, among those who pronounce doctrine the moderates are the distinct and weaker minority. The majority view was stated succinctly by a political leader lately prominent on the world stage: He said that the term moderate Islam is “ugly and offensive.” He said, “There is no moderate or immoderate Islam. Islam is Islam; that’s it.” That politician is Recep Tayyip Erdogan, prime minister of the increasingly powerful and influential Muslim nation of Turkey.

And what of the vaunted Arab Spring? What, indeed. As events unfolded in Tahrir Square, we in the United States saw lots of coverage of how the driving forces of the revolution relied on Twitter and Facebook, but not so much coverage of the public rape of a CBS journalist in Tahrir Square to shouts of “Allahu Akhbar,” and even less coverage of the emergence of the Sinai Peninsula as a refuge for Hamas-trained terrorists who travel freely from Gaza and who in August launched an attack that killed seven Israelis.

There was, I think, virtually no coverage at all of the return to Egypt of Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi, who had been exiled from the country by Hosni Mubarak and who delivered a triumphant sermon in Tahrir Square upon his return. Qaradawi is praised in many quarters in the West as a liberal and a reformer, who has among other things stood up for women’s rights, and so he has—even to the point of issuing a fatwa that authorizes women to participate in suicide bombings.

In Tunisia, Islamists are in control. Their leader, Rashid Ghannouchi, like Qaradawi recently returned from exile to lead his party. Barely five years ago, he called for the public hanging of Raja Ben Slama, a defender of women’s rights who taught at the University of Tunisia, and urged that she be joined on the gallows by another Tunisian free thinker, Laffif Lakhdar. But even a member of *The Wall Street Journal* editorial staff in a recent column in that paper assures us that Ghannouchi is a new breed of Islamist—with a sense of irony and of humor. Ghannouchi even assured the *Journal* editor that he would not seek to ban alcohol in Tunisia because it is well-known that alcohol is consumed privately, and he recalled that the United States had an unpleasant experience when it tried that experiment some decades ago. Quite an ironist and a humorist, and apparently the spiritual successor to those Soviets who, as we were told, must have been men of peace because they drank scotch and listened to jazz.

I would certainly concede that the Administration in which I served was hardly a model of clarity in confronting this phenomenon. We all recall that we were told immediately after 9/11 that Islam was a religion of peace—the Director of National Security and later Secretary of State, whose memoir came out last week, went so far as to say it was a religion of love and peace—that had been kidnapped by extremists. There

are reasons for that, including such diverse considerations as our experience with treatment of the Japanese during World War II, which we did not and do not want to repeat, and the relatively recent phenomenon of political correctness. But to understand how far we have come, imagine for a moment President Roosevelt telling Congress on December 8, 1941, that the peaceful Shinto religion had been kidnapped by militarists.

We have gone a whole lot further in that direction in the last nearly three years. The term War on Terror is out; in fact, terrorism itself is out, in favor of man-caused disaster. In August, the White House issued a strategy paper for dealing with what we used to call terrorism. It doesn't use the word terrorism in its title. It is called "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States." What's wrong with that? What's wrong with it is every single element of it. It's not only or even principally violence that is dangerous. The source of it can hardly be called extremism when the motivating doctrines are in the mainstream of the religion from which they spring, and empowering local partners—if the local partners are organizations like CAIR and ISNA—is more likely to worsen than to improve our situation.

The paper opens by identifying the challenge as nothing new, and tells us that "throughout history, violent extremists—individuals who support or commit ideologically motivated violence to further political goals—have promoted messages of divisiveness and justified the killing of innocents." The response is to be a "community based approach" with outreach to local stakeholders.

To the extent a villain is identified, it is Al Qaeda, which comes off sounding like some sort of motorcycle gang; to the extent Islam or Muslims are referred to, it is principally as the targets of Al Qaeda's blandishments, although why Al Qaeda would want to focus its attention on Muslim communities is nowhere explained.

There is no reference at all to recruitment either in prisons or on campus, although those are both well-known and dangerous problems.

The document is intended to sound innocuous, and it does. Small wonder that it was applauded by CAIR and organizations similarly minded.

But what is the danger of such a document? Well, take a long look at the social change that has overtaken some countries in Europe—including France and England and even Sweden—where Muslim enclaves are tolerated and even encouraged, and where Sharia rules. That's what comes of dealing uncritically through local stakeholders.

What the document also overlooks is that from 9/11 onwards, and even before, participants in successful and unsuccessful plots have been radicalized not in Muslim countries but in the West. Ziad Jarrah, the terrorist at the controls of the plane that was taken over by brave passengers over Pennsylvania, was raised in Beirut, where it is said that he never missed a party, but then went to Hamburg, Germany, where it is said he never missed a prayer. Major Nidal Hasan, who murdered thirteen of his fellow soldiers at Fort Hood; Faisal Shahzad, the would-be Times Square Bomber; Daood Sayed Gilani, a Chicago native who changed his name to David Coleman

Headley so he could pass for Christian and who pleaded guilty to conducting surveillance to help carry out the terrorist attack in Mumbai in November 2008—all of these, and many others, were radicalized in the West.

Obviously, there are limits to how a government like ours can defend itself and the society it governs. If the First Amendment's Establishment Clause means anything, it means that our government can't pick winners and losers in doctrinal disputes. That is something that Muslims will have to do on their own.

But it can take rational steps to defend itself, and avoid irrational steps that undermine its security.

First, those charged with protecting our security have a duty to understand and to teach others under their authority what the basic tenets are of the people who are trying to destroy our way of life. In past conflicts that may not always have been self-evident. Perhaps it was not necessary when we fought the Axis powers in Germany and Japan to understand all the ins and outs of Nazism and Fascism and the military culture of the Shinto religion. We could simply blast those countries to smithereens, as we did, because the evil had its home base there. But it was much more necessary to understand the enemy when we fought Communism, as Whittaker Chambers taught us, even when it was centered principally in the Soviet Union.

Also, those charged with protecting us have a responsibility to avoid strengthening the hand of those who are trying to undermine our way of life by relying on them as our principal interlocutors in the Muslim community. Again, CAIR, the Council on American Islamic Relations, is a branch of Hamas and of the Muslim Brotherhood. ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America, is another branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood traces itself back to Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb; its motto, which has not changed to this day, is "Allah is our objective; the prophet is our leader; the Quran is our law; Jihad is our way; dying in the path of Allah is our highest hope." If those are the people we empower by relying on them and reaching out to them, we not only damage ourselves by giving them entry into the upper reaches of our political system, but we correspondingly strengthen them in the Islamic community, and weaken more moderate voices.

In addition, those charged with protecting us have a duty to avoid self-censorship and self-delusion that can wind up deluding others as well. For example, the after-action report on Major Nidal Hasan's massacre at Fort Hood, which he preceded by shouting "Allahu Akhbar," does not mention the word Islam. The Army Chief of Staff said on television after that massacre that the greatest tragedy would be if it had a negative effect on the Army's diversity program.

John Brennan, a principal national security advisor and counter-terrorism advisor to President Obama, told an audience at the Center for Strategic and International Studies—that "violent extremists" attacking the United States are products of "political, economic and social forces" and should not be described "in religious terms" because to do so would create the mistaken impression that we are at war with Islam and thereby give credence to Al Qaeda propaganda.

“Products of political, economic and social forces”? Let’s review the bidding. Osama Bin Laden was a millionaire many times over; his successor, and also coincidentally the folks who planned and carried out the 2007 attack on the Glasgow Airport, are physicians; the perpetrators of the 9/11 attack were university students; Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried to blow up himself and his fellow passengers aboard an airplane over Detroit on Christmas Day 2009 is the son of the former economics minister of Nigeria. “Products of political, economic and social forces”?

John Brennan added for good measure in another speech at an NYU Islamic Center that we should not speak ill of Jihad because it is simply a struggle to purify one’s self or one’s community, and referred to Jerusalem with the Arabic “Al Quds.” Al Quds, as it happens, is Arabic for “The Holy,” and is used as a rallying cry by Jihadists to liberate Jerusalem from the infidel Jews and Christians. Interestingly, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Unit that is assigned to perform foreign sabotage and subversion, and that is alleged to have planned the execution of the Saudi ambassador in Washington recently, is called the Al Quds Force.

In the same speech, Mr. Brennan, who had once been the CIA station chief in Saudi Arabia, said that he admired the way the Saudis fulfilled their duty as custodians of the two holy mosques at Mecca and Medina, and had “marveled at the majesty of the Haj,” which he could not conceivably have done unless he is a Muslim because infidels are not permitted to set foot in either Mecca or Medina. Then he went on to add, “Whatever our differences in nationality, or race, or religion or language, there are certain aspirations that we all share. To get an education. To provide for our family. To practice our faith freely.” Rather odd from the former head of CIA operations in Saudi Arabia, where Sharia adherents permit no other faith to be practiced, where no one may even wear a cross in public. He was introduced at that speech by the previously mentioned Ingrid Mattson, head of the previously mentioned Islamic Society of North America. He reciprocated by praising her as a “voice for the tolerance and diversity which defines Islam.”

I linger on John Brennan not because he is unique, but because he is a perfect symbol of the soft-headed diffidence that has crept into public discussion of what this country stands for. Not that this is new to the point of being unprecedented. It isn’t. The smart set in the 1920s ridiculed the values and lifestyle of what they called the Booboisie; Anti-anti-Communism was fashionable in some circles in the 1950’s; a great liberal judge—Learned Hand—called proverbially the greatest appellate judge ever to sit, said in an address called “The Spirit of Liberty” that is quoted so often it has become shopworn, that the spirit of liberty is the spirit that is not too sure that it is right.

That may be if not exactly true, at least an affordable indulgence at times; it may even have been an affordable indulgence at the time he said it—in the late spring of 1944, when victory against the ism of that day was, if not exactly around the corner, at least pretty well certain. But today, when we are up against people who are sufficiently sure that they are right to fly airplanes into buildings, we had best make certain that the spirit of liberty is sure enough that it is right to keep itself—and us—alive.

I thank you again for the great honor of speaking to you.

Endnotes

1 Abdullah, Saeed, The Islamic Case for Religious Liberty, First Things, Nov. 2011, available at <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2011/11/the-islamic-case-for-religious-liberty>.

