

Exclusive: As the West Sleeps, Islamists Work on Establishing a Worldwide Islamic State

- (Part I of II)
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While we in the West sleep, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, is whispering [in Arabic](#) to hundreds of millions of Muslims how to establish Islamic states. In July he wrote two extensive columns (on [July 13th](#) and [July 22nd](#)) on the subject of the Islamic state in Arabic. Some Islamist apologists who remain ignorant of the threat of the Islamic state argue that the ascendancy of political Islam in the Muslim world is the better of “other evils” that could arise. Many Muslims and non-Muslims alike across the world, however, believe that it is self-evident that the ascendancy of political Islam will remain a significant security threat to the United States and to the West for decades to come as it has been so obviously so for anti-Islamist Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the Middle East.

This security threat is manifold. The attempt to create “Islamic” states which derive their laws from the theological interpretations of Islam and Sharia by clerics will always give rise to variant forms of internal and transnational movements which are supremacist in their worldview and thus justify various forms of terrorism against non-Muslims. Many in the state department believe that somehow Muslims are sentenced to live under the Islamist rule and rather governments which are pluralistic and are blind to a single religion are not possible under Muslims majority governments. Many of us would beg to differ. While this may be the line which the Muslim Brotherhood would like us to accept without debate, the reality is that a plurality if not a majority of Muslims refuse to subscribe to the religio-political collectivism of the Muslim Brotherhood and the now archaic concept of the Islamic state.

Up to this point, we have done very little in the public space to expose and engage the real ideological motives of the Muslim Brotherhood. The discourse over political Islam continues to grow but without reviewing source material and their discourse in Arabic we will make little headway. Some have been doing this but real time debate among Muslims is sparse to nonexistent over the subject of political Islam.

The English discourse over issues related to political Islam by the MB is hypocritically filtered for the Western audience. One need just review the [MB’s English website](#) and compare it to their [Arabic website](#). They are not simple translations of one another. Same organization, same ultimate mission, very different messaging for very different fronts in the same conflict. A real debate over political Islam will only occur when we engage the ideas they present to their Arabic audience, as well. The English version of their message plays a mere peripheral cosmetic role based out of London. The Arabic version stems from deep within their soul and reflects their home base of operations. The major difference between them reflects their dissimulation and hypocrisy. Thus, true anti-Islamist activity must center on their deeply engrained ideologies which are expressed in Arabic.

This requires a **“Counter-Project”** to refute and confront [“the ongoing Project of the Muslim Brotherhood”](#) and it will certainly take some time in its development. MB and current day political Islam took over a century to develop. I pray our response can be developed much more quickly. Just as the MB early on devised a plan as outlined in their project and effectuated at numerous meetings such as the [1993 Philadelphia meeting](#), so too should anti-Islamist Muslims begin to meet in the West and in Arabic countries and devise mechanisms of exposing and countering the ideologies of Islamist movements most notable of which is the MB. This is our mission at the [American Islamic Forum for Democracy](#).

While the origins of the MB derive from the writings of Sayyid Qutb and Hassan al-Banna, today’s spiritual leader of the MB remains Yusef Al-Qaradawi. He is the master of Islamist doublespeak. Yet, anyone with an iota of energy to search a few of his political commentaries will find a plethora of radical commentaries and outright militancy when speaking to Muslim and Arabic audiences. He has

endorsed terrorist acts, suicide bombings against Israelis in Israel and against Americans in Iraq to name a few. He has stated in April 2001 on suicide operations that “these are not suicide operations but are heroic martyrdom operations.” He has endorsed spousal abuse, death for apostates, a forward Jihad, and the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate as summarized by the [Investigative Project](#). In English he contributes to the Qatar-based [IslamOnline](#) providing fatwas (religious opinions) read by millions of Muslims [like this one](#) permitting women to perform suicide operations in Israel. He appears regularly on AlJazeera, also out of Qatar which is viewed by over 80 million daily spewing the same vacillation between militancy and his hypocritical “Middle Way” (Wasatiya) making himself appear moderate when he is in fact a radical.

Al-Qaradawi’s site in Arabic lately seems to be trying to lay the groundwork for the latest iteration and foundations of political Islam. On [July 22, 2008](#) he published a lead Arabic article explaining at length how the “Islamic State is in line with the essence of democracy.” And before that he also published a major piece at his website on [July 13, 2008](#) stating that, “the Islamic state is a civil state which derives its authority from Islam.” (translation provided by AIFD)

Let’s look at these columns and begin to dissect some possible Muslim responses to his Islamist worldview. Both of his columns seem to be laying out the strategy of how to counter the secularist argument being made for freedom by some Muslims. He feigns advancement in his writing claiming to be building upon his own MB ideological forefathers in [Abul Ala Maududi](#), the founder of Jamaat Al-Islamayia in Pakistan, and his own mentor [Sayyid Qutb](#) from Egypt. Make no mistake: while some MB leadership try to marginalize Qaradawi’s influence, he is the present day “Godfather” of MB philosophy. To quote from an [MB site posting](#) of an IslamOnline article from just a few weeks ago on July 18, 2008:

Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi is a pure product of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement. His only activist and ideological affiliation is to the Muslim Brotherhood and he has never frankly opposed it. Al Qaradawi has been defined by the Muslim Brotherhood Movement perhaps as much it is defined by him. They have been related in all stages of his life.

And [earlier in 2006 he](#) stated, "the MB asked me to be a chairman, but I preferred to be a spiritual guide for the entire nation"

In Qaradawi’s description of the [Islamic state in his July 13, 2008 column on his website](#), he in detail describes how leaders in the Islamic state are selected “by influential people.” He tries to imply that they are democratically elected but it is clearly an oligarchy. He uses examples of the first Caliph in Islamic history and discusses concepts of “shura” as being equivalent to democracy. This is quite insulting to any Muslim living in a real democracy in the United States. Yet, he implies that shura is a consultation just among the scholars or “ulemaa” alone and makes no mention whatsoever of how such a system preserves the equality of every citizen. Again his concept of democracy is clearly an oligarchy. His concept of the rule of law is Islamocentric derived from Sharia with no mention of a secular humanist approach as other real reformers such as [Mohammed Al-Ashmawy](#) have bravely discussed. Al-Qaradawi rather describes it as government’s role to ‘propagate morality and prevent immorality.’ Thus the ruling class will impose religious interpretations upon the general population. This is done through his interpretation of “Sharia” (Islamic jurisprudence) or that of a few clerics, one would presume. He clearly states that the ‘ruler’ is ‘governed by sharia’ whose provisions cannot be “canceled” by man, since they come from God. He then uses this verse from Chapter 33 in the Koran to justify the Islamic state:

Now whenever God and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice insofar as they themselves are concerned: for he who [thus] rebels against God and His Apostle has already, most obviously, gone astray. Koran 33:36

Qaradawi uses this verse to explain the Islamist concept of the rule of law in an Islamic state and the need for Muslims to submit to the rule of the scholars. Many Muslims would vehemently disagree with such an interpretation of our scripture and that verse. I believe the verse Qaradawi draws upon actually refers to an *individual* in their personal relationship with God. Nowhere does that verse refer to government or our affairs on earth. It is purely a personal discussion between God and the Muslim reader of the Koran. Conveniently, Qaradawi ignores the previous verse which stated,

And bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of God's messages and [His] wisdom: for God is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware. Koran 33:34.

Among many salient points, the most significant is the fact that this refers to recitation at home in a personal relationship of a Muslim with God. Again, not about government. It is a classic technique of Salafists to inappropriately pull out passages which they believe empowers them while ignoring the much more limiting larger contexts which have nothing to do with government and are isolated toward the individual, the family, or a specific incident in Islamic history.

Herein lies the central failure of the Islamic state. Their authority is autocratically imposed by the narcissistic belief of the so-called scholars that supposedly know the rulings of God and are the self-appointed instrument of God's ruling on earth. Qaradawi also later in the piece makes the paradoxical but true claim that in Islam there are no clergy or intermediaries between an individual and God. But yet, he insists upon a legal governmental framework which is "Islamic." To imply that all citizens of an Islamic state are free from the autocratic tendencies of a system which empowers "Sharia experts" to guide government is nonsensical. Clearly Qaradawi is confused, schizophrenic, or dissimulating - you make the call.

If Qaradawi were intellectually honest rather than deceptively promote his interpretations of the Islamic state, he would explain what he perceives as the drawbacks of Jeffersonian democracy for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He would have addressed why secular liberal democracies like the United States are inferior to his utopian Islamic state. As an American and as a Muslim I believe that the most ideal system of government for humanity is that based on the American Jeffersonian model where our Constitution is founded "under God," our government preserves the inalienable rights of its citizens guaranteed by our Creator, and our representatives argue law blind to the dogma of any one religion focusing on a humanistic natural discourse based in reason.

Qaradawi also, in his column, dismisses the European history of failed Christian theocracy as being vastly different than the Islamic state. But in perfect doublespeak never removes the "imams" or "scholars" from their position of interpreting God's laws for government and he never removes the injunction of running government by the legal tradition of only one faith versus that of all humanity. Clearly Qaradawi realizes his epistemological dilemma in ignoring the far more appealing and successful Western secular government than the Islamic state to humanity. As long as liberty-minded Muslims are unable to have an effective voice promoting liberty-based political ideologies, the ascendancy of the Islamic state as advocated by the likes of Qaradawi will continue unabated. Qaradawi is relying on the assumption that no one is going to call him out on the fact that his explanations are fraught with errors and a Salafist mentality stuck in the 7th century versus a modernist one looking into the 21st century. He claims free will for everyone and religious freedom but yet continues to advocate for the Islamic state as if its existence is an a priori assumption which cannot be disputed. Not only should it be disputed - its existence in concept is the greatest barrier to religious freedom for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is this usurpation of the domain of God by government for their own corrupting power on earth which is typical of the MB and demagogues like Qaradawi. Government should be established upon a reasoned debate between all citizens, not just Muslims, not just clerics (or scholars), and not just based upon any theology (i.e. Islam) but rather founded in reason. For those Islamists who attempt to argue that the evolution of Sharia can be based in reason, they have yet to answer why that doesn't then make their language and focus upon Sharia entirely irrelevant and archaic in the public sphere if it is to respect people of all faiths or no faith. Real reform and counterterrorism will only happen when the entire existence of the Islamic state can be questioned and the a priori assumption of clerics like Qaradawi dismissed. [Columns like this one](#) in Arabic by Al-Qaradawi can be countered in their essence through the complete intellectual de-legitimization of the Islamic state. I believe the concept of the Islamic state can be countered logically from a position of religious freedom, against oligarchy, and for "enlightenment." When positioned against Western liberal democracies founded in religious freedom, the Islamic state will never be able to live up to the same human potential for equally preserving the human integrity of every citizen and the personal nature of one's relationship with God.

And unless these so-called scholars have some sort of direct communication with God, their interpretations of *Sharia* (Islamic jurisprudence) are just human and their laws are just theocracy no

matter which way Qaradawi and his MB try to conceal it and peddle it as democracy. They may enjoy calling *Sharia* “God’s law,” but in reality it is a human interpretation of God’s laws. Thus it is no different in its power than secular laws based in reason. By clerics like Qaradawi, using *Sharia* and their interpretation of God’s will as a means to control a society, they are in fact abrogating the free will of individuals in exchange for their self-empowering clerical oligarchy.

Al-Qaradawi then takes particular effort to claim that clerics are not involved in the Islamic state since Islam has no clergy and makes the following absurd statement that “Establishing the Islamic state as the government ideology does not mean that it is a religious state.” He then ends with three observations in which he tries to repackage the Islamist ideologies of Maududi and Qutb as being non-theocratic. One should not only look at what he states but also what he does not say. Throughout his piece, Qaradawi continues to rest upon the need for societal law to be driven by *Sharia* and the Islamic state. He never answers the question of the assumed need for the Islamic state and the oligarchy it empowers by its sheer existence. He makes no convincing case for how *Sharia* can be implemented by non-clerics and also accommodate equal access to government by non-Muslims who are not schooled in *Sharia*. His entire diatribe seems to be predicated on a “Muslim-only” government founded in a common supremacist mentality of Islamists.

This is where our public diplomacy dollars need to be spent. How many of our State Department employees are following Qaradawi’s Arabic writings and its influence upon impressionable Muslims? How many anti-Islamist Muslims are we helping such that they can empower other Muslims to take on al-Qaradawi and offer an alternative to his Islamist deceptions? Slim to none.

Ayatollah Khomeini stimulated an Islamist revolution by shipping in tapes from France of his diatribes before 1979 while he was exiled in Paris. When will anti-Islamist Muslim think tanks in America begin to similarly ship in thousands upon thousands of tapes, YouTube clips, CDs, DVDs, columns, pamphlets, books, audio files and other mediums containing the ideas of liberty founded in an adherence to a personal, non-governmental Islam?

The only effective counter to the artfully deceptive description of the Islamic state by individual like Al-Qaradawi is a “**counter-project**” to express the comfort of pious Muslims with governments which are secular and classically liberal and not based upon *Sharia* but rather upon human reason and true religious pluralism in government.

Part II I will continue the discussion with a review Qaradawi’s next Arabic language defense of the Islamic state in his [July 22, 2008 article](#) entitled, “*Islamic State in line with the essence of democracy*”.

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