

Bush and Islam: Words versus Deeds

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Theme: [Religion](#)

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The wide gap between U.S. President George W. Bush's words and deeds vis-à-vis Islam and Muslims doomed to failure his speech at the United Nations on September 19, which could neither appease Muslims nor pacify the ever growing Islamophobia.

Hardly a week had passed since his speech, that Winston Churchill – author, journalist, former Member of Parliament and grandson of the former British prime minister – was speaking at an American university to condemn “Radical Islam” as posing to Western civilization a threat similar to that of the Nazis and the Soviets. (1)

President Bush has denied that the West is engaged in a war against Islam as a “false propaganda,” but confirmed his country's determination to carry on with its “war on terror” and its “great ideological struggle” at the start of the 21st century exclusively against Muslims and Muslim countries.

“My country desires peace,” Bush told world leaders at the opening of the 61st session of the UN General Assembly, adding: “Extremists in your midst spread propaganda claiming that the West is engaged in a war against Islam. This propaganda is false... We respect Islam.” (2)

Bush is also on record as saying that “Islam is a religion of peace” and praising Islam's “commitment to religious freedom,” statements that were criticized by the popular U.S. televangelist Pat Robertson.

These rare expressions of respect for Islam would have been welcomed by Muslims were they not swept to utter oblivion in the collective memory of the American public by his incessantly flowing anti-Muslim terminology: Islamic radicalism, Islamic fascism, Islamic extremism and extremists, Islamic or Islamist terrorism and terrorists, radical Islamists or Islamist and Islamic radicals, etc.

His September 19 speech was almost exclusively confined to the Middle East, an overwhelmingly Muslim region. The absence of even a reference to the North Korean pillar of his so-called “axis of evil” was revealing enough that his WWII (3) “on terror” has shrunk to focus exclusively on the Muslim Middle East.

“At the start of the 21st century, it is clear that the world is engaged in a great ideological struggle, between extremists who use terror as a weapon to create fear, and moderate people who work for peace,” he said, defining the battle lines of his WWII.

Four days earlier he identified those extremists as being “Islamic,” who “want to impose” their “ideology throughout the broader Middle East.” Earlier, on August 10, CNN quoted Bush as saying that, “this nation is at war with Islamic fascists.”

He also defined a modern Anglo-Saxon white man's mission in the 21st century as "our obligation to defend civilization and liberty, to support the forces of freedom and moderation throughout the Middle East." (4)

How can mainstream Muslims perceive Bush or the United States as respecting Islam when their overwhelming propaganda machine is producing this torrential flow of anti-Muslim terminology and their overpowering war machine is disintegrating Muslim societies to pre-state age, allegedly to defend the freedom of American people. How could a leader secure his people's freedom when he deprives other peoples of their freedoms!

Jim Lobe is a respected reporter of the Asia Times; in a recent article I misquoted him as attributing to Bush's co-ideologist, Newt Gingrich, the term "WWIII on Islam." Lobe rightly felt highly indignant that his credibility was compromised by my misquotation. Gingrich did not literally say it by the word, but he and Bush said it in each and every other word.

Bush's "strategies are not wrong, but they are failing," in part because "they do not define the scale of the emerging World War III, between the West and the forces of Islam," Gingrich said. (5)

Bush's attempt to verbally separate between Islam and Muslims in his propaganda to justify his pre-emptive American militaristic and hegemonic foreign policy is hopeless and doomed to failure.

Five years after U.S. President George W. Bush launched his global war on terrorism, this war has boiled down to a war on Islam: One cannot target all those Muslims, their countries and their Islamic syllabus without targeting their religion.

His global war on terrorism targets "Islamic terrorism" almost exclusively. "Till recently, of the 36 organisations on the U.S. State Department's banned list, 24 were Muslim. The rest were Basque and Irish separatists and leftist groups. There were no Christian, Buddhist or Hindu groups. The State Department also lists 26 countries whose nationals represent an 'elevated security risk' to the U.S. Barring North Korea, all are Muslim-majority countries." (6)

Bush's religious terminology is shooting his unreligious war in the legs, antagonizing not only the mainstream Muslims but also the non-Muslim large Christian minority in the midst of their ethnic compatriots because this minority feels threatened by his inciting anti-Muslim propaganda, which creates an explosive antagonistic environment that plays in the hands of the same extremists whom he uses as a scapegoat for his unjust pre-emptive wars.

"Ignorance" of the Middle East and its people is a false thesis that sometimes is cited as a justification for Bush's militarist policies and verbal anti-Muslim blunders. But Bush, whose country has been bleeding the region's oil wealth for a century, could not be credited even with the benefit of ignorance.

All the anti-Islamist terminology cannot blur the fact that the issue is oil. There's no question that controlling the oil and the profits from oil is a U.S. top priority in the Middle East, particularly as Washington is not only bracing for a future competition with China and India for that resource, but also is already in fierce race with Europe and Japan to take hold of the strategic asset, which is getting more precious and more expensive by the day, because whoever sets hands on it will decide who is the future leader of the globalized world

economy; hence the U.S. war on Afghanistan in the vicinity of the central Asian oil reservoir and on Iraq in the heart of the Middle East oil reserves huge depot.

In his most blatant self-contradiction Bush declared: "Freedom, by its nature, cannot be imposed, it must be chosen."

However he did not hesitate to arrogantly dictate to world leaders and whipping Muslims into line in his U.N. speech: The world "must," the United Nations "must," the nations gathered "in this chamber (U.N. General Assembly) must", the Muslim world "must," the "leaders" of Iraqis "must," the Syrian government "must;" and to the Hamas-led Palestinian government he had an outright order: "Serve the interests of the Palestinian people. Abandon terror, recognize Israel's right to exist, honor agreements, and work for peace."

Bush accuses Islamists of forcing their version of things on others while he unsheathes his sword out and high to dictate a 21st century white man mission to convert Muslims to a version of Islam that serves U.S. interests.

No wonder the National Intelligence Estimate concluded that the "pervasive anti-U.S. sentiment among most Muslims," is a "movement that is likely to grow more quickly than the West's ability to counter it over the next five years." (7)

And Bush still can't come to grips with the question of "Why they hate us." Bush's line: "They hate us because of our freedoms."

No Mr. President, they hate you because your administration and its predecessors have been for decades depriving them of their liberty, freedoms, resources and elected governments, in a historic trend that extends from removing an elected leader in Iran in the 1950s because of his nationalizing the oil and replacing him by the Shah, a brutal dictator, to suffocating the Palestinian people to squeeze out the elected Hamas-led government from power in 2006.

Bush's scare tactics aimed at American public should not blur the divide in Bush's WWII. The battle lines should be redrawn to be between U.S. and Israeli militarism and military occupation and expansion and the liberation movements that were led by nationalists or Pan-Arabists in the 20th century and now are led by Islamists.

Bush absurdly, unconvincingly and arrogantly postured as the liberator of the Muslim and Arab masses, promoting the U.S. Democracy as a campaign of changing Muslim and Arab regimes, by military force if needed.

However, Muslims and especially Arabs are very well aware that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the former USSR have made Islam a useful scapegoat for tightening the US grip on the unipolar world. Books by the Orientalist Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* became popular in the west because they promoted the idea that Islam was the main threat to Western "civilization."

They are also aware that this war to establish total and lasting U.S. global hegemony, a sort of modern-day Roman Empire, is spearheaded in the heartland of Muslims and Islam, the Arab world, where all the regimes are targeted sooner or later; it makes no difference whether they are Islamic, Islamist, secular, liberal, or Pan-Arab regimes, monarchies or republics.

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Notes

- (1) Winston Churchill at the Union University on September 26. Reported by the Baptist Press BP on Sept. 27, 2006.
- (2) President Bush's speech at the 61st session of the UN General Assembly on September 19, 2006.
- (3) "WWIII" is a term used by the former Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives Newt Gingrich in a recent speech at the neo-conservative American Enterprise Institute (AEI); he was quoted by Jim Lobe, Asia Times on September 14, 2006.
- (4) Bush's news conference at the White House on Friday, September 15, 2006.
- (5) Jim Lobe, Asia Times on September 14, 2006.
- (6) Praful Bidwai, Inter Press Service, September 7, 2006. Reported by <http://www.snpx.com>
- (7) The Washington Post on September 27, 2006.

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