

Research on Islam

October 11, 2014

Muslim Brotherhood

One of the largest and most influential of all the Islamic extremist groups is the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt in 1928, now operates throughout the world, including the United States. The slogan of the Muslim Brotherhood is “Islam is the solution.” The credo of the Brotherhood is “Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Koran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope.”

Islam is spreading faster today than at any other time in history, and it currently boasts about 1.8 billion adherents. Roughly one out of four people in the world are Muslims. Islam reigns as the dominant religion in forty-five nations. The spread of Islam as a whole has encouraged the rise of militant Islam—and militant Islam is the original and authentic Islam of the seventh century.

Democracy is rare in the Islamic world. In Iraq and Afghanistan, democracy has been imposed by the United States in the aftermath of war—and the future of democracy in those lands is uncertain. The only other Islamic democracy is Turkey, a nation that embraced secularism following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923. The increasingly theocratic policies of Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan have placed Turkish democracy in doubt.

SECT WITHIN A SECT: WAHHABISM The particular brand of Islam espoused by Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda confederates is Wahhabism, an austere fundamentalist branch of Islam founded by Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1787). Though this branch of Islam was instrumental in creating the Saudi monarchy, the Wahhabist sect now seems intent on bringing down the Saudi monarchy. Wahhabism fiercely opposes anything viewed as *bidaa* (modernity). This Arabic word expresses such intense disgust toward cultural compromise that it is usually spoken only as a muttered curse. The Wahhabis despise any social or technological change that appears to deviate from the fundamental teachings of the Koran. At various times, such innovations as the telephone, radio broadcasts, public education for women, and music have all been declared *bidaa*. The Wahhabis also believe their faith should never yield any ground in any land that Islam has conquered. For this reason, Saudi Arabia donated heavily to

the mujahideen fighters who battled the Soviets in Afghanistan. The Soviets had invaded Muslim land, and they had to be driven out and the land reclaimed for Islam. The ferocity of Wahhabi fighters is legendary. An Arab historian in the eighteenth century wrote of the Wahhabis, "I have seen them hurl themselves on their enemies, utterly fearless of death, not caring how many fall, advancing rank after rank with only one desire—the defeat and annihilation of the enemy. They normally give no quarter, sparing neither boys nor old men." Wahhabis advocate strict punishments for violators of the Koran: Thieves have their left hand amputated. Adulterers are stoned to death. Murderers and sexual deviants are beheaded. Since King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud unified Saudi Arabia in 1932, the royal dynasty has had to balance the demands of modernization against the intolerant beliefs of the Wahhabis. No one knows how many Muslims in Saudi Arabia adhere to Wahhabism. Estimates changed in fourteen centuries: Conquer the world and eradicate all other religions. The Koran tells all Muslims: Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya [religious tax].

England has gone from having a single mosque in 1945 to having more than fifteen hundred mosques today. Mosques are symbols of Islamic power, and Muslims are building them worldwide at a rate unprecedented in history.

A third reason for the expansion of Islam in the United States is that a significant number of African-Americans have converted to Islam since the 1960s. Muslim leaders see black America as ripe for conversion.

Erdoğan once called the term moderate Islam a "very ugly" term. "It is offensive and an insult to our religion," he said. "There is no moderate or immoderate Islam. Islam is Islam and that's it."