

Our Future With Islam

A new perspective on the
“clash of civilizations”

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About this Presentation

- Four parts
 - Understanding The Koran, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Islamic Tradition in a way which references Christian history
 - Getting real about Muslim military power and the Muslim Nuke
 - Examining options for *partnering with Islamic fundamentalists to produce peace*
 - Middle East 2.0 – what if Saudi Arabia changes?
- Consider this text as the product of a late night bull session; risky ideas thrown out in a loose framework

About your Author

- Unusual perspective
 - British Half-Caste Indian
 - Raised with both Hindu and Christian beliefs
 - On the Hindu side, sect has friendly relations with Muslims for many, many centuries
 - History & Philosophy of Science and the Enlightenment were strong intellectual influences
 - Constitutionalist Libertarian political leanings
- Sometimes you need to get far, far outside of the normal way of looking at things to see where things are going

Part One: Muhammad (PBUH)

Presented by retelling some parts of the
story of Muhammad with reference to the
story of Christ

Muhammad (PBUH)

- We're going to examine Muhammad (PBUH) by creating an "alternate history" story of Christ
- If you're a Christian, please don't be offended
- If you're a Muslim, please don't be offended either, and please help correct this so it better reflects your understanding
- This is a thought experiment to gain perspective
- As we move through this, try and imagine how you would feel if this was your religious history

Christ, The King

- Imagine an alternate history where the story of Christ unfolds different
- **Very** differently

Retaking the Temple

- When the Sanhedrin refuses to acknowledge Christ's right to take over the religious leadership of the Jews, Christ flees Jerusalem for another city and teaches, slowly building a large following
- Then he returns and takes the Temple by force, and is publicly acclaimed as the King of the Jews, spiritual and temporal leader of the people

Defeating the Romans

- Christ then leads a shockingly successful initiative against Roman power, establishing a free and independent Kingdom which is run by his spiritual, religious and moral authority
- This Kingdom is seen as being, in many ways, the most perfect Nation ever created by God in the world

The Law

- Christ communes regularly with the Archangel Gabriel and from their communication comes a collection of verses which are more perfect than Shakespearean sonnets. They are the pinnacle of language, of artfulness, of perfection
- These verses, plus biographical notes taken by observers and participants in this period, form the Law

The Law is Good Law

- This law is good law
- In the same way that the US Constitution and Bill of Rights frame spiritual precepts in the form of moral law, the Religious Law issuing from the King is Good Law, and under it, the people prosper ethically, morally and materially
- People love this law because it makes them free

The Law is Sealed

- The Law is so important that the language it was spoken in must be preserved
- Aramaic becomes like Latin was in Europe – the language of **law**, science and discourse
- The Law is preserved, letter by letter, and commonly understood all across the world
- Differences arise due to political considerations and historical interpretations of events (Hadith) but the law is one

Could we live without this?

- This is (a) spiritual truth framed as law:
 - We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
 - That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, Men.
- Many Americans love this law, because it makes them free.

Succession

- At the Ascension of the Prophet, debate about how to continue the Just Rule breaks out
- Is it like a Kingship, which passes through the family to Ali? (Shi'a)
- Or like a religious group, which passes to a leader (Abu Bakr) chosen by consensus (Sunni)?
- This is a quintessential Church vs. State issue and you can see these threads run right through American democracy in an unresolved fashion

How Important is Islam?

- Take everything you would feel as a Christian about Christ
- Multiplied by the political certainty of a world in which Christ won at a political level, and rather than being executed, ruled as a King in the material world
- Add to this the status of Shakespeare as an artist and creator of culture
- Multiplied by the feelings an American has about the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and the Founding Fathers like Jefferson
- To a Muslim, all of this and more is embodied in the Prophet Muhammad and the Koran

There is no Secularism in Islam

- Secularism is not the absence of religious feeling, but a transfer of fundamental faith from received texts to direct personal free will
- This is rooted in both the Enlightenment, and in Protestant mysticism (Rosicrucianism) and was embodied by both philosophical movements (Locke) and historically important fraternal orders (Freemasonry)
- Science was born in the crucible of Rosicrucian alchemical thinking and is, in many ways, the tangible fruit of this underground mysticism
- Both Isaac Newton and the Revolution are all tied up in this largely ignored intellectual history
- I do not believe that Islam had any directly parallel developments, although some branches of Sufism bear close parallels in a few small areas of thought

The Whole Truth, in Part

- Islam sees the world something like this:
- Muhammad is a Christ-like leader who ruled as a political figure (that is, as Christians see Christ)
- An untranslated, letter perfect historical text
- A divinely inspired constitution, law & national identity (Ummah)
- No philosophical “death of god” period
- No historical democratic challenge to the Divine Right of Kings
- No split between Science and Religion as such
- A vision of restoring the Perfect Society under the Perfect Divine Law (Sharia)
- This is Islam. Fundamentalism adds immanence.

How Far Have I Erred?

- A couple of weeks of time with a knowledgeable and devout Muslim scholar would put legs under this
- But you get the general idea: the fundamentalists are certain not because they are barking mad but because they have a lot of historical and religious reasons for certainty
- Islam is a whole system across religious, legal and political levels, and asking Muslims to change just one part is almost as bad as asking them to dump the whole: a thing is either perfect or it is not
- What secular currents exist in Islam are deeply conflicted
- I'm not an expert, so take this with a pinch of salt

Back to the Real World

- This is about emotions and about Faith
- Reason did not enter into Christian conduct during the Crusades
- Much of the American Revolution was based on a Faith dressed up as Reason
- The faith was in individual liberty, and in some cases, in Enlightenment ideals
- Even Science is built on Faith in concepts like Repeatable Experiment as a way of knowing Truth
- Faith can move mountains, and frequently moves national borders

Part Two: The Muslim Nuke

Examining Mutually Assured Destruction in
a Muslim context

The Muslim Nuke

- Pakistan has around 50 bombs
- They're all (?) pointed at India
- Mutually Assured Destruction exists between Pakistan and India
- And you think you've got problems
- This is a “no survivors” war
- It would start with nukes, and end with men beating children to death with sticks
- Thank god these are both relatively rational state actors.

Death to America?

- If a religiously motivated Muslim extremist group got a nuclear weapon, could they use it?
- Complex theological issues around killing women and children
- Risk of turning the holy sites into glass parking lots in retaliation
- **Does it move *towards* or *away* from what Muslim Extremists really want?**
- From their own writings, that seems to be control of the holy places and Muslim cultural renewal
- Are they going to get that by driving America mad with rage?
- I think not

Saudi Arabia – the Center of the Universe

- We have no Christian or Western equivalent to Mecca and Medina
- They are the Center of the Universe (in some sense) to Muslims
- During the time of the Prophet's life these places became sanctified
- Now, they are *shrines* in some sense

Nobody can risk a war that might target the holy sites

- This is not minor
- A few **hundred million** deaths is, as far as I can tell, nothing compared to the loss of Mecca and Medina
- I do not believe that any military or political course of action which endangers these places can ever find Muslim support, no matter what the goal is
- This is essentially a position of Mutually Assured Destruction between America (and other nuclear powers) and religious Muslim terrorists
- Would America would retaliate against Islam as a whole, rather than a specific target?
- It is not a question of “would we?” only a question of “might we?” - to which the answer is clearly “yes, we might.” That’s enough

So what can you do with a Muslim Nuke?

- Nuclear terrorism of the kind which might make the victims go insane with grief and hit back at a cultural level (i.e. Mecca and Medina) is not an option
- But non-religious groups might risk that sort of retaliation
- A secular Muslim Nation State under a non-theocratic government (i.e. the Indo-Pak Apocalypse) might use a bomb in a war because retaliation against the sacred sites is not likely or as significant to them - this is “business as usual” nuclear policy
- A religious group might risk it if the bomb was used in a way which did not create that retaliation: for example, an open field bomb used as a warning or against low-casualty, high-importance targets of some kind
- But nobody religious is going to go after Tel Aviv, Jerusalem or NYC because of this risk of irrational retaliation
- Nobody will be the man who made the Americans attack Mecca
- **NOBODY**

Pushing the Envelope

- So the bomb, in Muslim Nation State hands, is pretty much used as it is anywhere else: “invade us and we might use it”
- In non-state actor hands, Muslim extremists risk losing *everything* if they use it: they have more to lose (in their spiritual belief system) than anybody else!
- This leaves limited damage scenarios where full retaliation cannot be legitimately used: dirty bombs and similar low-casualty high-cost events
- Nobody will ever risk the sacred sites for political goals

The Unattributed Nuke

- What about the hard case - a Muslim extremist who detonates a bomb without warning or claiming credit?
- Is the goal “Death to America” or “Renewed Islam?”
- One bomb does not destroy America, except at a cultural level
- At a military and political level what would be unleashed is incompatible with the survival of any further threats
- Can you imagine a post-nuclear 9/11 America?
- Scares me. How much more does it scare them?
- Even an unattributed bomb is the end of any hope of a renewed Muslim political presence

Can Secularism Work?

- The American concept of secularizing the Muslim world is in direct opposition to the goals of the Fundamentalist Muslims
- Secularism is corruption
- Furthermore, strongly grounded intellectual secularism doesn't really exist in Islam: no Protestant/Rosicrucian/Masonic tradition of personal freedom
- Sufi Islam has more common ground with the secular perspective of "truth within" but it is a small and often persecuted tradition

Death to America?

(Part II)

- We risk a lot of kilo-casualty mayhem (i.e. 9/11 or worse) events while we still have these kinds of enemies
- But I believe that no credible threat exists to millions of American lives
 - nuclear invites retaliation
 - biological spreads everywhere (including back into the Muslim world – a big no no)
 - chemical has insufficient reach

Real Threats

- The real dangers lie in the Long War destroying us culturally, politically and financially
- The shadow of the bomb is more dangerous than the bomb itself
- This is exactly the same case as Mutually Assured Destruction - the threat of the bomb was the weapon, not the bomb itself
- Continued terrorism of various kinds
- Consolidation, over decades, of a much, much stronger Muslim political consciousness

Bleeding to Death?

- Economic warfare through continued engagements
- Iraq not as America's Second Vietnam
- But as America's equivalent of the Soviet-Afghan conflict
- They won that one. They remember
- You can destroy a superpower through bankrupting them
- They did it once. Can they do it again?

Part Three: Partnering with the Fundamentalists

Can America share a world with Muslims
who want Sharia law, Ummah politics, and
Koranic education?

America and the Native Americans: Getting it Wrong

- The Native Americans were a separate people America came into conflict with over land and natural resources
- They were largely militarily ineffective
- Disease and harsh treatment wiped out their civilization, bordering on genocide
- **America acted unforgivably**
- Reservations, although “state like,” are bad answers for a proud people
- Weak, demilitarized Muslim states are not much better
- Not all strength and power is military

American Religious Enclaves

- America has two large religious groups which have radically different values to the surrounding culture, and different jurisprudence
- The Amish and the Latter Day Saints (LDS, often called Mormons) each live by their own rules and maintain centuries-old cultural separateness
- Neither requires nuclear deterrence to maintain this relationship with mainstream America
- America: we do religious freedom right!

Amish and LDS: Better

- The Amish and the LDS both live lifestyles which cause very low resource conflicts
- When they have fought with their neighbors it has been small engagements (particularly for the Amish)
- LDS are extremely unorthodox Christians, and yet because of geographical isolation and no resource conflicts, remain largely able to do their own thing
- Neither group is militarily effective
- Neither group has a Nation State (Utah is close)
- Religious differences alone are in no way, shape or form enough to cause military conflicts
- Why are we fighting with the Muslims?

Globalization

- Global military reach means that America approaches the whole world as if it was in the back yard, unless a nation has nukes and therefore can enforce its separateness
- Even at its worst, America is free of gross barbarism and does not typically control insurgency by murdering civilians in retaliation
- Globalization does not work for Muslims, because they have an alternate model of Globalization - Islam for everybody
- This is a clash of global visions
- The cultural struggle is fought by conversions and the growth of secularism
- But still no clear necessity for violence

Muslims?

- In “total war” terms, none of the Muslim states are militarily threatening except for the nuclear Pakistan
- American can win wars – but not, so far, win the peace
- Global reach means that the Native Americans, LDS and Amish are, in fact, the correct historical antecedents to consider when thinking about US-Muslim relations
- Would the radical Muslims be content with their own peaceful religious enclave inside of Globalization?
- If so, are we smart enough not to fight against them achieving such an enclave?

Muslim Religious Enclaves?

- Some Muslims will not rest until they get to give Ummah/ Sharia a try on a broader scale in the modern age
- Imagine if the American Revolution had fallen apart after 50 years
- Would not the dream still be alive, and would not some “Patriots” still fight for it?
- This is Sharia – the Constitution of the Glorious Old Days
- The Muslim empires lasted off-and-on for well over 1000 years based on that “Constitution” and way of life
- Some Muslims want it tried again, with a purer theocratic heart this time - end the “blip” between empires!
- Osama bin Laden et al, for instance

Aren't Muslim Religious Enclaves a Huge Problem in Europe?

- Struggling for Sharia Law where they are
- Poor, disenfranchised, excluded
- Would a Sharia State act as a pressure valve?
 - Or an inspiration?
- The issue is there is no padding at the borders of the European enclaves
- Border conflict is a key Muslim issue
 - States with clear borders are easier to handle than enclaves in secular states

Why can't we live with Muslims like we do with LDS and Amish?

- Oil
- Nation States
- Muslim terrorism
- Horribly messy political geography
- Intra-Muslim armed conflicts
- Some thought of global Muslim empires
- Israel

Dependency Requires Control

- Control creates rebellion
- Rebellion is terrorism and insurgency
- We must break our dependency
 - Then we can start largely ignoring Muslim internal politics

Dealing With Oil

- Get Off Oil (<http://oilendgame.com>)
- Efficiency
- Ultracapacitors that charge from the grid at night
- Heeger's 10 cents per watt (5% of current cost) solar
- Biofuels, particularly algae for biodiesel
 - Algal Turf Scrubbers
- How long does the age of oil last in the face of these technologies?
 - 10 years before we know if this stuff works
 - 10 to 20 years after that before oil is irrelevant

If we are off oil, can we now ignore the Middle East?

- Not yet, there's still terrorism and Israel to consider
- One step closer to peace isn't there yet
- Now we have to get the terrorists to step down
- And, as we know, it's either economic growth or winning that settles terrorists down
 - Northern Ireland
 - South Africa
 - India under the Raj

The Terrorist's Goals

- To establish an enclave which includes the Holy Places of Islam
- To run that Enclave by their own lights
- To reunite the Muslim people as a single culture
- To win, on every level, against the gradual puttering out of the flame of their religious tradition

It's all about the center of the Muslim World - Saudi Arabia

- America, and others, defend the current Saudi regime
- Therefore we are the enemy
- Plus, because of our previous conduct, it could be assumed we hate fundamentalist forms of Islam
- That might even go back to the Crusades
- But as I think I have illustrated, it is possible that we could live in peace with fundamentalist states if we had a solution to the problems of oil dependence and security for Israel
- Technology gets us oil. What about Israel?

Part Four: The Middle East 2.0

Envisioning peace

Suppose the House of Saud is Destroyed by Fundamentalism...

- It is not unlikely that Saudi Arabia is already doomed by political, social and demographic factors.
- Suppose that OBL or the Wahabis or somebody else starts a revolution
- American forces cannot be allowed to intervene for religious reasons
- Therefore they win and start a theocratic state
- Pretty close to OBL's stated goals as I understand them
- What should be our reaction to this entity?

We can live with Ummah/ Sharia States

- So Muslim Fundamentalists got their radical state
- “The price of a successful attack is a constructive alternative” – Saul Alinsky
- Now let’s see how it works in practice
- Our goal is to make sure it stays **peaceful and non-nuclear**
- Nothing requires further war: victory attained, the radicals can go about their business – recreating an Enclave (like Utah) in which they can live as they choose
- We would have to never, ever touch plans involving interfering in the evolution of this state by fomenting resistance to its success, or we’d be the Bad Guys again and be headed for generations of wars

We Have to Get Off Oil for There to Be Peace

- OPEC, led by a Fundamentalist Arabian Government, is a force to be reckoned with
- Dependency **requires** control
- In this vision we wind up head to head with the Muslim world over a critical resource, **plus** the war now has explicit, unavoidable religious dimensions
- Nobody is ready for that
- So the first step is getting off oil so we can plausibly allow Middle Eastern states – including theocracies - real self determination

What's the Real Status of an Ummah/Sharia State After Oil?

- Pressure valve for global Muslim identity issues
- Could it be a peaceful religious enclave?
- A people with high spiritual ideas that they wish to pursue
- In a world obsessed with progress, technology and ever more subtle war
- Left alone, with religious freedom, it is unlikely we will ever hear from them as a threat again
- Nuclear weapons development is likely not to be something permitted by Israel as an option - an opinion they might threaten nuclear force over
- No potential to create large enough conventional forces
- Leaves the potential for state sponsored terrorism against Israel

Human Rights Under Sharia

- America frequently turns a blind eye to gross human rights abuses
- Never mind our own recent record
- So American does not have to get into this in a deep way: it's their legal code and it has harsh penalties
- Europeans look down on us for the death penalty
- No interventionism – not even sanctions – over human rights
- If people want to start using military force to protect human rights, start where the problems are worst and largest
- Effective anti-genocide forces in Africa first

We Cannot Let MAD Become How the Middle East Stays Peaceful

- MAD worked for the US/Soviet conflict
- But MAD in the Middle East is going to require a lot of weapons
- In the hands of unstable regimes
- And not having enough nukes for complete annihilation probably breaks the stability of MAD
- There must be regional stability without MAD

Military Support for Muslim States

- **How do we stop the Muslims from all going nuclear so they can use Mutually Assured Destruction to keep the peace?**
- We make – and keep – a vigorous regional security arrangement
- Something which provides, let's say, air support **even to the Fundamentalists** in the event of any invasion
- Possibly done through proxies, like non-fundamentalist, trustworthy Muslim states we provide hardware to
- (sound of tumbleweed blowing)
- Still, with a State, there is every chance that 100% of the energy of the fundamentalists will be redirected within the Muslim world, *if we leave the Theocratic State to evolve on its own course*

An Alternative to MAD

- Suppose we offered, in exchange for strictly enforced nuclear non-proliferation treaties
 - Support developing local power alternatives
 - Absolute air support in the event of an invasion (in return for, say, a local base)
 - Non-interference in internal politics, even inside Muslim Theocracies
- Could work only if we could be trusted – by all parties – to keep our word
- This could be the gateway to an enduring local peace

Air-Ground War, Hold the Ground

- What if America provided the “Air” part of Air-Ground War to other countries in exchange for them not going nuclear and relying on MAD?
- American air power can effectively stop armor crossing borders
- If, for example, during the Iran-Iraq war we had kept order by destroying any armor we found across the border, would have petered out or survived only as a small arms war?
- Costly in dollars, but not in American lives

Limitations

- This leaves various forms of insurgency, terrorism and guerilla war
- However, for the most part, those are *internal political struggles rather than cross-border invasions* and as such are outside of negotiated treaties
- Remember the point is to keep nuclear weapons off the table, not to resolve all regional struggles
- Hinges on trust

Migration and Balance

- Sharia/Ummah state/s surrounded by a buffer zone of other Muslim nations
- Open borders so the more Theocratically inclined can move towards the Center
- And the less-inclined can move away
- Possibly solution to violent and dangerous Muslim enclaves in Europe
- Strong cultural pride can express without heavy military activities

Is this Victory?

- Free of resource conflicts and associated wars because we got off oil
- We could acknowledge the Muslim Fundamentalists as people with a valid spiritual goal
- And we could accept their struggle for their freedom as they understand it
- And, if they get it, their values are largely incompatible with being an effective modern military state, so they stop being a threat
- *Are there any other paths to peace?*
- Remember that once it is certain we **can** get off oil, the power balance begins to shift extremely rapidly away from OPEC
- It all hinges around regional stability without MAD

Israel: the Sting in the Tail

- And now the hard part
- Can the Israelis survive in a world with a Theocratic Muslim Ummah/Sharia resurgence?
- Political or religious, political or religious?
- The confusion in Israel about the identity of the State – indeed, the core question of What Is It To Be Jewish in c21 – mirrors that of the Muslim World
- Israel **is** in some sense a militarized religious enclave, and proves how important peace is to such endeavors
- Because they do not have peace, the culture struggles at all levels for coherence and integrity

This is America's Problem

- Israel is not, in the long haul, strong enough to survive if the Muslim world gets its act together in a non-peaceful configuration
- To suppress terrorism, we have to quell the chaos without becoming the sole focus of global Muslim hatred
- Eventually **somebody** will come after American financial, electrical and ICT infrastructure – America can still lose a non-mass casualty terrorist war!
- No peace without peace for Israel
- Fix oil
- Prevent MAD-style nuclear equilibria spreading at all costs

The Economic Option

- The two ways terrorist wars end: victory, and economic growth
- Victory for the Palestinians is right out
- That leaves economic growth
- Where?
 - Gaza as a nation state with regional support from Egypt (land grants?)
 - In situ – jobs, shoe factories, capital, capital, capital
 - In the New Middle East
 - Where Muslims of various kinds revolve around the Hub of a theocratic Arabia?

Sunni and Shi'a

- The Shi'a are outnumbered
- They are also close to nuclear (Iran)
- Does this develop as MAD between Sunni and Shi'a requiring nukes on both sides?
- Or, once again, could we use air power to provide regional security
- Non-MAD peace in the middle east may require us to step up to plate to ensure regional security
- The alternative - nuclear weapons all over the planet holding national borders in place - is unthinkable

Four Final Thoughts

- Islam is a great and glorious religious, cultural, spiritual and social tradition – not a religion of camel herders!
- We live with peaceful religious extremists all the time. They stay on their land, we stay on ours. Landless extremists fight terrorist wars.
- Could nations defend themselves using American air power and their own ground troops – and skip mutually assured destruction all together?
- How does America become tolerant and trustworthy enough to use its essentially moral power to bring peace and non-nuclear stability to the middle east?

A Future for Everybody

- While there is the willingness to shed vast amounts of human blood for political goals, the future remains dangerous
- In a world with rising destructive power, we must look to addressing root causes of anger in order for there to be peace
- Weapons of all kinds get cheaper, more effective, and more widely available
- It is a race against time to peace, and there is no time to lose

The Real Global Issues Remain

- 1 billion people are without access to clean water, and about four million die every year as a result
- Cooking over open fires kills about 6 million people a year due to respiratory disease
- These alone account for about 1000 lives per hour
- Keep war in perspective - it is a small issue compared to poverty
- Freeing up money to address poverty requires peace