

‘TAQIYYA’: HOW ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS DECEIVE THE WEST

DR. ANDREW CAMPBELL

On 19 November 2003, in the United States District Court Eastern District of Michigan Southern Division, Judge Steven Whalen concluded a four-page indictment against Mahmoud Youseff Kourani.

The indictment described Kourani as a dedicated member of Hezbollah who had received specialised training in radical Shiite fundamentalism, weaponry, spy craft and counter-intelligence in Lebanon and Iran and a dedicated member/fighter/recruiter and fundraiser for Hezbollah:¹

“While in the United States, Kourani employed ‘taqiyya’: a Shia Muslim doctrine of concealment, pretense and fraud. This meant

amongst other things that Kourani would, when he thought it necessary, avoid going to mosques, not attend Shiite religious rituals, shave his beard, and otherwise keep his true beliefs secret while inside what he considered to be hostile territory – the United States of America.”

What is *taqiyya*, as referred to in the indictment? The Islamic tradition of *taqiyya* stretches back to the sixth-century A.D. when, following disputes over succession after the Prophet Mohammed’s death, the minority Shiites developed *taqiyya*, or “holy deception”, to conceal their “true” beliefs from the Sunni majority and to maintain operational security for their

1. U.S. Indictments: U.S.A. v. Mahmoud Youssef Kourani, 2003, No. 03-81030.

jihad/ terrorist missions in the *Dar el Haab* —The Domain of War.²

Taqiyya is inspired by the example and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed praised in the Hadiths (the sayings of the Prophet) as “the greatest deceiver”, and praised in the Koran. Muslims have used *taqiyya* (pronounced tark-e-ya) described variously as “precautionary dissimulation,” “religiously-sanctioned deception,” “lying” or “deception” and “keeping one’s convictions secret” and “tactical dissimulation” or “holy deception”.

Two texts in the Koran specifically refer to *taqiyya*. The Prophet Mohammed, the founder of Islam reportedly said:³

“[H]e who keeps secrets shall soon attain his objectives . . . All War is a ruse” and “Let not the believers take for friends or helpers unbelievers rather than believers; if any do that,

they shall have no relation left with Allah except by *way of precaution* .

.. [taqiyya] that ye may guard yourselves”. [Koran 3:28 and 40.28, emphasis added]

Early Islamic texts refer to the covert nature of *taqiyya*:⁴

“*Al Taqiyya* is with the tongue only; not the heart. A believer can make any statement as long as the ‘heart is comfortable . . .’; “God gave the believers freedom of movement by *takiyya*; therefore conceal thyself . . .”; “*Takiyya* is a cloak for the believer: he who has no religion has no *takiyya*, associate your opponents only outwardly and oppose them inwardly”.

Related terms include: protection of the secret (*hifz-al sirr*), secrecy (*katm* or *kitman*), deception (making something ambiguous) and hiding the real state of one’s convictions (*talbis*). Early Muslim sects, the Najadt and the

2. *Taqiyya*, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Volume X 2000, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 2000, pages 134 -136; *Encyclopaedia of the Quran*, Volume One A-D, J.D. Mc McAuliffe (General Editor) Brill, Leiden-Boston-Koln, 2001, pages 540-542; Parts 1-3 in “Islamic Sects and Followings, Shi’ite Beliefs and Practices”, *A Shiite Encyclopaedia*, Vahid J. Majd and Ali Abbas, October 1995; Hans Wehr, *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Beirut/London, 1980; *Secrecy and Concealment Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions*, Leiden, 1995. H.G. Kippenberg and G.G Stroumsa (Eds.); “Some Imami-Shi’I Views on Taqiyya”, Etan Kohlberg, *Journal of American Oriental Studies* 95(1975) pages 395-402; Reproduced in *Belief and Law in Imami Shi’ism*, Aldershot, 1991; *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat’s Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*, Johannes G. Jansen, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1986, pages 210-211. Note: there are many variant spellings of “taqiyya”. The most commonly accepted form is “taqiyya”, as used by Professor Bernard Lewis in his many publications.

3. Koran 3: 28 and 40: 28. [Emphasis added.]

4. See footnote 2, supra.

Kharjites, referred to particular regions outside their communities as “the abode of dissimulation” (*dar al taqiyya*).

A contemporary definition of *taqiyya* is religiously-sanctioned deception for the purposes of concealing terrorism. German terrorism expert and Middle East scholar, Basam Tibi, defined *taqiyya* as: “*You are two-faced. You hate me, but you smile at me.*”

Bernard Lewis — the pre-eminent Middle East historian and scholar, Cleveland E. Dodge Professor of Near East Studies Emeritus at Princeton University — defined *taqiyya* in his early study of the Assassins (1090-1275), a prototypical Islamic terrorist organisation which is discussed in greater detail below. He said:⁵

“The term *taqiyya*, caution, precaution, denotes an Islamic concept of dispensation — the idea that under compulsion or menace, a believer may be dispensed from fulfilling certain conditions of religion . . . It was used to justify the concealment of beliefs likely to arouse the hostility of the authorities or the populace.”

Taqiyya informs Shia and Sunni political and religious discourse. The Sunni Moroscos survived in Spain by

using *taqiyya* and washing off holy water after attending mass. Cox and Marks in their monograph, *The West, Islam and Islamism*, note that *taqiyya* is referred to in Sunni religious and political discourse and cite Surrah 16: 106, about which al Atabari, the famed Sunni commentator, said: “If anyone is compelled and professes unbelief with his tongue, while his heart contradicts him, to escape his enemies, no blame falls on him, because God takes his servants as their hearts believe”. Cox and Marks also note:⁶

“Thus, in extreme circumstances, deception and lying are permitted and the end justifies the means. These doctrines can clearly provide religious justification for deliberate deception — provided that the situation is perceived as threatening, which many Islamists believe is currently the case. The doctrine [*taqiyya*] could apply to those, for example, who quote a peaceful or tolerant verse from the Koran to show Islam as a religion of peace but fail to mention other verses which are warlike or intolerant”.

Taqiyya is also used by many Middle Eastern ruling elites and sects, including the Yezdi, Alaawites (the present Syrian ruling family),

5. Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins*, New York, 1987, page 25; W.B. Bartlett, *The Assassins: The Story of Islam's Medieval Sect*, Gloucestershire, 2001.

6. “The ‘West’, Islam and Islamism: Is Ideological Islam Compatible with Liberal Democracy?”, Caroline Cox and John Marks, *Civitas: Institute for the Study of Civil Society*, 2003, page 63.

Sabaeans and the Druze whose use of *taqiyya* dates back to c. 966-1021. In the harsh Middle East environment, *taqiyya* became a necessary protection to conceal esoteric beliefs or terrorist plans and maintain operational security.

As previously noted, the Islamic tradition of *taqiyya* stretches back to the sixth century A.D. when, following disputes over succession after the Prophet's death, the minority Shiites developed *taqiyya* or "holy deception" to conceal their "true" beliefs from the Sunni majority and to maintain operational security for their jihad/ terrorist missions in the *Dar el Haab* —The Domain of War. Daniel Pipes locates the spirit of *taqiyya* in the Syrian Alawis (also known as the Nusayris), a Shiite sect, saying:⁷

"We are the body and other sects are but clothing. However a man's dress does not change him. So we always remain Nusayris, even though we externally adopt the practices of our neighbors. Whoever does not dissimulate is a fool, for no intelligent person goes naked in the market".

According to Pipes:

"*Taqiyya* permits a Shi'i to pray with Sunnis, even while silently cursing the Sunni caliphs, and to raise children falsely to tell stran-

gers they are Sunnis."

THE ASSASSINS AND AL QAEDA

The Assassins (1090-1275), like Al Qaeda "sleeper agents", infiltrated the target milieu and waited patiently for many years for the signal for a surprise assassination. The Assassins were the prototypical Islamic terrorist organisation and during their most successful operational phase threatened the governments of Persia and Syria.

As the late and widely respected scholar in comparative history, culture and international law Professor Adda Bozeman points out in her comparative studies of statecraft, covert action, deception, intelligence collection and assassination have a long tradition in the Middle East and Islamic history:⁸

"In the vast Arab/Islam domain of West Asia and North Africa, war was idealised and institutionalised in many forms, notably in *jihad* or 'holy war' . . . Reflections on present and historical records suggest that secrecy, dissimulation, and covert activities are part of the general lifestyle; that social and political relations are marked by intrigue, deception, and conflict; that the image of 'the enemy' is highly developed; that fighting is viewed positively as a noble undertaking; and that people tolerate high levels of violence . . .

7. Daniel Pipes, *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy*, New York, 1998, pages 292-293.

8. "War and the Clash of Ideas: Statecraft and Intelligence in the non-Western World" in Adda B. Bozeman, *Strategic Intelligence and Statecraft, Selected Essays*, New York, 1992, pages 63-65, 105-107.

Such questions as 'Can covert action be just?' would not even suggest themselves in the context of Mohammedan law and ethics . . . The clandestine life of the Middle East has obviously always been suffused with 'intelligence' and appropriate communication networks. Assassination and related ways of checking enemy lives and activities were common practices."

Since the Prophet's death in 632 — from natural causes — assassination of political and religious leaders has been the primary source of regime change in the Middle East.

Of the 55 Caliphs (successors list), including the first four caliphs, an estimated 18 to 26 were assassinated. The Assassins pioneered Islamic "martyrdom operations", whose volunteers called themselves *fidaen* from the Arabic *fida'i* — a person ready to sacrifice his life for Islam. The *fidayyaah* (*fidais* or *fidawis*), or the "self-sacrificers", specialised in targeted assassination of elite political, religious or military leaders.

Like Al Qaeda, the assassins used scattered mountain sites as bases and a network of sympathy and support cells in urban centres. Using *taqiyya*, the Assassins became masters of disguise and often assumed the shape of the enemy. The reputation of the As-

sassins for surprise attacks was so formidable that the threat, or implied threat, of assassination was also used as a form of terror.

Using *taqiyya* the assassins posed as servants, advisors, soldiers, Sufis or Christian monks and ascetics to gain access to their target and humiliated and shamed the victim.

A favoured Assassin's tactic was "deceptive triangulation" which persuaded the target that *jihad* was not aimed at *him* but at another enemy. The real target would be deceived and destroyed. Another tactic was to deny that *jihad* was being waged. The fate for such faulty assessments was death.

Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda derive from the tradition of the Assassins. The elite of Al Qaeda were drawn from Egyptian terrorist groups, primarily the secretive Muslim Brotherhood and Al Takfir wal Hijra, often assessed as the most clandestine terrorist group in the world.

One of the most influential tracts on modern terrorism, and especially in relation to *jihad* and *taqiyya*, was *The Neglected Duty*, which redefined *jihad* as "war against the unbelievers", written by Muhammad Abd al Salaam Faraj (1954-1982).⁹ Faraj was one of the key figures in the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat in October 1981 and was subsequently executed

9. Johannes Jansen, *The Neglected Duty: The Creed of Sadat's Assassins and Islamic Resurgence in the Middle East*, London, 1986, pages 210-212. See also "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions", David C. Rapoport, *The American Political Science Review*, Volume 78, Issue 3, September 1984.

on 15 April 1982.

Faraj formally defined *jihad* as the sixth pillar of Islam and extended it to include *taqiyya* and quoted the medieval writer, Al-Tabari: "Lying is essentially permitted, but it is better to limit oneself to speaking ambiguously" and advised jihadists to operate in accordance with the heading "Deceiving the Infidels: One of the Arts of Fighting in Islam".

The terrorist group, Al Takfir Wal Hijra, who reportedly merged in the 1990s with Al Qaeda, are immersed in *taqiyya* techniques. Takfiris are "super sleepers" committed to becoming embedded in the target society and have operated in Lebanon, Sudan, Algeria, Jordan, Libya, England and through Western Europe since the 1990s. They are "permitted" to drink alcohol, live together, pray together, eat during Ramadan, dress in Western style and socialise with women, to avoid suspicion or detection. All outsiders, even Muslim brothers are regarded as *takfir* (infidels), and takfiris are reportedly even feared by Al Qaeda and other extremist Muslims. Takfiris specialise in "quality" large-scale terrorist operations, particularly assassinations and bombings.

The key figures and planners in the 11 September terrorist attacks are believed to be takfiris, including Ayman Al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's second in command; Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, now in U.S. custody; and the "commander" of the 11 September ter-

rorist attacks, Mohamed Emir Atta. As Takfiris specialise in "quality" large scale terrorist operations — particularly assassinations and bombing, they are regarded as one of the world's most ruthless terrorist groups.

MODES OF TAQIYYA

There are many modes of *taqiyya* which has developed as an art form of deception, including:

Outwitting

Islamic spokesmen commonly use *taqiyya* in the form of "outwitting". The matter under discussion is not to be debated or discussed; the opponent is "outwitted" through *taqiyya*, by diversion of the subject through the tactical use of honour (feigning "offence") and disparagement of the speaker and religious obfuscation, aided at times by a mystical reference to God or Allah, which is irrelevant to the topic under discussion. Outwitting is regarded as a skill, worthy of praise, often accompanied by smiles and laughter.

An Australian Example of "Outwitting": Sheikh Hilaly's Lebanon visit, 2004

In early February 2004, the Australian media reported that the controversial Mufti of Australia, Sheikh Hilaly of the Lakemba Mosque, New South Wales, had met with notorious terrorist Hezbollah leader, Hasaan Nasrallah, the leader of Lebanon's "Party of God" — the Syrian-Iranian-sponsored terrorist organisation — and on 13 February delivered a "ser-

mon” at the Al Quds mosque in Sidon, Lebanon, calling for *jihad* and praising the 11 September terror attacks.

The controversy raged. The Sheik was the Mufti of Australia’s Muslims, and a mufti by definition can issue fatwas, that is, a considered opinion ranging from an issue of community interest or religious law to peace, war and *jihad*.

On 18 February, Keysar Trad, the Sheikh’s translator, told A.B.C. radio:¹⁰

“I believe these people have been far too selective in taking information somewhat out of context. The Mufti is a proponent of peace and peaceful solutions to any conflict and his message was in a completely and entirely different context. I spoke to him yesterday and he assured me that the context in which he made his message was not in the way that it was reported by these people”.

On 19 February, Keysar Trad affirmed that the remarks about Israel and Hezbollah had been taken out of context. He said he spoken to the Sheikh and his remark about *jihad* was a rhetorical question.

On 29 February, Keysar Trad also

resorted to the Arabic poetic defence, reportedly claiming that the Sheikh had taken “bits from poems which he had incorporated into his sermons.”

On 1 March Trad used the “lost in translation” defence:

“I believe the context has been lost in the translation . . . He’s not praising it by any means, he’s really condemning these atrocities.”

In Australia, the Sheikh’s speech was widely reported and criticised by the Prime Minister in Parliament. On 3 March 2004, in an unusually frank interview, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer commented:¹¹

“He talks out of both sides of his mouth. When there was initially a suggestion in the media that he had said — at least he had called for a *jihad*, a spokesman for Al-Hilaly said that his words had been taken out of context.”

The journalist responded to Downer: “That’s not true.” Downer replied: “Exactly. That did not turn out to be true. We got a copy of the speech, we translated the copy . . . and it’s pretty obvious that he’s been calling

10. Sheikh Hilaly: “Sermon at Sidon Mosque”, 13 February 2004: Official Transcript from Australian Embassy, Beirut, 2004.

11. Transcript of interview, Radio 3AW, The Hon. Alexander Downer, M.P., Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia, 3 March 2004, pages 1-2. See also “Jihad call reports alarm Canberra”, CNN.com, 18 February 2004; “Muslim leader’s remarks cause controversy”, A.B.C. P.M. Transcript, 18 February 2004; “Outcry over leader’s call for *jihad*”, *The Age*, 19 February 2004; “September 11 is God’s work: Mufti”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 February 2004; “Muslim leader’s September 11 support appalls Downer”, *The Age*, 1 March 2004.

for jihad and suicide bombers . . . He's been praising September the 11th as God's work."

THE "ARABIC IS POETRY" DEFENCE

Featured on the A.B.C.'s *Religion Report* on 3 March, Dr. Amir Ali, President of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils stated:¹²

"Therefore unless I can see this transcript and unless I get it cleared by Sheikh Hilaly [an infidel cannot judge a Muslim] whether he has said the same thing, I will not be able to comment on what he has said. This sermon was not given in English, it was in Arabic. Now who made the transcript? What's the whole source of this transcript? So unless I see the transcript and I see what he has — listen to this man what he has said, I will not be able to make any comment."

The obviously frustrated interviewer asked:

"Hasn't the time come when the Muslim community has to stop saying that his comments have been misinterpreted or taken out of context?"

12. A.B.C. Radio National, *The Religion Report*, 3 March 2004, pages 5-7. Dr Ali implied that the official government transcript was unreliable.

13. "Plea for a little understanding", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 March 2004; "Grand Mufti could be stripped of title over remarks", *Khaleej Times*, 6 March 2004; "Australian Muslims warn: Interview with Sheikh Fehmi", *The Religion Report*, 10 March 2004; Sheikh Hilaly Interview, A.B.C., *Sunday Profile*, 7 March 2004. Cited in Dhimmi Watch, 14 March 2004; "Muslims clash over Mufti row", S.B.S. World News Transcript, 10 March 2005.

Dr. Ali replied frankly: "Yes, it is definitely happening all the time", but disingenuously continued that "this was started by the Middle Eastern Institute from Washington, which is known for twisting and turning what the Muslims say in order to create a bad image."

On 6 March 2004 the chief executive officer of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Amjad Merhoud, warned he would be seeking an urgent meeting with the Sheikh to clarify his views, and the Federation could discuss stripping his title and claimed: "He could have in hindsight probably used different words to describe what he was trying to say or not used some of the poetry that he was trying to recite". Interviewed on A.B.C. radio on 7 March, Sheikh Hilaly replied to the criticism that he was "saying one thing in English in Australia and something else in Arabic in Lebanon". The Sheikh replied: "Of course, you are talking about two different environments . . . I agree with you I am addressing two different environments I'm addressing them differently, it's be (sic) two different environments."¹³

On 8 March 2004, the Sheik reiterated his themes and insisted the terrorist group Hezbollah was misunderstood and that his speech contained poetry that was misinterpreted. Previously he had condemned the Federal Government for proscribing Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation:¹⁴

“What is truth? Actually it was a poetry and in poetry we go a little bit into the imagination of presentation.”

However Sheikh Fehmi Naji al Imam, interviewed on 10 March 2004, placed the Sheik’s translation problems in context. The interviewer pointed out:¹⁵

“Sheikh Hilaly only really speaks Arabic. We hear this talk about flowery, poetic language and him being misunderstood. Do you accept that?”

Sheikh Fehmi responded, laughing: “I don’t buy that.”

On 10 March 2004 Sheikh Fehmi Naji, one of Melbourne’s most senior clerics, claimed Sheikh Hilaly’s comments were not misinterpreted and called on A.F.I.C. to withdraw Sheikh Hilaly as the Mufti. However, Trad claimed A.F.I.C. had already met with the Sheik and they believed his version of events and “they understand

that they believe the Mufti, and they will not make any judgment until they see something different in the Arabic tapes themselves”.¹⁶

On 19 March, the Sheik cleverly criticised Al Qaeda as “a bunch of crazy people” and insisted in a declaration that he did not support the action of terrorists, and in the same context he claimed:¹⁷

“I can understand why some people would mistranslate my comments because to them they cannot understand my high level of expression and they might feel my words have some ambiguity to them.”

Asked if he would choose his words more selectively in the future, the Sheik, in a humorous example of outwitting, replied: “Of course, mate.”

Two of the Sheik’s daughters blamed the complexities of the Arabic language for the controversy. “You cannot just interpret it, just word by word”, they said.

An anonymous associate of the Sheik also pointed out in *The Australian*:¹⁸

“We know he [the Sheik] speaks English quite well, but a translator gives him time to think about his responses and gives him that ‘out’ if what he says provokes an angry re-

14. *The Australian*, 8 March 2004.

15. *The Religion Report*, A.B.C., 10 March 2004.

16. “Muslims clash over Mufti row”, S.B.S. World News Transcript, 10 March 2004.

17. SMH.com.au, 19 March 2004.

18. *The Australian*, 19 March 2004.

sponse. And he thinks that if he gives a sermon in his native tongue no one's going to bother to translate anyway."

On 21 April 2004, the A.F.I.C., at its 40th Annual Congress, voted for the Sheikh to retain his position as Grand Mufti of Australia. On A.B.C. Radio, the President, Amir Ali, was asked if the issue of the Sheikh's dismissal had been put to a vote but he assured the interviewer that Sheikh Hilaly was not the main issue:¹⁹

"Ali: 'In fact we said that the government did not submit the tape, the original tape that was taken. Still we are waiting for the tape to come, so they didn't send the tape.'

Interviewer: 'Oh . . . When you told me on this programme that you intended to investigate the matter and get to the bottom of it . . .'

Amir Ali: 'Yes, we investigated it and then we saw the translation was wrong.'

Interviewer: 'You never actually got the tape from the government?'

Amir Ali: 'No, not the tape, we only got the transcript . . . It just died down. Why (would) you want to bring it back?"'

The Muslim worldly and religious community leaders (with the notable exception of the courageous Sheikh Iman of Melbourne) must have known that no government would have ex-

posed its information sources. Significantly, the government transcript of the Sheikh's speech in Lebanon was never accepted by Sheikh Hilaly or his spokesmen, a position which implied that the government was deceitful. The various tactical claims that the Sheikh's sermon was "taken out of context", was a "faulty translation", was "a sermon that could not be translated from Arabic to English", and involved the use of "poetry", raise the inevitable question: Did *taqiyya* prevail in this controversy?

Role-playing as Victim

A content analysis of Islamic media reveals an unremitting theme: Muslims in Western countries are a victimised minority and allegedly and supposedly victims of racism, xenophobia, "Islamophobia" and religious discrimination.

Terrorist counter-measures, such as specific anti-terrorist legislation and racial profiling, are vehemently opposed by Islamic organisations who would seemingly be content to have no monitoring of their activities at all. Even the most limited counter-terrorist measures enacted by legitimately elected democratic governments add to the Islamic self-image of imputed victimisation and are widely misinterpreted as "a war against Islam".

False Claims of Torture

False claims of torture by terrorist suspects generally follow the instructions

19. The Religion Report, A.B.C., National Radio, 21 April 2004.

set down in the Al Qaeda training manual, *Declaration of Jihad against the Country's Tyrants Military Series*, in its 18th lesson, "Prisons and Detention Centres", which contains precise instructions to suspected terrorists [brothers] concerning [false] allegations of torture.

The manual instructs each Islamic brother to:

- "(1) insist on proving that torture was inflicted on them by state security before the judge . . .
- (2) complain to the court of maltreatment while in prison . . .
- (3) . . . do his best to know the names of the security officers who participated in his torture and mention their names to the judge (these names may be obtained from brothers who had to deal with those officers in previous cases) . . .
- (4) take advantage of visits to communicate with brothers outside prison and exchange information that may be helpful to them in the work outside the prison . . . The importance of hiding messages is self-evident here."

Tauriya

Tauriya, or manipulated ambiguity, involves the use of *double entendre*, using a word which has an obvious meaning whilst alluding to another more "concealed meaning". The story of the Negus is illustrative. According to bin Ishaq, Islam's earliest biographer of Mohammed, the Negus was

compelled by Christians to provide an account of his beliefs in case he had forsaken Christian beliefs. The Negus placed a statement of Islamic faith in his pocket and "outwitted" them, pretending to agree with their beliefs about Christ.

Claiming Harassment

False claims range from accusing law-enforcement organisations of ignoring Islamic customs (interviewing a woman without a female present), stealing money, damaging property and showing disrespect to Islamic women. False reports of harassment and threats are often framed by recourse to a family photograph opportunity to a receptive and often gullible media.

The Flight into Illness

A variation of the "victim of torture" claim is the "flight into illness" made by terrorist suspects involved in legal proceedings. Some law enforcement organisations have defined the condition humorously as "Post-Arrest Islamic Disorder". The most common claims are depression due to unlawful interrogation or incarceration, post-traumatic stress disorder and the most popular Islamic clinical artifact, "the heart attack".

Diversion

Questions relating to the morality of the September 11 terrorists attacks are commonly diverted by counter reference to the plight of the Palestinians, the role of Israel and U.S. foreign policy and support for Israel as

“causes” of terrorism. The Islamic hatred of Israel predates the formation of the State of Israel. Islamic anti-Semitism dates back to the Prophet Mohammed himself. The “root causes” of terrorism — allegedly poverty, marginality of youth, lack of opportunities and resources which are adduced as a “cause” of terrorist acts — overlook the fact that the “roots of terrorism” are found in *Muslim* countries.

Evasion

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, the so-called “Oracle of Hezbollah”, whom some claim to be the spiritual leader and /or youth leader of Hezbollah but who has reportedly travelled in disguise for Hezbollah operational purposes and “blesses” suicide bombers before their missions, is a master of *taqiyya* in the form of evasion.

Martin Kramer, the distinguished Middle East scholar, has pointed out that “his elusiveness could drive journalists to distraction. Fadlallah perfected two methods of evasion. When it suited him, he delivered long and winding monologues to the simplest question, wearing down the resistance of the most persistent journalists. At other times he spoke in Delphic telegraphy... [A reference to the Delphic oracle who always gave an answer that

could be interpreted in two ways]”²⁰

Asked if he was the “spiritual guide” of Hezbollah and the Islamic student movement, he replied: “I am all of these and none of them at the same time.”

A similar instance was seen when Australia’s controversial Sheik Omran, of the Ahl as-Sunnah wal Jamaah, was questioned by a leading Australian journalist:²¹

“Interviewer: ‘You are following the ‘Salhafi’ tradition?’

Sheikh Omran: ‘I could say yes and I could say no. But this is why we didn’t call ourselves Salhaffi, we called ourselves Ahlas-Sunnah wal Jamaah, so we don’t have a special flag or banner for us, different to the rest of the Muslims.’

Interviewer: ‘Do you think that some Muslims in Australia are uncomfortable with your tradition?’

Sheikh Omran: ‘Well, I don’t think maybe. I don’t want to say no. It could be yes...’

Interviewer: ‘Have any supporters from your group gone and trained in camps overseas, military camps?’

Sheik Omran: ‘Maybe, yes, maybe. But this has nothing to do with the group.’”

20. Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders in the United States, University of Chicago Press, 1997, page 114.

21. “I am behind every Muslim in this country”, *The Bulletin*, 10 September 2003.

Demanding “Evidence”

Islamic spokesmen and their legal advisors practice a form of *taqiyya* by repetitive and extreme requests for “evidence” and impossible standards of “proof” of alleged terrorist acts, which they know cannot be disclosed without revealing intelligence sources and methods. The demand for evidence is an attempt to identify intelligence sources and methods and personnel and obtain official documents for counter-intelligence purposes.

Tactical Denial

Admitting that a critical proposition concerning Islam may be even partly true would involve a loss of honour and invoke shame and reveal true intentions. For example the platitude: “*It is impossible to be a Muslim and a terrorist*”, is clearly false. “*Islam forbids suicide*”, is true, but irrelevant as suicide martyrdom attacks are *not* forbidden in the Koran or by the Prophet as they are believed to provide rapid entry to paradise and are an integral element of the history of Islam and are currently conducted in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon and against Israel. The fact that Islam forbids *personal* suicide, as do all major religions, did not impede the September 11 Islamic terrorists who launched four co-ordinated suicide martyrdom attacks.

EXPLOITING COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

The constant repetition of *taqiyya* themes induces a state of cognitive dissonance. The target audience attempts to resolve the claim that Islam is a peaceful religion with the dissonant reality of Islamic terrorist acts and operations. Christians and other participants seeking dialogue “with our Muslim brothers” are reminiscent of the “peace pastors” who, during the Cold War, believed that meeting with representatives of the Soviet Union somehow promoted peace.

THE HIJACKING OF ISLAM

The platitude that small groups of fundamentalists have “hijacked a great religion” is a masterly example of *taqiyya*. The timely, skilful, misleading and diversionary theme of the “hijacking” of Islam was introduced into public, political and media discourse by Islamic spokesmen in the United States shortly after the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The claim that the September 11 terrorist attacks were “un-Islamic” and contrary to the teachings of Islam is *taqiyya*. As Bernard Lewis observed in his recent study, *The Crisis of Islam*: “Most present-day terrorists are Muslims and proudly identify themselves as such.”²²

22. Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: The Holy War and Unholy Terror*, New York, The Modern Library, 2003, page 137.

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