

There are (at least) three kinds of causes of radical Islamic terrorism:

- Worldview: the religious rationale
- Social and political conditions: cultures of despair
- Means: the enabling conditions

The Bush administration discussed only the third: the means that enable attacks to be carried out. These include leadership (for example, bin Laden), host countries, training facilities and bases, financial backing, cell organization, information networks, and so on. These do not include the first and second on the list.

Worldview: The Religious Rationale

After the bombing occurred, the question that kept being asked in the media was, “Why do they hate us so much?”

It is important at the outset to separate moderate-to-liberal Islam from radical Islamic fundamentalists, who do not represent most Muslims.

Radical Islamic fundamentalists hate our culture. They have a worldview that is incompatible with the way that Americans—and other Westerners—live their lives.

One part of this worldview concerns women, who are to hide their bodies, should have no right to property, and so on. Western sexuality, mores, music, and women’s equality all violate their values, and the ubiquity of American cultural products, like movies and music, throughout the world offends them.

A second part concerns theocracy: They believe that governments should be run by clerics according to strict Islamic law.

A third concerns holy sites, like those in Jerusalem, which they believe should be under Islamic political and military control.

A fourth concerns the commercial and military incursions by Westerners on Islamic soil, which they liken to the invasion of the hated crusaders. The way they see it, our culture spits in the face of theirs.

A fifth concerns jihad—a holy war to protect and defend the faith.

A sixth is the idea of a martyr, a man willing to sacrifice himself for the