

# WASHINGTON'S DARK SECRET

THE REAL TRUTH  
ABOUT TERRORISM AND  
ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

JOHN MASZKA

POTOMAC BOOKS

*An imprint of the University of Nebraska Press*

© 2018 by John Maszka

Chapter 7, "From Bin Laden to Baghdadi," appears as chapter 2 in *Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram: Strategic Terrorism or Guerrilla Insurgency?* (Hackensack NJ: World Scientific, 2018). Used with permission from World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd.

All rights reserved. Potomac Books is an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press. Manufactured in the United States of America.



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Names: Maszka, John, 1963- author.

Title: Washington's dark secret: the real truth about terrorism and Islamic extremism / John Maszka.

Description: Lincoln: Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, [2018] |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017060419

ISBN 9781640120242 (cloth: alkaline paper)

ISBN 9781640121096 (epub)

ISBN 9781640121102 (mobi)

ISBN 9781640121119 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Terrorism. | Islamic fundamentalism. | Natural resources—Political aspects. | United States—Politics and government.

Classification: LCC HV6431 .M3785 2018 | DDC

363.325—dc23 LC record available at

<https://lccn.loc.gov/2017060419>

Set in Charis by E. Cuddy.

Designed by N. Putens.

## PREFACE

This book is written for intelligent, socially conscious people who refuse to accept everything they're told at face value. Regardless of your profession, your level of education, your race, your ethnicity, or your religion, if you're a critical thinker, then this book is written for you.

Books in general—and particularly books on terrorism or Islamic extremism—tend to fall within a certain predetermined style or genre. The author's approach is often singular, following a well-trodden path that is easy to navigate. Books such as these tend to require less imagination from either the writer or the reader, so it shouldn't be all that surprising that many of these books also tend to be, well, let's just say, unimaginative.

Rather than follow the well-trodden path, I've chosen to blaze a new trail. In the pages that follow, I pursue a fairly ambitious agenda. As a terrorism scholar, I'm all too aware of the shortcomings of my discipline—and I detail several of them in this book. I also reveal many of the myths surrounding Islamic extremism and particularly the misnomer "Islamic terrorism." However, this book is more than a mere exposé of the field of terrorism studies.

Much of the book's content deals with two of the world's most infamous Islamic militant organizations—al-Qaeda and the Islamic State—as well as the state and corporate powers that brought them into being. As I'll demonstrate, both groups are acting strategically toward the reestablishment of a global caliphate. Yet the strategies these groups employ are polar opposites of each another.

and spiritual—to Allah. Therefore, jihad encompassed all aspects of life, including the military.<sup>6</sup>

Some scholars insist that jihad passed through three stages during the life of Muhammad. From 610 to 622, jihad was an internal personal struggle. Between 623 and 626, the relocation to Medina required defensive jihad. Finally, the period 626–632 ushered in the need for offensive jihad against apostates.<sup>7</sup>

These multiple applications of jihad were very practical in the time of Muhammad. For instance, the early Muslims were instructed to reject the idolatry and polytheism of the pre-Islamic Arabs and thus struggle for inner spiritual growth and revelation. When Muhammad and his followers fled to Medina to avoid persecution, they were called on to sacrifice their homes and possessions and to start completely over in the name of Islam.

As the Muslim empire began to coalesce and power was consolidated, the concept of jihad became a matter of state policy—justifying both defensive war and conquest. Especially during times of division when power was contended (as during the Umayyad Dynasty), jihad was also employed to claim political legitimacy over one's opponents.

Various Muslim scholars interpreted jihad differently to deal with different practical realities. For instance Abu al-Walid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Rushd—better known as Averroes—stressed the peaceful and spiritual applications of jihad, while Ibn Taymiyyah emphasized its role in war.<sup>8</sup> In contemporary times its true nature has been widely debated as definitions vary from the sensational to the more benign.

On the far extreme, Islamophobes such as Daniel Pipes insist that there is no such thing as a moderate Muslim. I emphatically disagree. Over the last decade or so, I've lived in a number of Muslim countries. Most of my students, friends, and colleagues are just as moderate and progressive as the Westerners I know. Some aren't, of course—but I know a number of Americans and Europeans who hold rigid and inflexible views as well. As is always the case, it just depends on the person. Extremism is a personal characteristic, not a religious one.

How one interprets the concept of jihad is an individual choice as well. Pipes has concluded that jihad is “unabashedly offensive in nature, with the eventual goal of achieving Muslim domination over the entire globe.”<sup>9</sup> In other words with Muslim friends, who needs enemies? Pipes

would be correct if he were discussing takfiri groups such as the Islamic State or Boko Haram. Unfortunately he isn't. This is just another example of how mainstream Islam is often conflated with extremism.

David Cook defines jihad as "warfare with spiritual significance."<sup>10</sup> Cook tends to focus on the expansive phase of Islam and emphasize the military nature of conquest. According to this somewhat less extreme definition, the defense of Islam was only a secondary priority, playing second fiddle to conquest.

At the other extreme are those who defend jihad as purely defensive, claiming that the term "holy war" is misleading as it associates jihad with the bloody and barbaric Crusades. These insist that jihad refers to the individual and collective struggle against evil – either to cleanse oneself of sin or to defend Islam against those who would attack and destroy it. Many in this camp compare jihad to the Christian concept of just war and even contend that jihad in the Middle Ages was actually far less brutal than most warfare of the period.<sup>11</sup>

I would suggest that the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes in a dichotomy between jihad for political purposes and jihad for social purposes. The one serves Islamic hegemony and hence is at times violent, while the other serves Islamic society and is focused on inner growth and spirituality. According to this understanding, jihad has both military and peaceful applications. Furthermore, military jihad can be either offensive (as when Muhammad attacked Mecca in AD 630) or defensive depending on the need (as the battles of Badr and Uhud in 624–625 demonstrate).

Furthermore, jihad is not limited to waging war with arms. It can also refer to several other activities in support or defense of Islam such as *jihad bi-al-lisan* (jihad of the tongue), *jihad bi-al-qalam* (jihad of the pen), *jihad al-nafs* (jihad of the soul), *jihad bi-al-nafs* (self-sacrificing jihad), and *jihad bi-al-mal* (financial jihad).<sup>12</sup>

Truth is like beauty; it's in the eye of the beholder. Regardless of how jihad was originally intended to be performed or how it was actually applied, it has since assumed a violent connotation. Especially after 9/11 many politicians have claimed that jihad is nothing less than an attack against humanity practiced by violent and irrational extremists who hate the West and are intent on destroying it. For example George W. Bush repeatedly promoted the idea that the United States was in a