

# Hitlers legacy - Modern Islamo-fascism and its Nazi origins

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One of the little known realities of 20th Century history is the role played by Hitler's Nazi regime in kindling the contemporary conflagration known as the Global War On Terror. With the incessant and very effective propaganda war being waged by the Islamo-fascist movement in the media and the Internet, many of the deeper underlying issues in this conflict are being obscured, intentionally so.

When US analyst Stephen Schwartz coined the term 'Islamofascism' to describe al Qaeda, its multitude of franchises, and the Tehran regime, he elicited considerable argument. To date, academic analysts and scholars remain divided on the use of this term. This is unfortunate insofar as these regimes/movements and the underpinning methodology of public control are clearly fascist in every respect, once the veneer of fundamentalist Islamic propaganda is stripped away. Schwartz cites his own definition as 'Islamofascism refers to use of the faith of Islam as a cover for totalitarian ideology'.

Every revolutionary warfare movement needs cannon fodder, and the primary cannon fodder are disaffected people. The root of the Jihadist movement underpinning Al Qaeda is the progressive economic and political decline of the Islamic world, relative to the industrialised world. While the Jihadist view is that this is a consequence of Western oppression, the reality is far simpler. Nearly all of these nations were recipients of generous economic and military aid during the Cold War, as they sold their allegiance to the West or the Soviets since the beginning of the Cold War. With the fall of the Soviet Union, that source of external subsidy vanished overnight, and they had to compete in an increasingly globalised and active world economy. With little or no industrial base, excluding the handful of nations with significant petrochemical wealth, most of these nations were not viable economically. This was further exacerbated by arcane legal systems, often almost medieval, poor levels of public education, poor governance and dysfunctional public institutions, and often absolutist or authoritarian governments.

Nation states in this condition cannot compete in a modern global economy, and the result was increasing poverty, unemployment, and a sense of helplessness.



Poster subtitle: *Der Grossmufti von Jerusalem bei den bosnischen Freiwilligen der Waffen-SS*  
(The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem with Bosnian volunteers of the Waffen-SS).

These are conditions no different from those that spawned the Bolshevik revolution, and the rise of Hitler's National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP). The only missing ingredient was a shared ideology, which provides a supporting belief system to unify recruits. Fundamentalist Islam with its anti-Western, anti-Jewish and anti-wealth belief system forms that ideology, and the result is what we see today.

Another way of looking at this problem is that only Turkey and Iran had made a genuine transition from the medieval form of governance where Church and State were linked, and the genuine separation of Church and State, as occurred in the West during the reformation period centuries ago. This only remains in Turkey, since Iran's secular regime collapsed. As a result, political meddling by clerics remains at the root of the political problems we see today in the Islamic world.



By far the most active in this respect have been Wahhabi fundamentalists, a deeply conservative and extreme sect in Sunni Islam, which for a variety of historical accidents became the official state religion of Saudi Arabia. Wahhabist clerics receive generous state subsidies for both domestic activities and missionary activities on a global scale. Wahhabism is the ideology underpinning Al Qaeda, and the defunct Taliban state, which was crushed in Operation Enduring Freedom.

The Islamic nations of the world had considerable exposure during the Cold War to Soviet revolutionary warfare doctrine, which was standard curriculum material for any students sent to Soviet and other Warsaw Pact nation universities to gain free undergraduate and postgraduate education. Suffice to say, classics like Lenin's *Gosudarstvo i Revolutsia* (The State and the Revolution) were compulsory reading. To this pool of sociopathic knowledge infused across Islamic nations must also be added the extensive training in insurgency techniques provided by US and UK special forces and intelligence instructors during the 1980s Afghan war of liberation against the Soviets. Therefore the technique of destabilising governments and political institutions by sustained insurgency is well understood across the Islamic world, and considerable study material especially of Soviet origin remains available.

Having cannon fodder in the form of a materially disadvantaged and disaffected populace, an ex-Soviet cookbook for practising insurgency, and an ideological framework of Wahhabism mix as essential ingredients for mayhem, but not enough to construct a genuinely effective globalised insurgency. The glue which is needed to hold these together is a developed ideological doctrine and propaganda framework.

The Soviet model was never going to be a candidate in this environment, since too much of Soviet propaganda technique was centred on exploiting class divisions in industrialised societies, and too much was centred in ideas like 'Pan-Slavism' and 'internationalism'. The 'ideal' communist had to fervently believe in the brotherhood of all men, and accept that only class enemies were evil, and that people of any nationality could be liberated and brought into the fold given enough indoctrination. A revolutionary Islamic movement needed an ideological doctrine and propaganda framework which was chauvinistic in cultural values, and racist in focusing hatred on non-Islamic nations or groups, especially Jews.

The ideal model for this environment is of course the destructive creation of Dr Joseph Goebbels, Reich Propaganda Minister, and chief ideologue of Hitler's NSDAP, the Nazi propaganda machine and its associated doctrine and technique.



*The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, commander of the Waffen SS and SS security apparatus.*

Contemporary Western popular culture, exemplified by much of what Hollywood has produced on the topic, tends to portray the Nazis either as buffoons, or caricatures of evil. This is an unfortunate simplification of the truly destructive nature of the Nazi regime, and its clever use of a wide range of techniques designed to deeply seduce its followers. It is worth observing that the popularity of Nazi ideology in fringe groups in Western nations, despite the demonstrable moral and social bankruptcy of Nazism, has if anything grown over recent decades.

The Nazi model was multi-pronged, essentially populist, and was carefully constructed to provide paths via which the socially disadvantaged or ambitious individual could advance. A central theme of the Nazi cultural construct was that those who would take the initiative individually in promoting Nazi agendas or performing a community service (of a variety approved by the regime) would be rapidly promoted. Good ideas and the willingness to invest effort in them were rapidly rewarded. In a socially strongly stratified and class structured pre-Nazi Germany, the Nazis presented opportunities for upward social mobility unseen until then. Individuals who jumped on the Nazi bandwagon, if industrious in their pursuits, could rise socially at a speed unseen until then in Germany. Cinematographer Leni Riefenstahl and aviatrix Hanna Reitsch were classical examples.

One byproduct of this arrangement was an enormous burst of technological, industrial and social welfare innovation in Germany, during the 1930s. Talent which aligned with the Nazis was rewarded generously, the quid pro quo being complete subservience to the ideological belief system of the regime. The Nazis for instance actively recruited PhD graduates in a wide range of disciplines to staff their bureaucracies and security apparatus. It is little known that much of the leadership staff of the SS security apparatus held doctorates from leading German universities.

Another key element of the Nazi model was a focus on social welfare, hitherto unseen in developed nations, and a mechanism designed to completely

seduce the 'blue collar' sections of German society. This extended from the use of youth organisations to perform community service, to the introduction of innovative health insurance. Which citizen could not admire a movement that would organise idle teenagers to help fix a pensioner's dilapidated residence, or clean up the littered town square?

The Nazis perfected the model of complete ideological seduction of the populace, in a manner the Soviets never mastered, despite no less intensive effort. This is why German troops fought with such blind fanaticism during the latter phase of World War II. Most truly believed, en masse, in the regime and its view of the world.

A key tenet of Nazi propaganda was to attribute all misfortunes experienced by Germany to influence conspiracy of others. Therefore, German humiliation, misery and poverty in the post Great War Weimar republic, and depression era, were attributed to the Western powers, a global Jewish conspiracy and the subversive influence of the Nazi's primary ideological competitor, the Soviet led communists. In the Nazi view of the world, Germans were deemed to be perfect, and all misfortune the fault of others who had to be fought and ultimately exterminated. The Holocaust, and other mass murder committed against opponents of the regime across Europe were the manifestation of this deeply indoctrinated belief. Readers who have followed the rise of Islamofascist political and revolutionary movements across the Islamic world over recent years will note the striking similarities in social ideology, political doctrine, propaganda and the exploitation of social inequality, in comparison with the Nazi model. Is its similarity a coincidence, or is there a deeper connection?

There is ample evidence to show that during the latter decade of the Nazi regime, and following the collapse of Nazi Germany in 1945, elements of Nazi ideology found their way into the Middle East. There is a good case to be made that initially, anti-Semitism was at the root of this migration of ideas, but later other aspects of the Nazi model became assimilated.



The connections between the radical 'political Islam' movement and Hitler's regime now span eight decades, and most recently involve an ongoing dialogue between neo-Nazi organisations and 'political Islam' centred organisations.

The roots of current 'political Islam' and its Islamofascist ideology lie in the 1920s when Atatürk secularised Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman regime and dumped the idea of an Islamic caliphate, which spanned the globe. Egyptian Hassan al-Banna, by occupation a schoolteacher, founded Al Ikhwan Al Muslimun (The Muslim Brotherhood) in 1928, a radical revolutionary movement centred in fundamentalist Islam as an ideological model.

The Brotherhood followed the pattern of European revolutionary movements, recruiting followers disaffected by colonial rule in the Arab world, and building up a covert organization, which by some accounts had hundreds of thousands of followers in Egypt by 1945, and branch offices across the Middle East. The aims of the Brotherhood were simple – recreate the 'Golden Age' of Islam by restoring the Caliphate, and drive the infidel 'kafer' colonialists out of the Islamic world. The social groupings around mosques and traditional Islamic welfare organisations were used as a cover and conduit for financing the movement. By some accounts, much of the early activity of the Brotherhood was modelled on the early NSDAP.

By 1948 the Brotherhood had gained such potential that it prepared a coup against the Egyptian monarchy but was disbanded by the Egyptian government. It responded by assassinating the Prime Minister, the regime in turn killing its leader Hassan al-Banna. The ascendancy of Nasser's national socialist regime then saw a sustained campaign by the government to destroy the Brotherhood, a campaign that has continued to this day. One of the casualties of this campaign was al-Banna's successor, Sayyid Qutb, hanged in 1966.

Qutb is often regarded as the father of modern Islamofascism, as he fused fundamentalist Islamic ideology with the Nazi propaganda model, his stated aim being to produce a movement that rivalled Nazism in the West and Communism in the East. To create this ideological model, Qutb essentially 'remapped' the Nazi model into a Middle Eastern equivalent, replacing 'German racial purity' with 'Islamic religious purity' and adopting the tenets of Nazi anti-Semitism and rejection of Western capitalism and liberal democracy. Key elements of Nazi propaganda, such as the ideas of a world Zionist conspiracy, centred in the US, were rolled into this toxic mix, together with the idea of propagating Islam by the sword.

*Hezbollah have adopted the Nazi Hitlergruß straight arm salute, in addition to a wide variety of other Nazi ideas, techniques and propaganda.*

A then young follower of Qutb was Ayman al-Zawahiri, more recently co-founder and deputy leader of Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda who was recruited into the Brotherhood during the 1960s. In many respects, the modern Al Qaeda is a direct offspring of al-Banna's movement. Al-Zawahiri, like bin Laden, is a dropout from a social elite. He qualified as a medical practitioner, his grandfather was the Grand Imam of the al-Azhar University, and his uncle the first leader of the Arab League.

Another Islamofascist who was inspired by Qutb was a young Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, later to lead the Iranian revolution that toppled the Shah, Reza Pahlavi.

The connection with the NSDAP regime in Germany, however, runs deeper, as the Nazis did their best to support through finance and advice the embryonic Islamofascist movements in British ruled Egypt and Iraq through the late 1930s and early 1940s. The aim was to destabilise British rule in these strategically critical colonies. A key player was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, implicated in a 1941 coup attempt in Baghdad, and another graduate of the al-Azhar University. Al-Husseini was extensively involved in anti-British and anti-Jewish Palestinian unrest during the 1920s and 1930s, and one source claims he met covertly with representatives of the Nazi SS intelligence arm during the late 1930s, including Adolf Eichmann, later a key player in the extermination of European Jews.

Once al-Husseini wore out his welcome with the British he fled to Germany for the remainder of World War II, remaining active as a propagandist and recruiter of Balkan Muslims into the Waffen SS Handschar and Kama Divisions. Non-German recruits were used extensively in the latter part of the war, as German manpower available for combat divisions declined. After the war al-Husseini returned to Egypt, and after being implicated in numerous acts of political violence was exiled. Yasser Arafat, deceased leader of the Palestinians, was a nephew of al-Husseini.

With the withdrawal of the British and French from their Middle Eastern colonies after World War II, and the formation of Israel, the Middle East became a hotbed of Arab nationalism, in which the fascist Baath movement became the dominant player. The Baathists represent yet another thread of Nazi influence, as they assimilated Nazi propaganda materials. As secular 'national socialists' they in many respects represented a closer ideological model to that of the Nazis.

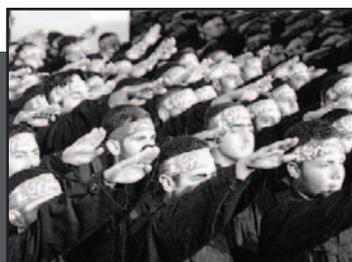
Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime, broken by Coalition forces in 2003, was a direct descendent of this political movement. Hussein's admiration for Hitler has been well documented.

The connections between Nazism and Arab fascism were further reinforced as some Nazi war criminals sought refuge after the war. The best documented instance is that of SS-Hauptsturmführer Alois Brunner, former commandant of the Drancy concentration camp in Paris, who eventually settled in Syria during the 1950s. There are claims that in total several hundred former SS and Gestapo officers eventually found new homes in the Arab world, these including Gestapo officer Joachim Däumling, SS Ober-Gruppenführer Oskar Dirlwanger, SS Gruppenführer Leopold Gleim, and SS Ober-Gruppenführer Heinrich Selimann.

Given the volume of publications that currently exist connecting modern Islamofascism to the NSDAP regime of the 1930s, and the well documented activities of al-Husseini in Nazi occupied Europe, the evidence that modern Islamofascism has its primary ideological and doctrinal roots in 20th Century Nazism is overwhelming.

Apologists for Islamofascism and 'political Islam' will no doubt dismiss this historical material as 'Zionist propaganda', but whether we are prepared to accept or reject such historical claims, the nearly identical ideological and doctrinal models used by the Nazis and modern Islamofascists cannot be explained away so easily. Nor is the adoption of Nazi symbology such as the Hitlergruß straight-arm salute used by Hezbollah, or the wide distribution by Islamofascists of anti-semitic tracts such as the "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion", a favourite of Goebbels' propagandists. There are simply too many threads connecting the two ideologies to be dismissed easily as fabrications.

World War II may well be sixty years behind us, but it is clear that the poison which almost destroyed the world's democracies then is still alive and well today.



*Hezbollah paramilitaries (top) and Palestinian security troops (bottom) performing the Hitlergruß straight arm salute.*