

## [Revisiting Islamic Imperialism](#)

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As Americans were getting ready to celebrate Thanksgiving Day, another terrorist attack occurred. This time various interests in Mumbai, India were the targets of Islamic rage. The perpetrators were young Muslims presumably belonging to a group called Lashkar-e-Taiba. It will be some time before anything definite can be said about these particular terrorists but their intent to wreak havoc with India's symbols of success and modernity and kill as many Westerners, particular Americans and Brits as they could, was high on their priority list of atrocities to be performed on behalf of their handlers and their perverted theology.

The electronic and print media were all over the scene and from Wednesday the 26th until late Friday the 28th, the world was kept apprised of how Indian security was handling the ongoing traumatic events occurring most particularly at the famous old Taj Hotel. Many called the attack on Mumbai India's 9-11. This was no doubt true in at least one sense - the Indian government showed itself to have been totally unprepared to handle such an atrocity. That they should have foreseen such a terror attack as a distinct possibility and did not is very troubling.

On November 27th before the crisis had been resolved, Time magazine online posted an article entitled "**India's Muslims in Crisis**" by Aryn Baker

Ms. Baker began her article with the ominous sentiments of one of the attackers:

*"The disembodied voice was chilling in its rage. A gunman, holed up in the Oberoi Trident hotel in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) where some 40 people had been taken hostage, told an Indian news channel that the attacks were revenge for the persecution of Muslims in India. 'We love this as our country but when our mothers and sisters were being killed, where was everybody?' he asked via telephone. No answer came. But then he probably wasn't expecting one."*

Ms. Baker endeavored to explain the historical roots of Islamic rage against India. She organized and simplified the vast material into three headings: "**The Beginning of the Problem, Two Faiths, Two Nations, and India Today.**" This background lesson was important to help the reader understand at least some of the history of the Indian sub-continent, especially since its partition by Great Britain in the summer of 1947. However, Ms Baker chose to hold up a particular political position as though it needs no discussion or rebuttal. Note her words:

*"Still, many South Asian Muslims insist Islam is the one and only force that can bring the subcontinent together and return it to preeminence as a single*

*whole. 'We [Muslims] were the legal rulers of India, and in 1857 the British took that away from us,' says Tarik Jan, a gentle-mannered scholar at Islamabad's Institute of Policy Studies. 'In 1947 they should have given that back to the Muslims.' Jan is no militant, but he pines for the golden era of the Mughal period in the 1700s, and has a fervent desire to see India, Pakistan and Bangladesh reunited under Islamic rule."*

One would have hoped for more balance as opposed to the half-truths the quote contains, particularly the following statement,

*'We [Muslims] were the legal rulers of India, and in 1857 the British took that away from us,' 'In 1947 they should have given that back to the Muslims.'*

What needed to be explained was the rationale behind the opinionated Tarik Jan's political statement which Ms. Baker chose to end her article. What was required was the background for such an opinion and whether it rings true.

The Muslim quoted obviously shares a fundamental premise with many other Indian Muslims regarding their history, not only as Indian Muslims but as believers in a religion that claims to be the only universal religious truth. I call it the Islamic belief in the **"Divine Right of Conquest,"** granted them by Allah. But in what sense could Muslims claim that they **"were the legal rulers of India up till 1857?"** Did their conquest of India under the Mughals, give them a legal right to remain its masters for ever?

Islam has always been an imperialistic religion, which sets it apart from all the other major world religions. To illustrate this point, especially when contrasting Christianity and Islam, there was an interesting study by Ephraim Karsh, Professor and Head of the Mediterranean Studies Programme, King's College, University of London, in a book entitled **"Islamic Imperialism: A History,"** published by Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2006. In the Introduction to the book Professor Karsh stated:

*"The worlds of Christianity and Islam, however, have developed differently in one fundamental respect. The Christian faith won over an existing empire in an extremely slow and painful process and its universalism was originally conceived in spiritual terms that made a clear distinction between God and Caesar. By the time it was embraced by the Byzantine emperors as a tool for buttressing their imperial claims, three centuries after its foundation, Christianity had in place a countervailing ecclesiastical institution with an abiding authority over the wills and actions of all believers. The birth of Islam, by contrast, was inextricably linked with the creation of a world empire and its universalism was inherently imperialist. It did not distinguish between temporal and religious powers, which were combined in the person of Muhammad, who derived his authority directly from Allah and acted at one and the same time as head of the state and head of the church. This allowed the prophet to cloak his political ambitions with a religious aura and to channel Islam's energies into*

*‘its instruments of aggressive expansion, there [being] no internal organism of equal force to counterbalance it.’” P. 5*

India was indeed a “crown jewel” in the British Empire throughout the 19th century. And the British presence and influence led eventually not only to Britain giving up her jewel to the Indians but that the Indians also were liberated from the Islamic domination that had lasted for centuries prior to the British colonization in its period of Empire. It is important to remember that even though many criticisms can be leveled at European colonialism, it was basically a different genre of colonization. All the colonies of the British, the French, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Germans, were “over-seas.” Not so with Islamic colonialism. It spread in a contiguous manner following conquest, and in most instances it was and remained final. On the other hand, countries that the European nations had colonized mainly for economic reasons but also to help the nationals in many instances, actually were granted independence in the aftermath of the Second World War. They were generally left in better economical and social condition than they were when the colonizers first found them. One could ask: “has a country and people conquered by Muslims ever been granted independence or freedom of religion or any other benefit of nationhood similar to what the European colonizers gave back to those they governed for a short while as colonizers?”

According to Ms. Baker, the strong penchant to turn back history and revive Islamic domination of the entire Indian subcontinent is manifest in the worldview of Islamic scholar Tarik Jan who she says *“pines for the golden era of the Mughal period in the 1700s, and has a fervent desire to see India, Pakistan and Bangladesh reunited under Islamic rule.”*

But what Ms. Baker fails to note is that unfortunately for him and for those who subscribe to Islam’s *“Divine Right of Conquest”* while the era of the Mughals was unparalleled in its glory and splendor, it was not so for the majority Hindus who suffered greatly under Islamic rule. Has Mr. Jan been smitten with amnesia!?! The British left Pakistan, with its Eastern and Western regions, as one Islamic state; but it didn’t take long before East Pakistan declared its independence, and became Bangladesh. Islam was not a strong enough “glue” to keep Pakistan intact. Is it not wishful thinking on his part to suggest that by now adding India to the failed mix of quarreling ethnicities under universal Islam things could improve?

As we continue to reflect upon the most recent events that shook up India and the rest of the world at the end of November, 2008, it is well for us to ponder these words of Professor Karsh, taken from the Epilogue of his book.

*“Contrary to widespread assumptions, these attacks, [reference here is to 11 September, 2001, and I may add to 26-28 November, 2008] and for that matter Arab and Muslim, anti-Americanism, have little to do with US international behavior or its Middle Eastern policy. Osama bin Laden and other Islamists’s war is not against America per se, but is rather the most recent manifestation of the millenarian jihad for a universal Islamic empire (or umma). This is a vision*

*by no means confined to an extremist fringe in Islam, as illustrated by the overwhelming support for the 9/11 attacks throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds.” P. 234*

For almost 1000 years, history witnessed a rising tide of Islamic dominance. Its empires, Arab, Turkish, Mughal, controlled large parts of the world. But with the decline and fall of the Mughals, and the eventual dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Islam was thrust into a deep crisis. The tide had turned. Islamic constraint on personal freedom for peoples it dominates was no match for the peoples of the rest of the world who were blessed to live as free people under various forms of democratic government. But today's Islamic radicals with lots of oil money, consider they will succeed in bringing the rest of the world back to the tyranny they envision by training and sending out their Madrassas-brainwashed young people, to kill and be killed, all over the world, in a ***Jihad in the Path of Allah.***