

Why the US Departure from Afghanistan Could Encourage Al-Qaida Attacks on America

The word "Islam" literally means submission and peace and conveys the message "obedience to the will of God." Followers of Islam are known as Muslims and worship one infinite God, to whom they refer to as Allah.

Devout Muslims strive to live completely submitted to the will of Allah.

Islam boasts a worldwide membership of 1.9 billion, second only to Christianity with 2.4 billion adherents. Both Islam and Christianity claim descent from the worship of the God of the patriarch Abraham. Both originated in the Middle East and are monotheistic.

Christianity evolved from the ministry of Jesus, who was crucified between A.D. 30 and 33. Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God and died for the forgiveness of sins. They declare He was crucified and buried in a tomb. On the third day He rose and ascended into heaven and will return at the establishment of God's kingdom.

In contrast, Islam emerged in Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia, in the seventh century and embraces the teachings of the Islamic prophet Mohammad. Muslims believe Mohammad based his teachings on divine revelations that required total submission to the one God, belief in a soon-to-be last judgment and a focus on the poor and needy.

Muslim opinions of Christians and Christianity vary. Moderates view Christians as people of the Book and Christianity as a legitimate religion. Islamic fundamentalists and radicals often regard members of the Christian faith as infidels and

Christianity as an illegitimate expression of faith.

Christians hold differing views of Islam.

Liberal Christians accept Islam as an Abrahamic religion and may declare that Allah and the Christian God are one. Christian Conservatives, on the other hand, reject Islam as a legitimate religion because Muslims reject the Trinity, Christ's divinity and the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ.

Like most religious majorities, moderate Muslims believe in striving for a just and peaceful world. They maintain that the Quran encourages Muslims to control their tendencies toward forcefulness and approach others peacefully. Non-Muslims often view Islamic moderates as open-minded, tolerant and non-violent citizens of their respective countries and member of their religion.

But to quote *Baptist Press* journalist David Roach, "While all forms of Islam run counter to the Christian gospel of salvation through Christ alone, 'some of them are subversive to democracy' and do not provide for freedom of religious expression." The subversive promoters fall mainly into two categories: fundamentalists and radicals. They prefer advance and practice political Islamism rather than Islam as a religion. Their activities encourage the use of the term Islamist or jihadist to describe them.

The Islamist-jihadist group al-Qaida attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. One hijacked flight crashed into floors 93 through 99 of the north tower of the World Trade Center in New York; a second hijacked flight struck floors 77 through 85 of the south tower. The terrorists realized they were unable to destroy the United States militarily and chose symbolic targets to demonstrate their objective and might.

The United States government responded to the al-Qaida attacks with strength and vigor. The U.S. launched the war on terror

designed to reduce the strength and influence of al-Qaida and its allies. The war began with the invasion of Afghanistan late in 2001. The U.S. hoped to force the Taliban to hand over Osama bin Laden, a key al-Qaida leader.

The Taliban resisted the U.S. pressure, but bin Laden was killed in 2011. Al-Qaida has not undertaken a major attack against the United States since 2001.

The U.S. has remained in Afghanistan for almost 20 years and has kept pressure on al-Qaida, but the pressure will ease with the current withdrawal of the U.S. In an article titled "Don't expect an al-Qaida reboot in Afghanistan," Daniel L. Byman suggests that after the U.S. departure, the Taliban may attempt to continue its loyalty to al-Qaida while preventing attacks on the U.S.

Certainly, the U.S. exodus will relieve pressure on al-Qaida. The level of Afghan success in controlling al-Qaida will depend on the government's strength or weakness.

The U.S. exodus from Afghanistan should expand the space between the United States and al-Qaida, but the intergroup tension will continue. Many al-Qaida members remain certain that Christians conspire with Jews to destroy Islam, making members of the Christian-Jewish alliance eligible for elimination.

The members also contend that the man-made laws operational in countries like the United States should be replaced with Islamic law or Shariah. Such beliefs do not discourage or prohibit future attacks against Americans or the United States. {eoa}

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