A simmering issue in the Islamic world's relations with the West concerning the tension between the sacred and the secular took a particularly violent turn on 11 September 2001 when Usama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network launched a coordinated assault on the US in the name of sacred duty. The West reacted with stunned surprise, taken by the long history of Islamic fundamentalist grievances, is not the West's surprise itself surprising?

It is, for example, clear that Bin Laden is motivated by sacred rage against an infidel secular West, and yet the West has sought to dismiss Bin Laden's self-proclaimed struggle as bogus. President Bush has, notwithstanding, sought to portray his military campaign as a sacred contest with an 'axis of evil.' Bush believes that US action is the only way to prevent the individual acts of terrorism from leading to the religious situation with 11 September

The West doesn't seem reluctant to take the fundamentalists at their own word. The fundamentalists continue to put up a spirited defense of Islam against the ancient foe now enunciated in the United States. We should inquire into what they mean by Islam and why for them the United States has come to be a citadel of infidels. In a videotaped statement on 7 October, Bin Laden spoke of the moral injury stemming from the disgrace and injustices Islam has suffered for almost eighty years, a reference to the end of the caliphate in Turkey in 1924 following the First World War. Turkey became a secular state, and the sultan ceased to be the political head of the worldwide community of Muslims. With the end of the caliphate went a potent symbol of Islam's imperial prestige. Through historical ups and downs, and sometimes only in name, the caliphate lingered on, but with little actual meaning. Most Westerners were, or are, still too busy with their own mundane lives to think about it. That is prompting from Bin Laden's view-point for a secular American, a history of the roots of his fundamentalist agenda of restoring Islam's glorious past, but for Americans that would be time wasting.

**Divergent notions of religion**

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