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Al-Qauida in Britain: A Place in Which They Can Flourish

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“British al-Qaeda Hub is Biggest in West”

“Britain has the greatest number of Islamic extremists linked to al-Qaeda of any Western country and poses a grave risk to international security, the US government believes.” So ran the headlines for *The Daily Telegraph* on January 15, 2010 and echoed in the following morning’s Saturday newspaper.

Whereas London was once famous for being a place of safety for refugees from all round the world, such as Austria-Hungary’s Prince Metternich after the revolutions of 1848; and the crowds chanted “Viva Garibaldi” as the Italian renegade was carried in his coach through the streets, these were no threat to anyone British. They were representative of political contests, which, however much they might disrupt normative political discourse, did not mean the end of Western civilization, mass conversion or random assassination and murder. It is not, then, accurate to regard the current situation as representative of older political traditions and to cite historical parallels, for none truly exist to explain the harboring of terrorists.

The seriousness of the threat reflects poorly on the government of Gordon Brown, even if it is not confined to the UK. The concentration in Britain means other countries are legitimately concerned and troubled by the situation, which has been allowed to develop.

American leaders believe Gordon Brown's government is failing to combat the threat of extremism among Muslims living in Britain. “The UK has the greatest concentration of active al-Qaeda supporters of any Western country,” a senior US official told *TheDaily Telegraph*. “As a result, no Western country has been more threatened than the UK, but the UK-based al-Qaeda network poses not only a potent threat to Britain but to the rest of the world.”

The present writer would take issue with the use of the word “extremism” because in reality, the adherents of these forms of Islam think themselves not to be extreme but appropriate and legitimate. They regard themselves as the most accurate practitioners of their beliefs. Furthermore, research has shown that the process of so-called radicalization is not so strained as to make it difficult to achieve. It is neither obscure nor culturally inimical.

Experts agree about the importance and bravery of the characterization. Veteran analyst Amir Taheri wrote:

In this groundbreaking study, Melanie Phillips shows how Britain’s imperial policy of ‘benign neglect’ towards radical Islamist groups in the 1980s and 1990s came close to malign complicity in the activities of some of the most determined terrorist organizations ever to emerge in Europe.

There are plainly far-reaching issues involved in the negligent and strangely self-defeating policies, which have allowed terrorist networks to flourish in Britain. At the very least, such a lack of persistent preventative strategies is dangerous. For instance, immigration policies, closer monitoring of those with certain profiles and mosque sermon analysis.

Daniel Pipes’ comments on the book highlight some more elements about the failure to root out and make inhospitable the security terrain for such deadly groups.

In contrast to the overwhelming majority of her British compatriots, who prefer to avert their eyes from the radical Islamic horror growing in their midst, Melanie Phillips has compiled a unique record

that fearlessly, brilliantly and wittily exposes this problem. Londonistan builds on and goes beyond her prior work by showing the role of what she calls the British ‘spiral of decadence’ in permitting Islamist ideas and demands to ride roughshod over the UK’s traditional ways. Phillips rightly warns Americans of the acute dangers for them, too, from Britain’s being a source of Richard Reid-like terrorists to the ending of the two countries’ special relationship.

One such characteristic, noted incidentally, by Arthur Koestler in his lecture to the British Academy (the arts equivalent of the Royal Society) many years ago, is the ostrich-like nature of the authorities, who seem not easily to wake up to reality. Melanie Phillips does not avert her gaze and in that is unusual and perhaps a somewhat isolated voice. This is partly why *The Daily Telegraph* article is significant. It is calling for the ostrich behavior to cease.

Natan Sharansky may be thought to have his own authoritative voice on standing up to evil and so he recognises facets which are apparent in “Londonistan” which do just this and attempt to demonstrate the need to eschew appeasement policies which are damaging and very dangerous, even if they have a long history in the Foreign Office.

Melanie Phillips’ Londonistan is a last-minute warning for Britain and for much of the free world. In the 1930s, Britain was the leading appeaser of the world’s most intransigent foe, refusing to see the gathering signs of danger, until it was almost too late. Today, the same tendency to appeasement and self-delusion is evident again—only now, the threat is within. Britain refuses to recognize the clear and present danger of Islamism inside its own borders, which steadily corrodes its social values and moral compass. Once again, only the good sense of the British can save their country—and the same may be true in many other democracies. This book is powerful and frightening, but also courageous. In dictatorships, you need courage to fight evil; in the free world, you need courage to see the evil.

The future officials, policy makers and advisers are now going through universities in Britain which are often hotbeds of cowardice fostered by political correctness. *The Daily Telegraph* reported

British universities are a particular concern. Abdulmutallab [the recent potential plane bomber] was president of the Islamic Society at University College London between 2006 and 2007, while he was studying for an engineering degree. UCL, together with many other British universities, has been accused of failing to stop radical preachers giving talks on campus for fear of being accused of Islamophobia.

Links have been emerging between British Muslims and Yemen. MI5 once recently estimated 2,000 potentially violent terrorist individuals existed. They are optimistic about identifying all potentially active cells. The USA authorities are not so certain. It is very possible numbers of “invisible” terrorists are increasing. This means there is a lot of difficulty finding them, since they have clean criminal records and no knowledge of others like themselves. They lurk below the surface of society.

Other countries’ security officials need to take note. Britain’s lax folly needs to act as a warning. Other countries also need to be aware of Britain’s apparently all too easy penetration by Al-Qaida and its sympathizers so that they can monitor what has become a major springboard for terrorist resource build up and violent action.