

Dance of deception: Blaming the Muslim world

by [James M. Wall](#) in the [August 9, 2005](#) issue

Among the messages of sympathy that poured into London following the July 7 bombings were condolences from the governments of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Iran, Turkey—all nations with majority Muslim populations—and at least two Muslim nongovernmental groups: Hamas and Hezbollah.

But as Middle East scholar Juan Cole pointed out on his Web site “Informed Comment,” only ArabicNews.com and a few Chinese sites mentioned this list. The Western media gave little attention to this strong Muslim expression of solidarity.

Why this omission? Support from Muslim nations did not fit the dominant narrative in the U.S., which insists that “the reason we are attacked is that they hate us and our way of life, and we are not going to let that deter us from fighting terror.” This narrative is not based on reality.

The narrative also insists on a connection between Islam and terrorism, even though suicide bombing is anathema to Islam. Robert Pape, director of the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism, has compiled a database that includes every suicide terrorist attack anywhere in the world from 1980 to the beginning of 2004. “The facts show that suicide terrorist attacks are not primarily an outgrowth of Islamic fundamentalism and are, almost always, part of an organized campaign to compel a modern democracy to withdraw military force from territory that the terrorists consider home.” The world leader in suicide bombing is Sri Lanka, where a secular Marxist group draws its recruits from Hindu families (*Chicago Tribune*, June 29).

Western nations are not involved in a “war” on terror against people “who hate us.” What we are involved in is a dance of deception led by leaders in Washington and London who took us to war for reasons they know to be false and who now compound that deception by hiding behind the rhetoric of a simplistic struggle against evil. The U.S. media are complicit in this deception. The British media are not much better, though some journalists, including the *London Independent's*

Robert Fisk, point out the nakedness of the Whitehall and White House emperors.

Fisk had the courage to probe a painful point: Yes, the July 7 London attacks were barbaric, he says. But weren't these also barbaric—"the civilian deaths of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the children torn apart by cluster bombs, the countless innocent Iraqis gunned down at American military checkpoints?"

Prime Minister Blair made this pledge on the day after the London bombings: "They will never succeed in destroying what we hold dear." Fisk responded: "'They' are not trying to destroy 'what we hold dear.' They are trying to get public opinion to force Blair to withdraw from Iraq, from his alliance with the United States, and from his adherence to Bush's policies in the Middle East."

Deception dulls the mind—perhaps this explains why the usually well-informed Blair said that there should be two states in the Middle East, Israel and Palestine side by side, with two peoples, Arab and Jew, and two religions, Jewish and Muslim. Hopefully, the archbishop of Canterbury called Blair to remind the prime minister that there is also a Christian population in Palestine with historic connections that date back at least to the first journeys of Paul.

Blair's remark drew no reaction from either the American or British media, a further indication of the cultural-religious ignorance that encourages the absurd "clash of civilizations" paradigm—Muslims against the West—that is currently in vogue.

One journalist fond of the clash of civilizations paradigm is *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who has been writing columns of advice to Muslim populations, calling on them to modernize their faith and get on the capitalist train before modernity leaves them at the station. On the day after July 7 he suggested that Muslims worldwide are surrogate parents for the London bombers:

When jihadist-style bombings happen in Riyadh, that is a Muslim-Muslim problem. That is a police problem for Saudi Arabia. But when al-Qaeda-like bombings come to the London Underground, that becomes a civilizational problem. . . . It is essential that the Muslim world wake up to the fact that it has a jihadist death cult in its midst.

The assumption that worldwide Islam bears the responsibility for radical young men and women who blow up buses and trains is devoid of logic and conscience. Is

Friedman saying that the only brothers for whom we must be keepers are those who share our religious tradition? This implies something I do not think Friedman wants to say: Islam “caused” these terrorist acts and Islam alone can make them stop.

Enough of giving advice to Muslims. Our responsibility is to demand that Western leaders accept that what they’ve done to others has a direct connection to what is now being done unto us. Of course we want our leaders to remain vigilant against violent attacks. But meanwhile, it is time to stop blaming others, and to heed the scriptural command to “look to your own house” (1 Kings 12:16).