

of absolute justice threatens to undermine the democratization of Muslim societies from within. As a result, these political causes have exacerbated feelings of disempowerment in Muslim communities: "Democracies often get very bad press in the Arab and wider Muslim World because Britain and America have often said, 'we believe in freedom and democracy but you've got to have the Shahs of Iran as dictators over you.'" ¹¹ Hence, the perception that Western powers preach democracy while supporting corrupt, authoritarian regimes has left many Muslims with a feeling of desperation and anger.

The media also play a prominent role in reinforcing these negative perceptions of the West and the U.S. in Muslim communities. The "information revolution" of globalization has resulted in a new generation of Muslims even more aware of perceived injustices. For instance, it has been argued that *Al-Jazeera* Television has reinforced negative perceptions of the West among Arabs:

...[*Al-Jazeera's*] coverage of the [Israeli-Palestinian] conflict is one-sided. However, it often rivals or surpasses Western counterparts in the quality and timeliness of its

stories....The images also threaten to widen the gap in perception between, say Americans, who see different images on their screens and in their papers, and Arabs. Gaps like these are grist to the mill of those who talk of 'a clash of civilizations'.¹²

Religious and Cultural Factors

By contrast, others see a confrontation between extremist ("militant") ideologies of Islam and the West as the key cause of conflict. Therefore, in a "war on terrorism," the true "enemy" is not terrorism or Islam — it is "militant Islam." "Militant Islam" has been defined as a "terroristic" interpretation of Islam. "Militant Islam" does not arise from poverty or political factors; these are seen as merely irritants. Instead, "militant Islam" is the result of a collective angst over the perceived decline of Islam in relation to the West. According to this argument, "militant Islamic" ideology must be destroyed in order to combat terrorism. At the same time, moderate Islam and moderate Muslims must be supported. "Militant Islam" has two dimensions: military and political. While Western governments have begun to combat the military elements of this ideology, further measures need to be taken to address the political aspects.

- ¹¹ See summary of remarks from Karen Armstrong (2002), available at the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development website, www.cfp-pec.gc.ca. Karen Armstrong's presentation to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is also available in online video at the same website location.
- ¹² Paul Lalor, "Discussion Paper for Thinkers' Retreat: Clash of Civilizations? (2002): Lessons from Israel and Palestine," online: www.ecommons.net/ccfpd-thinkers2002/main.phtml?section=ottawa&show=lalor; see also Paul Lalor, interview in online video for Thinkers' Retreat: Clash of Civilizations? (2002), available at the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development website (www.cfp-pec.gc.ca).