



WHY THEY HATE US: THE LONG ANSWER

HUSAIN HAQQANI EXPLORES THE ROOTS OF MUSLIM INSTABILITY

HUSAIN HAQQANI recalls a *Newsweek* cover from October 2001: a Pakistani child brandishing a gun and the headline “Why They Hate Us.” The photo is emblematic of a question that has haunted Haqqani, director of BU’s Center for International Relations and a College of Arts and Sciences associate professor of international relations. “I have always wondered why the Muslim world is in the eye of virtually every storm, in my lifetime at least,” he says. “The Middle East is a cauldron. The India-Pakistan conflict has a Muslim dimension. In Russia, there’s Chechnya, another Muslim dimension.” Why is the Muslim world plagued by instability, undemocratic governments, and sectarian violence?

Haqqani has set out to find answers. He calls his project *State of the Muslim World*, and he draws broadly from such fields as anthropology, sociology, history, economics, and demography. He has written a series of articles exploring some of his questions, and he plans to begin writing a book this year.

Despite the diversity of the Islam-influenced world, he says, Muslims everywhere share membership in the *Ummah*, or community of believers. “There are many differences among Muslims, but there are also common streaks running from Egypt to Indonesia, and there is a sense of belonging together,” he says. “And yet, in the last few centuries, it has been a belonging together in decline. The Kuwaitis may be rich, but they know it is coming from oil in the ground, not from something they’ve accomplished. There is a lack of a general sense of accomplishment in modern times.”

He reels off a succession of surprising statistics in support of this argument: the GDP of the world’s fifty-seven Muslim-majority countries combined is less than that of France. Those fifty-seven countries are home to about 500 universities, compared to more than 5,000 in the United States and 8,000 in India. Fewer new book titles are published each year in Arabic, the language of 300 million people, than in Greek, spoken by only 15 million. More books are translated into Spanish each year than have been translated into Arabic in the last century.

Haqqani is getting some help in pulling together the data. “On Fridays, I usually have a set of my students working with me on this project,” he says. “How many books are sold in Bahrain? Compare that with some other country comparable in size and resources.”

Using these facts, Haqqani argues that a lack of economic, intellectual, cultural, and technological productivity in the Muslim world has left a vacuum that has been filled by

paranoia and inflammatory rhetoric, fueling “a culture of political anger, rather than political solutions.” Angry rhetoric, he maintains, keeps Muslims in a constant state of fear that Islam and Islamic culture are in danger of being snuffed out, resulting in a persistent cycle of violence as Muslims respond to the perceived threat posed by both external and sectarian enemies.

At the same time, this culture of anger prevents Muslims from examining the internal problems that plague the Islamic world, such as repressive governments, sectarian conflict, and a lack of democratic representation. “Muslims must rise and peacefully mobilize against sectarianism and the violence and destruction in, say, Iraq,” he wrote in the *Gulf Times*, an English-language newspaper popular in Qatar. “But before that can happen, Muslim discourse would have to shift away from the focus on Muslim victimhood and toward taking responsibility, as a community, for our own situation.”

Haqqani came to the United States after a career as a Pakistani journalist and statesman. He was Pakistan’s ambassador to Sri Lanka from 1992 to 1993 and was an advisor to Pakistani prime ministers Benazir Bhutto, Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, and Nawaz Sharif.

Haqqani is the author of *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, which was a bestseller in South Asia. He is also a practicing Muslim who studied in a *madrassa*, or traditional Islamic school, in Pakistan.

Although he hopes his message will reach Muslims, Haqqani believes that his research has something to teach Western policy makers as well. “Basically, I am saying that this is an entire section of the world that is reeling from the trauma of its decline,” he says. “How can the United States and other Western powers build relationships with the Muslim world without understanding what happens in the Muslim mind?” **TRICIA BRICK ■**