

G. The Making of a New Enemy

1. The final piece of the puzzle in the making of the contemporary version of America as the world police power is the replacement of communism as the main perceived threat to “democracy,” and the rise of Islamic terrorism as the new challenge for the United States.
2. The Berlin Wall fell in 1989, when Russia abandoned control of Eastern Europe, and by 1991, Russia itself had abandoned communism. This signaled the success of America’s mission to protect Europe, and made possible the rise of the European Union.
3. Up to that point events in the Islamic world had been seen as less important, but a new strain of anti-Americanism had been growing there that would soon grab the headlines.
4. First, because of America’s focus on anti-communism, a new enemy arose in Iran.
 - a) During the Cold War, the United States had supported the monarch of Iran (the “Shah”) because of his anti-communism.
 - b) The people of Iran, however, had gravitated toward a charismatic elected official, prime minister Mohamed Mossadegh, who promised to *nationalize* the oil resources of the country that had been developed by British and American companies.
 - c) America’s leaders saw in this program the specter of communism, so the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) was tasked with conspiring with the Shah to remove Mossadegh from power. In **1953** Mossadegh was arrested and imprisoned, and from that point on the Shah was more aggressively supported with weapons and money by the CIA even though he was especially unpopular with the people.
 - d) Since elected officials had been neutralized by the Shah and America, the only champions of Iranian independence still to be found were among the religious caste. The most charismatic of these was the Ayatollah Khomeini.
 - e) In **1979** mass protests broke out against the Shah and in support of Khomeini, and the Shah decided he could no longer hold onto power and he escaped the country.
 - f) As part of this **Iranian Revolution**, terrorists stormed the American embassy and took its staff hostage as a symbol of their uprising against the corrupt government and its superpower sponsor.
 - g) For 444 days, Americans were paraded on global television in blindfolds. The United States was humiliated, and the president, Jimmy Carter, refused to take action against Iran.
 - h) The result was the birth of a modern cultural trend called **Islamism**. Islamism had been brewing for a long time in Islamic culture, which resented being overpowered by cultures like Europe, Russia, and America, and in **1979** it erupted as a new threat. Islamism holds that a new deep commitment to Islam as the only true belief can fuel the overthrow of the world order with America at the top by means of “jihad” (holy war).
 - i) America’s inaction against Iran in **1979** and since has made the religious government of Iran the leading champion of Islamism in the world.
5. The United States also made the mistake of fostering the rise of Islamism while fighting the spread of communism in Iran’s neighbor Afghanistan.

- a) In **1979**, precisely when the United States was struggling to handle the situation in Iran, Russia invaded Afghanistan, where a new communist government was struggling to retain control of the country.
 - b) The United States did not want to fight Russia directly, so it opted to send money and weapons (again, via the CIA) to train the “mujahideen” fighters of Afghanistan. (President Ronald Reagan touted the mujahideen as “freedom fighters,” but the word literally means “jihadist” or “holy warrior of Islam.”)
 - c) Countless terrorists from around the Islamic world went to Afghanistan and received money and military training thanks to the United States, which believed they were focused on fighting communism.
 - d) One of these jihadists was Osama Bin Laden. Long after Russia limped home from its defeat in Afghanistan in **1989**, the jihadists trained and supplied in Afghanistan would become the infamous faces of Islamic terrorism. Osama Bin Laden himself was the organizer of the terrorist organization *Al Qaeda*, which was responsible for the 9-11 attacks against the United States.
6. By focusing so exclusively and obsessively on anti-communism, the United States inadvertently created its own next enemy: an Islamic world permeated by Islamism.