

INFLUENCE OF THE FIRST CRUSADE ON THE CURRENT SITUATION  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Military History

by

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
2006

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**REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE**Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

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<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 16-06-2006		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master's Thesis		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> Aug 2005 - Jun 2006	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b>  Influence of the First Crusade on the Current Situation in the Middle East				<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>  Leardi, Joseph L., Major, US Army				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD 1 Reynolds Ave. Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027-1352				<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b>  Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The Medieval Crusades have fundamentally shaped the Christian and Muslim world for almost a thousand years. The First Crusade was the start of the crusading period and as such, is the critical historical event that defines the relationship between Islam and America today. The interaction between the Franks and the Saracens during the First Crusade further developed the clash of cultures that began when Islam invaded Western Europe in the eighth century. Both cultures define their interaction during the First Crusade in a different way and from opposing points of view. Although Muslim and American scholars agree on some of the basic facts of the First Crusade, such as dates and outcome of battles, their historical interpretations of who did what and who was justified often starkly contrast each other. This gap in historical facts and interpretations highlights part of the current problem in the Middle East. Both sides believe that they are justified in their actions. Americans believe that their actions in the Middle East are moral and good. Islamic fundamentalists believe that Allah legitimizes their actions in the Middle East and around the world. "God Wills It!" Neither side acknowledges the validity of the opposing point of view, nor can they, given their religious (Arab Islamic) and ideological (American) justifications.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> First Crusade, Clash of Cultures, Arab Islamic History of the First Crusade, American History of the First Crusade, Historical Legacy of First Crusade, Franks, Saracens, Relevance of First Crusade in Middle East					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b>	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UU	105	

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

INFLUENCE OF THE FIRST CRUSADE ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, by Joseph L. Leardi, 97 pages.

The Medieval Crusades have fundamentally shaped the Christian and Muslim world for almost a thousand years. The First Crusade was the start of the crusading period and as such, is the critical historical event that defines the relationship between Islam and America today. The interaction between the Franks and the Saracens during the First Crusade further developed the clash of cultures that began when Islam invaded Western Europe in the eighth century. Both cultures define their interaction during the First Crusade in a different way and from opposing points of view. Although Muslim and American scholars agree on some of the basic facts of the First Crusade, such as dates and outcome of battles, their historical interpretations of who did what and who was justified often starkly contrast each other. This gap in historical facts and interpretations highlights part of the current problem in the Middle East. Both sides believe that they are justified in their actions. Americans believe that their actions in the Middle East are moral and good. Islamic fundamentalists believe that Allah legitimizes their actions in the Middle East and around the world. "God Wills It!" Neither side acknowledges the validity of the opposing point of view, nor can they, given their religious (Arab Islamic) and ideological (American) justifications.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the last year, I focused considerable time and energy on this research project. Many individuals directly or indirectly assisted me with guidance, encouragement, focus, and understanding. I want to express my sincere gratitude to those individuals listed below and to the others that I have neglected to mention who helped me accomplish this task.

First, I would like to thank my family. My wife, Joan, and two boys, Luke and Henry, endured countless hours without me as I researched and composed this thesis. Their patience and understanding allowed me to focus on my project and maintain perspective during the year.

Second, I would like to thank my MMAS committee composed of Mr. Bud Bowie, Dr. Alex Bielakowski, and Dr. Joseph Fischer. Each member provided invaluable advice, guidance, and focus that assisted me in completion of my thesis.

Third, I would like to thank my mother, Louise Leardi, for her tireless efforts to correct grammar mistakes within my thesis. Her expertise as a twenty-year veteran English teacher allowed me to focus more on the content and substance of this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to thank my Command and General Staff College classmates, many of whom provided valuable input by stimulating ideas for my thesis through class discussion and interaction. Their sincere effort to facilitate learning during and after class provided worthwhile material for thought.

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## ACRONYM

DoD United States Department of Defense

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The current situation in the Middle East pits American culture and ideals against Arab Islamic culture and ideals. One reason for opposing perceptions between Americans and Muslims is an ignorance of culture and history, more so from the American perspective. “In current American usage, the phrase ‘that’s history’ is commonly used to dismiss something as unimportant, of no relevance to current concerns, and despite an immense investment in the teaching and writing of history, the general level of historical knowledge in American society is abysmally low. The Muslim peoples, like everyone else in the world, are shaped by their history, but unlike some others, they are keenly aware of it.”<sup>1</sup> Middle Eastern Muslims predominately view Americans from a historical perspective while Americans predominately view Arabs from a much more contemporary context.

Arab Muslims clearly equate the American presence in the Middle East to the Western European conquest during the Crusades. Islamic fundamentalists amplify the most negative aspects of the Crusades in relating to the American presence in Iraq and the Middle East. Most Americans seem oblivious to any historical or cultural connotation of the Crusades. Yet, American culture derives most of its beliefs from the same Judeo-Christian principles that governed Western European culture during the First Crusade. Americans distance themselves from religious confrontation by proclaiming secular ideals associated with democracy. Americans use their “secular shield” to distance themselves from the “inappropriate” religious conflicts of history and justify their motives in the Middle East.

President George W. Bush accentuated the differences in culture and perspective immediately following the 11 September terrorist attacks when he addressed the press at the White House on 22 September and equated the war on terrorism to a “crusade.” International response to his statement was highly critical, especially from Islamic countries. The president used the secular definition of the word crusade without historical or religious context. He intended to unite the American people under a campaign to fight against the evil of terrorism. “The characterization of the war as a ‘crusade’ would be recognized as a blunder because of its serious negative connotations in the Islamic world, where it is still associated with the invading medieval European Christian armies.”<sup>2</sup> In general, most of the world equates the US president’s views or attitudes to the views and attitudes of Americans. The president’s unwitting faux pas reinforced world, and more importantly, Arab Islamic opinion that Americans think they are ideologically superior to other cultures, much as the Crusaders thought Christianity would prevail over Islam because God was on their side.

### The Proposed Thesis

The medieval Crusades have had a much more significant influence on the current situation in the Middle East than most Americans understand or care to acknowledge. The First Crusade is the critical historical event that defines the relationship between Arab Islamic and American cultures today. It greatly contributes to current negative Muslim perceptions and attitudes toward Americans in the Pan-Arab region. These negative perceptions have an adverse impact on American and Western influence, foreign policy, economic policy, and military actions in the region.

## The Research Question

### The Primary Research Question

Does the current clash between Arab Islamic culture and American culture in the Middle East have roots in the First Crusade?

### Subordinate Research Questions

Is cultural understanding by Muslims and Americans important to the context of the current problem in the Middle East? How can American military and civilian leaders use cultural understanding of Arabs to rectify the differences in perception that exacerbate the current situation in Iraq and the Middle East?

## Background of the Research Question

From the Western perspective, the medieval Crusades were critical historical events that exerted a powerful influence on European development over a period of several centuries. Most Americans see the Crusades as a campaign by the medieval Catholic Church to impose Christian religious and moral ideals on Muslims in the Middle East during the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> The Crusades are also, more recently, an important period to the Arab Islamic culture. Muslims believe the Crusades were an unprovoked invasion by the West to secure land, steal gold, and impose the infidel Christian religion on Muslims. Since 11 September 2001, the Crusades have suddenly become relevant to both Arabs and Americans as they look for solutions to cultural issues that go back almost a thousand years.

The US Army has recently prioritized awareness of Arab Islamic culture to a much higher level than ever before. In order to understand Middle Eastern Muslim

culture, military leaders must learn the history of Islamic interaction with Western civilization. One of the first and most significant interactions between the two cultures occurred during the Crusades. Although significant interaction between Muslims and Western Europeans first occurred when Islamic forces invaded Spain in the seventh century, the clash of cultures was too new to influence cultural perceptions. Other significant interactions between the two cultures occurred during the Ottoman Empire's expansion into Western Europe in the fifteenth century and during British imperial colonialism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although significant, neither of these periods is within the scope of this thesis.

### Origins of the Crusades

Although there are many different theories on the origins about the Crusades, historical facts generally support two viewpoints. The first, more secular view goes back to the early medieval period and the boredom of a warrior class. "The breakdown of the Carolingian empire in previous centuries, combined with the relative stability of European borders after the Christianization of the Vikings and Magyars, gave rise to an entire class of warriors who now had very little to do but fight among themselves and terrorize the peasant population."<sup>4</sup> The medieval Church discouraged infighting among Christians and often excommunicated or imposed other forms of religious punishment on those lords who participated in the violence. Despite the stigma that excommunication carried with it, many of these nobles continued their misbehavior, believing that they had nothing more to lose. Therefore, this temporary solution did nothing to solve the actual problem: excessive numbers of landless and penniless knights with a penchant to better

their position in life. However, when opportunities presented themselves to fight against non-Christians, these abundant, landless knights joined the fight with zeal.

Pope Urban II visualized a world where Christians would fight against an external threat instead of fighting against other Christians. With this vision, the Pope directed the formation of an armed pilgrimage to free the Holy Land from Islam. Historians later named the start of this holy war the First Crusade. McFall sums up the role of the medieval Church in restraining the violent tendencies of soldiers and providing moral direction in society within the context of the Crusades. “The Church--despite its all too often greed, ambition, treachery and politics--was the one major force for preserving some remnant of literacy, culture and moral order. It wielded an immense spiritual authority and on the whole used its power wisely, trying to promote a world more humane than that of the warrior-knights.”<sup>5</sup>

The second, more religiously founded view also goes back to the early medieval period. In the late seventh and early eighth centuries, Muslim forces advanced through North Africa into Spain and France. Muslim forces spread Islam through Africa and into Western Europe almost exclusively using military force. The Frankish King, Charles Martel, defeated the Muslims at the Battle of Tours, France, in 732, ending further Islamic expansion into Europe for several centuries. Aside from the importance to Christianity in stopping Islamic expansion, the Battle of Tours and subsequent skirmishes established a precedent of violent Muslim behavior. European experience dealing with the Muslim threat gave them their first taste of holy war. The Europeans believed that Spain was Christian territory, and Muslims had no right to attempt conquest. This conflict became a training ground for the religious and moral justification that the Church

eventually used during the Crusades.<sup>6</sup> The Muslim invasion of Western Europe supplied Church leaders with justification for preemptive action against Islam.

### The First Crusade

By the eleventh century, Western European Christians had established a tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Two possible reasons for this trend were an increase in religious fervor starting at the turn of the first millennium and the encouragement by the Church to visit Christian holy places, the *Holy Sepulcher* being the most holy of places. During the middle of the eleventh century, the expansion of the Muslim Seljuk Turks into both Byzantine territory and Middle Eastern lands ruled by the more Christian friendly Fatimid's caused upheaval along the pilgrimage routes and in the Holy Land.<sup>7</sup> The Seljuk Turks were much less tolerant of other religions and would often torment Christians living in the holy land and pilgrims moving through their territory. When word of the persecutions of Christians in the Holy Land and the request for assistance from the Byzantine emperor reached Pope Urban II, he decided to address the assembly at the Council of Clermont to energize the Church, proclaim the need for a pilgrimage to free Jerusalem, and assist Constantinople.

An overwhelming response from both the nobles and the poor materialized in response to the Pope's call to retake the Christian Holy Land from the Muslims. Historians attribute part of this massive response to the large population of landless knights who were often overeager to make a name for themselves and at the same time fulfill their religious obligations to the Church. The titled knights and kings who participated in the Crusade most likely joined for the favor of the Church and the salvation of their souls. This Western-dominated view is often disputed as idealistic, and

many instead theorize that the true motivation was tied to desire for land and gold. A combination of religious zeal and a desire to improve ones station in life motivated many of the serfs and peasants to join the Crusade. At a time of very rigid social structure and the feudal system, upward mobility was nearly impossible for the poor, unless they found great riches and land in faraway places. A large portion of medieval society thought that Jerusalem could provide a new beginning.

During the formation of the First Crusade, multiple armies formed starting in 1096 to answer the call to free the Holy Land. These uncoordinated waves of Crusaders formed from different regions and social strata within Europe and even took different routes to Constantinople. Along the way, Crusaders committed various atrocities against Jews in the name of the Church, and some even pillaged and murdered fellow Christians in order to secure sustenance or money. Many Crusaders never even made it to the halfway point, succumbing to disease, lack of money, and often loss of purpose. Eventually, all of the waves of Crusaders found their way to the Byzantine capital. In 1097, the much more organized army of Crusaders set out from Constantinople with Byzantine support to attack the Muslims on the way to the Holy Land. Along the way to Jerusalem, the Crusaders laid siege and captured Nicaea and Antioch, as well as many smaller cities. The army also defeated every lesser Muslim Army that they encountered. “The march through Asia was unpleasant. It was the middle of the summer and the crusaders had very little food and water; many men died, as did many horses, without which a knight was no more than an ordinary foot soldier. Christians, in Asia as in Europe, sometimes gave the pilgrims gifts of food and money, but more often the crusaders looted and pillaged whenever the opportunity presented itself.”<sup>8</sup> They also

burned and raped as part of the pillaging, standard practice to help defray the costs of campaigning, keep the army fed, and keep the knights and soldiers occupied outside the camp.

By the middle of 1099, the Crusaders finally reached Jerusalem and began a siege to capture the city. The Islamic perspective of the siege and resulting victory of the Crusaders is of course somewhat different from the Frankish view. “In 1099, after a forty-day siege, the Crusaders took Jerusalem. The scale of the massacre traumatized the entire region. The killing lasted two whole days, at the end of which most of the Muslim population--men, women and children--had been killed.”<sup>9</sup> The Christian army massacred so many noncombatants because they thought the Pope sanctioned killing all Muslims as part of the pilgrimage to secure Jerusalem. The Franks saw the noncombatants as Muslim defenders of the city, responsible for the massacre of Christian pilgrims and desecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Yet, the Crusaders killed more than just Muslim defenders of Jerusalem. They indiscriminately killed all defenders, regardless of ethnicity or religion, including Jews and possibly even other Christians. Although inconceivable in modern society, this indiscriminant massacre of defenders and innocents was commonplace in the medieval world, especially after long sieges.

#### Analysis of First Crusade

The First Crusade was militarily the most successful of all the Crusades and obviously succeeded in meeting Pope Urban’s primary objective, liberating the Holy City from the Muslims. The Islamic caliphs were generally unprepared for the Frankish invasion, largely due to religious infighting and a lack of realization of the nature of the Frankish threat. “This new round of internecine warfare [Shia and Sunni wars of

succession immediately preceding the Crusade] further weakened the Arab world. Two years later, the Franks struck. Their brutal determination shook the divided world of Islam and it rapidly crumbled.”<sup>10</sup> Sectarian differences divided the Islamic world into three centers of power and prevented Muslim leaders from reacting collectively to defeat the threat.

The First Crusade was also successful in assisting the Byzantine Emperor in his effort to temporarily delay the invading Muslim armies. “The establishment of the crusader states in the east helped ease Seljuk [Turkish] pressure on the Byzantine Empire, which had regained some of its Anatolian territory with crusader help, and experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity in the 12th century.”<sup>11</sup> When the Franks established the Kingdom of Jerusalem, they inadvertently created a buffer that also protected Western Europe. Instead of continuing their invasion of Europe, Muslims focused their efforts on expelling the Christians from their territory.

In addition to these more concrete examples, there were other less tangible benefits of the Crusades for Western Europeans. Trade routes were opened up for Middle Eastern goods to go to Europe, Europeans and Arabs began to exchange ideas once a temporary peace settled in, and all those restless knights were occupied far away from Europe making their fortunes at the expense of the Muslim. The leaders of the Catholic Church had also found a way to further influence increasingly uncooperative nobility. “The Papacy saw the Crusades as a way to assert Catholic influence as a unifying force, with war as a religious mission. This was a new attitude to religion: it brought religious discipline, previously applicable to monks, to soldiery--the new concept of a religious warrior and the chivalric ethos.”<sup>12</sup>

## Subsequent Crusades

Subsequent crusades were primarily expeditions to assist Frankish principalities established in the Holy Land and to defend lands that they had captured. Church leaders and kings did not direct all follow-on Crusades against the Muslim threat in the Holy Land. The Franks crusaded against fellow Christians when they attacked the capital of the Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, during the Fourth Crusade. In general, the later medieval Crusades resulted in a much more coordinated and violent response against the Franks by the Muslims in the Middle East. The military campaigns of the subsequent Crusades also experienced much less success compared to the First Crusade. Saladin, a Kurd from the area of present day Iraq, stood out as the most successful Islamic military leader of the period (between the Second and the Third Crusades). “The victories of Saladin and his capture of Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 have long been and are today a source of inspiration to Arab leaders.”<sup>13</sup> Saladin was an extremely competent military and political leader who unified Middle Eastern Muslims through force and leadership. Both the Muslims and the Franks respected him as a fair and impartial leader.

After the Sixth and Seventh Crusades, the popular support for the Crusades in Europe eroded away, leaving the last strongholds in the region vulnerable to Muslim reconquest. Slowly these strongholds were defeated until Muslim forces captured Acre in 1291. With the fall of Acre, the Frankish Crusade period was formally over.<sup>14</sup> The Catholic Church preached the necessity of additional Crusades; however, neither royal nor popular support solidified to back a large military campaign against the Muslims in the Holy Land.

### Assumptions

The primary assumption is that neither the American nor the Arabic Islamic perceptions of the Crusades are objective. Americans and Muslims think they know the “truth” and neither side will acknowledge that the other side’s view has merit. Fact is not necessarily the most important aspect of the history of the Crusades; perception is everything. Even if it were possible for both Muslims and Americans to know all the facts, it will neither prevent the clash of cultures nor will it convince either culture that they can peacefully coexist with the other. There are objective lessons from the First Crusade that can facilitate understanding of the current situation in the Middle East.

### Definitions

Atabeg. A Turkish term of respect meaning father of the prince and used to indicate one who acted in the name of the emir.

Caliph. A political and religious leader for an Islamic community or state, literally a successor of Muhammad.

Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The commemorative site of the tomb and crucifixion of Jesus Christ located within the old walls of Jerusalem. The mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine originally built the Church in A.D. 330.

Frank The term used by Middle Eastern Muslims to describe the Western European invaders during the Crusades.

God. The principal being of faith and worship in monotheistic religions.<sup>15</sup> The Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religions all claim decent from Abraham and all worship the same god but by different names: Yahweh, God, and Allah.

Saracen. The term used by Western Europeans during the Crusades to describe any Arab Muslim.

Total War. An armed conflict across national boundaries where countries or nations use all of their resources to destroy another country or nation's ability to wage war.

Holy War. An armed conflict where the main cause or purpose is religion or religious differences.

### Limitations

Some limitations include the lack of availability of primary sources on the topic; no one has survived the last seven hundred plus years to tell the "true story" behind the Crusades. Only God knows the truth of the past.

Time constraints imposed by the process may require less intensive and in-depth research than should be devoted to this topic.

The large amount of information on the Crusades, especially from western sources, will make gleaning pertinent information and focusing on the research question challenging.

The language barrier between English and Arabic limits the amount of information available on the Arabic Islamic perspective of historical and contemporary events. In general, there are far fewer Arabic historical writings on the First Crusade in comparison to American and western historical works.

### Delimitations

Historians generally agree that there were eight or nine major Crusades and a host of lesser or unofficial campaigns that some historians consider Crusades, depending on the point of view. Because of the wide date range and the immense amount of information available, the scope of this research work is restricted to the First Crusade, starting in 1095 and ending with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. Western historians predominately agree that the First Crusade was the earliest significant cultural interaction between Western Europeans and Arab Muslims. Moors, Muslims of mixed African and Berber decent, invaded present-day Spain but the level of cultural interaction was generally insignificant. Historians also agree that the First Crusade was the most organized and successful crusade for the Franks. The First Crusade provides a first look at the interaction between the Franks and Arab Muslims before cultural immersion. It also provides valuable insight into initial Islamic cultural reactions to the invasion. This delimitation will also aid in focusing the research and managing the mountains of information in the limited amount of time available to complete the project.

For the purpose of this thesis the American and western history of the First Crusade are synonymous. The differences between the two have more to do with the personal biases and experiences of the specific historians than with any cultural disparity. Most historical examples do not differentiate between the western and American cultural perspective, therefore, historians usually identify the western or Frankish cultural perspective in the historical examples.

### Significance of the Study

The First Crusade was a major campaign in the ongoing war of culture between Islam and Western Christianity that started in the seventh century, intensified during the Crusades, matured during the domination of the Ottoman Empire, and continues today in the Middle East between Americans and Muslims. “No student of the Crusades can fail to be struck by the similarities presented by some of their aspects with the contemporary Near Eastern scene.”<sup>16</sup> The “Near Eastern scene” that Issawi refers to is the Sinai campaign of 1956, which initiated the Suez Canal crisis. The First Crusade was the first time that the two cultures interacted on more or less equal terms because previous contact, such as during the Moorish conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, never resulted in a meaningful cultural relationship. Throughout the chronicle of the clash of cultures, the players and their disagreements have often changed, yet the underlying cause remains the same in each conflict between Islam and the West. The underlying cause, cultural domination, resulted in differing cultural perceptions that each culture accepts as historically universal. These differences in culture and perception intensify the clash of cultures today.

The American view of the start of the war begins with the attacks on 11 September 2001 against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The American perception equates this physical attack to a religious attack against American culture and ideals such as freedom, democracy and capitalism. The US retaliation and ensuing military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq are part of a much larger global war against terrorist, specifically targeting the Islamic Fundamentalists group Al Qaeda, their leader Osama bin Laden, and all terrorists wherever they are located. In essence, America’s

leaders designed this offensive operation to prevent further attacks against America and the West by Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorist organizations.

The Islamic fundamentalist view of the start of the war and its implications are very different from the American view. “For bin Laden and those who follow him, this is a religious war, a war for Islam against infidels, and therefore, inevitably, against the United States, the greatest power in the world of infidels.”<sup>17</sup> This statement should not surprise any American. Conflict often arises from a difference of opinions, perceptions, and interests. Despite the American leaderships attempt to disprove this hypothesis, this perception persists in the current conflict and may be partially responsible for the continued strength of the insurgency.

President George W. Bush is credited with saying “In order to win a war, you must understand the enemy.”<sup>18</sup> Bernard Lewis, referring to Osama bin Laden’s frequent use of historical examples in his anti-American propaganda campaign, states that “Historical allusions such as bin Laden’s, which may seem abstruse to many Americans, are common among Muslims, and can be properly understood only within the context of Middle Eastern perceptions of identity and against the backdrop of Middle Eastern history.”<sup>19</sup> It is blatantly obvious from the statement that to understand the enemy, and thereby defeat him, one must understand the history of the Middle East. However, one should also focus specifically on the religious and cultural identities of the Middle Eastern people in relation to history. Bernard Lewis goes on to say, “Islamic history, for Muslims, has an important religious and also legal significance, since it reflects the working out of God’s purpose for His community--those that accept the teachings of Islam and obey its law.”<sup>20</sup> This provides one reason why the study of history is so

important to understanding the Islamic fundamentalist / terrorist and all other Muslim peoples. Like Christianity, history plays a major role in Islamic religious culture and perceptions. Despite the secular nature of many traditionally Christian nations, such as the United States, religion and history play a major role in defining culture and laws within society. Lewis infers that history was even more important in the formation of Islamic identity and continues to play an important role in both cultural and governmental aspects.

American military and civilian leaders must understand the current conflict in the Middle East within the context of the clash of Western Christian and Islamic cultures. The best way for military and civilian leaders to understand the ongoing war of culture is to study the First Crusade. The First Crusade provides an opportunity to study significant military cultural interaction between an occupying western army and Muslims in the Middle East. It facilitates understanding of Islamic culture as well as American culture and stimulates reflection on the problem. Military leaders must understand the history and cultural terrain in order to visualize the battlefield and direct possible solutions to specific and general problems associated with the clash of cultures.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003), xviii–xix.

<sup>2</sup>Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 94.

<sup>3</sup>William Caferro, “The Crusades,” *Readers Companion to Military History*, ed. Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 117.

<sup>4</sup>*Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia*, s.v. “The First Crusade,” available from <http://en.wikipedia.org>; Internet; accessed on 23 September 2005.

<sup>5</sup>Arthur McFall, “Ill-fated Crusade of the Poor People,” *Military History* 14, no. 6 (1998): 2.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas F. Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 4.

<sup>7</sup>David Miller, *Brassey's Book of the Crusades* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc., 2001), 11.

<sup>8</sup>*Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The First Crusade," available from <http://en.wikipedia.org>; Internet; accessed on 23 September 2005.

<sup>9</sup>Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernarity* (London: Verso, 2003), 40.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The First Crusade," available from <http://en.wikipedia.org>; Internet; accessed 23 September 2005.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003), 48.

<sup>14</sup>*Wikipedia Online Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The First Crusade," available from <http://en.wikipedia.org>; Internet; accessed on 23 September 2005.

<sup>15</sup>Answers.com, s.v. "God," available from <http://www.answers.com/>; Internet; accessed on 22 October 2005.

<sup>16</sup>Charles Issawi, "Crusades and Current Crises in the Near East: A Historical Parallel," *International Affairs* 33, no. 3 (1957): 269.

<sup>17</sup>Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003), xv.

<sup>18</sup>Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 125.

<sup>19</sup>Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003), xviii.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, xix.

## CHAPTER 2

### AMERICAN HISTORY OF THE FIRST CRUSADE

American historians focus on the First Crusade because it was a turning point in the war between Islam and Christianity. When the Franks captured Jerusalem in 1099, Christianity seized the initiative from Islam and succeeded in reestablishing temporary control of parts of the Holy Land for the first time in over 400 years. American historians also focus on the First Crusade because it was the first step in a significant historical period that influenced European development and ultimately forced a cultural metamorphosis. The cultural interaction between Western Christians and Arab Muslims catalyzed many of the changes in western society that America benefits from today.

#### The Call

From the western historical viewpoint, the Seljuk Turks initiated the Crusades when they “swept through Persia, reduced the Abbasid caliphs to clients, and inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Byzantines of Manzikert. According to the traditional and often disputed version, the Byzantine emperor Alexius issued an urgent plea to the West for assistance. This in turn led Pope Urban II to issue a call for ‘holy war’ at Clermont in 1095.”<sup>1</sup> Before the Council of Clermont, a delegate from Emperor Alexis of the Byzantine Empire attended the Council at Piacenza in early 1095, and requested assistance from the Western Church to fight off the Seljuk Turks and protect Christian pilgrims en route to the Holy Land. The Byzantine delegate appealed to the sense of obligation to Church and God and obviously convinced the majority of the assembly, most important of which was Pope Urban, that this was a worthy cause.<sup>2</sup>

At the Council of Clermont Pope Urban II addressed the gathered delegates, consisting of cardinals, bishops, a large number of clerics, minor nobles, and other lay members of the Church, to tell them of the worsening situation in the Holy Land. He then called those gathered to listen to his appeal. Those present did not initially record Pope Urban's message but historians later attributed the following words to him:

Christian warriors, who continually and vainly seek pretexts for war, rejoice, for you have today found a true pretext. You, who have so often been the terror of your fellow men, go and fight against the barbarians, go and fight for the deliverance of the holy places. You who sell for vile pay the strength of your arms to the fury of others, armed with the sword of the Machabees, go and merit an eternal reward. If you triumph over your enemies, the kingdoms of the East will be your reward. If you are conquered, you will have the glory of dying in the very same place as Jesus Christ, and God will never forget that he found you in the holy battalions. This now is the time to prove that you are animated by true courage, the time to expiate the violence committed in the bosom of peace, the many victories purchased at the expense of justice and humanity. If you must have blood, bathe in the blood of the infidels. I speak to you with harshness because my ministry obliges me to do so. Soldiers of Hell, become soldiers of the living God!<sup>3</sup>

Pope Urban delivered a powerful message; the right message, delivered by the right person at the right time and at the right place. His intended to inflame a passionate response from those assembled. Many of those in attendance immediately pledged their support to free the Holy Land from the infidel. The Popes message spread by word of mouth to the outlying areas until the flame had ignited most of Western Europe (see figure 1 for map of Europe at the time of the First Crusade).

One of those to spread the Pope's message of pilgrimage to the Holy Land was Peter the Hermit, an old monk who had the gift of speech. Peter totally embraced the idealistic purpose of the Crusade. Wherever he went, throngs of peasants arrived to hear him preach the message of Pope Urban. He eventually amassed large numbers of disciples that helped him spread the message of war in the Holy Land to more remote

places in France and Germany. “Miracles followed Peter wherever he went. Demons were exorcised, sickness healed, and confirmed sinners turned to God. It was widely believed that Peter carried with him a letter sent down from heaven in which God exhorted all Christians to move quickly against the Turks so that he could take vengeance upon them.”<sup>4</sup> Peter the Hermit’s intense faith and sincerity convinced thousands of peasants to join the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Whether he was actually responsible for miracles or whether they ever occurred in the first place is of lesser importance compared to the fact that people believed in him enough to attribute amazing events to his person.

It is important to note that contemporary medieval scholars did not use the term “crusade” to designate the movement until much later in the medieval era. Contemporary medieval writers and clergy referred to the men and women that answered the call as pilgrims. These pilgrims were armed to attack and clear the Saracens from the Holy Land instead of the defensive measures typically taken to protect against the hazards encountered on the journey. Candidates became crusaders by taking the vows of a pilgrim, usually given by Church clergy, and receiving symbolic items such as a purse or a staff. The clergy would then bless the pilgrim and they would then don a cloth surcoat with a white cross on the front and back. This symbolism earned these pilgrims the designation of “taking the cross”.



Figure 1. Map of Europe at the Time of the First Crusade

Source: Ramsey Muir, *Philips' New Historical Atlas for Students* (London: George Philip & Son, Ltd., 1911).

Shortly after his proclamation for a pilgrimage to free the Holy Land, Pope Urban decreed that the pilgrims were to take an oath and wear a visible symbol of the cross, to signify their dedication to the oath. He further prescribed that those who took the cross would be absolved of their sins and that the Church would safeguard their worldly belongings until their return from the Holy Land. Pope Urban forbade clergy from taking the cross and further discouraged the elderly and sick from the making the pilgrimage. He also dictated that the armies should depart by the Feast of the Assumption of the following summer and that they should meet at Constantinople to coordinate their efforts

with Emperor Alexius.<sup>5</sup> The Pope was attempting to control the scope of the Crusade. He clearly understood the nature of warfare and felt obligated to impose constraints and limitations on the forces that would answer the call. Even though Pope Urban abdicated the sins of those that took the cross, he did not intend to unleash total war upon the Muslim people and others in the path of the crusading army. The Pope wanted to instill a moral aspect to the war in the Holy Land by invoking the values and traditions of the Church.

### The First Crusade Forms

#### The Peasant Crusade

The formation of the First Crusade was not a model of how to organize a large army to march several thousand miles. The Pope never directed a plan to raise and organize an army with a responsible leader. Instead, several armies of pilgrims seemed to spring up in response to someone that collected the group and started to move out. Historians call the first wave of pilgrims to form into a recognizable army the Peoples Crusade. Historians credit Peter the Hermit with raising this first wave of crusaders. As Peter traveled through France and Germany preaching the message of Pope Urban, large numbers of peasants began to follow him from place to place. This group of disciples soon formed the nucleus of the first crusading army and began to push its way across Europe toward Constantinople. Most of the pilgrims in this expedition were peasants, although there were a small number of merchants and minor nobles. Peter's first wave of crusaders departed on their pilgrimage much before the date specified by Pope Urban. Their organization and equipment reflected the hasty formation of the army and the low social class of the majority of the group. Though poorly equipped and lacking any

semblance of military organization, the Peasant Crusade displayed an almost fanatical religious enthusiasm.

When Peter departed Germany on his way east along the Danube River, he left behind several cohorts in Germany who continued to preach Pope Urban's decree and gather recruits for smaller pilgrim armies. These predominately-German pilgrim armies were to meet Peter's army in Constantinople. They were similarly equipped and driven by the haste of religious fervor. As these groups mobilized to move east, they noticed the large number of Jews living in cities such as Mainz, Trier and Cologne. The Jews were not overly popular in France and Germany during the eleventh century because the population perceived that they were making excessive profits by loaning money to Christians and because they dabbled in forbidden sciences such as medicine. Many believed that the Jews were enemies of Christendom because their ancestors were responsible for the Crucifixion.<sup>6</sup> So began the crusader persecution of Jewish communities along the route that the pilgrim armies followed to the Holy Land. Many of these smaller pilgrim armies never made it to Constantinople, although a few eventually linked up with Peter's pilgrim army.

Peter's army of pilgrims arrived piecemeal in Constantinople around 1 August 1096 after marching overland through Hungary, Bulgaria, and Greece. Hunger forced the poorly equipped Peasant Army to forage for food and supplies along the route of march. The pilgrims' behavior while foraging did not endear them to the local Christian inhabitants. As the army neared Constantinople, the forewarned Emperor Alexius sent escorts to guide the army the rest of the way to the capital and ensure that Peter's pilgrims maintained some semblance of good behavior. Alexius, fearful of further

misbehavior, housed Peter's army outside of Constantinople's walls in the remote suburbs. He decreed that the number of pilgrims and the frequency of visits to the city should be strictly controlled to prevent violence between the easterners and the westerners. Alexius also provided provisions in his attempt to pacify the disorderly mob of pilgrims. Initially the Emperor attempted to convince Peter and his army to remain in camp around Constantinople until the arrival of the forthcoming main body of the crusade, set to depart on 15 August 1096 from France. Alexius' concern emanated from his observations that Peter's army was poorly equipped, poorly organized, did not understand the enemy, and did not know the geography of the area.<sup>7</sup> Alexius feared that the Turks would easily defeat Peter's army. Neither Peter, nor any of his leaders, properly planned and prepared their army for the invasion of Asia Minor. Instead, they relied on faith, believing that God would hand them victory over the Muslims. Despite his misgivings, Alexius changed his mind and decided to assist Peter's army to cross the Bosphorus Straits because he could not support them for an extended period.

Once across the straits, arguments erupted within the leadership of Peter's army about how best to execute the campaign. These arguments split the pilgrim army into two camps, a predominately French faction and a predominately German faction. When the army split, Peter's role as leader of the army dissolved. He remained an influential spiritual leader, but he no longer made strategic decisions for the army. The two armies stopped their advance to the Holy Land and instead raided surrounding villages and cities. When one army returned from a raid with plunder, the other army conducted a raid to match the success of the other in a sort of pseudo competition.<sup>8</sup> The pilgrim army had clearly lost focus. The split of the army and the loss of a leader with the vision only made

matters worse for the pilgrims of the Peasant Crusade. If they had any possibility of success from the start, the loss of unity of command made defeat inevitable.

The French army soon conducted a successful raid in the environs of Nicaea, the capital of the Seljuk Turks, bringing back much plunder. The German contingent responded with a raid of their own that eventually led to the capture of the Turkish castle Xerigordon. A large Turkish army eventually besieged the Germans who decided to remain in the castle. The Germans surrendered to the Turks and were all killed or taken as slaves. In response, the remaining French army of roughly 20,000 pilgrims rode out of their camp at Civetot to meet the Turkish army and avenge the slaughter of their German peers. The Turkish army soundly defeated the undisciplined French force, slaughtering many thousands of soldiers and camp followers. Alexius' forces later rescued the few thousand pilgrims who escaped to an abandoned castle ruin near the coast.

The Peasant Crusade was over. Mainstream historians consider the first wave an utter failure. The crusaders themselves committed horrible acts of violence, often against other Christians. Although their leader, Peter the Hermit, had vision and purpose, he lacked military organization and the ability to impose discipline. He did not plan or prepare for the second half of the campaign (the more important part), instead, believing that the will of God would assure victory. The breakup of the pilgrim army at the doorstep of the enemy further weakened the army and made defeat inevitable. The whole affair was a shameful loss of life and a waste of effort. The second wave of pilgrims would unintentionally fix many of these deficiencies through their deliberate preparation and more experienced leadership.

## The Main Body

The main body of the First Crusade spent several months gathering forces and preparing for the long march to the Holy Land. Their approach was much more deliberate than the first wave of pilgrims. “In general terms, the First Crusade followed Urban’s plan, with vigorous recruiting during the remainder of 1095 and the early months of 1096. As a result, four large armies assembled in August 1096 and made their separate ways across Europe to the Byzantine capital at Constantinople.”<sup>9</sup> There were also a number of smaller armies or groups of pilgrim soldiers that formed and met the larger armies in Constantinople. Prominent leaders such as Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine, led each of these large armies. Godfrey was an experienced warrior and leader, having participated in numerous battles and campaigns. He was one of the first to take the cross, and would eventually become the first Latin King of Jerusalem. Godfrey also possessed lands and wealth, much of which he had to sacrifice to prepare his army for the pilgrimage.

In addition to knights and foot soldiers, the larger prince led pilgrim armies included support personnel such as blacksmiths, cooks, fletchers, and other camp followers. Many of the knights also brought their families and household servants, a common practice for long campaigns during the medieval period. In contrast to Peter’s army, the princes effectively organized their armies with better logistical support and enforcement of discipline.<sup>10</sup> The amount of time that the princes gave their armies to prepare and the military leadership that organized the armies facilitated a much more prepared pilgrim movement. Also in contrast to Peter’s army, were the large contingent of knights and nobles. Peter’s army had few knight and even fewer nobles. This may also

explain the better organization of these following waves of pilgrims because knights tended to have more military experience than the average peasant.

On 15 August, the large pilgrim armies departed for the Holy Land. Each army initially traveled a slightly different route (see figure 2). Godfrey of Bouillon's army traveled along the same route that Peter's army had taken; east along the Danube, then south through Hungary, Bulgaria, and Greece on the way to Constantinople. Godfrey often had to deal with the aftermath of the actions of Peter's army. The towns, cities, and principalities were not happy to see another large pilgrim army moving through their lands. Godfrey, however, did not make the same mistakes that Peter made. "He was well armed, he was well known, and he had complete control over his men."<sup>11</sup> Godfrey also had experience campaigning with large armies and displayed an understanding of diplomacy by sending emissaries and messengers ahead to prepare the way for his army. Godfrey's diplomacy and enforcement of discipline facilitated the smooth and uneventful journey for his army on the way to Constantinople.

The other three large armies that departed for Constantinople on 15 August included a French and Norman army led by Duke Hugh de Vermandois, a Norman army from southern Italy led by Duke Bohemond of Otranto, and a southern French army led by Count Raymond of Toulouse. Duke Hugh, the brother of the King of France, traveled down through the Alps, south through Italy, took ships across to the Balkan Peninsula and then marched to Constantinople. Duke Bohemond traveled by ship to the Balkan Peninsula and then marched to Constantinople. Count Raymond traveled with the Pope's envoy, Bishop Adhemar du Puy, south through the Alps across northern Italy and then south along the Dalmatian coast across to Constantinople.<sup>12</sup> Each army fought through

typical trials and tribulations with no major losses, with the last army reaching the Byzantine capital by May 1097.



Figure 2. Map of the Route Taken on the First Crusade

Source: The Hartley Family Web Site, "The First Crusade," available from [http://www.medievaltymes.com/courtyard/first\\_crusade.htm](http://www.medievaltymes.com/courtyard/first_crusade.htm); Internet; accessed on 2 March 2006.

As the four pilgrim armies arrived in Constantinople, Alexius sent a guard to escort each army to camps outside the city walls. All four armies arrived at separate times and Emperor Alexius personally greeted each of the leaders. "For Emperor Alexius, the crusade presented both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, he was pleased

that his request for aid had met with such success. Thousands of Christian soldiers were now mobilized to fight the enemies of Byzantium. On the other hand, these western barbarians were not altogether trustworthy.”<sup>13</sup> Alexius suspected that the crusader princes had more secular motives for taking the cross. He believed that they intended to secure land and wealth and possibly establish principalities. Alexius developed a policy that would ensure he maintained sovereignty over any re-conquered Byzantine lands. He would demand an oath of allegiance from each leader in exchange for logistical support.<sup>14</sup> In theory, this oath would keep the crusader princes obedient and allow Alexius to exert control over old territory.

According to most accounts, Duke Hugh was the first of the large pilgrim army leaders to arrive. Alexius greeted him warmly and presented him with gifts, yet, he restricted his freedom until he agreed to swear an oath of obedience. Hugh eventually agreed to the oath, possibly because he had no army (weather delayed his army in Italy) and because he was unprepared to turn the offer down. He also understood that he was in a foreign and possibly unfriendly land with little room to negotiate and no friends for support. The next leader to arrive was Godfrey. Godfrey had a larger army, was forewarned of Alexius’ intentions, and did not care to swear an oath to Alexius.<sup>15</sup> The stalemate between Godfrey and Alexius went on for several months, even erupting into armed conflict on several occasions. Godfrey eventually recanted his earlier convictions and took an oath to Alexius so that he could receive provisions for his army and transportation across the Bosphorus Straits to the pilgrim army’s staging area.

Duke Bohemond was the next leader to arrive and fall into the trap that Alexius had set. Bohemond was the son of the Norman leader Robert Guiscard and had

participated in the Norman conquest of Byzantine lands without success just over ten years prior to his arrival. Alexius had provided part of the force that defeated Bohemond's armies. Alexius considered Bohemond the most dangerous threat to his interests out of the four leaders. He understood Bohemond to be the most ambitious with the most to gain from the situation.<sup>16</sup> Bohemond swore the oath with the least amount of resistance. The final pilgrim army leader to arrive in Constantinople was Count Raymond. Raymond was the most powerful of the four leaders and the Pope acknowledged this by bestowing the papal envoy with the southern French army. Raymond resisted swearing an oath to Alexius but the two eventually compromised and Raymond swore a modified oath the Emperor. Neither the Emperor nor the crusading army leaders were completely happy with the compromise, nor did either party trust the intentions of the other.

### The Campaign Begins

The First Crusade officially started when Alexius secured the final and fourth oath from the western princes. The Byzantines transported the four pilgrim armies across the Bosphorus Straits to the staging area. The diplomatic situation was precarious but for the moment, it was not the primary concern. Alexius provisioned the crusading army as promised and the army began preparations for the second phase of the operation. The pilgrim army's first goal was to assault and take the city of Nicaea, the capital of the Seljuk Turks. They chose this city probably because it was close to Constantinople, but also because Alexius strongly suggested that they could easily defeat the Turks.<sup>17</sup> Nicaea was a well fortified city and strategically located for lines of communication and trade. In

mid-May 1097, the crusading army, side by side with the Byzantine forces, advanced to the city and established a land and naval siege.

The Seljuk Turk Sultan, Kilij Arslan, was away from the city when the Christian armies assaulted the city. “Kilij Arslan did not take seriously this new menace from the West. His easy defeat of Peter the Hermit’s rabble taught him to despise the Crusaders; and perhaps his spies in Constantinople, wishing to please their master, gave him exaggerated accounts of the quarrels between the Emperor and the western princes.”<sup>18</sup> Once the Sultan realized the true nature of the threat, he returned with an army to relieve the siege and defeat the Christian armies. The Christian army settled in for a long siege, knowing that the strength of the fortifications and other defensive works would require an extended effort. Not long after the siege began, the Sultan’s army attacked the Christian army outside the city. On 21 May, the Christians routed the attacking Turkish army.

Once the Turkish garrison observed the defeat of their Sultan, they negotiated terms for surrender with the Byzantines. Unbeknownst to the western pilgrim army, the Turks surrendered the city to the Byzantines at night and they awoke the next morning to see the Eastern empire flags flying over Nicaea. The pilgrim army felt that the Byzantines had betrayed them. This was their first opportunity to kill the infidel and plunder a city. Alexius robbed the pilgrims of their opportunity to loot the city and ensured that they would adhere to the oath that they promised. Alexius, knowing that he had pre-empted the pilgrim’s plan, rewarded the soldiers with gifts of food and rewarded the knights and leaders with gifts of gold and gems. Despite his attempts to pacify the pilgrim army, many of the pilgrims resented the Byzantines even more.

After the hollow victory at Nicaea, the leaders of the pilgrim army met to decide on a course of action for the army. Working as a council with no single leader they decided to split the army in two and continue the march across Asia Minor towards the Holy Land. One army led by Count Raymond followed about a days march behind the other led by Duke Bohemond. When the Christian pilgrims set out, Kilij Arslan followed the army awaiting his opportunity to attack and get revenge. Somewhere near the valley of Dorylaeum, the Sultan's army prepared an ambush to destroy the split pilgrim armies. The Sultan's army attacked the lead army early one morning at the end of June, clearly outnumbering the Christians. Bohemond requested the support of the other army and prepared a defensive fight against the Turks. As Bohemond stalled for time, the second pilgrim army attacked the Turks saving the camp. Then another force from the second pilgrim army attacked the Sultan's army from their rear, causing them to flee the battlefield. The Christian army won a great victory. This was the first major victory for the pilgrim army and opened up the rest of Asia Minor for travel or conquest.

After their victory at Dorylaeum, the Christian army rejoined its two forces moving southeast, following the road south of the salt desert along the edge of the mountains. The combined army was now very large and as is the case with most large armies, very slow. The Byzantine guides, acting as advisors to the pilgrim army, would most likely have advised the route along the mountains because they knew a march across the salt desert during the middle of summer would kill the army.<sup>19</sup> Despite this kinder route, a combination of heat, lack of food and water, and constant harassment by Turkish forces nearly broke the Christian army. These harsh conditions created opportunities for secondary effects such as disease to start to decimate the army. To make

matters even worse, the land had been devastated in past years by war between the Byzantines and the Turks, and the Franks could find little respite.

Finally, the coming of fall brought the relief of rain and cooler temperatures to the Christians. In conjunction with the more temperate weather, they entered the environs of Iconium, with fertile valleys and heavy Byzantine influence. Here, the pilgrim army recuperated and planned for the next phase of the journey. After they gathered water and other supplies for their continued journey, the Christian army moved towards the fertile valley and town called Heraclea. The Christian army immediately attacked the smaller Turkish army and routed them with superior numbers and heavier forces. At Heraclea, the leaders of the pilgrim army, believing the danger was past and looking to their own interests, began to disagree about the course of action to take. Here two smaller groups of pilgrim knights and soldiers split off to find glory and riches in Tarsus and Edessa.<sup>20</sup> Both extraneous campaigns were successful, creating more space along the lines of communication for the pilgrim armies. Historians consider the county of Edessa the first crusader state. Edessa would later become important as a cushion against Turkish attacks against the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The differing of opinions and the split of the Christian forces at Heraclea was also the beginning of a trend that would eventually play a large role in the failure of later crusades.

### Antioch

One significant obstacle obstructed the pilgrim army's path to the Holy Land, Antioch. There were a host of lesser cities and towns with Muslim garrisons and a range of mountains that could pose problems for the pilgrims, but none of these posed such a significant challenge to the Christians as Antioch. "On October 20, four months after the

battle of Nicaea, the Crusaders saw the high, biscuit-colored walls of Antioch in the distance. They were awestruck by the power and splendor of the city that stood in their way, defended by walls built by a Byzantine emperor and by a ruthless and well-organized Turkish army.”<sup>21</sup> The Christian army could not bypass Antioch because it Muslim forces could use it as a base to attack and disrupt pilgrim lines of communication. Muslim forces could also use the city as a staging base to attack newly acquired Christian principalities in the Holy Land. Antioch was also a rich trade city that would invariably provide riches for the pilgrims and future trade for the Christians. Unfortunately, for the pilgrim army, Antioch had a large Turkish garrison determined to defend the city and nearly impenetrable walls, well protected by hundreds of towers.

The pilgrim army leaders decided against a full-scale attack against the walls and settled in for a siege, hoping to starve the inhabitants of the city. The Turkish governor of Antioch sent requests for assistance to anyone who would heed the call to relieve the city. As winter approached, the pilgrim army began to suffer from the harsh weather and a lack of provisions. Foraging parties traveled further and further in search of enough supplies to provision a large army. Eventually conditions deteriorated to the point that the leaders almost called off the siege. Even with the arrival of sufficient provisions and the defeat of Turkish relief forces, the Christian army began to falter in their purpose. The city was so formidable that it seemed as if it would never fall. Many pilgrim soldiers, including knights, deserted and many died of disease and starvation.

Antioch could conceivably last for years on the provisions that the mayor had stored. Fortunately, for the pilgrim army, there was a large population of Christians in the city and a guard that valued money more than duty. Bohemond convinced an Islamic

convert and captain of the guard to betray his masters and open the city to the pilgrim army. In June of 1098, the pilgrim army rushed through the opened gate and captured the sleeping city of Antioch. After nearly eight months of siege, the crusades took control of one of the most strategically vital cities in the region. Shortly after the pilgrims conquered the city, a large Turkish army from Mosul and under the command of Kerbogha arrived to relieve the city from the besieging Christian army. The besiegers became the defenders just in time to prevent their destruction outside the walls of the city.

Once again, the pilgrim army faced starvation, disease, and death. They also confronted a large, well-armed and well-supplied enemy army. The pilgrim army realized how bad their position was just as Kerbogha tightened the noose around the city. In the midst of such a hopeless situation, one particular event ignited the religious fervor of the pilgrims and returned to them the willpower to defeat the besieging Turks.<sup>22</sup> A peasant, Peter Bartholomew, pronounced that Saint Andrew told him the location of the Holy Lance, the weapon used to pierce the side of Christ during the crucifixion. Peter was the servant of a French pilgrim, yet he inspired enough confidence in the Christian leadership to lead them to the buried Holy Lance. With the Lance as their testament to victory, the pilgrim army rode out from the walls of Antioch and attacked the unsuspecting Turkish army. Once again, the Christian army had defied the odds and defeated a superior enemy force that held the initiative and superior position on the battlefield.

### Jerusalem

The pilgrim army remained in Antioch for several months waiting for the heat to dissipate and the leaders to decide a course of action that would take them to Jerusalem. After nearly six months of rest and recuperation, plus some planning and preparation

thrown in, the Christians departed Antioch in January 1099 on their way to Jerusalem with Count Raymond in command. The pilgrim army marched through most of Syria along the coast and eventually into Fatimid territory near present day Beirut. The previous year, a Fatimid army had attacked Turkish forces in Jerusalem and defeated them, gaining control of the region. Many of the cities and towns along the route of march offered the pilgrims money and provisions so that they would leave them alone. In June 1099, the pilgrim army arrived at Mount Joy and observed the city of Jerusalem from the heights (see figure 3 for a map of Jerusalem during the Crusades). Muslim forces garrisoned and provisioned the city well in anticipation of the Christian army assault. The Fatimid's had prepared the city by poisoning wells outside the city, admitting all livestock inside the city, and expelling most Christian inhabitants prior to the pilgrim army's arrival.<sup>23</sup> The governor of Jerusalem had also summoned an Egyptian army to help relieve the city and defeat the pilgrim army.

The pilgrim army, hearing of the Egyptian army's approach and realizing that they did not have enough forces to encircle the city, conducted a hasty attack against the city defenses. Despite a valiant attempt, they failed to take the city primarily because they did not have any siege equipment. Near to that moment, a small army from Genoa arrived by ship with the necessary siege equipment and much needed provisions.<sup>24</sup> In mid-July, the invigorated Christian army attacked the city and succeeded in breaching the walls after a few short days. On 15 July 1099, the pilgrim army entered the city, massacring as many of the inhabitants as they could find in an attempt to cleanse the city of all infidels and make Jerusalem a Christian city once again. Two days later the princes and leaders met to appoint a ruler of the city. They chose Duke Godfrey of Bouillon after several of

the other princes turned the position down. Now the Christian forces turned to the arduous task of consolidating their gains and building a kingdom in the Holy Land.

### Conclusion

With Jerusalem secured, the Christian army accomplished their primary goal as envisioned by Pope Urban. They also succeeded in meeting their second objective by assisting the Byzantine Empire defeat the Seljuk Turk threat. The Frank's campaign was long and difficult and came close to failure numerous times. Yet, they always succeeded in pulling away from the brink of failure and continuing towards their objective. For the most part, the Christian army maintained their focus and understood how they were going to achieve their end state. The Crusader princes' leadership and unity of effort was at least partly responsible for their eventual success. Despite the many successes, many thousands of crusaders died at the hands of the enemy and many more died from the hardships of the journey. Western European medieval society clearly considered the sacrifices of the pilgrims well worth the cost. When word reached Latin Europe that the crusaders had re-taken Jerusalem from the Muslims, the exultation was pervasive. The successful campaign had validated the will of God and proven that the Franks were justified in their cause.

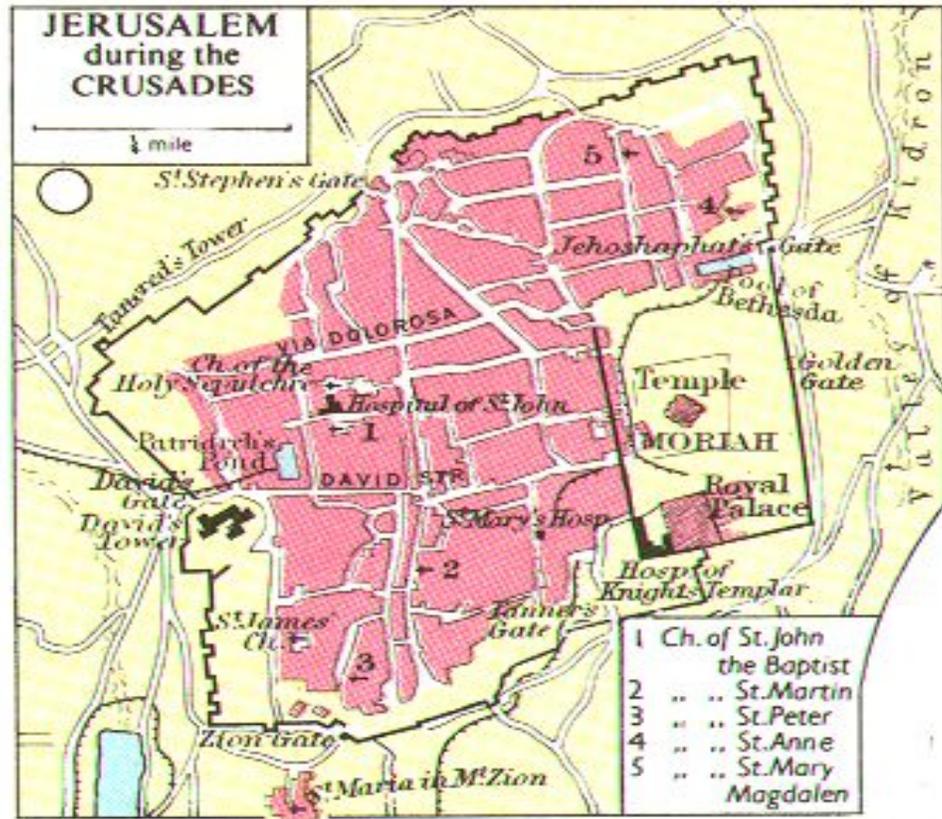


Figure 3. Map of Jerusalem during the Crusades

Source: Internet Medieval Sourcebook: Maps and Images, "Jerusalem, (Col);" available from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/maps/jlem-colmap.jpg>; Internet; accessed on 10 March 2006.

<sup>1</sup>William Caferro, "The Crusades," *Readers Companion to Military History*, ed. Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 117.

<sup>2</sup>Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 39-40.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 34-35.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas F Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 18.

<sup>5</sup>Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43-44.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas F Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 20 - 21.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 43.

<sup>8</sup>Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 58.

<sup>9</sup>David Miller, *Brassey's Book of the Crusades* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc, 2001), 15.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 51-52.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>12</sup>Joshua Prawer, *The Crusaders' Kingdom: European Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (London: Phoenix Press, 1972), 12.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas F Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 22.

<sup>14</sup>Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 70 - 71.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 54.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas F Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 24.

<sup>17</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 67.

<sup>18</sup>Steven Runciman, *The First Crusade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 95.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>20</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 72.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>22</sup>Thomas F Madden, *A Concise History of the Crusades* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999), 30.

<sup>23</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 95.

<sup>24</sup>David Miller, *Brassey's Book of the Crusades* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc., 2001), 20.

## CHAPTER 3

### ARAB ISLAMIC HISTORY OF THE FIRST CRUSADE

Muslim scholars and historians poorly document the events of the First Crusade, especially in comparison to the countless historical accounts and contemporary historical interpretations by American scholars. Medieval Islamic leaders failed to plan, prepare, and execute a successful defense against the invading Christian armies. Neither historical Muslim leaders nor modern Islamic scholars dwell on the failures of Muslim forces during the Frankish conquest. Those Islamic leaders and scholars that mention the First Crusade generally emphasize the barbaric acts of the Franks and justify their actions from their historical interpretation and cultural perception of the situation.

#### Pre-Crusade Islamic World

Muslim scholars retrospectively comment on the Franks reasons for initiating the First Crusade since there were no Muslims present nor did they care at the time what the Christians were doing at Clermont. Ibn Al-Athir notes that the Franks first became a force to be reckoned with in 1085 when they retook Toledo, Spain from Islamic forces. He also notes that the Franks recaptured Sicily from invading Muslim forces.<sup>1</sup> Many other Muslim scholars note a similar sequence of attacks against Muslims as a starting point for the Crusades. This seems to indicate the Islamic scholars deduced that the First Crusade was one campaign within a grand strategy to wipe Muslims off the face of the earth. Naturally, the Western Europeans would start closer to home and move from there to attack Muslim controlled lands. No mention is made of the Muslim conquests of Spain and Sicily, as they were traditional Christian lands.

During the years 1092 to 1094, a series of murders and suspicious deaths of influential Muslim leaders caused chaos throughout the Arab Islamic world. Both the vizier of the Seljuk Turks and the sultan of the Seljuk Turks were murdered or died under suspicious circumstances. The Fatimid caliph of Egypt and the vizier of Cairo also died under possibly suspicious circumstances, ending an intense rivalry between the Seljuks and the Fatimids. The Abbasid Sunni caliph also died during the period, completing the purge of major Islamic leaders in the Arab region. “This succession of deaths in both the key power centres of the Islamic world, namely the Seljuq and Fatimid empires, occurring at exactly the same time, must have had the same impact as the disintegration of the Iron Curtain from 1989 onwards: familiar political entities gave way to disorientation and anarchy.”<sup>2</sup> While the consequences of this chaos were affecting the Muslim world, Pope Urban began preaching his message to free the Holy Land from the infidel. The Frankish timing to initiate a military pilgrimage could not have been better, although there are no indications that it was anything but luck.

Another important influence prior to the start of the First Crusade was the sectarian divide between Shia and Sunni. The Seljuk Turks were Sunni and the primary objective of their strategy was the destruction the Shi’ite Fatimid caliphate. This rift between Shia and Sunni permeated Islamic society and played a major role in the lack of cooperation between the two regimes when the Franks first invaded.<sup>3</sup> The Shia and Sunni conflict followed the same parameters that occur in the Middle East today. Killing and infighting occur constantly, until a serious threat to the region or perceived threat to Islam materializes. Then the two sects make a truce long enough to face the external threat.

Once Islamic forces defeat the external threat, the two sects return to their bickering and killing.

The Shia/Sunni rift occurred within the first few decades after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. The Muslim community divided over the question of succession. One group, the Shia, felt that the leader of the community should pass down to direct descendants of the Prophet. The Sunnis believed that the community should elect their leaders through a majority consensus and lineage was of little importance. The Shia supported Imam Ali, cousin of the Prophet, husband of his daughter Fatima, and the second person ever to embrace Islam. The majority Sunni elected three caliphs prior to Ali's succession to the caliphate, none of whom the Shia recognized as legitimate caliphs. The first elected caliph, Abu Bakr, was an old companion and father of one of the Prophet's wives but he was not related by blood. Umar succeeded to the caliphate with the majority support of Muslims but his policies on tribal leaders and conquest further divided the two groups. Uthman succeeded next, but his policies intensified the division between the two groups and he was eventually murdered.<sup>4</sup> The violent means that the early caliphs often used to ascend to the caliphate and the ensuing controversy often surrounding the process developed into the violent split between the two groups.

In addition to the differing opinions between the rights of succession to the caliphate, Shia and Sunni also disagree on the function of the caliphate system. Shias believe that the caliph has a spiritual connection to the prophet and as such interprets his teachings and laws for the people. The Imams hold a very powerful position within the Shia community and maintain much of this spiritual infallibility. Sunnis believe that the caliph is the protector of the people and the Imam plays a much less important role in the

community. The Shia and Sunni have developed practical differences in the way they pray and in other rituals because of their theological differences. Despite their differences, both Shia and Sunni share a common heritage and recognize the other as Muslim. They both accept the Five Pillars of Islam and other fundamental principals revealed by the Prophet. These similarities unite both sects in the face of external threat.

### Muslim Defense of Asia Minor

The Seljuk Turks had established an intricate communications network stretching into the Byzantine Empire and even infiltrating Western Europe in southern Spain and southern Italy. This network was comprised of Muslim merchants, diplomats, soldiers, and sometimes spies. As early as July of 1096, Sultan Kilij Arslan heard through this spy network of the movement of a large Frankish army towards Constantinople. This first army of Franks was the peasant hoard of Peter the Hermit. Although he probably did not know the goal of the Franks, he assumed the worst.<sup>5</sup> Sultan Arslan's territory bordered Constantinople and was closest to where the Franks would most likely invade. Turkish forces recently seized this region from the Byzantine Empire and most of the population was still Orthodox Christian. Arslan undoubtedly prepared for the coming of the Frankish hoard but was fairly secure in the fortifications of his capital city, Nicaea, which would logically be the target of the Christians. Nicaea was a well-fortified city with over six thousand meters of thick walls and several hundred turrets.

The Frank army slowly made its way across Anatolia (known today as Asia Minor) towards Nicaea, pillaging and killing while foraging for supplies (see figure 4 for a map of the Middle East at the time of the First Crusade). A Christian contingent of about six thousand eventually circled around Nicaea, attacked and took the nearby

fortress of Xerigordon by surprise. As they celebrated their first major victory, Arslan and his Turkish army attacked and encircled the fortress.

An atrocious torment began for the besieged Franj [Franks]. They went so far as to drink the blood of their mounts and their own urine. They were seen looking desperately up into the sky, hoping for a few drops of rain in those early October days. In vain. At the end of the week, the leader of the expedition, a knight named Reynald, agreed to capitulate provided his life would be spared. Kilij Arslan, who had demanded that the Franj publicly renounce their religion, was somewhat taken aback when Reynald declared his readiness not only to convert to Islam but even to fight at the side of the Turks against his own companions.<sup>6</sup>

The Turks sent many of the knights into captivity in eastern Muslim lands but they killed most of those that surrendered. The practice of selling valuable prisoners into captivity was common in Muslim countries. The Muslims often imprisoned and eventually ransomed some of the more valuable prisoners. The common soldiers, those that had little monetary value, were often killed because the Muslims could not afford to transport or logistically support them--it cost more money to care for them than they would ultimately generate.

When news of the defeat at Xerigordon reached the rest of the Frankish army, they hastily decided to attack the Turks to avenge their companions. Turkish spies spread rumors in the camp to incite passion and hasty action. The Christian army marched into a Turkish ambush near Civitot, in column with knights in the front, many without their armor. Turkish archers killed most of the knights in the first volley and then decimated the disorganized column of foot soldiers as they rode in pursuit of the Franks. The Turks pursued the Franks to their camp and killed or took captive most of the women and children to sell into slavery.<sup>7</sup> The Turks killed or sold into slavery over 20,000 Christians after they defeated the first wave of the Crusade. The Turks were surprised to defeat the Franks so easily and with so few casualties to themselves. They completely defeated a

larger more formidable force and gathered large amounts of pillaged goods, including slaves.



Figure 4. Map of the Middle East in 1099

Source: Internet Medieval Sourcebook: Maps and Images, "Jerusalem, (Col);" available from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/maps/jlem-colmap.jpg>; Internet; accessed on 29 April 2006.

In May 1097, Sultan Arslan received word that the Franks were once again attacking his capital city. Arslan was engaged in a campaign against a rival Seljuk emir, far from Nicaea. He soon learned that the Franks that were attacking Nicaea were much more formidable than the first wave of peasants that he had so easily defeated. Sultan

Arslan, realizing his precarious position, requested a truce with his Muslim enemy explaining that a large Frankish army was attacking his capital city. His enemy agreed to a truce and Arslan rode with his army to Nicaea where he interdicted the Christian siege. Arslan met the Crusader army in July 1097 outside the besieged city at a place called Dorylaeum. The heavily armored Franks soundly defeated the attacking Turks primarily because the Turkish army consisted of light cavalry and archers, attacking in waves against the Franks in a defensible position.<sup>8</sup> The Franks forced Arslan's army to withdrawal from the field because they suffered tremendous casualties and they could not gain a decisive advantage. The Sultan and many of his emirs fled the battlefield once they realized the inevitability of Christian victory. Arslan underestimated the Franks because he failed to understand the nature of the enemy. Arslan assumed that his army could easily defeat the Frankish army because he knew his army was well trained and expert at their tactics. He allowed his previous experience against the Franks to influence his decisions and assumptions without properly analyzing enemy capabilities. The Sultan could have resolved this problem with better intelligence collection on the Franks and re-analyzing his courses of action based on the enemies' capabilities.

The Frankish defeat of the Turkish army at the battle of Dorylaeum was a decisive point during the early part of the Crusade because this victory opened up Asia Minor to the Franks and allowed them passage to Syria and the Holy Land. No major army now stood in the path of the Franks in Asia Minor. Islamic scholars note the defeat of the Turkish forces and the surrender of the city to Byzantine forces but they do not pay a requisite amount of attention for such a significant event. Hillenbrand notes, "The early history of the nomadic Turks of Anatolia is, as already mentioned, very poorly

documented; so we should perhaps not read too much into the neglect of this battle in the Islamic sources.”<sup>9</sup> With this analysis, it is important to note that this ignorance of current events may have been at least partly responsible for the initial success of the Franks because most of the Muslim world at the time did not know that the Franks were moving south with a large army and did not understand the threat to their territory or culture. Even the Muslim leaders that knew might have thought it in their best interest to let the Franks defeat rivals while they either prepared themselves or just observed the Franks move away from their territory.

Muslim scholars record little of the Franks advance through the arid and desolate regions of Asia Minor. This was probably a result of lack of intelligence as to where exactly the Franks were in the sparsely populated region. Many of the people that did populate the region were Orthodox Christians and did not have much interest in requesting help from their Turkish rulers. As the Franks approached Syria, more and more information came to light as to their disposition and location. Word also began to spread of the embarrassing defeat of the Seljuk Turks at Dorylaeum and many Muslim leaders obviously became very concerned that they were in the path of the Christians.

#### Muslim Defense of Syria

Muslim scholars note with some detail the final approach of the Franks to the important city of Antioch and the ensuing siege and victory of the Christians. The city of Antioch was historically important to the Christians as a haven and religious center. Antioch was also strategically located in the region to control trade in and out of Syria from the sea and over ancient land routes. The population of the city during this period was mixed, including Muslims, Jews and Christians as well as other peoples. Antioch

was a well-fortified city, with massive walls and hundreds of defensive towers, which could be easily defended for months. The Muslim leader of the city heard of the imminent approach of the Franks he decided that he would prevent any possible treachery by Christians. “When Yaghi Siyan, the ruler of Antioch, heard of their [Franks] approach, he was not sure how the Christian people of the city would react, so he made the Muslims go outside the city on their own to dig trenches, and the next day sent the Christians out alone to continue the task. When they were ready to return home at the end of the day he refused to allow them.”<sup>10</sup> Yaghi Siyan forced the Christian citizens of Antioch to camp outside the city and maintain some sort of good behavior while their families remained captive in their homes. Emir Siyan’s policy appeared to prevent Christians from turning the city over to the Franks, but it did not prevent others from doing the same.

When the Franks arrived at the city in October 1097, they immediately attacked in a futile attempt to take the city by surprise. The forewarned and well-prepared Turkish defenders quickly expelled the Franks. The Franks numbered roughly thirty thousand soldiers and knights when they arrived at Antioch. The Turkish garrison numbered around seven thousand soldiers. Tactically, the Franks had a four-to-one advantage in numbers but they had no siege engines because they could not transport them over the long distances to Antioch. The Turks also had stockpiled large stores of supplies within the city and had the protection of immense fortifications. As the Franks settled in positions outside the city walls for a siege, the Turks sent for reinforcements to help break the Christian encirclement. Muslim accounts of the nine-month siege note that the Franks dug a defensive trench to protect themselves from the constant attacks by the Turkish garrison. The accounts indicate that although some commodities such as salt and

oil would sometimes run low, the Franks could not effectively encircle the entire city and inhabitants eventually smuggled just about all necessities into the city.<sup>11</sup> One reason that the Franks could not effectively besiege the city was because it was so immense and required more than the thirty thousand Frankish soldiers to guard every inch on the walls. Another reason that the Franks could not completely encircle the city was because terrain made encirclement impossible. The Orontes River flowed along the western wall of Antioch on its way to the Mediterranean Sea and prevented a force with few to no boats from controlling the wall.<sup>12</sup> As the months advanced, this problem only became worse for the Franks as they suffered losses due to disease, starvation, and desertion. Time was on the side of the Turks and the Franks understood that their situation was not improving with time.

The Muslim inhabitants believed that the Franks were crude barbarians, determined to rape and pillage the city. Several first hand accounts of the savagery of the Franks from Muslim sources seem to support this view. During the siege, Emir Siyan requested assistance from rival emirs and anyone that he thought could help him break the Frank's siege. One such group of Muslims arrived from Aleppo to attack the Christians. As they attacked the Franks, the Turkish defenders rallied forth from Antioch to attack the Frank's camp. The Aleppan's were soon defeated when they attempted to fight hand to hand against the more heavily armored knights. Siyan's force retreated into the fortress as the Franks regrouped to fight off the flank attack. "Scarcely had they completed their retreat when the knights who had crushed Riwan [Aleppan Emir] returned, carrying macabre trophies from the battle. The inhabitants of Antioch soon heard great guffaws of laughter, followed by muffled whistles. Then the fearfully

mutilated severed heads of the Aleppans, hurled by catapults, began to rain down.”<sup>13</sup> The inhabitants of Antioch were obviously shocked, fearful, and probably quite angered. If the Franks intended to use shock and awe to force the city to surrender, they certainly caused shock and awe. Their ploy to force the city to surrender, however, failed and maybe even backfired as the population might never willingly surrender knowing how savage the Franks were.

As the siege entered its seventh month, the situation for the Muslims in Antioch was starting to become more desperate, even as life became more wretched for the Franks camped outside the city. No matter how well supplied a besieged city, the constant threat of enemy combatants wears on a population's nerves. Supplies, though well stocked, will eventually run out unless the defenders could lift the siege. Furthermore, the intelligence that Siyan previously received from the Franks' camp was drying up as the Christian leaders realized that spies were sending information to the Muslims. The Franks took care of the problem by making examples of spies caught in their camp. “The emir's agents had occasion to watch them [Franks] kill a man, roast him on a spit, and eat his flesh, while shouting that any spy who was discovered would suffer a similar fate.”<sup>14</sup> Naturally, most informants for the Muslims left the camp rather than take their chances. Whether or not this event actually happened is suspect, although the Franks were on the verge of starving and ate almost anything they could find including camp dogs and rats. This account indicates once again how beastly the Franks were from the Muslim perspective and reinforces the Muslim effort to portray the enemy as subhuman. Due to the worsening situation, Siyan once again requested outside aid, this time from Mosul. A powerful

Seljuk Atabeg, named Karbuqa, formed an army with a prince of Mosul's blessing and marched to the rescue of the city of Antioch.

The Franks soon learned of the coming Turkish army and realized that they had to get inside Antioch before the Turks arrived. One of the Frankish leaders, understanding the futility of taking the city by conventional means, convinced a Muslim Armenian armorer and convert from Christianity to open one of the gates of the city for a certain sum of money. Muslim scholars indicate that Firuz, the traitor to Allah, might have held a grudge against Yaghi Siyan or his administration.<sup>15</sup> They also curse his very existence for handing the city to the infidels. On 3 June 1098, when the planned moment to open the gate arrived, Christian knights and soldiers poured into the city and began to massacre all inhabitants of the city, regardless of sex, age, or religion. The fight was over quickly because the Turks were too few to fight off a surprise attack from inside the city walls. Siyan fled the city and left it to the Franks rather than face certain death. The Franks took few prisoners but many Muslims escaped out of the city and a few, including the son of Yaghi Siyan, holed up in the city citadel to fight against the Franks. The Muslims defending the citadel successfully repulsed attack after attack by the Christians knights until the Franks finally gave up.

The Franks immediately set about preparing for the arrival and imminent siege by Karbuqa's army, which may have numbered as many as thirty thousand. The Frankish army probably numbered as few as ten thousand due to depletion of the ranks by disease, starvation, and battle casualties. Even with their decreased numbers and the capture of the depleted food stores of Antioch, the Franks began to suffer from starvation and diseases related to malnutrition. Near the end of June 1098, the Muslim army arrived at the gates

of Antioch. Muslim victory seemed inevitable considering their advantages in numbers and time. The Muslim army that arrived to siege the defending Franks was different from the army that set out from Mosul. In addition to Karbuqa's Turkish soldiers, several rival Muslim princes and their forces had joined the army as it moved into Syria. One Syrian King, Duqaq of Damascus, was particularly concerned about Karbuqa's motives in Syria. According to Muslim scholars, Karbuqa was an arrogant, inept leader and not well liked by many of his emirs. The rival princes and rebellious emirs within the army turned against Karbuqa during the siege of Antioch.<sup>16</sup> Many began to desert or willfully disobey orders to the point that the Muslim Army began to lose its numerical and tactical advantage.

According to Muslim accounts, the Franks deployed from the castle to meet the besieging army outside the walls because the excavation of a holy artifact inspired them. The Muslim scholar Ibn al-Athir counters the Frankish claim of finding the Holy Lance by stating in his account that a "wily monk" who worked for the Christian commander, Bohemond, buried an old lance in the Kusyan temple. Ibn al-Athir then relates that the monk ordered the Franks to pray and repent their sins so that they might find the lance that pierced Christ and gain victory. When the Franks entered the temple, they excavated the fraudulent lance and rejoiced in certain victory.<sup>17</sup> The Muslim army began to fall apart even before the Franks started their frontal assault. When the Franks charged, they completely routed the Muslim army. The battle was over before it really began with relatively few casualties on both sides. Muslim scholars, including Al-Azimi, blame the Muslim leaders for the Christian victory because of the "evil of their intentions."<sup>18</sup> More likely Al-Azimi is criticizing the Muslim princes for putting their quarrels and interests

before the interests of a Muslim victory. The princes and emirs focused on what they could get out of the situation and what they would lose if a rival benefited from the situation. If they would have focused on the common good for Islam, they might have defeated the weakened Christian army. With the defeat of the Muslim army outside the walls of Antioch, there remained no other armies to prevent the Franks from moving to the Holy land. The Franks were also free to establish the principality of Antioch, a strong Crusader state that would stand for many years against the forces of Islam.

### The Muslims Lose Jerusalem

As the Franks moved from Antioch to Jerusalem, they encountered the walled Syrian city of Ma'arrat. Although most Frankish historians do not even mention the city, Muslim historians highlight the Christian conquest of the city and the subsequent massacre of most of the Muslim inhabitants. In December 1098, the Christian army besieged Ma'arrat when the citizens would not surrender the city. The Franks quickly defeated the city's defenses and scaled the walls to attack the inhabitants. The Muslim scholar Ibn al-Athir records the massacre and carnage that follows. "Their [Franks] appearance in the city terrified the Muslims, who shut themselves up in their houses. For three days the slaughter never stopped; the Franks killed more than 100,000 men and took innumerable prisoners."<sup>19</sup> Other Muslim accounts note that the Franks not only killed civilians, but they tortured them to extort treasure and even ate them. According to Maalouf, Christian sources confirm that the Franks boiled and grilled adults as well as children so they could eat them.<sup>20</sup> The local population quickly spread word of the atrocities that the Franks committed against the population of Ma'arrat. These stories reinforced the already prevalent image of the Franks as subhuman and further vilified

them. What enemy could be worse, even in medieval times, than cannibals? “They [Franks] aroused a mixture of fear and contempt, quite understandable on the part of an Arab nation which, while far superior in culture, had lost all combative spirit. The Turks would never forget the cannibalism of the Occidentals. Throughout their epic literature, the Franj are invariably described as anthropophagi.”<sup>21</sup> Muslims equate the conduct of the Franks during this siege to their true nature and eventually used this example to ignite cooperation between rival princes and emirs. In the near term, the conduct of the Franks benefited their campaign. In the long term, their conduct would eventually contribute to the loss of the war.

As the Franks moved south from Ma’arrat in early January 1099, many of the Muslim leaders of the cities they encountered decided it was better to pay off the Franks than risk their anger. All Muslim leaders knew that any resistance would place their entire community at risk. They also knew that they could not count on neighboring emirates to assist without exacting a price almost as bad as what the Franks would take.<sup>22</sup> This was of immediate benefit to the Franks, as it made the final leg of their journey much easier than previous legs. Some of the leaders even promised logistical support to the Franks in the form of provisions, gold, and sale of transport animals. The Franks in turn promised to leave these places alone and for the most part, they remained true to their word. The only major city in the area to resist was Arqa or Acre as the Franks called it. The Franks besieged the city in February 1099 as they moved south to Jerusalem. Arqa was not any better fortified or defended than cities the Franks had previously captured, yet, the Franks could not break through the tenacious defenses. For three months, the Franks camped outside the city walls without success. Finally, the Franks decided that

they could not afford the resources and time to wait it out and moved on to Jerusalem. One possible explanation for this anomaly of successful resistance is that the inhabitants of the city banded together, despite differences, for the greater good.<sup>23</sup> The Muslim leaders of Arqa found a way to defeat the Franks; cooperate for the greater good and stall for time.

By the middle of May 1099, the Franks were once again moving south towards Jerusalem. As they crossed the Nahr al-Kalb or River of the Dog a few days later, they entered a new jurisdiction of Muslim rule. The Franks were now on Fatimid territory. The Shia Fatimids had recently recaptured Jerusalem and its environs from their rivals, the Sunni Seljuk Turks, during their campaign to retake lost territory. The Seljuks had captured Jerusalem from the Fatimids in the middle of the eleventh century and the Fatimids had retaken the city after a short siege in 1098. As is often the case with invisible boundaries, the Franks probably did not even realize the change. Yet, the Franks violation of the Shia territory facilitated the cooperation between the two rival sects. The Franks had in essence declared war on both sects and become the common enemy that would eventually unite Muslims against the Christians.

The Franks arrived at Jerusalem on 7 June 1099 and set up camp outside the walls of the city. The Muslim generals had prepared well for the Christian siege of the city by stocking large quantities of supplies, reinforcing fortifications, expelling Christians to prevent internal treachery, poisoning wells outside the city, and destroying food sources surrounding the city. The Fatimid General responsible for the defense of Jerusalem, Iftikhar, was confident in his preparations for the siege. He also understood some of the Franks capabilities and even respected their prowess in battle. Contrary to Iftikhar's

expectations, the Franks did not start out the siege as the typical conventional force, by erecting siege engines and ladders to scale the walls. “Far from making such arrangements, however, they began by organizing a procession around the walls, led by bare-headed praying and chanting priests; they then threw themselves against the walls like madmen, without carrying even a single ladder.”<sup>24</sup> After the Franks failed to take the city by invoking their God, they set to work on two large siege towers to scale the walls. The Franks attacked the city from both the north and the south each with a tower. Jerusalem’s defenders succeeded in burning the southern tower down, but they succeeded in breaching the defenses with the northern tower.

As the Franks poured into the city on 14 July 1099, they immediately started massacring all inhabitants that they could capture. Ibn al-Athir notes, “The population was put to the sword by the Franks, who pillaged the area for a week. A band of Muslims barricaded themselves into the Oratory of David and fought for several days. The Franks granted the Muslims their lives in return for surrendering. The Franks honored their word, and the group left by night for Ascalon.”<sup>25</sup> The Franks also slaughtered the Jewish inhabitants of the city, many of whom were praying in the synagogue when the Christians burned it down. After a week of drunken celebration and destruction, the Franks started to administer and defend their new kingdom.

### Conclusion

Within weeks of their victory, an army of thirty thousand Muslim soldiers raised by the Fatimid ruler in Egypt arrived in Palestine. While the Muslim army awaited word from their leaders attempting to negotiate a settlement, the Franks suddenly attacked, completely driving them from the field of battle. After the battle, the Franks continued

their conquest of the surrounding region, increasing their influence and gaining more land. Muslim forces continued localized resistance but had little effect against the Franks. When word reached Muslim leaders in places such as Baghdad and Damascus, they expressed shock, fear, and some confusion. Many contemporary medieval Muslim leaders and scholars blamed their fellow Muslims for disunity and disloyalty to Islam as the cause for the Frankish victory.<sup>26</sup> Eventually, the shame of defeat and the anger over Frankish atrocities galvanized the Islamic world and Muslim forces united against the Franks.

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<sup>1</sup>Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 33.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 33 and 36.

<sup>4</sup>Malise Ruthven and Azim Nanji, *Historical Atlas of Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 34.

<sup>5</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 3.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>9</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 56.

<sup>10</sup>Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 5.

<sup>11</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 57.

<sup>12</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 20.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>15</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 57.

<sup>16</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 33.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>18</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 57.

<sup>19</sup>Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 9.

<sup>20</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 39.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>25</sup>Francesco Gabrieli, ed., *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993), 11.

<sup>26</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 71-73.

## CHAPTER 4

### ADJUDICATION OF ARAB ISLAMIC AND AMERICAN CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS

American and Muslim cultural perceptions of the First Crusade differ in their fundamental concept of justification. Both historical interpretations tell their respective side of the story and fail to account for the opposing view. The accuracy of each account matters less than each culture's acceptance of the "truth," especially in context to the current clash of cultures in the Middle East. Opposing cultural interpretations of history clearly influence the tone of the current conflict between Arab Muslims and Americans. Contrasting past and present cultural perceptions of justification for war, propaganda, treatment of prisoners of war, and coalition / leadership sustain the ongoing clash of cultures. Americans and Muslims continue to validate their own cultural superiority while attempting to dominate the other.

#### Justification for War

##### Arab Islamic Justification

Both medieval Muslims and medieval Christians had strong justifications for escalating the conflict in the Holy Land to war. From the medieval Muslim viewpoint, the Franks violated Seljuk Turk sovereignty when they crossed the Bosphorus Straits into Anatolia. Their arrival at Constantinople and their subsequent invasion was a complete surprise to the Seljuk Turks and the Muslim world in general. Muslim forces that encountered the Franks during the First Crusade did not fathom the reasons for the attack. "Islamic chroniclers do not seem to link the arrival of the Western Europeans with the distant event of al-Hakim's destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre nor with the

appeals by Byzantium to Europe for help against the Turkish threat on its eastern borders.”<sup>1</sup> Medieval Muslims disregard for Western European justification for the First Crusade was probably partly ignorance and partly dismissal of the Christian viewpoint. Most Muslims in the Arab world probably did not know about the Moorish invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth century, the destruction of the Holy Sepulcher by the Fatimid Caliphate in 1009 or the more recent persecution of Christian pilgrims by the Seljuk Turks. Even those that knew of these events probably did not care. Muslims see Islam as the only true faith, much as Christians see Christianity as the only true faith. Christian justification for opposing Allah and his people bore no merit with the majority of most medieval Muslims.

The first wave of crusaders under Peter the Hermit quickly established themselves as ruthless and barbaric during their foraging raids into the Anatolian countryside. Despite the Franks aggressive behavior, Sultan Kilij Arslan, contented himself with observing the Franks progress and hoping that this excursion was nothing more than another weak attempt by Byzantine forces to push back the advancing Turks. Two events disproved Arslan’s optimistic assumption. First, Muslims that encountered the invading Franks heard them proclaim their intent to exterminate all Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Second, the Franks attacked the sultanate capital of Nicaea and captured the nearby fortress of Xerigordon. Although the attack on the capital failed, Arslan had to defend against further attacks. Arslan counterattacked the Christian army and decisively defeated them. When the main body of the First Crusade arrived, Arslan attempted to defend his kingdom, but the advancing Franks decisively defeated his army.

This pattern of Christian offensive action answered by strong defense and counterattack from local Muslim forces was a theme throughout the First Crusade. Muslims had no choice but to defend themselves from extermination. Their concept of honor demanded that they act against the infidel invasion. Not all Muslims fought to defend their lands from the Franks. Some surrendered to the advancing Franks and others appeased the Franks with gold and supplies. One Christian convert to Islam even betrayed his fellow Muslims to the Franks. According to Muslim historians, the Franks massacred those Muslims that surrendered. Taking into account the strong sense of honor versus shame in Arabic Muslim culture, it makes sense that a Muslim would most likely choose to fight to the death in defense of his home than surrender in shame to the infidels. Muslim historians curse the Muslim that betrayed Antioch to the Franks to this day. Muslim leaders who appeased the invading Franks so that they could preserve their people and cities shamed themselves by dealing with the infidel; however, they also preserved their ability to fight another day.

Modern Muslim fundamentalists justify acts of terrorism and war against America by pointing out that the American presence in the Middle East, whether peaceful or not, is an extension of the same aggression dating back to the Crusades. Osama bin Laden states in his 1998 Fatwa urging Jihad against Americans:

If the Americans' aims behind these wars are religious and economic, the aim is also to serve the Jews' petty state and divert attention from its occupation of Jerusalem and murder of Muslims there. The best proof of this is their eagerness to destroy Iraq, the strongest neighboring Arab state, and their endeavor to fragment all the states of the region such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan into paper statelets and through their disunion and weakness to guarantee Israel's survival and the continuation of the brutal crusade occupation of the Peninsula.<sup>3</sup>

In this text, Osama bin Laden equates the war of extermination waged by the Franks during the Crusades to the presence of Americans in the Middle East. He appeals to the Muslim people's basic instinct for survival and to their cultural sense of honor. Bin Laden implies that if Muslims do not stop American conquest now, it may be too late to prevent the extermination of Islam. This is a powerful message, but moderate Muslims do not necessarily accept the credibility of the threat. Bin Laden also appeals to the Arabic sense of honor to instigate Muslims to support his fundamentalist cause. He attempts to shame the moderate Muslims to support those Muslims that have attacked America and her western allies.

Many moderate Muslims also believe this pattern of aggression that America, not even a nation during the medieval period, shares with her Western European ancestors. Moderate Arab Muslim's distrust American motives to instill democracy and freedom in the region. Osama bin Laden attempts to kindle this skepticism by informing his audience of the true reasons for United States involvement in the region; oil and religion. History and economics seem to support the claims of bin Laden and support the mistrust of the many moderate Muslims. America consumes more oil than any other country in the world.<sup>4</sup> Logical reason can connect America's need to secure additional oil reserves in the Middle East. Many third world countries accuse America of imperialism because of her history of direct territorial conquest and indirect methods of exerting control on the politics and economy of other countries. Imperialism historically involves economic exploitation of another country's resources such as raw material and cheap labor to enhance the imperialist nation's own interests.

Osama bin Laden also accuses America of supporting Israeli interests in the region. Many moderate Arabic Muslims believe that America supports Israel more than it supports Middle Eastern Muslim nations. America's support for the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine in 1948 started this perception. President Truman played a vital role during the United Nations vote to install a Jewish state. The formation of Israel created a serious rift between America and Middle Eastern nations and led to the declaration of war by Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon against Israel. The Muslim perception is further fueled by current American financial and military support for Israel. America grants more foreign aid to Israel than to any other country year after year, resulting in a cumulative total greater than any other country since the end of World War II.<sup>5</sup> These facts reinforce the Muslim perception of bias towards Israel and against Middle Eastern Muslim nations.

#### American Justification

The western historical justification for the First Crusade has roots in the formation of Islam and the Muslim conquest of the Christian Holy Land in the seventh and eighth century. Islam developed in the same region as Judaism and Christianity. Islamic methods for spreading the word of Allah were more violent and intolerant than either Judaism or Christianity. As Muslims spread Islam across the Middle East and Africa, they used the sword to force pagans, Jews, and Christians to convert. Then the Moors invaded the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth and ninth century to spread Islam to traditional Christian lands. Christians defended their homes and their culture from the invading Muslim forces. Then in 1009, the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim destroyed the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, one of the holiest places in the Christian world. The

Byzantine Emperor did little to avenge this insult and soon the Fatimid Muslims allowed the Christians to rebuild the Church. The pattern of Muslim aggression continued with the Seljuk Turkish attack and victory against the Byzantine army at Manzikert, Asia Minor in 1071. After this important victory, the Turks continued to overrun Byzantine territory in the east. This Turkish invasion led Emperor Alexius to request assistance from Western Christendom. The final straw that drove Pope Urban to call the armed pilgrimage was the Seljuk Turk attacks of Christian pilgrims traveling through the Holy Land. Islam established a pattern of aggression that the Pope decided to stop with a preemptive strike.

The modern American view of the global war on terrorism is that America has a moral obligation to deliver freedom and democracy to the Middle East. If the United States did not intervene, who would have? The purpose of the war in Afghanistan was to free the Afghan people from an oppressive regime, the Taliban. The purpose of the war in Iraq was to free the Iraqi people from the oppression and brutality of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi people asked the United States to free them from an oppressive dictator. America also justified intervention because she was obligated to secure weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and prevent state sponsored terrorism in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

#### God Wills It

Pope Urban II called for a holy war at the Council of Clermont in 1095 so that Christians could fight off the Seljuk Turks for the Eastern Christians and protect Western Christian pilgrims en route to the Holy Land. Urban launched the First Crusade by stating that “God wills it,” gaining fervent support from assembled clergy, nobility, and peasants who acknowledged that God not only approved of the war, but actively supported the

effort. God was on their side. Medieval Muslims also used the phrase “if God wills it” or “inshaa’allah” to explain that all things (even their many defeats at the hands of the Christians during the First Crusade) were predestined by the will of Allah. Although medieval Muslims used “inshaa’allah” during the First Crusade, they primarily used the phrase to accept defeat at the hands of the Franks.

President Bush’s use of the word “crusade” during a speech in September 2001, whether intentional or unintentional, facilitates Muslim perceptions that the global war on terror has secular motivations. American Politicians are quick to note that the war on terror is not a war against Islam. The war is focused on those elements of fundamental Islam that want to destroy the values of freedom and democracy that America represents. Despite Americas attempt to separate church and state, many Americans, and most of the world, still consider America a Christian nation. The majority of Americans are Christian according to the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) poll that lists the percentage of American population as Christian at 76.5 percent.<sup>6</sup> America is a Christian nation with a Christian culture. As a western nation, Americans and their culture are vastly different from Arabs and Middle Eastern culture. American culture holds democracy and freedom as tenets of society. Americans believe that the war on terror and to a lesser extent, the war in Iraq is a moral war, a war that God has sanctioned. On the other side, Islamic fundamentalists believe that God also sanctions their cause. Both sides claim that God wills it; God is on their side and therefore God does not support the other side. During the Crusades, when the Franks or the Muslims stated, “God wills it,” God sanctioned their deeds, no matter how atrocious. The underlying theme on both sides is that the ends justify the means.

## Persecution of the Jews

In 1096, as elements of the first wave of crusaders traveled through Germany on their way to Constantinople, they massacred Jews in cities such as Worms and Mainz. Count Emich of Leiningen, the leader of the movement to kill the Jews, justified his actions because the Jews were responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. These Christians gave the Jews the opportunity to convert to Christianity or die. Many of the Crusaders involved in the massacres wanted or needed the wealth the Jews purportedly possessed to fund their pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup> Many historians note the significance of this event as the first Holocaust. Yet, Christians throughout Europe had been persecuting Jews for hundreds of years prior to the start of the First Crusade. Throughout Christian Europe, the Jews were considered outsiders because they did not believe in Christ and because they often practiced such arts as medicine in direct violation of Church teachings.

Christians killing Jews during the First Crusade did not end in Europe and were not just the acts of a few “bad apples.” When the Franks captured the city of Jerusalem in 1099, they massacred all inhabitants that could not escape, including Jews who were praying in the main synagogue. Robert Payne recounts the Crusader slaughter of the Jews after the battle: “Jerusalem was to become a Christian city. The Jews, too, must be destroyed. They had all rushed to the chief synagogue, where they hoped to receive shelter and protection. The Crusaders, hungry for simple solutions, burned down the synagogue with the Jews inside.”<sup>8</sup> From Payne’s point of view, the Christians did not kill Jews because they murdered Christ but because they were an obstacle to a Christian pure

city. Although this reason does not justify the slaughter of Jewish civilians, it points to less sinister motives of the Christians.

During the medieval period, Muslims treated Jews much differently than they do today. According to the Koran, Jews (and Christians) are “People of the Book,” and medieval Muslims allowed them some level of religious tolerance and freedom from persecution within the Islamic community. After World War II and the Nazi massacre of millions of Jews, the United States assisted the Jewish nation in forming a homeland in Palestine. By 1948, the United Nations recognized Israel as the legitimate nation state of the Jews. The formation of Israel in Muslim controlled lands caused resentment and even hatred among Arab Muslims towards Jews. America’s involvement in the issue created resentment, mistrust between Arabs and Americans, and brought to the forefront the historical conflict between Christians and Muslims. The Christian persecution of Jews transformed to a Muslim persecution of Jews as the Arab nations reacted to the new state of Israel by declaring immediate war. Although the Israeli nation beat back Muslim forces, the conflict was far from over. War between Israel and Arab Muslim nations occurred again in 1956, 1967, and 1973. In between the outbreaks of war and continuing today are terrorist attacks by Palestinian Fedayeen and other groups aimed at killing Jews and forcing them from Muslim lands. Many Arab Muslims link America’s efforts in the Middle East to Israeli interests in the region.

### Propaganda and Information Operations

#### American Propaganda

Western Europeans’ first significant contact with Muslims came in the eighth century when the Moors, primarily North African Muslim converts, invaded the Iberian

peninsula in what is today Portugal and Spain. Despite this initial contact, most Western Europeans knew very little about Muslims. What little they knew they learned from propaganda promulgated by Christian writers that emerged shortly after the invasion. This propaganda accused Islam of being a violent religion that spread faith by the sword.<sup>9</sup> Christians base much of this accusation in fact, but Islam did not spread solely by force, not even in historically Christian lands. Muslims used a variety of methods, most uncoordinated to coerce or cajole non-believers to convert to Islam.

By the time of the Council of Clermont, the propaganda and information operations campaign against Muslims assisted the Pope in gaining support for a pilgrimage to free the Holy Land from the Infidel. Prior to the Council, the Byzantine Emperor, Alexius, wrote to the Count of Flanders requesting assistance from the west against the invading Turks. He claimed that the Muslim Turks were animals, urinating on Christian altars, sodomizing Christian prisoners, and carrying off Christian women.<sup>10</sup> This plea and characterization of Muslims greatly influenced Pope Urban to address the issue at the council of Clermont. Pope Urban's message to free the Holy Land from the Saracen yoke, where Christian pilgrims were killed or imprisoned by Muslims while enroute to the Holy Land, was strong enough to incite an overwhelming response from the people. The Christian propaganda continued to dehumanize the Muslims and even increased during the First Crusade. Christians believed Islam was an inferior religion that sprang from a misguided dogma similar to Judaism.

Modern American propaganda and information operations focused on the Middle East started in earnest after 11 September 2001 when terrorists attacked the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. The use of the word terrorist to describe Al Qaeda and any

organization that attacks Americans through unconventional methods is part of the information operations campaign that strives to prove that America is correct and the Islamic Fundamentalists are wrong. The target audience for the American propaganda and information operations is the world opinion in general and specifically moderate Muslims. America requires world support in order to win the global war on terrorism. America must convince the moderate Muslim population, many of whom are “fence sitters,” not to support the Islamic Fundamentalists that threaten America. One of the greatest dangers to American global influence and world stability is moderate Muslims joining the Islamic Fundamentalist cause. This will push the war against Fundamentalism to a religious war that would greatly complicate the situation.

#### Arab Islamic Propaganda

Muslim propaganda during the First Crusade gained momentum slowly throughout the Middle East. This lethargic start for medieval Muslim propaganda had much to do with the uncoordinated and disorganized military response to the Crusaders. Muslim historical accounts of the Franks advance through Anatolia are relatively few, but as they advance deeper into Muslim territory, the coverage picks up.<sup>11</sup> As in the historical accounts, the propaganda also increases as the Franks advance deeper into Muslim lands. Muslims used their historical accounts to spread propaganda about the Franks. They also used word of mouth, as this was the primary means of communication during medieval times.

The fall of Ma'arrat to the Franks in December 1098 was the first significant increase in Muslim propaganda against the Franks. Islamic scholars grossly exaggerate many of the historical accounts but something clearly happened after the battle that struck

fear and revulsion in the Muslim population. The Crusaders massacred most of the Muslim population of the town after it fell. Many historians also claim that Crusaders cannibalized Muslim men, women, and even children because they were starving and suffered from long-term malnutrition. Amin Maalouf, in his book *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, claims that the Frankish chronicler Radulph of Caen writes that “our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled.”<sup>12</sup> Other historical sources seem to verify this account by Radulph of Caen. As horrible as this seems, it should not be surprising that starving and severely malnourished people would resort to cannibalism if no other food were available. The circumstances of the situation seem to indicate that the Frankish army was near collapse from starvation and many had died from malnutrition. No matter the reason or the facts surrounding the incident, Muslim sources quickly spread word of the deed. Muslims now considered the Franks demonic and inhuman. Fear gripped the general Muslim population as this propaganda spread and many of the towns and cities in Syria appeased the Crusaders by giving them gold and supplies. The immediate impact of the Muslim propaganda may have helped the Franks reach Jerusalem, but the long-term effect facilitated their eventual expulsion from the Holy Land.

The Franks capture of Jerusalem and subsequent massacre of inhabitants was the second significant increase of Muslim propaganda during the First Crusade. The Frankish massacre of Jerusalem’s inhabitants reinforced the propaganda that emerged in Ma’arrat al-Numan. Islamic scholars immediately began to recount tales of Christian slaughter and pillage. Earlier accounts, such as al-Azimi’s narrative in 1099, were precise and contained few details about number of Muslims killed. Later Islamic scholars, such as Ibn

al-Jawzi in 1200, lengthened their historical accounts and fabricated new details about Christian massacre and pillage. These later scholars accused the Crusaders of killing upwards of 70,000 Muslims, killing Muslim imams, plundering the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa mosque, and burning copies of the Koran.<sup>13</sup> Islamic scholars' manipulation of history indicates the great extent to which history becomes part of an information operations campaign. This phenomenon is not unique to Islamic history. Medieval Christian scholars were undoubtedly as guilty of using history to their own ends as their Muslim counterparts.

The most important result of the fall of Jerusalem and the propaganda was the Muslim realization that the Franks were a strategic threat, not just to the region, but also to all of Islam. A group of refugees from Jerusalem under the leadership of Abu Sa'ad al-Harawi arrived in Baghdad and told tales to the leaders about the Christian victory and desecration of the holy places of Islam. Al-Harawi began a campaign of preaching to convince his fellow Muslims that the Christians were an imminent danger to Islam.<sup>14</sup> Although it took many more years to mature, Muslims would eventually unite against the Christians and overcome many of the leadership failures that helped the Franks succeed during the First Crusade.

Modern Islamic fundamentalists use propaganda and information operations to transmit their message to their primary target audience, moderate Muslims. They specifically target young, impressionable moderate Muslims for recruitment into their fundamentalist organizations. Their information operations campaign is anti-American and ant-West. Since Muslim Arab culture places great emphasis on history, among other things, the fundamentalists claim current American presence in the Middle East is

nothing less than an extension of the medieval Crusades. The American presence is part of the ongoing struggle of Islam against the West, with America acting as the aggressor. Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda use information as a primary means to attack America and transmit messages to their target audience. Al Qaeda has become adept at using modern media sources to attack the United States.

### Is America Losing the Information Operations War?

Many senior military leaders perceive that America is losing the Information Operations war in the Middle East. The other side of this argument is that Al Qaeda and Islamic fundamentalists are winning the information war in the Middle East. This concern indicates the importance of information operations in the strategic context of the war. It relegates the military arm of the elements of national power to a much lower terrace in the GWOT. Many experts on Islam and analysts agree that these groups appear to be winning the information war by convincing the world, specifically the moderate Islamic world, that America's global war on terrorism is a war against Islam and not terrorism.<sup>15</sup> President Bush and other American political leaders have specifically stated that America is fighting a global terrorist network that seeks the destruction of freedom and democracy. America's leaders believe that 9/11 was a direct attack against American ideals and to defend ourselves America must preemptively attack the nations and organizations that harbor terrorists.

The challenge for America in respect to the information war is convincing moderate Muslims that the global war on terror is not a war against Islam. The moderate Muslim world population is the center of gravity for the global war on terrorism. America must convince the Muslim world that fundamentalism is counter to the tenets of Islam.

America must convince the world that her interests in the Middle East are stability, democracy, and freedom in order to have any chance of winning the propaganda war against Al Qaeda and Islamic fundamentalist groups. America must win the information war in order to win the global war on terrorism.

### Prisoners of War

#### Arab Islamic Perspective

Before and during the First Crusade, medieval Muslims generally treated prisoners based on their social status, their sex, and their age. The first significant prisoner of war situation during the First Crusade occurred at the fortress of Xerigordon, when knights and soldiers from the Peasant's Crusade captured the fortress and were in turn besieged by Seljuk Turk forces under Sultan Kilij Arslan. The Franks had little food or water and capitulated to the Muslim army. The sultan offered the knights and soldiers the opportunity to convert to Islam and they would be spared. Many of the knights embraced Islam, including the leader of the expedition, Reynald. Sultan Arslan then sold or sent the converted Christians into captivity in Syria. The sultan outright killed those knights and soldiers that did not convert to Islam.<sup>16</sup> Arslan pressed his advantage and continued on to the main Crusader camp following his victory at Xerigordon.

When Arslan's army defeated the main body of the Peasant Crusade, he captured many combatants as well as many of the camp followers who were women, children, old men and priests. "The youngest women were kidnapped by the Sultan's horsemen and distributed to the emirs or sold in the slave markets. Several young boys suffered a similar fate. The rest of the Franj, probably nearly twenty thousand of them, were exterminated."<sup>17</sup> General western historical accounts of these two battles focus on

Muslim mutilation of combatant prisoners of war and the killing of priests, women, and children. Muslims selling women and children as slaves was a common practice in the Middle East during this period. Killing prisoners of war and mutilating their bodies was also a common practice, but it was not unique to Islam. For the remainder of the First Crusade, the Franks remained on the offense and there were no significant numbers of Franks captured by Muslim forces. When Muslim forces took Franks as prisoners of war, they killed them, sold them into slavery, or ransomed them if they were important knights.

Modern Muslim fundamentalist treatment of military and civilian prisoners has little changed since the First Crusade. The infamous beheading of Nick Berg, an American civilian captured in Iraq by insurgents, was the first in a series of killings of foreigners in Iraq. The event was significant because the insurgents transmitted the video on the internet, gaining worldwide attention. The insurgent group claimed to kill Berg to avenge the treatment of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib. Many moderate Muslim leaders denounced the beheading as counter to Islam, but this did not stop further killings of foreign civilians, which continues today. The insurgents often use foreign prisoners as bargaining tools to further their interests as in the Nick Berg case. They may also use the process of capturing and killing foreign prisoners to prove that America is vulnerable. Overwhelming world opinion condemned Nick Berg's killing, but it is debatable whether the incident hurt or helped the insurgent cause with the moderate Muslim population.

The Koran specifically addresses the issue of treatment of prisoners of war only once.

So when the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters, wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush. But if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And if any one of the idolaters seek protection, protect him till he hears the word of Allah, then convey him to his place of safety. This is because they are a people who know not.<sup>18</sup>

The “idolaters” refers to worshipers of pagan gods from Mecca but is also commonly associated with unbelievers. This passage seems to reinforce the conversion of non-Muslims to Islam. The Koran does not specifically say not to kill prisoners of war, nor does it say that Muslims must treat all prisoners well. Many of the Hadiths, or recorded teachings of Mohammed outside the Koran, are vague or contradict each other on treatment of prisoners of war. This ambiguity allows both fundamentalist and moderate Muslim leaders to interpret Islamic guidance on treatment of prisoners of war as they deem best. Vinod Kumar sums up his experience in “Islam and Prisoners of War” by saying that “the underlying message that one gathers is whatever is good for the Muslims and serves the interest of Islam is valid.”<sup>19</sup>

#### American Perspective

The Frank’s treatment of Muslim prisoners of war during the First Crusade was a product of necessity as much as it was the standard for dealing with prisoners in medieval Europe or the product of religious zeal. The Franks traveled long distances on their trek to the Holy Land, often enduring starvation and other hardships along the way. The Franks situation deteriorated on several occasions during the journey to the point that they ate their horses and mules. This further complicated the transportation issues that were common with any long journey during the Middle Ages. For most of the First Crusade, the Franks could barely feed and transport themselves, much less care for

possible tens of thousands of prisoners. They failed to plan adequate logistical support for themselves and certainly did not plan for supporting large numbers of Muslim prisoners. The solution that the Franks implemented was slaughter of most Muslim prisoners.

Western Europeans generally treated prisoners of war according to their social status during the medieval period. Knights were nobles and usually had money or had a liege lord that would pay for their freedom if captured. Knights generally followed the medieval rules of chivalry when dealing with other knights. During battle, opposing knights gave vanquished knights the opportunity to capitulate in exchange for a guarantee of fair treatment. The winning side would then exchange the knights for gold or some other type of compensation. Opposing sides often traded common soldiers, such as foot soldiers and archers, for common prisoners taken by the opposing side; however, they were often outright killed if their value exceeded the effort to care for them. The Franks rarely applied the rules of chivalry to exchanges with Muslims, probably because Muslims were not equals in the eyes of most knights. The Franks did exchange some higher-ranking Muslim prisoners for gold or other prisoners during the First Crusade, but usually they just killed them.

Religious fervor and dogma also played a role in Crusader treatment of Muslim combatant and civilian prisoners. Medieval Christians were fanatical in their belief that Christianity was superior to any other, especially Islam and Judaism. The Church greatly influenced this dedication by controlling almost every aspect of medieval life. The Church was the center of life in the period before and during the First Crusade. When Pope Urban II addressed the Council of Clermont, he called for an armed pilgrimage against the infidel to assist the Byzantine Empire against the Turks and free the Christian

holy places from Muslim control. The Pope's speech incited fanatical enthusiasm from the crowd, who shouted 'God wills it' and broke into tears. The Pope's message, coupled with his blanket policy of forgiveness of sins for pilgrims that took the cross, manifested itself in flagrant religious hatred.<sup>20</sup> Christian hatred led to belief in Muslim inferiority and undoubtedly resulted in many of the massacres during the First Crusade. The Crusaders did offer conversion in place of death to some Muslim prisoners early in the First Crusade, but they soon abandoned this practice.

America's treatment of prisoners taken during the GWOT has become a point of contention between the Muslim world and America. Recent incidents, such as the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq, the existence of prisoners detained in Guantanamo Bay prison and allegations that the United States has secretly held GWOT prisoners in foreign prisons since 9/11 have all brought international criticism against America and fueled Islamic fundamentalist propaganda. Department of Defense (DoD) policy on enemy prisoners of war in DoD Directive number 2310.01 states:

Captured or detained personnel shall be accorded an appropriate legal status under international law. Persons captured or detained may be transferred to or from the care, custody, and control of the U.S. Military Services only on approval of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ASD(ISA)) and as authorized by the Geneva Conventions Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and for the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.<sup>21</sup>

This policy applies to all Department of Defense organizations in times of war and operations other than war. This policy follows applicable international law and references the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, signed and ratified by the United States.

The Abu Ghraib prison scandal occurred during 2003 when military police and interrogators abused prisoners detained at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, Iraq. The U.S. administration blamed low-level Army leaders and soldiers and convicted or

administered non-judicial punishment to the accused. The Guantanamo Bay prison controversy centers around the detainment of Taliban and Al Qaeda prisoners at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base held since post 9/11. Starting in 2005, human rights groups and news media have accused the US of abusing prisoner's rights at the facility. Bush administration policy is that Taliban and Al Qaeda detainees are unlawful combatants and do not qualify as prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions; however, U.S forces will treat them humanely and in a manner consistent with the principles of Geneva.<sup>22</sup> In late 2005, human rights groups and news media accused the United States of secretly holding GWOT prisoners in foreign prisons run by the CIA since post 9/11. Bush administration officials have repeatedly declined to acknowledge the existence of covert prisons run by the CIA. These allegations once again brought U.S. policy on prisoners of war under scrutiny by the international community.

Al Qaeda and America's enemies have used or can use all three of these perceived or real violations against prisoners of war in their information war against America. World perception and more importantly moderate Muslim perception of these situations is the crucial element. Semantics of legal right or wrong matter little to those that already view America's policies in the Middle East as hypocritical. Each of these incidents reinforces the importance of a proactive, strategic information operation campaign as the pinnacle to America's global war on terrorism.

### Coalition and Leadership

#### Frankish-American Coalition

When Pope Urban II called for an armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1095, he called on all of Western Europe to answer the summons. The major princes of the First

Crusade were French and Norman, however, large number of pilgrims came from Germany, Italy, and England and smaller numbers of pilgrims came from just about every country in Western Europe. Once the Franks arrived at Constantinople, Emperor Alexius joined the coalition. This diverse group of leaders had their own agendas and was reluctant to relinquish control to one of the others. During the journey through Anatolia, The four princes and other leaders, including clergy, eventually made decisions for the pilgrim army through committees.<sup>23</sup> Committees allowed the group to vote on courses of action by majority and solve short-term problems for the good of the entire army. The diverse and often fractured leadership within the pilgrim army had little impact on the outcome of the Crusade because the various leaders understood the importance of unity when the committee made a decision.

The current U.S. coalition in the GWOT has suffered several setbacks because of the international politics and to a lesser degree the dictatorship style decision-making process employed by the Bush Administration. One of these setbacks occurred when America transitioned from Afghanistan to Iraq and many traditional allies decided not to participate. America naturally took the lead in the global war on terrorism after the attacks against New York and Washington, D.C. President Bush understood the importance of enlisting support from coalition partners to win the immediate conflict in Afghanistan and the longer-term war in Afghanistan. Yet, “the president said he didn’t want other countries dictating terms or conditions for the war on terrorism. ‘At some point’, he said, ‘we may be the only ones left. That’s okay with me. We are American’.”<sup>24</sup> America has had many successes during the GWOT, but a strong coalition could have had many more successes.

## Arab Islamic Coalition

Just prior to the start of the First Crusade, the Islamic world disintegrated into chaos after the most influential Muslim leaders of the Arab world perished. The impact of this leadership void is difficult to measure, yet it clearly helped prevent a coalition from forming to fight off the Franks. When new leaders emerged, they focused internally, building support rather than preparing to fend off a Frankish attack. Religious schism between Sunni and Shia was another factor that prevented Islamic leaders from uniting when the Crusaders first attacked. The schism manifested itself in violence between the two sects and prevented any type of cooperation unless the Islamic world understood a serious threat. One additional factor that emasculated an Islamic coalition was the highly competitive nature of many of the local sultans and emirs. Local leaders constantly waged war amongst each other to win back their honor, settle grudges, or gain wealth and land. Western and Islamic scholars both seem to agree that Islamic division is one of the primary reasons for the success of the First Crusade.

Islamic disunity remains a theme in the modern Middle East. Religious schism between Shia and Sunni is still a major issue in the Arab world. The failure of Sunni and Shia to work together has prevented Iraq from forming a coalition government and reignited violence along sectarian lines. The centuries old schism threatens to tear Iraq apart and undo the process of democracy that the U.S started in 2003. Cultural trends such as corruption, terrorism, and tribal loyalties also threaten the stability in the Middle East, specifically in the fledgling democracies of Afghanistan and Iraq. Stability and democracy in the Middle East require unity between ethnic groups and religious sects that has historically only been achieved in response to external threats. Without harmony

between these discordant groups, the situation in Iraq and most of the Middle East will remain volatile.

### Conclusion

The medieval Crusades have fundamentally shaped the Christian and Muslim world for almost a thousand years. This statement suggests the influence of history on the current situation in the Middle East between the West and Islam. History is an essential part of any culture. In fact, mainstream sociologists and historians agree that history helps define the identity of a culture. The First Crusade was such a pivotal event that it not only influenced western and Muslim Arabic culture, it distinctly shaped both cultures. A reasonable person can deduce that the Crusades have directly influenced the current situation in the Middle East. The Crusades have influenced the current situation in the Middle East by influencing cultural perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. American and Muslim perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs have in turn influenced decisions, policies and day-to-day interactions at all levels. Decisions, policies, and interactions are often the obstacles that hinder cultural understanding and interaction between Americans and Muslims in the Middle East. American and Islamic leaders make policy and decisions based on their culture and experiences; these in turn dictate the interactions of Americans and Muslims in the Middle East.

If there is any possible solution to the clash of cultures between Islam and America, leaders must study Western European and Muslim views of the Crusades. The Crusades, specifically the First Crusade, are vital to understanding and formulating policy because they have manipulated and defined the current relationship between America and Muslims in the Middle East. Modern Muslim and American cultures of violence,

perceptions formed during the Crusades, and interactions between both cultures all signify the importance of the Crusades to modern American and Arab Islamic society.

### Culture

Both the Franks and medieval Muslims have a history of fighting which came to define their cultures. Both cultures used armed conflict to solve political, religious, social and economic conflicts during the medieval period. Franks and Muslims often resorted to warfare at the first sign that more peaceful forms of diplomacy would fail, if they even considered attempting diplomatic means. Often, Muslims and Christians perceived violence as the only answer to solve a problem. The First Crusade epitomized their violent cultures and indicated the nature of a problem that neither side could overcome; Franks and Muslim believed God was on their side. Religion and ideology fed the violence that perpetrated many of the more atrocious acts of violence by both sides during the First Crusade. God was often as not was used to justify religious war, a crusade from the western view and a jihad from the Muslim view.

The Crusades and the unarguable justification for violence continue to influence American and Islamic culture today. Modern American society and Arab Islamic society frequently use armed conflict and violence to solve political, religious, social, and economic disagreements. Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, including Operation Iraqi Freedom and the frequent acts of terrorism in the region, exemplify the violent and religious convictions of both cultures. Each society views the other in the historical context of the Crusades, although, Arabs tend to look more to history to define relationships with the West. Both American and Muslim leaders, historical and modern, are guilty of misunderstanding the long term effects of violence to solve political,

religious, social and economic problems in the Middle East. Leaders must understand their own culture of violence as well as the opposing cultures characteristics. One way to gain this understanding is to study the violent interactions that occurred between Christian and Muslim during the Crusades.

### Perception

Both Christian and Muslim cultures developed perceptions about the opposing side that persist today. Many of these perceptions define the relationship between Arabs and Americans in nations such as Iraq and Iran. Medieval Islamic and Christian leaders often fabricated the more negative perceptions as part of propaganda and information operations during the First and later Crusades. Islamic historians claim that the Franks were cannibals, eating captured Muslim women and children as they pillaged Muslim towns. This heinous accusation, whether true or not, spread by word of mouth amongst the Muslim people of the Middle East and initially caused immense fear. The long-term effect of this perception was unification of the Muslim world against the Franks and eventual expulsion from the Holy Land. Modern Islamic Arabs do not accuse America of cannibalism, but they do accuse American soldiers of wantonly killing Muslims for their own ends. The continued American military presence in the Middle East will only exacerbate this perception, especially if the focus remains on lethal action. Medieval Muslims also believed that the Franks were in the Middle East for gold, land and to convert Muslims to Christianity. Frankish actions, especially during the later Crusades, reinforced this perception. Today, Arab Muslims believe that America's presence in the Middle East is motivated by oil and religion. Muslim fundamentalists such as Osama bin

Laden accuse Americans of propagating a war against Islam and seeking their own financial gain by stealing oil from the Arab people.

Medieval Christians perceived Saracens to be barbarians, spreading Islam with their swords and recklessly killing peaceful Christian pilgrims in the Holy Land. They believed that Muslim culture was lower than European culture and did not curry the favor of God. Pope Urban the II used this propaganda to inflame his audience at the Council of Clermont and gain widespread support in Western Europe for an armed pilgrimage which historians later named the First Crusade. Today, Americans still believe Muslims are backwards and violent. Americans perceive that Muslim nations continuously violate human rights, treat women like slaves, and have no regard for democracy or freedom. In essence, Americans believe that Islamic nations and Muslim culture is lower than American and western culture. This belief and the ensuing attitude and actions clearly influence relationships at the personal, day-to-day level, and all the way up to national level. Leaders must understand the nature of their own perceptions and how they can see past them. Leaders must also understand the opposing sides' perceptions and how to disprove them. One way to gain this understanding is to study the source of these perceptions, many of which date to the First Crusade, and determine ways to address historical and modern fallacies inherent in their logic.

The American and Muslim historical interpretations of the First Crusade indicate some of the differences between the two cultures. The conflict, then and now, attests to the difficulty in adjudicating the ideological and religious justifications whereby both Muslims and Americans base their actions. The First Crusade is essential to understanding the context of the problem and finding solutions that satisfy both cultures.

Understanding aspects of the First Crusade such as culture and perceptions and how they relate to current controversial issues such as justification for violence, propaganda, and treatment of prisoners of war can lead to greater understanding of the problem. Through study and understanding of the First Crusade, all levels of leaders can better understand the nature of the current situation in the Middle East. Better understanding will eventually lead to common ground solutions that can benefit both the American and Muslim world.

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<sup>1</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 50.

<sup>2</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 5.

<sup>3</sup>Mideast Web, "Osama Bin Laden's Jihad and Text of Fatwahs and Declaration of War" [article online]; available from <http://www.mideastweb.org/osamabinladen1.htm>; Internet; accessed on 20 March 2006.

<sup>4</sup>Gibson Consulting, "Oil Industry Statistics" [article online]; available from <http://www.gravmag.com/oil.html>; Internet; accessed on 26 March 2006.

<sup>5</sup>Shirl McArthur, "A Conservative Total for U.S. Aid to Israel: \$91 Billion - and Counting" [article online]; available from [http://www.wrmea.com/archives/Jan\\_Feb\\_2001/0101015.html](http://www.wrmea.com/archives/Jan_Feb_2001/0101015.html); Internet; accessed on 26 March 2006.

<sup>6</sup>Graduate Center, City University of New York, "American Religious Identification Study," 19 December 2001; available from [http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research\\_briefs/aris/aris\\_index.htm](http://www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_briefs/aris/aris_index.htm); Internet; accessed on 30 March 2006.

<sup>7</sup>Malcolm Billings, *The Cross and The Crescent: A History of the Crusades* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1988), 15-16.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 103.

<sup>9</sup>Karen Armstrong, "Medieval Prejudice Still Influences West's View of Islam," *Dawn* (Pakistan), 21 June 2002 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://www.dawn.com/2002/06/21/int17.htm>; Internet; accessed on 30 March 2006.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Payne, *The Crusades: A History* (London: Robert Hale, 1986), 28.

<sup>11</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 56.

<sup>12</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 39.

<sup>13</sup>Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 65-66.

<sup>14</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 52-53.

<sup>15</sup>Francesco Sisci, "The Propaganda War, and Why bin Laden is Winning It," *Asia Times Online*, 7 November 2001; available from [www.atimes.com/c-asia/CK07Ag01.html](http://www.atimes.com/c-asia/CK07Ag01.html); Internet; accessed on 12 April 2006.

<sup>16</sup>Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 7.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>18</sup>Qur'an 9:5-6 (Translated by Maulana Muhammad Ali)

<sup>19</sup>Vinod Kumar, "Islam and Prisoners of War," *Kashmir Herald* 2, no. 6, 2002; available from <http://kashmirherald.com/featuredarticle/islamandprisonersofwar-prn.html>; Internet; accessed on 15 April 2006.

<sup>20</sup>Ronald C. Finucane, *Soldiers of the Faith: Crusaders and Moslems at War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 157-158.

<sup>21</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, DoD Directive Number 2310.01, *DoD Enemy POW Detainee Program* (Washington, DC: GPO, 18 August 1994).

<sup>22</sup>George W. Bush, *Humane Treatment of al Qaeda and Taliban Detainees*, White House Memorandum, 7 February 2002; available from [www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/02.02.07.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/02.02.07.pdf); Internet; accessed on 17 April 2006.

<sup>23</sup>Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 86.

<sup>24</sup>Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 81.

## CHAPTER 5

### HOW AND WHY DOES THE FIRST CRUSADE MATTER

The First Crusade matters to military and civilian leaders because the cultural interaction that occurred between Islam and Christianity is relevant to the current situation between Americans and Muslims in the Middle East. The First Crusade is the critical historical event that defines the relationship between the two cultures today. The incessant attempts by each culture to dominate the other during the Crusades are ongoing in the Middle East. Prior to the First Crusade, Islam clearly retained the initiative over Christianity. Muslims spread their religion in a nearly unstoppable wave from the Middle East, to Asia Minor, through Africa, and into southern Europe. The First Crusade turned the tide in the war between these two cultures. It “saved” Christendom and western culture from Muslim encroachment and eventual assimilation into Islam. The First Crusade allowed Christianity to take the initiative from Islam.

#### American Historical Legacy

The First Crusade was the first successful Western European counter-offensive against Islam. The Crusaders attacked deep into Arab Muslim territory and secured their religiously symbolic objective, Jerusalem. Pope Urban II translated his vision into reality and established a Christian moral precedent that allowed for an armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Pope encouraged his “Christian warriors” to do whatever necessary to secure the holy places of Christendom from the infidel. He absolved pilgrims of sin while on the Crusade so that they could kill Muslims free of guilt. This was necessary to secure popular support and accomplish the mission. Yet, he stopped short of declaring total war

on the Muslim people. The Pope clearly did not intend for Crusaders to slaughter innocent women and children. The unintended consequence of Pope Urban's absolution of sin for Crusaders led to massacres and atrocities against Muslim and Jewish innocents. Pope Urban's precedent legitimized violence as a means to a higher moral end and resulted in unintended consequences that he could not control.

Today, Americans align their morality with secular human rights and western values. American culture derives most of these values and rights from refinement of the same Judeo-Christian morals and laws that governed medieval Europe during the First Crusade. Despite America's attempt to secularize values and rights, there is a constant internal movement to recognize their foundation in Christianity. Furthermore, Americans embrace their secular values of freedom and democracy the same way that a theocracy adopts religious principles. This indicates the impulsive nature of cultural influence in American society. Americans use the secular argument to trump the religious argument adopted by Islamic states. The majority of Americans believe that as long as political leaders keep God out of the equation then any action in the Middle East is justified. Americans accept that their motives in the Middle East are moral and good within the context of a secular morality that benefits the human situation. American leaders legitimize the global war on terror as a means to a higher moral end.

### Islamic Historical Legacy

The First Crusade shattered the power of the Islamic caliphate during the height of religious expansion and served to magnify several inherent vulnerabilities of Islam. Islam suffered from cultural disunity and sectarian controversy that worsened as Islam continued to expand. The first Crusaders arbitrarily took advantage of this situation to

capture Jerusalem and establish the Christian principalities in the Holy Land. Initial Muslim response to the invasion was violent but disorganized. As the Crusaders advanced deeper into Islamic territory, Muslim leaders attempted diplomacy to preserve their principalities. Muslim leaders and Islamic scholars later condemned those Muslims that cooperated with the Franks, blaming them for failing Allah's test and inviting disaster upon Islam. Because of the shocking success of the First Crusade, the forces of Islam united against Christian militarism and answered with their own form of holy war, Jihad. Seljuk and Fatimid Islamic leaders legitimized violence as a means to a higher religious end.

American militarism in the Middle East is both an outrage to Islamic moral rightness and a justification for Islamic militarism. Osama bin Laden justifies Islamic fundamentalist violence as a response to American and western aggression against Muslim culture. He strengthens his case by citing the historical example of the Crusades and underscoring the established pattern of western violence against Islam. American political leaders' careless use of the word crusade reinforces this perception. Bin Laden's logic equates the First Crusade to the first Western Christian sin against Islam. In his view, the pattern of the crusade proves that America seeks to dominate Islam for religious and economic reasons. No diplomatic compromise is possible with Americans because they seek to impose their false religion on Muslims, then as now.

Islamic fundamentalists call Muslims to resist the relentless assaults from western military, economic and cultural hegemony. They fear the dissolution of their control and elimination of Islamic culture if America imposes democracy and freedom in the Middle East. Islamic fundamentalists use modern Jihadism to save Islam from the modern

crusade. They call all Muslims to obey the will of God or face the same consequences imposed upon medieval Muslims during the First Crusade. Islamic fundamentalists brand Muslims that accept American globalization as traitors that deserve the same fate as infidels. American freedoms and values amount to a Trojan horse for Christian reconquest of the Holy Land that represents a historically validated threat to the Islamic view of the will of God and the doctrine of Mohammed. Islamic fundamentalist leaders legitimize violence as a means to a higher religious end.

### Modern Insights

Modern American Christianity is primarily an individual interpretation of God and a relationship with God that is closely associated with the western ideals of individual rights, personal conscience, and rights to privacy. American Democracy is the secular expression of Christian values and rights and a validation of American cultural superiority. This cultural view of religion directly opposes the cultural view of modern Islamism. Modern Islam is primarily a collective cultural subordination to the will of God that prefers voluntary, enthusiastic obedience to God but accepts collective coerced submission. Modern Islam is closely associated with Arabic tribal identity and family honor. Islam's rule of every aspect of law and administration within a Muslim state makes most Middle Eastern governments theocracies. Islamic Theocracy is the expression of religious tradition and law and a validation of Islamic cultural superiority.

The conflict between Christianity and Islam during the First Crusade was a contest between two opposing cultures for dominance. Both cultures used religion as a tool to justify their actions and validate their own cultural superiority. Today, American and Islamic cultures compete for supremacy in the Middle East. Muslims still use religion

and its political extension, theocracy, to validate Islamic cultural superiority. Americans believe they have progressed beyond religion and use the political / ideological concept of democracy to validate their cultural superiority.

The power of the Crusades today lies in the cultural prejudices that govern the relationship between Americans and Muslims. Although the historiography of the First Crusade is important, it is much less significant to the current situation than the Muslim and western pursuit of cultural dominance in the Middle East. Culturally significant terms such as “crusade” and “jihad” further exacerbate the conflict and signify the similar, yet opposing ideological nature of the conflict. If this contest continues, the thousand-year-old clash between cultures will endure and each side will continue the war using any means available to win.

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