



Sympathy for the Devil

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Almost everyone thinks Zacarias Moussaoui is mad except Zacarias Moussaoui, and now he will have a lifetime to ponder that curious fact. Those who believe he is insane got yet more evidence on Wednesday when he was sentenced to life in prison for his role in the 9/11 attacks, and reacted as if he had been acquitted. He clapped his hands and shouted, "America, you lost. I won." After all, what sane person would react in such a way to being sentenced to life behind bars? As if to explain his bizarre behavior, [CNN](#) placed a video link immediately following its account of Moussaoui's exclamation: "Watch how Moussaoui grew up surrounded by pain - - 3:07)."

Maybe Moussaoui did grow up surrounded by pain, and as an adult, driven insane by this pain, turned to jihad. His own lawyers, abetted by his sisters and some of his old

friends, attempted to stave off the death penalty by mounting what has become known as the "Officer Krupke" defense: fans of [West Side Story](#) will recall how gang member Action explained his delinquency to Krupke: "Hey, I'm deprived on account I'm deprived." If anyone was deprived, it was Moussaoui. [According to his sister](#) Jamilla, their father "poisoned our lives. He left us completely destitute. ... He was a man who never should have had children." Moussaoui's onetime friend Christophe Marguel testified that the future mujahid had a "very hard time" with racism in France. A clinical social worker, Jan Vogel-sang, said that an upbringing like Moussaoui's "would place someone at risk to wind up in serious circumstances later in life."

Moussaoui himself would have none of this, dismissing it as "a lot of American B.S." Nevertheless, the

strategy apparently worked: he was indeed spared the death penalty. And to be sure, Moussaoui's own erratic behavior has contributed to the impression that he is more than a little unhinged. Not the least of his strange outbursts was his reaction to video and audio of the destruction of the World Trade Center and the cries of the victims. "Burn in the U.S.A.!" [Moussaoui shouted](#). "No pain, no gain!" For years he has sent long-winded, rambling "legal briefs" to Judge Leonie Brinkema, whom he dubbed "the death judge." Brinkema, however, was herself not convinced that Moussaoui was crazy, writing in 2002: "It's very, very, very significant that the day-to-day observations of the people in the Alexandria jail consistently negate any question about there being any serious mental illness or disease in Mr. Moussaoui."

But if he isn't insane, then what could possibly account for his behavior? Any normal person faced with either execution or life imprisonment might rejoice at being granted the latter, but why would Moussaoui characterize this as a victory for himself and a defeat for America?

The answer can be found in the ideology that motivated Moussaoui to get involved with Al-Qaeda and the 9/11 plot. [He told prosecutors](#) that he felt "no regret, no remorse" for 9/11: "We want pain in your country. I wish there would be more pain." Why? At his death penalty hearings, according to [AP](#), Moussaoui "told jurors that Islam requires Muslims to be the world's

superpower as he flipped through a copy of the Koran searching for verses to support his assertions. One he cited requires non-Muslim nations to pay a tribute to Muslim countries." It is likely that he cited Qur'an 9:29, which commands Muslims to make war against the "People of the Book" (i.e., primarily Jews and Christians) until they pay the *jizya*, a poll tax not collected from Muslims, and "feel themselves subdued." An echo of this verse comes through in Moussaoui's statement that "we" -- the Islamic world -- "have to be the superpower. You have to be subdued. We have to be above you. Because Americans, you are the superpower, you want to eradicate us."

Moussaoui made himself very clear. He identified himself as an adherent of the jihad ideology that fuels Islamic movements around the globe today, who are fighting in part because of the conviction enunciated decades ago by the Pakistani jihad thinker and politician Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi: he declared that non-Muslims have "absolutely no right to seize the reins of power in any part of Allah's earth nor to direct the collective affairs of human beings according to their own misconceived doctrines." If they do, "the believers would be under an obligation to do their utmost to dislodge them from political power and to make them live in subservience to the Islamic way of life."

From this perspective, why should Moussaoui feel any remorse for what he did? [As he put it](#), "There is no regret for justice." He sees 9/11

as the Muslims doing their utmost to dislodge the infidels from political power. He believes that when he inflicts pain upon those who are at war with Islam, he is doing what pleases Allah. He is working for justice in this world.

Why did he consider his evading the death penalty a victory? Some have suggested that executing Moussaoui would just make him a martyr in the Islamic world. In fact, however, this is unlikely. Strictly speaking, Paradise is promised only to those who "slay and are slain" for Allah (Qur'an 9:111), not to those who die an ignominious death at the hands of Infidel corrections officers. While there is little doubt that a dead Moussaoui would nevertheless be lionized in the Islamic world as another victim of America's putative "war on Islam," he is of more value to the global jihad alive than dead.

There are several reasons for this:

[1] *The verdict will be seen in the Islamic world as another manifestation of American cowardice and failure of will, akin to Bill Clinton's withdrawal from Somalia after the Black Hawk incident -- which convinced Osama bin Laden that America could be beaten. A man who believes that the Almighty commands him to be "merciful" to his fellow Muslims but "ruthless" to the unbelievers (Qur'an 48:29) does not readily understand acts of mercy or forbearance as anything other than weakness. In this view a strong America would execute Moussaoui; a weak America allows him to live on.*

[2] *Moussaoui's trial has aggravated the fissures between the United States and Europe. [France has offered](#) Moussaoui, a French citizen, consular protection. A living Moussaoui will be able to continue to try to worsen the tensions between the emerging Eurabia, made up as it is of terrified governments desperate to placate their growing and restive Muslim populations, and a U.S. still pursuing the war on terror.*

[3] *A living Moussaoui could become the Leonard Peltier of the jihad movement. Moussaoui executed will cause outrage for a moment; Moussaoui imprisoned will provoke outrage for a lifetime. For the next fifty years Moussaoui could become a symbol of American injustice: a rallying point for protestors, a new occasion for the international Left and the global jihad to make common cause. He himself has a tendency to make extreme, inflammatory statements -- so he will fit right in with the Left's current crop of overheated rhetoricians.*

[4] *Moussaoui himself could become a heroic figure, most especially in whatever prison in which he is ultimately incarcerated. He will provide a new impetus for prison conversions to Islam, and a rallying point for jihad recruitment in his prison. This may be the most important reason of all why Moussaoui declared victory on Wednesday: he can see himself training up the next generation of mujahedin who will see his great battle for Allah through to final victory over the American Great Satan.*

Of course, none of these reasons are likely to have been considered by anyone connected with Moussaoui's sentencing. They were, in contrast, preoccupied with questions of Moussaoui's sanity. It is unfortunate that they apparently did not under-

stand or attach much weight to [Moussaoui's statement](#) that suicide bombings were "not crazy but based on Islam." If they had, they might have realized that by sentencing him to life in prison, they were only helping his cause.