

“Given this understanding of the issue, how should we begin to confront Totalitarian Islam? Again, there is precedent in history. The basic principles of a rational policy towards Islamic Totalitarianism—with clear strategic implications—were revealed in a striking telegram sent by the U.S. Secretary of State James Byrnes to General Douglas MacArthur, the American commander in Japan, in October, 1945. The telegram established the basic U.S. policy goals towards Shintoism, and laid out, for MacArthur and his subordinates, the basic principles by which those goals were to be achieved:



[Click to enlarge](#)

Telegram of Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, transmitting the radio remarks of John Carter Vincent, head of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, to the supreme commander of the Allied Powers in Japan. From W. P. Woodard, *The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945–1952 and Japanese Religions* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).

"Shintoism, insofar as it is a religion of individual Japanese, is not to be interfered with. Shintoism, however, insofar as it is directed by the Japanese government, and as a measure enforced from above by the government, is to be done away with. People would not be taxed to support National Shinto and there will be no place for Shintoism in the schools. Shintoism as a state religion—National Shinto, that is—will go . . . Our policy on this goes beyond Shinto . . . The dissemination of Japanese militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ideology in any form will be completely suppressed. And the Japanese Government will be required to cease financial and other support of Shinto establishments."

The telegram is clear about the need for separation between religion and state—between an individual's right to follow Shinto and the government's power to enforce it. This requirement applies to Islam today (and to Christianity and Judaism) as strongly as it did to Shinto. In regard to Japan, the job involved breaking the link between Shinto and state; in regard to Islamic Totalitarianism the task involves breaking the link

between Islam and state. This is the central political issue we face: the complete lack of any conceptual or institutional separation between church and state in Islam, both historically and in the totalitarian movement today.

As for what we should do about this, the 1945 telegram is direct. Here is its opening, rewritten to substitute Islam for Shinto:

Islam, as it is a religion of individuals, is not to be interfered with. Islam, however, insofar as it is directed by governments, and as a measure enforced from above by any government, is to be done away with.

There is no question here about religious freedom. Individual religious belief is to be left alone—as is all freedom to think and to speak by one’s own judgment—but state religion must be eliminated. It is vital that this principle be understood, stated clearly, and enforced—for this is a precondition of the thorough and permanent defeat of America’s current enemy.

Totalitarian Islam, an ideology that merges state power with religious belief, must go.” (John Lewis [\*The Defeat of Islamic Totalitarianism\*](#))