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Bin Laden's new image: younger, more Marxist

The former multimillionaire now blames global capitalism and class for the tragedies in Iraq and Afghanistan.





By [Fawaz A. Gerges](#) / September 13, 2007

BRONXVILLE, N.Y.

AFTER A THREE-YEAR absence, Osama bin Laden has resurfaced in another of his rousing videotapes, only this time with a new image and a new message. Projecting a younger look, Mr. bin Laden gives his most ideological address since the early 1990s with an assault on capitalism and liberal democracy loaded with Marxist and socialist terms. Indeed, this new bin Laden sounds more like Che Guevara, the Marxist revolutionary, than some of his rifle-toting Al Qaeda cohorts.

Gone is bin Laden's vintage militaristic appearance. He has exchanged his fatigues and Kalashnikov for a white robe, circular cap, and beige cloak, giving him an aura of clerical wisdom. The new bin Laden portrays himself as a spiritual figure, not a grizzled soldier.

His gray beard is dyed black and trimmed neatly, which is actually an old tradition dating back to the birth of Islam; the prophet Muhammad reportedly dyed his hair and recommended, while at war, that his commanders and soldiers dye theirs to strike fear in the enemy.

In the video, bin Laden addresses Americans and rails against the ills of economic exploitation, multinational corporations, and globalization. He tells them to liberate themselves from "the deception, shackles, and attrition of the capitalist system." Similar to his incitement of Muslims against their oppressive, "apostate" rulers and the meddling West, bin Laden now seems to be trying to galvanize Americans against their own harsh socioeconomic and political system.

"Poor and exploited Americans, unite against your capitalist laws that make the rich richer and the poor poorer," the former multimillionaire businessman tells the camera. Never before has bin Laden utilized the grandiose language of Marxism in his statements to the American people. And yet, he says, Muslims and Americans are alike; they are both victims of the capitalist system, which "seeks to turn the entire world into a fiefdom of the major corporations under the label of 'globalization' in order to protect democracy."

While in the past bin Laden emphasized the clash of cultures and religions as the basis for confrontation, he now talks about commonalities of victimhood and suffering. He blames the global system of capital and class for the tragedies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the poverty of Africa, and "the reeling of many [Americans] under the burden of interest-related debts, insane taxes, and real estate mortgages." According to the new bin Laden, big capital, class interests, and multinationals – not religion or culture – are responsible for perpetuating war and killing.

Similarly, bin Laden had never before made distinctions between the American people and their leaders, but now he says that Americans, like Muslims, are victims of profiteering and the corporations that control the political process and media.

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