

Chapter 6

Transnational Movements and Terrorism

National and international security now involves nonstate actors to an extent unprecedented in modern history. Transnational movements and substate groups have tremendous power both to contribute to the greater good and to bring about violence, death, and repression. The most prominent such threat arises from transnational Salafi jihadism, of which al Qaeda is the standard bearer. Al Qaeda and the larger movement that presently command America's attention remain serious threats for two primary reasons. First, this movement threatens the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), though its ability to do so in the near term is questionable. Second, the movement's ability to create humanitarian dystopias, as in Afghanistan and Iraq's Anbar Province, among other places, remains significant and should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless, the movement has substantial weaknesses and arguably is self-limiting.¹ It finds itself

surrounded on all sides by opponents that include not only the Western democracies but also the media, the governments in majority Muslim countries, mainstream Muslims, and even other Islamists. Moreover, it is becoming clear that the Muslim community's familiarity with al Qaeda and its ilk is breeding contempt, not converts.

Recent poll results underscore some of these points. Gallup polls taken across the Muslim world make clear that many Muslims, justifiably or not, are extremely skeptical about U.S. actions and policies, but that these feelings do not translate into support for al Qaeda and its associates. In fact, only 7 percent of Muslims, some 91 million people, "fully support" the attacks of September 11, 2001, with another 7 percent leaning toward supporting it.

Clearly, then, the United States has some fence-mending to do among Muslims. The terrorism problem, however, is much smaller in extent than even



AP Images (Hatem Mousa)

Girl in Islamic Jihad headcovering rallies with Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants in Gaza City

Gallup's numbers indicate. Al Qaeda and likeminded groups boast as members only a fraction of 1 percent of the 91 million Muslims who may have celebrated September 11. Arguably, this suggests that increasing America's popularity among Muslims, while desirable in itself, is an inefficient way to shrink the number of Salafi jihadists. Indeed, some of America's staunchest allies against al Qaeda—such as Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Iranian regime, many radical preachers, even the much maligned Arab media—may be some of our staunchest foes on other issues. In short, an approach to the contest in which the United States remains active but does not insist on putting its actions (especially the military ones) at center stage may be most effective.

A look at the psychology of terrorists can also pay dividends. It turns out that terrorists of any stripe are mostly notable for their similarity to the rest of us (a point that the Gallup results make in a different way). What makes them different is not their individual psychology, but their group, organizational, and social psychologies. A comprehensive understanding of the social, historical, and political contexts in which terrorist groups arise suggests a typology of terrorism. Among the substate terrorists, there are five basic types: social revolutionary (left-wing), right-wing fascist, nationalist-separatist, religious extremist, and single-issue terrorists. The religious extremists divide into violent religious fundamentalists (such as al Qaeda) and those fighting for “new religions.” Each of these types has a different group psychology, and thus different policy prescriptions are appropriate for each.

The next issue to consider is the nightmare scenario that terrorists will acquire and use WMD. The U.S. Government is not well prepared—intellectually, legally, organizationally, or in terms of capability—to respond to catastrophically disruptive incidents. Fortunately, few terrorist groups in recent decades have actually tried to use WMD, not least because there are more readily available conventional means of gaining attention. But al Qaeda does not fit that profile and has sought to acquire unconventional weapons.

Looking to the future, technology, notably biological technology, is in the process of “super-empowering” not just small groups such as terrorist organizations, gangs, organized criminal networks, anarchists, and ultra-extreme environmentalists, but even Unabomber-style individuals. The successful response to this emerging threat will probably have to aspire to be an “all-of-society” response.

Assessing the Salafi Jihadist Movement

A particularly idiosyncratic understanding of the Sunni Islamic faith called “Salafi jihadism” by its practitioners underpins al Qaeda and inspires more than 100 kindred terrorist groups around the world, not to mention numerous isolated groups or even individuals.² Salafi jihadism is a minority, reactionary viewpoint within a wider acrimonious debate among Muslims about how to reconcile the progress and frustration unleashed across the Islamic world by modernization and globalization.³ Though many Muslims (and, for that matter, non-Muslims) are concerned about the implications of globalization, only a tiny minority of Sunnis adhere to the stern tenets of this harsh and xenophobic worldview that calls for the formation of a caliphate—an Islamic superstate stretching from Spain to Indonesia—and the conversion of all other Muslims from their purportedly innovative, unfounded, and corrupt beliefs. (It is important to note that the destruction of the United States is not among the goals per se of Salafi jihadists, though many, perhaps most of them, would be happy to see it happen. Instead, they desire to see the United States quit the Muslim world as part of a process to topple corrupt regimes and hasten the beginning of the caliphate.)

Salafis seek a return to what they believe was the simple and pure truth of Islam as it was first practiced, hence, the Arabic word Salafi, which means “return to the forefathers.” (Whether they are correct in their understanding of Islam's original nature is another question.) Even within the Salafi community, however, there are important divisions.⁴ A large component of the community eschews engagement in politics, let alone violence, because they believe that such activities pit people against each other when they should, instead, be coming together in “true” (that is, Salafi) Islam. A second, probably larger component, which includes the Muslim Brotherhood, is willing to engage in politics—for instance, by standing for election—and to use violence when deemed necessary. The smallest component of the Salafi community is the actual Salafi jihadists themselves, who believe that violent jihad is presently an obligation incumbent on every true Muslim, and that democracy is un-Islamic. The Salafi jihadist theology was codified by Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) in the 1960s, proliferated via radical Egyptian and Saudi scholars during the 1960s and 1970s, oxygenated during the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s, and updated by al Qaeda's leadership in the 1990s. Today, al Qaeda remains its vanguard.

Salafi jihadism shares the major characteristics of the other great radical ideologies of the post-Industrial Revolution era:

- a social critique that resonates widely
- a call to violence as the only way to alter a corrupt social order
- a utopian vision of the future that will follow a violent uprising.

Like Karl Marx's critique of unconstrained capitalism, much of Salafi jihadism's social critique is powerful and resilient. It taps into widely accepted historic Arab and Sunni mythology about the manner in which Christian crusaders, Mongol hordes, and assorted Western colonizers have successively subjugated and oppressed Islam and Muslims for centuries. It further criticizes Muslims for being seduced by alien values such as nationalism, secularism, and democracy. It projects fault onto external forces: the Other. It dovetails with the blame that Arab and Islamic states have projected on the West for generations, but it extends fault to insufficiently pious Muslim government leaders, calling for their violent overthrow. Though parts of this critique are less well supported within the Sunni world, such as the opposition to nationalism and democracy, as a general proposition it has a strength, and a politico-cultural authenticity, that make it stubbornly resistant to counter-messaging from the outside.

Salafi jihadism's weakness is not in its social critique, but in its prescriptions. First, in its call for violent jihad, it is on shaky ground with the general Muslim population. Polling done by Gallup indicates that perhaps some 91 million Muslims worldwide see the September 11 attacks as fully justified. Yet only a minuscule fraction of even these most anti-American Muslims have been willing to join the Salafi jihadist movement, let alone al Qaeda itself. The fact is that most Muslims do not support violent jihad except (if at all) under very circumscribed conditions. They certainly do not welcome an "all jihad, all the time" approach. In fact, the polling compellingly points out that most Muslims who do support violence do so on political grounds, not, ultimately, on the religious grounds that are central to al Qaeda ideology. Indeed, the experience in such locations as Riyadh, Amman, and Iraq's Anbar Province, among many others, has shown that when the violence is no longer performed far away and out of sight against the "Zionist-Crusader" Other, but comes home to Islamic communities, it loses its appeal.⁵

Second, Salafi jihadism features the vision of a utopian future based upon historical fiction. This vision parallels an equally seductive ahistorical myth of socially ideal primitive communism espoused by Marx and Friedrich Engels. Much like its ideological forerunner, Salafi jihadism's vision of the future anchors on the myth of a near-perfect Sunni caliphate, under a single religious hub and sharia law, that stretched from modern-day Morocco to India during the 7th and 8th centuries. It aspires to "reestablish" this caliphate from Spain to Indonesia, arguing this will occur rapidly after the violent overthrow of corrupt Muslim autocracies and the elimination of all decadent Western influences throughout the region. Of course, as with human societies throughout history, there was less utopian bliss in the historic caliphate than Salafi jihadists advertise. The Taliban's real-life emirate established in Afghanistan from 1996–2001 displayed the many horrors for average Muslims that will come from the oppressive, misogynistic, and xenophobic caliphate that the Salafi jihadists desire.

Al Qaeda is the self-designated vanguard (another echo of Marxism) of Salafi jihadism. Its senior leadership cadre has worked since 1996 to communicate its social critique and vision of the future, while simultaneously recruiting, training, organizing, and inspiring the new generation of Sunni terrorists necessary to bring about that future. Nevertheless, Salafi jihadism existed for some two decades before al Qaeda established itself in the late 1980s, and there is every reason to believe that the far-flung, organizationally diffuse movement will outlast al Qaeda. Thus, the health of al Qaeda may be an important issue, but it is not necessarily the decisive issue. Rather, the United States and its allies must gauge the vigor of the broader movement.

Present Trends

American policymakers have recently been confronted with dramatically differing analyses of the health of and risk posed by al Qaeda and the rest of the Salafi jihadist community. One line of analysis argues that al Qaeda, operating from its safe haven along the Afghan-Pakistan border, remains the source of the gravest threat for catastrophic terror.⁶ The contending perspective is that al Qaeda's operational decline renders it less salient to international security concerns than the growing threat from diffuse, low-level groups emerging out of local social networks and acting out of a shared belief in the Salafi jihadist mass media message.⁷ What are global policymakers to think? Can both of these perspectives be correct? If not, which threat is more severe?

Ultimately, the question of whether al Qaeda itself or its relatively diffuse constellation of loosely affiliated co-religionists poses the greater threat may be moot. Both are substantial threats. Each requires a tailored response from its opponents. On the one hand, the al Qaeda–led globalized variant is more intellectually adaptable within its ideological commitment to nonstop jihad, but it faces major structural challenges. It has the greater ability to mount narrow but devastating attacks, as its track record makes clear. On the other hand, the surrounding movement with its violence-prone group of men poses a more widespread but less physically potent threat. There is growing evidence that the multifaceted approach to countering Sunni terrorism that has evolved in the past few years, with a concentration on denying al Qaeda its desired outcomes, is showing signs of success. While American strategy for countering terrorism can, of course, be improved, policymakers should use caution to avoid discarding methods that are known to work, in their zeal to get rid of what has not.

Responding to the Threat

In organizational and strategic terms, the Salafi jihadists have faced substantial setbacks over the last several years. The United States and its partners have continued regularly to kill or capture key

leaders, such as a succession of operational chiefs of al Qaeda central, and a string of successive leaders of “al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.” There have been similar successes against Jamaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia, and against other groups large and small across the globe. Important leaders of al Qaeda in Iraq, including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, have been killed or captured. Moreover, the overall Salafi jihadist position in Iraq is, as of this writing, grim, under relentless American military pressure, and facing increasingly capable Iraqi services and the Sunni tribal “Awakening.” In sum, because of the combined pressures of various national security services and the military, intelligence, and law enforcement services of the United States, al Qaeda and its allies find it hard to operate in most places in the globe.

At the same time, the movement has, arguably, made a grave strategic blunder. By allowing Zarqawi to reorient attention of the Salafi jihadists in Iraq and, indeed, in the entire Middle East, toward attacking the Shia, it took on an additional adversary, both ideological and physical, while it was still grappling with the formidable alliance of the “Jews, Crusaders, and [Sunni] apostates.” This was not part of Osama bin Laden’s or Ayman al-Zawahiri’s master plan, for they always felt that the Shia would be quickly eliminated late in the process of forming a caliphate, when



AP Images (Hussein Mailla)

Gunman takes position in Tripoli, birthplace of Lebanon’s Salafi movement in the 1950s

the numbers of Sunni “true believers” would form an overwhelming weight to wield against Shia heretics.⁸ As a result of these various developments, almost nowhere in the world is there a truly permissive environment for the operation of Salafi jihadists.

Nevertheless, al Qaeda and the broader movement have been adapting in a number of ways. First, al Qaeda has worked hard to reestablish a physical safe haven in Pakistan, and especially within the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Al Qaeda requires a place of physical freedom to practice the management of a proto-caliphate, to congregate in an unfettered manner, and to plan and launch spectacular acts of terrorism against its opponents. Al Qaeda strategists are incessantly writing to each other about the good old days in Afghanistan (between the expulsion of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the post-9/11 invasion), and the need to generate a similar safe haven soon. They lament the loss of the once-promising safe haven in Iraq, particularly in Anbar Province, largely blaming Zarqawi’s intemperance for this. Today, al Qaeda’s strategists are trying to establish a permanent safe haven in Pakistan’s border areas adjacent Afghanistan. Intense efforts since late 2005 have produced results. Al Qaeda gained a foothold in this area, which by 2009 had become a central battle ground. In alliance with young and highly militant Pakistani-Pashtun allies, al Qaeda has overthrown most of the tribal elder system in western Pakistan and embarrassed the Pakistani military. Many of the major attacks planned and executed against Western targets since 2002—including the London 7/7 bombings, the United Kingdom–U.S. airliner plot of 2006, and the Frankfurt airport plot of 2007—have common origins in western Pakistan and featured direct contact between key attackers and al Qaeda leaders.

Second, al Qaeda has expanded its formal franchisee arrangements with heretofore loosely affiliated Salafi jihadist groups. Al Qaeda’s leadership has tried to formalize relationships and stamp the al Qaeda brand name on all forms of regional Salafi jihadist and insurgent activity. At the same time, these groups seek their share of the prestige, and often funding, that goes with the “al Qaeda” name and reach out to it. For instance, in 2004, Zarqawi’s Iraqi group was assimilated into the movement as “al Qaeda of the Two Rivers,” a reference not only to Iraq, but also to the wider territory extending toward southwestern Iran and Kuwait. Similarly, in early 2007, distinct references to “al Qaeda of Khoristan”

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The View from the Muslim World

While military and economic strategies are of critical importance in capturing, killing, or containing terrorists, equally important is public diplomacy, the battle to win the hearts and minds of people who might be sources of recruitment or support for jihad. Although the United States and its allies have made progress in learning how both to understand and fight against global terrorism, the U.S. Achilles’ heel has been a continued failure of public diplomacy, which lags far behind the military response. Too often, such diplomacy has simply taken the form of public relations, demonstrating how likeable the U.S. Government really is. Yet the most important factor, which is how the foreign policy of the United States and the rest of the developed world is perceived abroad, has been overlooked or downplayed.

Anti-Americanism is not based on who “we” are, but on what people believe “we” do—in other words, the perceived contrast between the way we walk and the way we talk. But neither of the two aspects of public diplomacy, public relations or public perceptions, can succeed without an understanding of what Muslims truly think. Getting an accurate fix on the Muslim world continues to be critical to limiting the feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and humiliation that foster radicalization and recruitment among Muslim populations.

The U.S. Government has been engaged in an ideological battle, a struggle it frames in terms of ideas, beliefs, and perceptions that tend to obscure its vision of the larger situation. Policymakers have had to rely on wildly differing “experts” who, however well credentialed, often lacked the global data to back up their reading of the Muslim world. Rather than seeing the Muslim world through the lens of a Western/American mindset, Washington needs new insights that come directly from what large numbers of Muslims across the Muslim world really think, not from outsiders or, especially, from the extremist terrorists who seized center stage and overshadowed the less demonstrative mainstream majority. Direct access to Muslim public opinion helps policymakers avoid the grand theories, individual political agendas, and ideologies that can blur important insights.

To respond effectively to global terrorism, U.S. foreign policymakers require a better understanding of how Muslim majorities see the world and, in particular, how they regard the United States. Major polling by a number of organizations, including Pew, Zogby, and Gallup, provide much needed insight into the minds and hearts of Muslims globally.

The Gallup World Poll, which has surveyed a Muslim population sampling representing more than 90 percent of the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims, is the largest, most comprehensive study of contemporary Muslims ever done.¹ As such, it now enables us to answer such basic questions as: What do Muslims across the world have to say about their dreams, hopes, and fears? How many Muslims hold extremist

views? What are their priorities? What do Muslims admire and what do they resent about the United States and the West?

Between 2001 and 2007, Gallup conducted more than 50,000 hour-long, face-to-face interviews with residents of more than 40 nations that are predominantly Muslim, and among significant Muslim populations in the West. Respondents represent the young and old, female and male, educated and illiterate, wealthy and poor, living in urban, suburban, and rural settings. With the random sampling method that Gallup used, results are statistically valid within a 3-point margin of error.

Extremism and Muslim Populations

Anger at the United States, a sense of not being accorded respect, and widespread religiosity seem an explosive combination. Muslims nevertheless are, in fact, at least as likely as the American public to reject attacks on civilians. While 6 percent of Americans think attacks in which civilians are targets are “completely justified,” in Saudi Arabia, it is 4 percent; in both Lebanon and Iran, this figure is 2 percent. In Europe, Muslims in Paris and London were no more likely than their counterparts in the general public to believe attacks on civilians are ever justified, and were at least as likely to reject violence, even for a “noble cause.”

Despite widespread disapproval of the U.S. leadership, only a minority sympathize with the attacks of September 11, 2001. Some 55 percent said it was completely unjustified (a 1 on a 1-to-5 scale from completely unjustified to completely justified); 12 percent gave this item a 2; 11 percent gave it a 3; 7 percent gave it a 4.²

To understand what drove public support for terrorism, however, Gallup looked at the outliers—the 7 percent of the population who saw the 9/11 attacks as completely justifiable (5 on the scale), and have an unfavorable view of the United States—and compared them to the rest. Where was terrorism finding a sympathetic ear?

Perhaps the most significant finding was the *lack* of a finding; there was no correlation between levels of religiosity and extremism among respondents. While 94 percent of the high-conflict group said religion is an important part of their daily lives, a statistically identical 90 percent of the nonviolent mainstream said the same thing. Similarly, no significant difference exists between the two groups in mosque attendance.

Gallup probed respondents further and asked both those who condoned and those who condemned

extremist acts why they answered as they did. The responses fly in the face of conventional wisdom, specifically the view held by many people that Islam, more than other faiths, encourages violence. Rather, it is politics, not piety, that drives 7 percent of Muslims to condone fully the attacks of September 11. Looking across majority-Muslim countries, Gallup found no statistical difference in self-reported religiosity between those who sympathized with the attackers and those who did not. Moreover, when respondents in selected countries were asked in an open-ended question to explain their views of 9/11, those who condemned it cited religious as well as humanitarian reasons. For example, 20 percent of Kuwaitis who called the attacks “completely unjustified” explained this position by saying that terrorism was against the teachings of Islam. In Indonesia, one woman said, “Killing one life is as sinful as killing the whole world,” paraphrasing verse 5:32 in the Koran. In contrast, not a single respondent who condoned the attacks of 9/11 cited the Koran for justification. Instead, this group’s responses were markedly secular and worldly—expressed in terms of revenge and revolution, not religion. For example, one respondent said, “The U.S. Government is too controlling toward other countries, seems like colonizing.”

Limiting the growth of terrorism requires the United States not only to focus on and try to understand the politically radicalized few, but also to appreciate the mainstream majority. While not extremists today, a significant portion of the world’s Muslim population, if further alienated and marginalized, represent the seed bed from which tomorrow’s terrorists will grow. An analysis of the politically radicalized, the 7 percent (some 91 million) of Muslim respondents who believe that 9/11 was completely justified and who are convinced that the United States wishes to dominate the Middle East, can yield important insights.

Educated, Affluent, Optimistic Radicals

The politically radicalized are, on average, more educated and affluent than the mainstream majority, and they are also more internationally sophisticated. These individuals are surprisingly optimistic about their personal futures, but, as might be expected, when it comes to their political futures, they are more pessimistic.

The politically radicalized are not antidemocratic. A significantly higher percentage (50 percent of radicals versus 35 percent of the mainstream) say that moving toward democracy will foster progress in the Muslim

world. In addition, they are even more likely than mainstream respondents (58 percent versus 44 percent) to believe that Arab/Muslim nations are eager for better relations with the West. They are more cynical, however, about whether improved relations will ever actually occur. While half (52 percent) of the mainstream disagree when asked whether the United States is serious about promoting democracy, that percentage is 72 percent among the radicalized.

The politically radicalized faction conveys a strong sense of being “dominated” or even “occupied” by the West. Responding to an open-ended question, they cite “occupation/U.S. domination” as their greatest fear. In contrast, while concerned about American influence, the mainstream respondents’ top concern centers on economic problems.

“Why Do They Hate Us?”

A common answer to the question, “Why do they hate America?” has been, “They hate Americans for who they are and what they represent.” While this response may accurately describe the terrorists, it does not adequately account for the widespread anti-Americanism among many in the Muslim world, and in other countries and regions of the world, who admire the principles and values the United States stands for but reject its conduct of foreign policy. Despite widespread anti-American and anti-British sentiment, Muslims around the world said that they do in fact admire much of what the West holds dear.

When Gallup asked all respondents in an open-ended question to describe what they admired most about the West, the most frequent response was technology, expertise, and knowledge; the second most frequent was the West’s value system, hard work, and responsibility; and the third was its fair political systems and regard for human rights. When respondents were asked to describe their dreams for the future, they did not describe waging jihad, but instead cited the need for a better job, improved economic well-being and prosperity, and the possibility of a better future for their children. This was the most frequent response in Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Indonesia, among others.

A Question of Politics, Not Piety

Muslims do not see the West as monolithic; their perceptions of different nations fall along policy lines, not cultural or religious lines. For example, while unfavorable views of the United States (74 percent) and

the United Kingdom (69 percent) dominate, respondents view France and Germany as positively as they do other Muslim-majority countries. For example, only 21 percent of respondents have unfavorable views of France, while 30 percent view Pakistan unfavorably. This issue becomes especially clear when comparing the United States to its neighbor to the north: Canada. While 67 percent of Kuwaitis have unfavorable views of the United States, the number for Canada is 3 percent. Similarly, where 64 percent of Malaysians say the United States is “aggressive,” only 1 in 10 associates this quality with France and Germany.

Although a significant number of Muslims admire and associate liberty with the West in general and the United States in particular, most do not believe Americans are serious about supporting democracy in the Muslim world, and seem to believe that U.S. policies deny Muslims the same rights of self-determination that they themselves enjoy. Doubting American intentions with regard to democracy is closely tied with the perception that America is an imperial power that controls the Middle Eastern region. More than 65 percent of Egyptians, Jordanians, and Iranians and 55 percent of Pakistanis believe that the United States will not allow people in their region to fashion their own political future the way they see fit, without direct U.S. influence. A perceived “democratic exceptionalism” when it comes to the Muslim world is also reflected in significant percentages who associate the adjective “hypocritical” with the United States.

The perceived deep gap between America’s espoused values of self-determination, democracy promotion, and human rights on one hand, and its apparent “double standard” in failing to put these values first in the Muslim world on the other, lead many to believe that America and its allies must be hostile toward Islam and regard Muslims as inferior. Because the perception of how Muslims are treated is so antithetical to admired Western values, Muslims reason, these same Western powers must simply be singling Muslims out for disapproval. When Gallup asked Muslims around the world what the West can do to improve relations with the Muslim world, the most frequent responses were that the West should demonstrate more respect for Islam and regard Muslims as equals, not inferiors.

Religion and Terrorism: Challenging Assumptions

Understanding the relationship of religion to terrorism, both domestically and globally, remains critical in the 21st century. Religion remains an important factor in

mainstream Muslim politics, a source of national identity, and a factor in democratization movements and electoral politics from Egypt and Morocco to Turkey, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia. At the same time, it is also a source of identity and legitimacy for extremists and terrorist organizations, domestic and global, which operate from Spain to the southern Philippines.

The primary causes of global terrorism are often obscured by the religious language and symbolism used by extremists. In most cases, political and economic grievances are primary causes or catalysts, and religion becomes a way to legitimate the cause and to mobilize popular support. Religiously legitimated violence and terror add divine or ultimate authority, moral justification, religious obligation, and certitude of heavenly reward that enhance commitment and sacrifice—a willingness to fight and die in a sacred struggle. Yasser Arafat, leader of a secular nationalist movement (the Palestinian Liberation Organization [PLO] and then the Palestinian National Authority), frequently used the words *jihad* and *shahid* (martyrdom) to enhance his influence. Similarly, the Palestinian militia (not just the Islamist Hamas) appropriated religious symbolism, called itself the al Aqsa Brigade (a reference to the mosque in East Jerusalem opposite the Dome of the Rock), and used religious terms such as *jihad* and *martyrdom* for recruitment, legitimacy, and support.

While a seemingly logical profile of terrorists assumes that they are psychological or social misfits, poor, unemployed, and uneducated, this characterization, as in the above-mentioned profile of the “politically radicalized” identified in the Gallup World Poll, is often inaccurate. Like members, and particularly leaders, of many social movements in the Muslim world and the West, members of terrorist organizations are not solely the “have nots,” but rather bright, educated, motivated individuals responding to their perception of grave political or social injustice. With some exceptions, the new breed of militants and terrorists, from the 9/11 attackers to the London bombers, are not the urban poor. Ayman al-Zawahiri, a pediatric surgeon, and other al Qaeda leaders, as well as those responsible for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, such as Mohammad Atta, were well-educated, middle-class professionals. Many British Muslim militants, such as Omar Sheikh, the convicted murderer of journalist Daniel Pearl, have been products of the British public school system.

Distinguishing between mainstream opposition and extremists or terrorists can sometimes be difficult. Drawing the line between national liberation movements and terrorist organizations often depends upon one’s political vantage point. Israel founders Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, the radical Zionist Irgun and Stern Gangs, Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress, and Yasser Arafat and the PLO, to name only a few, were regarded by their opposition as terrorist leaders. Yesterday’s terrorists may be just that—terrorists; or they may become tomorrow’s statesmen. Even grayer and more difficult for some to characterize are groups such as Lebanon’s Hizballah, which is a militia, a de facto local governing body, and a major political party with seats in Lebanon’s parliament, and Hamas, which has won electoral victories not only in municipal but also in national elections in Palestine.

Implications

Globally, majorities of Muslims clearly do not see conflict with the West as primarily a religious war or a “clash of civilizations.” Instead, they distinguish between specific Western powers in terms of policy, and not principle. The clash-of-civilizations theory provides no helpful answers and gains no support in Muslim responses to the Gallup World Poll. It may be helpful for policymakers to disaggregate “the West” and the “Muslim World” into distinct countries, whose conflicts and confrontations originate from the specific policies of specific nations and their leaders, especially the United States.³

When Muslims are asked what is the most important thing the United States could do to improve the quality of life of people like them, the most common responses after “reduce unemployment and improve the economic infrastructure” are “stop interfering in the internal affairs of Arab states,” “stop imposing your beliefs and policies,” “respect our political rights and stop controlling us,” and “give us our own freedom.” Failure to respond effectively to the hopes and fears of the mainstream, and especially those of the politically radicalized, will make a bad situation worse.

The voices of majorities of populations should not be ignored or overlooked because of the threat from an extremist minority, or because Western countries have established ties to authoritarian rulers in, for example, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Kazakhstan, or Saudi Arabia. Acceding to and even supporting the growing authoritarianism of some regimes because they are

allies in the so-called war on terror or because they warn that Islamists could come to power in elections would be seriously short-sighted. If it is to support self-determination in the Muslim world, the United States must make a crucial distinction, and separate violent extremists from the many mainstream Islamic activists and parties who have proven track records of participation in electoral politics and government. Perpetuating the culture and values of authoritarianism and repression will only contribute to the long-term instability and anti-Americanism that empower the terrorists.

The United States can counter its concerns about mainstream Islamists coming to power by supporting a strong civil society and rule of law. Multiple political parties and professional associations, an independent judiciary, and a free press and media offer Muslim populations broader political choices. If Islamists are the “only game in town,” then their electoral support will come not only from their members, but also from those who want to cast the only vote they can against incumbent governments and for the critical changes needed to improve their future.

A wealth of data is available, from the polls cited here as well as from other sources, and it offers new insights that may point the way toward ending the ongoing conflict between the West and the Muslim world. It is about policy, not a clash of principles. The U.S. Government needs a greater understanding of the conflict’s root causes; listening to the voices of a billion Muslims is a sound way to begin.

NOTES

¹ Gallup’s self-funded Poll of the Muslim World is conducted in 40 predominantly Muslim nations and among significant Muslim populations in the West. It is the first data set of unified and scientifically representative views from Muslims globally. The Poll of the Muslim World is part of Gallup’s larger World Poll, a self-funded effort aimed at consistently measuring the well-being of 6 billion world citizens (a sample representing 95 percent of the Earth’s population) on a wide range of topics for the next 100 years.

² Based on a population-weighted average across Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Lebanon, Pakistan, Morocco, Iran, and Bangladesh, representing 800 million Muslims.

³ David Kilcullen, “Countering Global Insurgency,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 4 (August 2005), 597–617.

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(al Qaeda in Afghanistan, eastern Iran, and western Pakistan), and the announcement of its leader, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, began to appear on the al Jazeera Web site, with reference to that jihadist group’s evolving status as the Arab partner to the Taliban. Then, in September 2007, the longstanding Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) in Algeria announced formal affiliation with al Qaeda and changed its



AP Images

American-born al Qaeda operative justifies future terrorist attacks against United States

name to the “al Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).” These moves extend al Qaeda’s reach and reinforce the Salafi jihadist’s narrative that a fundamentalist Sunni caliphate is borderless and destined to encompass the entire Islamic world (see map on p. 139). They also enhance previously informal communications and terror management conduits and potentially extend al Qaeda access to underdeveloped terror recruiting networks such as those affiliated with Algerian GSPC across France and in other parts of Western Europe.

By way of contrast, Salafi jihadists have only a limited ability to forge alliances with Muslims who are not Salafi jihadists, even those with whom they have very substantial theological similarities. For instance, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood on the one hand, and al Qaeda on the other, are constantly at daggers drawn, in particular over issues of the propriety of electoral politics and the relative value of violent and nonviolent aspects of the jihad.

If al Qaeda is unwilling to make common cause with non-Salafi jihadist groups, what of their blandishments toward individual Muslims? What is the health of the broader movement? Perhaps at the homegrown, grassroots level the movement has better prospects.

Of the three major features of the ideology's message, one remains resilient while the other two have demonstrated substantial weakness. The biggest asset the Salafi jihadist movement has is anti-American sentiment in the Muslim world. Much less helpful is the anti-Israel sentiment there because more and more voices are asking why Hamas and Hizballah have actively, and apparently successfully, fought Israel, while al Qaeda and other Salafi jihadist organizations have not even tried, despite their rhetoric and anti-Semitic stance. In other words, the Salafi jihadists are not viewed as being out in front on this issue. The preeminent Salafi jihadist Palestinian group, Fatah al-Islam, is a minor player in the region by comparison with Hamas, Hizballah, and even the Lebanese government.⁹

The credo of necessary violence is the Achilles' heel of the ideology, and its overexposure across the Islamic world in recent years has weakened the Salafi jihadist appeal. Since at least 2003, when a wave

of terrorism in Riyadh and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, shocked many Muslim sensibilities about the killing of fellow Muslims, al Qaeda has struggled to retain a grip on message management regarding the use of violence and the desirability of a future Islamic caliphate. Al Qaeda has been forced to rebuke its Saudi Arabian arm and one of its few precious celebrities, the late Zarqawi, for excessive violence that was every bit as appalling to Muslims as to non-Muslims.

Since the summer of 2005, polling across the Muslim world has shown a dramatic drop in public support and admiration for Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. Revulsion at violence has been the primary, though not the only, issue here.¹⁰ To the extent that mainstream Muslim support for bin Laden as the figurehead of al Qaeda and the Salafi jihadist ideology remains, Muslims overwhelmingly link this support to his rhetorical stand on behalf of Islamic causes and his confrontation of the United States, while expressing little support for his violent methods of operation or his vision of a utopian Islamic state.¹¹

The Salafi jihadists will have a hard time reversing the tendencies of many within the movement toward wanton violence. There are two obvious ways to control this problem. The first is through tough command and control; the second is to deny membership in the movement to those inclined to indiscriminate violence. For a series of interlocking reasons, neither of these seems probable. As previously discussed, the United States and its partners are busily impeding command and control functions within Salafi jihadist organizations. As a result, the ability of cooler heads at al Qaeda central (for instance) to prevail is inhibited. Indeed, some Salafi jihadist thinkers, notably Abu Musab al-Suri, have even started to argue that the movement should eliminate its bureaucracies and devolve to something more like "leaderless resistance" because the U.S. military and local security services are optimized to destroy terrorist or insurgent command and control structures.¹² Moreover, the Salafi jihadist movement claims to champion the only universally applicable version of Islam. Thus, while individual groups can control their own membership, the movement as a whole perforce is saddled with anyone who claims to be a Salafi jihadist, even if he is an incompetent or a bloodthirsty psychopath whose actions will discredit the movement in the vital Sunni Muslim audience. Ironically, the very growth of the Salafi jihadist movement will almost certainly undercut its popularity.

The vision of a utopian future brought about by violence has also worn poorly across the Sunni



Student members of India's ruling party protest terrorist attacks in Mumbai, December 2008

Muslim world among religious and revolutionary elites. Renowned Salafi jihadist and former ideological head of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Dr. Sayyid Imam Sharif, also known as “Doctor Fadl,” released a book in late 2007 formally renouncing violence, jihadism, and the path to social reform espoused by al Qaeda, largely on the grounds that it will not succeed.¹³ Prominent Saudi clerics continue to issue decrees against violence and terrorism in the name of Islam. Finally, a growing network of non-Arab Islamic leaders has been condemning Salafi jihadism’s violence and its inhumane treatment of Muslims in places such as Anbar Province, Iraq, and across western Pakistan.¹⁴ Most recently, in late May 2008, the extremely conservative Deoband Muslim seminary in India issued an edict against terrorism as unjust and un-Islamic, while also criticizing the Taliban for going too far in their implementation of Islamic laws in Afghanistan and parts of western Pakistan.¹⁵

The growing criticism has put al Qaeda’s leaders in an increasingly reactive mode. Deputy al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and media spokesmen, including the late Abu Laith al-Libi and Abu Yahya al-Libi, have been increasingly consumed in detailed ideological debates with these challengers within the Salafi jihadist movement and across wider Sunni Islam. For example, Zawahiri found it necessary to issue a 2-hour monologue in early 2008 to counter the impact of Dr. Sharif’s renunciation of Salafi jihadism. Extensive and frequent public releases assert the necessity of violence, scold Islamic leaders and movements who are insufficiently activist, and defend the jihad and martyrdom as necessary for true believers.

Given these concerns, al Qaeda has expanded its efforts at mobilization and recruitment, simultaneously endeavoring to counter growing Muslim discontent with its aggressive methods and unpalatable goals. Much of this growth has come as a normal function of the ever-expanding Internet. Since 2004, al Qaeda has established its own media production company, As Sahab. It has also developed a new propaganda distribution network known as the Al Fajr Media Center, while widening its network of Web sites from fewer than 1,000 to more than 5,000.¹⁶ Most of these operate overtly, while others have password protection and exhibit sophisticated access and message control. The network even features more than 100 sites operating in English. The content of these Web sites is increasingly aimed at the second- and third-generation Islamic diaspora across Europe.

For terrorism analysts who focus on measuring inputs, expanding Web sites would seem to indicate that a new form of self-radicalized, homegrown jihadist has become the greatest terrorist threat inspired by Salafi jihadism. In general, however, these efforts have not paid off in terms of recruits or converts. There is little evidence that they have played an important role in the increased anti-Americanism around the world or in any resurgence of “Islamic feeling” (if such indeed is under way at all). Rather, what has demonstrably contributed to America’s bad poll numbers have been its overt acts in prosecuting the fight against terrorism, primarily the invasion of Iraq, and to a lesser extent Afghanistan, and the formal and informal media far beyond the jihadists’ efforts, which convey inflammatory words and images from these conflicts.

Moving beyond mere empathy through affiliation and on to formal enfranchisement as a practitioner of Salafi jihadist terror would appear to require direct contact with the core of al Qaeda’s trusted agents. Multiple reports over the past few years indicate that an increasing number of second- and third-generation European Muslims are being aggressively recruited to come to Pakistan for vetting, training, and incorporation into interchangeable terrorism operations within Pakistan, across the border in Afghanistan, and, most ominously, against targets in their countries of origin. Those who fail al Qaeda’s litmus test or who cannot gain safe transit back to the West remain and conduct terror attacks in South Asia. Those whom the leadership trusts, and who can secure passage out to the West, will return there to conduct spectacular attacks. Consequently, the culmination of the process of radicalization to terrorism involves physical space. Today, that space is in western Pakistan (including the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the Northwest Frontier Province, and Baluchistan).

At the same time, the Salafi jihadists have found that their media efforts are swamped by those of the globalized information and entertainment industry, not to mention the vast majority of the imams and Islamic scholars. The Salafi jihadists have found that these outlets and communicators are overwhelmingly hostile to them, even when they are virulently anti-American and anti-Israeli. Jihadist elites write lengthy denunciations of the news media while the rank and file threaten death to reporters from al Jazeera and al Arabiya.¹⁷ The problem, however, from an al Qaeda perspective, is much worse than that. Popular media, music, and sports are all typically anti-Salafi jihadist

in their orientation even when appearing, from a Western perspective, as nonpolitical. The movement is even plagued by the various September 11 conspiracy theories. For instance, it is difficult to attract new recruits if they believe that Osama bin Laden is a creation of the Central Intelligence Agency, or that the attacks were an inside job mounted by the Bush administration, or a plot by Israel's Mossad.¹⁸

Ultimately, then, the Salafi jihadist movement is failing to attract large numbers of people. Generous estimates put its total number at perhaps 250,000 worldwide. While even this possibly inflated estimate sounds like a large number, in fact it is not. It is roughly 0.03 percent of the 91 million Muslims worldwide who found the September 11 attacks "fully justified." Only some 0.02 percent of all Muslims in the world are Salafi jihadists.

These numbers underscore that there is no straight line from grievance to terrorism. In the words of one social movement theorist, "If we have learned anything from the last thirty years of social movement scholarship, it is of course that no such line exists. A huge analytic chasm separates grievances and specific strategies of collective action."¹⁹ Another scholar put it more directly: "Making Arabs angry does not alone turn them into terrorists."²⁰ Given this, there is little reason to believe that burnishing America's image in the Middle East or among Muslims generally—even assuming such is possible, and recent scholarship on the many types of anti-Americanism suggests that perhaps it is not—will be an effective, let alone efficient, method of reducing the terrorism threat.²¹

Policy Considerations and Tradeoffs for the United States

The United States will continue carrying out defensive measures to protect itself and its allies against terrorist attacks. The difficult questions are what forms of offensive action should be undertaken, and by whom. Fortunately, the fundamental strategic situation is extremely grim for al Qaeda and the other Salafi jihadists. The movement is under tremendous stress and has failed to attract genuine adherents despite its media efforts, the once-high (but now declining) popularity of Osama bin Laden, and the fact that the U.S. prosecution of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is widely unpopular across the Islamic world.²²

The problem, from the Salafi jihadist perspective, is the fact that experience has shown that, all other things being equal, the more Muslims are exposed

to its indiscriminate violence, the less they support al Qaeda and the movement it represents. As many have argued—including those who still see al Qaeda as tremendously dangerous—the movement is inherently self-limiting.²³

The United States, ironically, is the best friend that the Salafi jihadists have. The Salafi jihadists want the United States to use its military power extensively because they believe such actions help to mobilize Sunni Muslims to become Salafi jihadists. It is also worth remembering that what most contributes to anti-Americanism in the Islamic world is the perception that U.S. policies unfairly dictate how things must be. Reducing the visible American profile in the world would undercut Salafi jihadism at least to the extent that it can take the edge off of anti-Americanism. To this effect, the United States might wish to support regional programs that grow responsible local paramilitary and law enforcement capacity in Sunni Muslim states. Building local partner capacity, along with intelligence-sharing to help constrain the ability of organized Salafi jihadist terror groups to topple these regimes, might undercut the effectiveness of the terrorists while reducing America's military profile.

The United States must recognize that it is in a similar position to the terrorists. Not surprisingly, given its preponderance, the more it uses coercive force, the more it is likely to be seen as a threatening power. Arguably, the more visible the United States is, with the notable exception of manifestly humanitarian missions, the less it is liked. Indeed, al Qaeda usually wants the United States to act, believing that American actions will inevitably validate their narrative. Accordingly, the United States must avoid falling into a maximalist, activist, and interventionist approach. In addition, it must not make the mistake—too often committed by both sides of the political system—of believing that it alone has power and agency, and that the other peoples around the world have none. Furthermore, Washington must recognize the limits of its power, not only because America's intrinsic capabilities to deal with this (and any other) problem are finite, but also because Muslims themselves will always outnumber Americans in Muslim countries, and they have positional and cultural advantages over the United States. But the United States still enjoys numerous potential partners in fighting Salafi jihadist extremism and violence. These range all the way from the governments of Indonesia, Syria, and Iran, to Hamas and many other Islamist groups, to al Jazeera, to the United Nations (UN), to traditional allies such as the United

Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Policymakers have a range of cooperative techniques available to them for dealing with these various countries and groups, ranging from unwitting to tacit to covert to overt.

The most important potential partners for the United States are Sunni Muslims, who have credible voices with other Muslims. Salafi jihadists' complaints suggest that most of those in the Islamic world are against them. If it is going to take full advantage of this fact, the United States might continue to quietly support Muslim voices opposing Salafi jihadism, while improving activities in areas where unacceptable al Qaeda strength remains, notably in the safe haven of western Pakistan.

Several other policy considerations stand out:

- It may be helpful to measure proposed changes in U.S. counterterrorism policy against the possible harm from degrading what has already proved successful in the struggle against Salafi jihadism and al Qaeda. It is clear that an al Qaeda under pressure is less tactically and strategically effective. Similarly, the Salafi jihadist movement has, at various points in its 40-year history, apparently been contained or reduced to manageable levels. When the pressure was removed, the movement always rebounded.

- While the United States wishes to be well liked in the Muslim world, it is clear that America's unpopularity is largely unrelated to the health of Salafi jihadism. Thus, policymakers may wish to carefully scrutinize calls for more and better strategic messaging campaigns to counter the social critique of Salafi jihadism. Reform of Islamic societies, under the leadership of mainstream Muslims, is most likely to render the Salafi jihadi social critique impotent. This reform will take time, but Western governments may be able to help indirectly by continuing to encourage temperate Muslim reformers and visionaries, while avoiding heavy-handed gestures and pompous demands for immediate change. To the extent that direct Western efforts can help, these need to be seen and not heard. By the same token, Western leaders may wish to take every opportunity to provide significant, visible assistance to Muslim victims of flooding, earthquakes, famine, and other natural disasters. As was the case with U.S. assistance to Pakistani Muslim victims of the October 2005 earthquake, and Indonesian Muslim victims of the December 2004 tsunami, such overt assistance to Muslims in need will slowly but surely erode general Muslim beliefs that the West is only about subjugating and exploiting Muslims.

- The United States can provide additional indirect support for the growing number of Muslim critics of Salafi jihadism. Washington might encourage the natural tendency of Muslims who have been victims of the violence to speak out in front of fellow Muslims, for it is these voices that carry the most weight in discrediting the Salafi jihadist ideology.

- Most importantly for 2009, American and allied leaders will have to face the major threat posed by al Qaeda and the Salafi jihadist ideology: namely, the terrorist safe haven in western Pakistan. A collaborative effort to fully and firmly engage the Pakistanis in order to eradicate al Qaeda may be indispensable to preventing another 9/11. The approach most likely to be successful will frame the al Qaeda safe haven in Pakistan as part of the more general problem with jihadism in terms of an ongoing Pakistani security strategy, and address this wider problem in the context of a reformulated South Asia security arrangement.

In short, Salafi jihadism remains dangerous. It is a threat that is irregular in nature but is easy to understand because it is an open mass movement with universal aspirations. It can be penetrated nearly at will, however, whether for the purpose of collecting information or for influencing its actions. This is a different problem from competing with closed societies such as the former Soviet Union. Salafi jihadists are remarkably open in discussing and debating their strategies, weaknesses, fears, and vulnerabilities. The United States might, then, profitably invest more in its ability as a nation to "know the enemy," which is the wider movement of Salafi jihadism. Washington can then tailor its strategies to exploit the movement's growing vulnerabilities in the Muslim world, while simultaneously taking only prudent offensive actions that inhibit catastrophic terrorism and supporting ongoing Muslim efforts to marginalize the Salafi jihadist ideology across the Islamic world.

The Mind of the Terrorist

What is inside the mind of the terrorist? The lay public widely assumes that terrorists driven to give their lives for their cause must be crazed fanatics. In fact, the consensus of scholars who have specialized in terrorist psychology holds that individual-level analyses fall far short of explaining terrorism.²⁴ As Martha Crenshaw has observed, "The outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality."²⁵ Similarly, in a review of the "Social Psychology of Terrorist Groups," McCauley and Segal conclude that "the best documented generalization is negative;

terrorists do not show any striking psychopathology.”²⁶ Indeed, terrorist groups and organizations screen out emotionally unstable individuals. They represent, after all, a security risk.

If it is not individual psychopathology, what is the major determinant of terrorist psychology? The Committee on the Psychological Roots of Terrorism concluded that:

group, organizational and social psychology . . . provides the greatest analytic power in understanding this complex phenomenon. Terrorists have subordinated their individual identity to the collective identity, so what serves the group, organization or network is of primary importance. For some groups, especially nationalist/terrorist groups, this collective identity is established extremely early, so that “hatred is bred in the bone.”²⁷

AP Images (Franco Pagetti)



Crowds search rubble of U.S. Embassy, Nairobi, Kenya, after August 1998 car bombing

In considering psychological and behavioral bases of terrorism, it is important to consider each manifestation of terrorism in its own political, historical, and cultural context,²⁸ for terrorism is a product of its own place and time. It is an attractive strategy to a diverse array of groups that have little else in common. In considering the psychology of the broad spectrum of terrorist types—right-wing, nationalist-separatist, social revolutionary, single-issue, and religious fundamentalist terrorists—given how different their causes and their perspectives are, these types would be expected to differ markedly.²⁹ So the discussion should be about terrorisms—plural—and terrorist psychologies—plural—rather than searching for a unified general theory to explain all terrorist behavior.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush declared that this was “the first war of the 21st century.” But in fact, the modern era of terrorism is usually dated back to the early 1970s, as represented by the radical Palestinian terrorist group Black September’s seizure of the Israeli Olympic village at the 1972 Munich Olympics, an event that captured a global television audience and demonstrated powerfully the amplifying effect of the electronic media in the information age. In the early years of the modern era of terrorism, two terrorist types dominated the landscape. They were leftist social revolutionary terrorists, groups seeking to overthrow the capitalist economic and social order, and exemplified by the Red Army Faction in Germany and the Red Brigades in Italy; and nationalist-separatist terrorists, such as al-Fatah and other radical secular Palestinian terrorists, the Provisional Irish Republican Army of Northern Ireland, and the Basque separatist group Freedom for the Basque Homeland (Euskadi ta Askaratsuna, or ETA), which sought to establish a separate nation for their national minority. Both of these group types wished to call attention to their cause and would regularly claim responsibility for their acts. They were seeking to influence the West and the establishment. Often, there were multiple claims of responsibility for the same act.

Social-Revolutionary Terrorism

Social-revolutionary terrorists are rebelling against the generation of their parents who are loyal to the regime. They are disloyal to the generation of their families that is loyal to the regime. Their acts of terrorism are acts of revenge against the generation of their family that they hold responsible for their failures in this world. One of the Baader-Meinhof gang

spoke derisively of his parent's generation: "These are the corrupt old men who gave us Auschwitz and Hiroshima." Social-revolutionary terrorist groups have experienced a significant decline over the last two decades, paralleling the collapse of communism in Europe and the end of the Cold War.

Nationalist-Separatist Terrorism

In contrast to the social-revolutionary terrorist groups, nationalist-separatist terrorism continues to be a vigorous, even growing phenomenon. Also known as ethnonationalist terrorists, these groups are fighting to establish a new political order or state based on ethnic dominance or homogeneity. In vivid contrast to the generational dynamics of the social-revolutionary terrorists, they are carrying on the mission of their parents and grandparents who have been damaged by, or are disloyal to, the regime. They are loyal to families that are disloyal to the regime. Their acts of terrorism are acts of vengeance against the regime that damaged their families.

These vengeful feelings become particularly intense when the majority is seen as obliterating the identity of the minority. This "identicide" is exemplified by the eliminationist policies of the founder of the modern state of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, toward the Kurds, or Francisco Franco's attempts to obliterate Basque identity in Spain. This in turn produced a defensive intensification of identity, setting the stage for the charismatic leadership of Abdullah Ocalan, founder of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, and the formation of the ETA.

Islamist Fundamentalist Terrorism

In recent decades, however, no responsibility has been claimed for upward of 40 percent of terrorist acts. This is probably because of the increasing frequency of terrorist acts by radical religious extremist terrorists, in particular radical Islamist fundamentalist terrorists. They are not trying to influence the West. Rather, the radical Islamist terrorists are trying to expel what they consider the corrupt, secular modernizing West. And they do not need recognition by having their name identified in a New York Times headline or on a story on CNN. They are "killing in the name of God" and do not need official notice; after all, God knows.

Traditional groups include Islamic, Jewish, Christian, and Sikh radical fundamentalists. In contrast to social-revolutionary and nationalist-separatist terrorists, for religious extremist groups, the decisionmaking role of the preeminent leader is

of central importance. The radical cleric, who is seen as the authentic interpreter of God's word, interprets the religious text so as to endow the destruction of the defined enemy with sacred significance. This interpretation is uncritically accepted by his "true believer" followers, so there is no ambivalence about killing the defined enemy. These groups are accordingly particularly dangerous because they are not constrained by their target's reaction; they seek to expel the unbelievers, to have revenge against them. Islamist radicals have shown a willingness to perpetrate acts of mass-casualty terrorism, as exemplified by the 1993 truck bombing of the World Trade Center in the United States; the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia; the 1998 coordinated twin attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; the 2000 attack on the USS Cole in the Gulf of Yemen; and the mass-casualty terrorism on a scale never seen before in the coordinated attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Osama bin Laden, responsible for these events, has openly discussed in interviews the use of weapons of mass destruction.

While many who are drawn to the path of religious fundamentalist terrorism are poor and uneducated, some show similarities to the generational dynamics of the rebellious, social-revolutionary terrorists. Osama bin Laden shows characteristics of these generational dynamics and can be considered a social-revolutionary operating under the guise of religious fundamentalism.³⁰ He is the 17th of 25 sons of a multibillionaire Saudi construction magnate, whose financial empire and wealth came from a special relationship with the Saudi royal family. When Osama bin Laden was 11, his father died. The father was worth between \$2 billion and \$3 billion at his death; his son Osama inherited some \$57 million at age 16. After the mujahideen rebels, with the help of bin Laden's money and his Islamist followers, expelled the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, bin Laden actively criticized "the apostate regime" in Saudi Arabia for permitting the U.S. military to "occupy the land of the two cities" (Mecca and Medina). When he railed at the corruption of the Saudi royal family and their lack of fidelity to Islam in permitting the American military to establish a base on holy Saudi land, he was striking out at the source of his family wealth, a move that led not only to his expulsion from Saudi Arabia, but also to severe damage of his family's standing, turning them against him as well. He was rebelling against the family that was loyal to the regime that had enriched them.

While not a religious authority, Osama bin Laden is known for his piety and has been granted the title of emir. Like the late Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Osama bin Laden regularly cites verses from the Koran to justify his acts of terror and extreme violence, even using many of the same verses earlier cited by Khomeini. Consider this extract from the February 1998 fatwa, “Jihad against Jews and Crusaders, World Islamic Front Statement”:

In compliance with God’s order, we issue the following fatwa to all Muslims:

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God, “and fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together,” and “fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God.”

We—with God’s help—call on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God’s order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it.

Note that it is not Osama bin Laden, but God himself, who is ordering his followers to kill Americans. Bin Laden is simply the messenger relaying the commands of God as written in the holy Koran—a blasphemous suggestion in itself for many Muslims.

Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hizballah, and Islamic Jihad all have found an abundance of recruits, eager to join these Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organizations. Indeed, Ariel Merari, an Israeli specialist on terrorism, noted wryly that for every terrorist killed or captured, there were 10 waiting to take his or her place, and that there were now more terrorist volunteers than there are suicide explosive belts.³¹ For them, like the youth drawn to the path of nationalist-separatist terrorism, hatred has been “bred in the bone.”

This emphasizes the crucial organizing role of the leader, who provides a sense-making explanation for what has gone wrong in the lives of these disaffected recruits, is able to identify the external enemy as the cause, and draws disparate individuals into a collective identity. It was Osama bin Laden and his desig-

nated successor, Ayman al-Zawahiri, cofounder and principal ideologue of al Qaeda, who fulfilled this illuminating role and forged the collective identity of the radical Islamist fundamentalist, transnational terrorist organization al Qaeda.

Contrast between Suicide Bombers in Israel and Suicidal Hijackers of 9/11

Israeli authorities developed so-called psychological postmortems for 93 Palestinian suicide bombers in the early 1990s. These were, for the most part, lost young men between the ages of 17 and 22, unmarried, uneducated, and unemployed.³² When they volunteered or were recruited, they were told that, though their life prospects were bleak, they could still do something significant with their lives and that they would be enrolled in the hall of martyrs. From the moment they entered the group’s safe house, the prospective martyrs were never alone: someone slept in the same room with them the night before the action to ensure that they did not backslide, and physically escorted them to the pizza parlor, disco, or shopping mall to carry out their act of suicide terrorism. Merari has called attention to the “suicide bomb production line,” in which individuals first volunteer to become a shahid (martyr), then are identified and praised publicly as living martyrs, and finally make the requisite pre-attack video, which will be used both to memorialize their names and to recruit other potential martyrs. He observes that it is difficult to back down after passing through these stages; the shame that would attend such a reversal would be unbearable.

The contrast with the suicidal hijackers of September 11 is dramatic. They were older, ranging in age from 28 to 33 (Mohammed Atta, the ringleader, was the oldest), with the exception of a small group of younger terrorists, brought in late for “muscle,” who may have been unaware that theirs was not a conventional hijacking. A number had higher education: Atta and two of his colleagues were in master’s degree programs at the technological university in Hamburg at the time of the operation. Most came from comfortable, middle-class homes in Saudi Arabia or Egypt. Unlike the Palestinian suicide bombers, these were adults who had willingly subordinated their individuality to the organization, responding uncritically to the siren song of hatred sung by the charismatic leader, Osama bin Laden. Interestingly, some had been on their own in the West for about 7 years, exposed to the “buzzing, blooming confusion of a democracy,” pretending to blend in while nur-

turing their secret intention to give their lives while taking the lives of thousands of others.

Implications

The understanding that children have been led onto the path of terrorism at an early age has important implications for counterterrorism strategy. This should be a sustained campaign, requiring early interventions. Moreover, mainstream Muslims should counter the extremists who have called for violence in the name of Allah, by pointing out that they are using the Koran to justify actions that in fact the Koran proscribes. There are numerous prohibitions against suicide in the Koran, against the killing of innocents, and against the killing of fellow Muslims. And yet children in the mosques hear the glorification of martyrdom. It is encouraging to observe that mainstream Islamic voices in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Singapore, Great Britain, Lebanon, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and elsewhere are beginning to challenge and counter the extremists in their midst.

Preventing Catastrophic Terrorism

Concerns about terrorist use of chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN) weapons are not new. In fact, two prominent 19th-century anarchist theorists, Karl Heinzen and Johann Most, advocated the use of poisons by terrorists. But serious concerns about WMD terrorism date to the late 1970s. At the time, these concerns impelled the U.S. Departments of Defense and Energy to formulate nuclear response capabilities. Despite isolated worries about biological and chemical terrorism, however, only in the wake of the 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subway did the U.S. Government begin to take the prospect of these types of attacks seriously.

Why So Few Attempts?

There is considerable debate regarding the seriousness of the WMD terrorism threat. Skeptics argue that this threat is exaggerated, as demonstrated by the paucity of reports regarding terrorist interest in unconventional attacks. Some skeptics argue that the notion of “global terrorism” is also overblown, but most contend that a myopic focus on a low-probability, high-impact WMD terrorism event distracts from efforts to address more likely forms of terrorism, including improvised explosive devices.

The historical record certainly indicates that few terrorist groups have been interested in WMD, if only because they tend not to see those types of weapons as useful. Indeed, most terrorist groups have not been

interested in mass-casualty attacks. Prior to September 11, the most destructive terrorist incident on record was the 1978 arson attack on a cinema in Iran that killed at least 377 people.³³ According to one survey, there were only 10 terrorist attacks between 1946 and September 11, 2001, that resulted in the death of 100 or more people, and only 76 that resulted in 25 or more deaths.³⁴ While there were numerous failed terrorist plots that could have resulted in the deaths of more than 100 people, it is still a remarkably small number given the violence of the period and the large aggregate numbers of people killed by terrorists. The apparent lack of interest on the part of most terrorists in causing mass casualties helps explain their lack of interest in weapons of mass destruction. RAND terrorism expert Brian Jenkins articulated this view in the mid-1970s: “Terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead.”³⁵

Historically, only a few terrorist groups have shown an interest in WMD, and fewer still have acquired and used such weapons. The best known example was the 1995 use of chemical agents by Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult. In that attack, the nerve agent sarin was released in a low-tech operation in the Tokyo subway, killing 12 and injuring about 1,000. It is worth noting that the group had spent months before that trying to figure out how sarin and other chemical agents could be used as weapons. Significantly, some groups that have employed WMD subsequently abandoned them. The Tamil Tigers used chemical agents against Sri Lankan forces in 1990, but there is no evidence of subsequent interest by them in chemical weapons or other WMD. Similarly, the Rajneeshee, a cult responsible for infecting 750 people in Oregon during September 1984 by contaminating salad bars with salmonella, subsequently stopped using biological agents and focused on more conventional weapons.

The primary WMD terrorism concern since the late 1990s has been al Qaeda and groups associated with it. Al Qaeda clearly does not fit into Jenkins’ paradigm. It has long shown an interest in mass-casualty terrorism and has expressed an explicit interest in WMD. In 1998, Osama bin Laden issued a public statement declaring that it was a religious imperative for Muslims to acquire WMD. In 2003, a Saudi cleric issued a fatwa justifying the use of WMD, even if it resulted in the mass death of innocents. Although considerable evidence exists that al Qaeda is interested in WMD, there is less evidence to indicate serious progress in developing capabilities to use them. The group undertook a crude effort to develop

poisons under the direction of Abu Khabab al-Masri, who reportedly was killed in July 2008. Al Qaeda also explored producing radiological dispersal devices (so-called dirty bombs). More seriously, it had a program under way to develop biological weapons capable of causing mass casualties, which U.S. forces discovered after the invasion of Afghanistan.

The declassified key findings of an April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate concluded, "CBRN capabilities will continue to be sought by jihadist groups."³⁶ Although the Intelligence Community believes that al Qaeda and related groups will rely mainly on explosive devices, it maintains that they are still seeking WMD capabilities.³⁷

There are two basic sources of skepticism regarding al Qaeda's WMD ambitions. First, many experts doubt the ability of al Qaeda to master the technologies needed to use any but the most primitive of chemical, biological, or radiological weapons. Second, there is mounting criticism from within the Islamic community of al Qaeda's unrestrained violence. In particular, many clerics respected by al Qaeda's supporters are casting doubt on the legitimacy of targeting innocents.

Countering WMD Terrorism

Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the dispersal of its military assets among several successor states, the United States and other countries have invested substantial efforts into ensuring that the materials needed to produce WMD did not fall into the wrong hands. Until recently, the primary focus of these efforts was to secure nuclear material scattered across the former Soviet Union. Chemical stockpile destruction also received considerable support. More recently, growing attention has been given to reducing the risks from biological weapons. The efforts initiated in the former Soviet Union now are being extended to other parts of the world, especially those countries potentially vulnerable to terrorist exploitation of WMD-related technology.

Prior to September 11, most efforts to restrict the movement of materials needed to develop WMD focused on state programs. Since then, the primary emphasis has shifted to addressing nonstate transactions. To some extent, this not only suggests greater concern that terrorists might get access to existing nuclear weapons, but it also reflects the lessons learned from studying the operations of the diffuse transnational network associated with prominent Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan. The network spanned many countries in the 1990s and provided clients

with the critical technology needed for the production of nuclear weapons. It could provide designs for centrifuges to produce highly enriched uranium, and it was able to contract with companies that could manufacture the components. It also could provide blueprints for nuclear weapons designs. As a result, the proliferation of nuclear weapons apparently no longer relied on the activities of states, but could be contracted out to private operators.

One effort to address the changing environment was the Bush administration's Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), announced in May 2003, which created no new legal authorities, but rather sought to build on existing national and international legal frameworks. PSI attempts to enhance cooperation among states on the interception of illegally diverted WMD-related materials and technologies. More than 90 countries now participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative. The later Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, launched in 2006, applies the same model to fostering international cooperation against all aspects of nuclear terrorism.

Another initiative intended to restrict access by terrorists to WMD technology was UN Security Council Resolution 1540. Adopted in April 2004, the resolution imposes a binding obligation on UN member states to ensure that nonstate actors are unable to obtain the technologies needed to develop WMD. While the capabilities to implement these obligations vary considerably from one country to another, the Security Council reiterated its continued support for the objectives of 1540 when, in April 2008, it extended the mandate of the UN's 1540 Committee until 2011.

The United States also has supported the development of a global architecture for the detection of nuclear materials. This effort, centered primarily on points of entry into the United States and at key shipping hubs elsewhere, aims to locate in-transit radioactive material that might be used in a so-called dirty bomb, or fissile material for an improvised nuclear device.

Although the United States would like to deter terrorists from using WMD, it remains unclear whether it can in fact do so. First, Washington may not have sufficient information regarding terrorist possession of WMD to develop the types of tailored policies needed for truly effective deterrence. Second, it is difficult to deter terrorists when one may not have identified the key individuals responsible for terrorist decisionmaking, or when one does not know how those individuals relate to one another, what moti-

vates them, and how they make decisions. Finally, it may not be possible to identify suitable targets for retaliatory strikes, since the terrorists involved may have no easily identified home base.

For such reasons, it has proven difficult to develop a deterrence strategy against WMD terrorism. In 2008, the United States articulated a declaratory policy addressing the complications posed by the danger of WMD terrorism:

*The United States has made clear for many years that it reserves the right to respond with overwhelming force to the use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States, our people, our forces, and our friends and allies. Today we also make clear that the United States will hold any state, terrorist group, or other non-state actor or individual fully accountable for supporting or enabling terrorist efforts to obtain or use weapons of mass destruction—whether by facilitating, financing, or providing expertise or safe haven for such efforts.*³⁸

This statement appears aimed primarily at groups and countries who might be enablers of WMD terrorism, either by providing ready-to-use CBRN weapons or by providing access to the technology, expertise, and resources needed to generate these weapons. If terrorists themselves may not be deterrable by traditional means, their facilitators—perhaps less committed and with identifiable home bases—may be.

Since the late 1990s, the United States has devoted considerable resources to developing the capabilities needed to respond to WMD terrorism. Consequence management is particularly challenging given our federal system of government, which gives state and local governments the primary responsibility for response activities. While the Federal Government has the resources and much of the specialized capabilities, it cannot take the place of the first responders who work for state, local, and tribal governments. As a result, a national response requires integration across all levels of government. The Department of Homeland Security has tried to address the response architecture problems highlighted by Hurricane Katrina through the National Response Framework, which establishes the guidelines for all levels of government for the management of natural disasters and terrorism incidents.

The concern that the United States may not be able to identify the perpetrators of a WMD terrorism attack has resulted in growing attention

to the problems of attribution, which requires the development of robust processes for assessing all types of information, including intelligence and law enforcement data. Integral to this process is the information developed through forensic analysis. In addition to traditional types of forensics, the investigation of WMD events will require specialized capabilities. Efforts are under way to develop specialized analytic capabilities for nuclear forensics, in the hope that it will be possible to ascertain critical information about the origin of a nuclear or radiological device from post-event analysis. Similarly, in the aftermath of the 2001 anthrax letter attacks against targets in the United States, a bioforensics capability has emerged to allow investigators to glean additional information based on an understanding of the materials used in a biological incident. Efforts to develop comparable chemical forensics capabilities are just beginning.

Despite substantial concerns about the prospect for terrorist use of WMD, there remain significant divisions between the bureaucracies that address terrorism and those dealing with unconventional weapons. Historically, the counterterrorism community devoted little attention to WMD, and the groups responsible for addressing WMD concerns had little to do with terrorism. These disconnects were recognized more than a decade ago, and considerable effort has been made since then to integrate the full range of responses to state and terrorist WMD threats. Experience also suggests that there is considerable confusion regarding the relationships among nonproliferation, counterproliferation, and consequence management, as well as counterterrorism communities and activities. This uncertainty makes synchronization of strategies, plans, and operations more difficult and contributes to the creation of organizational stovepipes and unnecessary competition. Unless addressed by the national leadership, there is a danger this could become a long-term institutional obstacle to ensuring that WMD terrorism remains a rare occurrence.

Evolving Threats: Terror Groups, Gangs, and Networks

Even as nations adjust to fighting today's combination of insurgencies and terror groups, political, economic, social, and technical trends are setting the conditions for conflicts that may involve even smaller but potentially more powerful entities. These entities could range from super-empowered individuals and small groups unified by a cause, to gangs and other criminal enterprises motivated primarily by profit.

Salafi Jihadists: Still Dangerous, Still Failing

Major al Qaeda Lost Sanctuaries

The Sudanese government expelled al Qaeda from that country in 1996 and Operation *Enduring Freedom* ejected it from Afghanistan in 2001.

Al Qaeda has had three primary sanctuaries. It was born in Afghanistan out of Abdullah Azzam's Maktab al-Khidmat or "Services Bureau," but it began to mature as an organization in its own right in Sudan where Sudanese leader Hassan al-Turabi offered the group sanctuary beginning in 1992. Expelled from Sudan in 1996 as a result of international pressure on the Sudanese regime, al Qaeda sought refuge back in Afghanistan. It lost this sanctuary in 2001 as a result of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. The group is now thought to have sanctuary in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in northwest Pakistan.

al Qaeda Polling Data Results

What aspect of the al Qaeda organization do you sympathize with most?

- ▶ **7%** *It seeks to create an Islamic state like that of the Taliban in Afghanistan*
- ▶ **10%** *Its methods of operation*
- ▶ **18%** *It stands for Muslim causes such as the Palestinian issue*
- ▶ **30%** *It confronts the United States*
- ▶ **21%** *I do not sympathize at all with this organization*

A survey conducted by Zogby International in March 2008 showed that Arab Muslims have little enthusiasm for al Qaeda's positive program or its methods. The survey had a sample size of 4,046 respondents from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Asked what they most liked about al Qaeda, 21% said they did not like anything about it and another 48% said that they liked it for its opposition to the United States or its support for Muslim causes such as the Palestine issue. Of course, al Qaeda is hardly the only group to hold such views about the United States or Palestine. These findings suggest that al Qaeda's support in the Arab world is narrow and potentially shaky.

Arab Muslims show little enthusiasm for al Qaeda's positive program or its methods. They respond most positively to its anti-American stance.

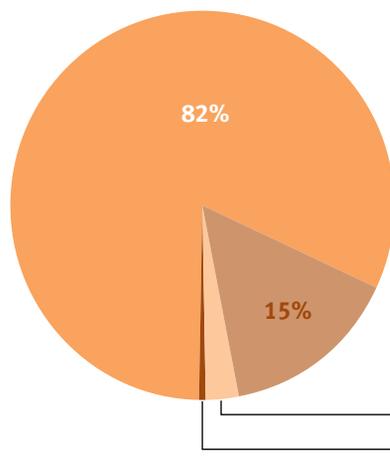
al Qaeda Major Defeats ▶

Strategic analysts within the jihadist movement such as Abu Musab al-Suri and Hazim al-Madani identify numerous past defeats of various elements of the Salafi jihadist community. These defeats date back to the 1960s, shortly after the death of Sayyid Qutb, to more recent events, such as the failure of the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria during the 1990s, and the near-complete defeat of the Islamic State of Iraq in the post-Saddam era. Many of these more recent defeats have been the subject of wide discussion within the Salafi jihadist community among elites and the rank and file.

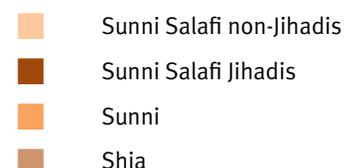
■ Locations of major defeats as assessed by Abu Musab al-Suri

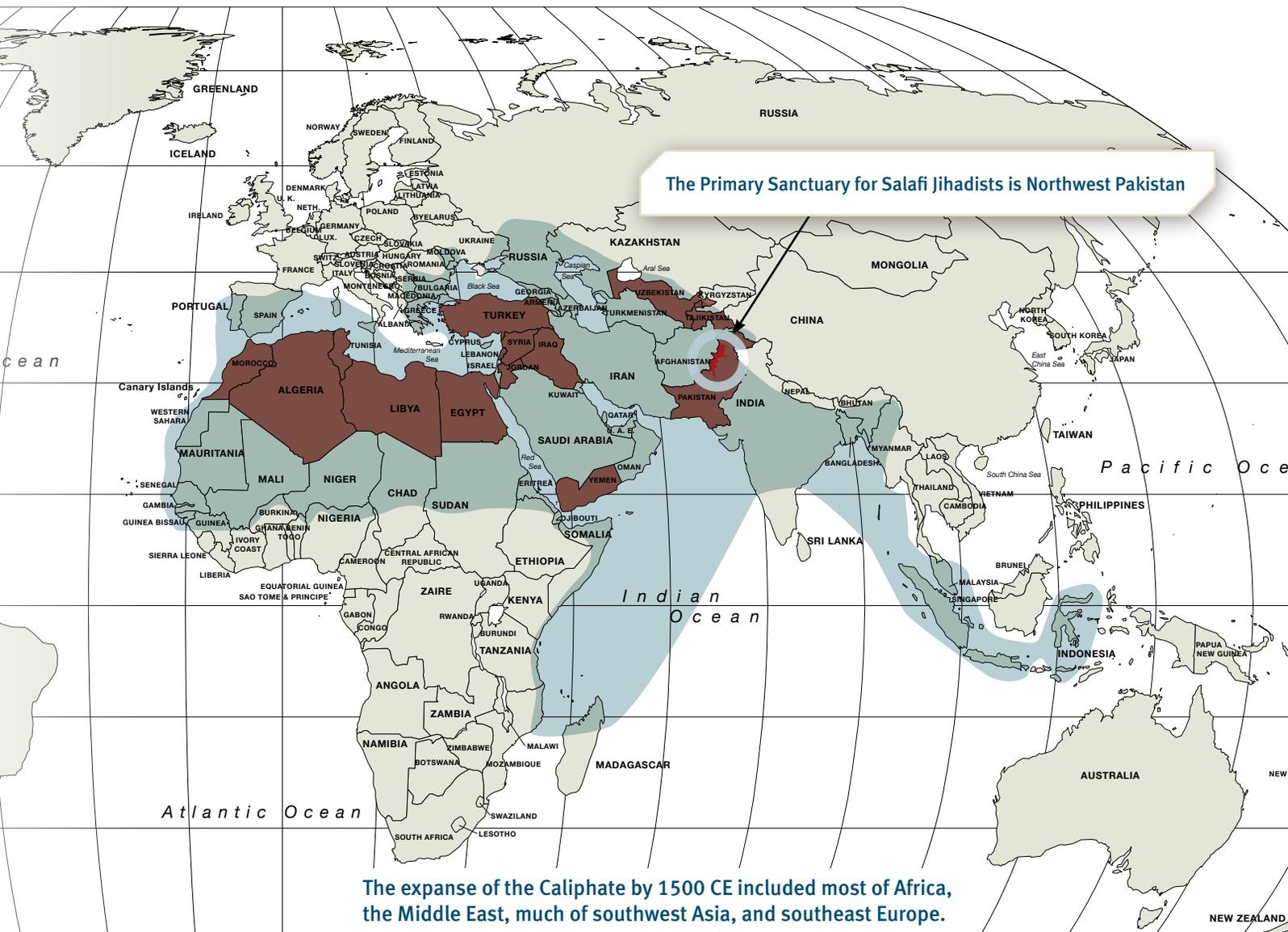
Shia, Sunni, Salafi, and Salafi Jihadists throughout Islam

Salafi Jihadists, like al Qaeda, are a minuscule fraction of Salafis overall, who are a minority community within Sunni Islam.

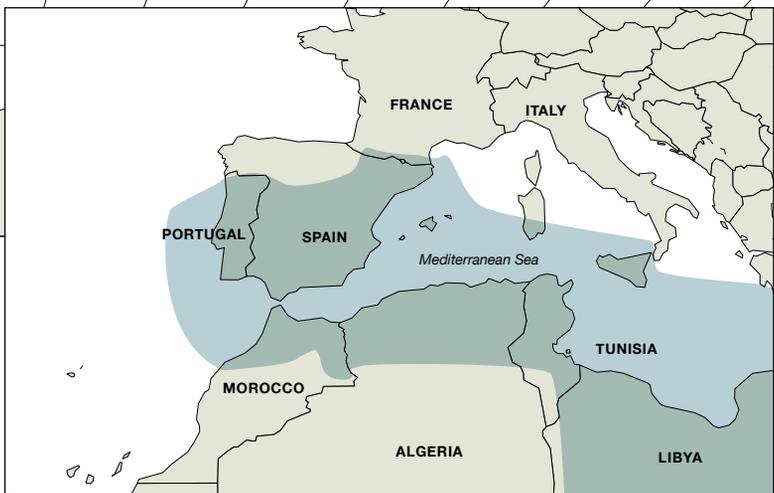


Estimates of the number of Muslims in the world vary substantially. However, 1.5 billion is roughly the median estimate. Of those, some 85% or 1.3 billion are Sunnis. The number of Salafis is uncertain but is perhaps in the range of 50 million, of which only perhaps 250,000 are Salafi jihadists. This estimate, of course, is imprecise and includes some individuals who emerge from Deobandi or Wahhabi backgrounds but who identify with the Salafi jihadist cause. The jihadists' own literature brackets the number of their brethren as being less than half a million at most; low-end estimates are that there are several tens of thousands of Salafi jihadists.





In 900 CE, the Caliphate included most of present-day Spain and portions of France and Italy.



Background

The United States may have seen the first attack by a super-empowered individual, or at most a very small group, in the 2001 anthrax letter attacks in New York, Florida, and Washington, DC. It took the Federal Bureau of Investigation almost 7 years to decide that a single individual was responsible. Yet the attack caused massive disruptions for Congress and the entire U.S. Postal Service.

While groups empowered with weapons of mass destruction, or mass disruption, are an emerging phenomenon, gangs represent a much older problem that may well evolve into something more threatening in the decades ahead. John Sullivan, for instance, contends that gangs have evolved in three waves or generations. First-generation gangs essentially fight over turf. They focus on gaining control of a territory and providing a social structure for their members based on loyalty to the gang. Once these have been established, the second generation of gangs evolves to become market-oriented drug traffickers, some of which are international in nature. Third-generation gangs have a higher degree of sophistication. They strive to operate globally, controlling noncontiguous territories for political and mercenary purposes. Third-generation gangs often dominate the local governments in the areas in which they operate.

The obvious question is why these nonstate challengers will be a growing threat in the future. Nations have certainly faced such threats from small groups in the past without major problems. What is changing? The Prussian military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz noted, “Military institutions and the manner in which they employ violence depended on the economic, social, and political conditions of their respective states.”³⁹ The enormous changes in societies over the last 50 years have inevitably changed how violence is carried out. Unfortunately, some trends increase the potential destructive power of these nonstate threats. Moreover, what has changed in contemporary society in many countries is that governments possess fewer effective checks on individuals or small groups, at least relative to the lethality of the weapons that might be at their disposal.

Clearly, small actors pose big problems in failed and failing states, such as Somalia and potentially Haiti. In states where governments fail to provide for basic security, welfare, and political voice, people will turn to more local or tight-knit communities, including clans, tribes, or extended families or ethnic groups, as the basic unit of security. These smaller communities will, in turn, assume responsibility for

security by forming armed gangs or paramilitaries. Without suggesting that the future portends a world of failed states, state weakness will compel many people to look to smaller, more local entities to provide for their own security. Personal loyalties may shift away from the nation-state to specific causes, ranging from subnational ethnic ties to transnational religions to global ecological movements. Whether these trends presage a rise in the number of small-group threats remains to be seen, but the combination of changing identity and the proliferation of lethal means into the hands of individuals and small groups would certainly alter the strategic landscape.

These developments have already changed who fights “wars” and how they fight them. The trend has been away from nation-states using huge, uniformed armies to small groups of like-minded people with no formal organization who simply choose to fight. The nature of most armed conflict has changed so much that often it is impossible to tell today’s insurgents from simple criminal elements. Many of the former are, in fact, criminal elements—either they use crime to support their cause or they use their cause to legitimize their crime. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the recently resurgent Shining Path in Peru, pirates off the coast of Somalia, and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines are just four illustrations of this challenge.

Political, economic, and social trends point to the emergence of super-empowered individuals or small groups bound by a cause rather than a nation. At the same time, trends in technology will increase the power of gangs and other criminal networks bound together for both profit and identity. Using tomorrow’s off-the-shelf technology, small actors may well be able to generate levels of destructive power that used to require the resources of a nation-state.

Key Issues

These new developments are of particular concern because emerging political, business, and social structures have consistently been more successful at using nascent technology than older, established organizations. Today, two emerging technologies, nanotechnology and biotechnology, have the power to alter our world—and warfare—more fundamentally than information technology has.

Even before these technologies mature, the fragility of globalization means that it is imperative to prepare for significant shocks. In many ways, military and business problems are merging as the world becomes more interconnected and power is

driven downward. In 2006, a group of about 20 angry Nigerians took hostages from a Shell Oil Company oil platform in the Gulf of Guinea. In response, Shell shut down its Nigerian Delta production and world oil prices rose dramatically, demonstrating how vulnerable our interconnected world is to disruptions in key commodities, and how business issues can very rapidly become matters of international security.

This is not the same as in the old “banana wars” of the early 20th century, in which U.S. Marines were consistently committed to protect American business interests that mattered only to a few stockholders. Today, very small armed groups can affect the entire world’s economy immediately and dramatically.

This fragility in the oil supply system is duplicated in a number of key elements in the international supply chain, including rail and shipping bottlenecks. To prevent minor damage from translating into a major economic shock, these systems need excess capacity. Yet businesses are rightly reluctant to pay for excess capacity “just in case,” since it makes them less competitive in an increasingly competitive world market.

At the same time that globalization has created a more interconnected and fragile economic system, small groups and even individuals now have access to much more powerful weapons. Using the leaderless resistance model of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and, increasingly, some Islamist terrorist groups, these groups can use materials available in modern society to attack it. These range from the simple arson attacks conducted by ALF to the attempted chlorine attacks by al Qaeda in Iraq, to the potential for major chemical attacks based on a Bhopal-type accident, to nuclear-equivalent detonations modeled after the 1947 Texas City disaster. The remarkable growth of innovation in synthetic biology means that there is a high probability that within the next 10 years, small groups will be able to create lethal viruses, including smallpox, from commercially available DNA. The possibility of a planned, worldwide release of smallpox gives small groups access to a potential lethality equal to dozens of nuclear weapons.

One of the crucial issues facing the developed world, and the United States and its allies in particular, is the mismatch between investments in defense and the potential threats. The earlier forms of war will continue to coexist with newer kinds of threats represented by small groups and gangs. Therefore, future conflict is likely to cover an enormously broad spectrum from small groups conducting single actions, to Hizballah-type movements, to nation-

state wars—in essence, hybrid war. Increasing the complexity of these conflicts, most will involve a multitude of players with widely varying objectives. The United States and its allies must be prepared to fight these hybrid wars, but unfortunately, our current investment in national defense is still skewed heavily toward external, nation-state wars.

The Future

As noted above, future enemies will make use of the entire spectrum of warfare and crime to achieve their goals. Some will have traditional political goals of controlling territory or coercing behavior from other states, others will pursue purely criminal goals, still others will want to achieve a mix, and finally, some fear that a relatively new entrant, radical environmentalism, might well attack in defense of the “planet.”

For the United States, the absence of a peer competitor in the short to medium term poses particularly difficult questions. While the United States will have to be prepared to fight across the spectrum, even the Department of Defense, in its 2008 report to Congress on China’s military power, suggested that a China out-of-area threat would probably not emerge until the 2020s. Similarly, a “near peer” competitor to the United States is not likely to materialize over the next decade or more. Meanwhile, the threats to U.S. forces in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan obviously will remain priority considerations for some time to come. Beyond those considerations, however, the United States and its allies will have to be aware of what could cause serious harm at home.

Third-generation transnational criminal gangs represent both a direct and indirect threat to security. First, they may have already gained sovereignty in parts of the United States, Europe, and elsewhere—a neighborhood in one city, an apartment block in another, an apartment complex in a suburb elsewhere. These gangs are essentially leaderless networks that answer to no single authority, but have extended sovereignty over noncontiguous spaces in the United States and overseas. They directly challenge the legitimacy of civil rule within parts of the United States. States and cities lack the resources to control them. Indirectly, gang violence compels migration by increasing political and civil instability in the “home” countries. This instability, combined with looming population and resource crises south of the U.S.-Mexico border, could force major migrations of people with no other choice. Gangs and cartels are fighting to establish mini narco-states in various nations in Central America and Mexico. They do not

want control of the entire state, simply enough of it to provide a secure base for their operations, and in which to enjoy their wealth.

A more distant nonstate threat may be that of environmental activists. Of course, the vast majority of environmentalists are law-abiding individuals; however, a few believe their ends justify violent means. Usually, this violence amounts to small-scale criminal activity. But one could imagine the emergence of a more radicalized fringe movement, driven by a fervent belief that governments were ruining the planet. Thus, a loose, violent antiglobalization movement could take hold, albeit this time with access to highly disruptive means, whether cyber terrorism or a radiological attack to demonstrate dangers associated with nuclear power. To date, their attacks have been limited to minor nuisance attacks. However, as globalization affects people at higher levels of education (computer programmers, radiologists, and biotechnicians, for instance), some of those displaced workers will inevitably lend their skills to efforts to reduce globalization. This may well take the form of attacks on the communications and transportation systems that create globalization.

The most dangerous attacks probably would emanate from apocalyptic groups. Their causes would vary, but they are likely to be driven by an absolute belief in what they do. In particular, these groups may look to exploit the advances in synthetic biology, as well as the possibilities of other weapons of mass destruction. Belief in their cause will provide the moral justification for mass destruction of fellow human beings, as well as allay concerns about the number of their own personnel who will inevitably die.

Finally, the United States must consider how other states will react to the increasing power flowing to small groups. While some states will use them for their own purposes, most states fear this threat to their own sovereignty. Washington must take advantage of the common interest in stopping such apocalyptic attacks to build relationships with other nation-states. Containing this type of emerging small-actor threat should be a challenge around which developed nations can fully cooperate.

All-of-Society Response

These potential threats will be extremely difficult for governments to counteract. A defense against them must involve all of society in the effort. Just as insurgency requires all elements of government to work together to defeat it, the challenge of super-em-

powered leaderless groups will require all elements of society to defeat them.

Creating an all-of-society defense will be difficult, but not impossible. There are already some models of such defenses, the most obvious being the defense of the Internet. It is being attacked daily by what is essentially a leaderless array of networks and individuals. In response, a leaderless network has developed to defend the Internet. While some elements of the defense are sophisticated organizations, the vast majority of those who defend the Internet simply follow basic rules: never run a system without an updated protection package, and never open emails from unknown senders. This creates the emergent intelligence that has, to date, protected the Internet from another computer virus such as the “Love Bug” that caused worldwide damage in 2000. Other examples of successful defense are effective crime control through community participation and effective disease control through a network of public health officers.

The key issue for developing all-of-society defenses against various threats is developing the rule sets that allow all elements of society to participate without having any specific individual or agency in command. This may well be the legitimate role of the Federal Government. Only it has the resources to bring together the entire range of players—all levels of government, business, academia, the media, and others to discuss and game possible threats, and develop the rule sets that will allow a global, leaderless, emergent intelligent response. [gsa](#)

NOTES

¹ Marc Sageman has made this argument about the movement being self-limiting in his *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). So, in a different way, do Mark Stout et al., *The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of al Qaida and Associated Movements* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008).

² The *bunch of guys* formulation originates with Marc Sageman.

³ Michael Scott Doran, “Somebody Else’s Civil War,” presentation given at “How Did this Happen? Terrorism and the New War,” meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations, December 17, 2001.

⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Anatomy of the Salafi Movement,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 3 (2006), 207–239.

⁵ The decline in Salafi jihadism popularity in Muslim communities relative to the degree of indiscriminate jihadi violence experienced by those communities is highlighted

in two public opinion surveys: "Support for Terror Wanes Among Muslim Publics," Pew Global Attitudes Survey, July 2005; and "Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians and al Qaeda," World Public Opinion.Org, April 24, 2007.

⁶ This position, articulated by notable terrorism experts Bruce Reidel ("Al Qaeda Strikes Back," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2007) and Bruce Hoffman ("Why Al Qaeda Still Matters," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008, his rebuttal to Marc Sageman's *Leaderless Jihad*), was buttressed by the July 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate and in public testimony by the Director of National Intelligence, Michael McConnell, throughout early 2008.

⁷ See Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Ending Terrorism: Lessons for Defeating al Qaeda*, Adelphi Paper 394 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, November 2007); and Marc Sageman, among others.

⁸ The al Qaeda grand strategy of "Vexation and Exhaustion," with a primary focus on the United States, the West, and "apostate" Muslim autocrats, is well articulated by Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War." See also Stout et al.

⁹ For information on Fatah al-Islam, see Rebecca Bloom, "Fatah al-Islam," *Council on Foreign Relations Background*, June 2007, available at <www.cfr.org/publication/13391/>; and Gary C. Gambill, "The Rise of Fatah al-Islam," *Mideast Monitor* 1, no. 2 (June-July 2007), available at <www.mideastmonitor.org/issues/0705/0705_5.htm>.

¹⁰ Pew Trust Poll, June 2005.

¹¹ University of Maryland-Zogby International Poll, March 2008, available at <www.brookings.edu/topics/~media/Files/events/2008/0414_middle_east/0414_middle_east_telhami.pdf>.

¹² For an enunciation of al-Suri's ideas on leaderless resistance, see Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaeda Strategist Abu Musab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

¹³ Lawrence Wright highlights the importance of Doctor Fadl's defection from the Salafi jihadist movement and its relationship to the internal challenges faced by al Qaeda in his "The Rebellion Within," *The New Yorker*, June 2, 2008, 36-53. See also Peter Bergen, "Al Qaeda at 20 . . . Dead or Alive?" *The Washington Post*, August 17, 2008, B1, B5.

¹⁴ Among the defections, Saudi sheikh Salman al-Auda, a longtime critic of al Saud royal families' ties with the United States, stands out. Osama bin Laden considered al-Auda a kindred spirit and praised him publicly. See Daniel L. Byman, "Al-Qaida at 20: Is the Movement Destined to Fail?" August 12, 2008, available at <www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0812_al_qaeda_byman.aspx>.

¹⁵ For more on the importance and the limitations of this May 31, 2008, Deobandi fatwa, see "Deoband First: A Fatwa Against Terror," *The Times of India*, June 1, 2008, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Deobands_first_A_fatwa_against_terror/articleshow/3089161.cms>; and Walid Phares, "The

Deobandi Fatwa Against Terrorism Didn't Treat the Jihadi Root," July 31, 2008, International Analyst Network Web site, available at <www.analyst-network.com/article.php?art_id=2302>.

¹⁶ Number provided by Ned Moran, Terrorism Research Center, Arlington, VA, in a Canadian Broadcasting Company broadcast on a November 14, 2007, interview entitled "Hacking wars, heightened encryption latest threats from Islamic extremists: analyst," as found at <www.cbc.ca/world/story/2007/11/14/hacker-threat.html>. See also Gabi Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Area, the New Challenges* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2006).

¹⁷ For two examples of the former, see <www.jihadica.com/new-booklets-on-media-jihad/> and <www.jihadica.com/new-book-the-media-war-on-the-people-of-islam/>.

¹⁸ See, for instance, <www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/refuting-the-conspiracies-surrounding-as-sahab-media.pdf>.

¹⁹ Jeff Goodwin, "Review Essay: What Must We Explain to Explain Terrorism?" *Social Movement Studies* 3, no. 2 (October 2004), 260.

²⁰ Marc Lynch, in *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 198.

²¹ Ibid. For a short summary of the main themes of the book, see Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Anti-Americanisms," *Policy Review*, vol. 139 (September-October 2006), 25-37.

²² Pew polls in 2007 showed respondents in Muslim countries (Arab and non-Arab) favoring American withdrawal from Afghanistan at almost the same rate that they favored American withdrawal from Iraq. See Pew Research Center, *Rising Environmental Concern in 47-Country Survey: Global Unease with Major World Powers*, June 27, 2007, available at <<http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/256.pdf>>. For another discussion of the unpopularity of the intervention in Afghanistan, see Gallup Poll of the Islamic World, 2002: Subscriber Report.

²³ Bergen, Byman, Michael McConnell, and Marc Sageman all make this point.

²⁴ Jerrold M. Post, "The Psychological Roots of Terrorism," *Addressing the Causes of Terrorism*, Vol.1, Proceedings of the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism, and Security (Madrid: Club de Madrid, 2005), 7-12.

²⁵ Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics*, vol. 13 (1981), 379-399.

²⁶ C.R. McCauley and M.E. Segal, "Social Psychology of Terrorist Groups," in *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, vol. 9 of *The Annual Review of Social and Personality Psychology*, ed. C. Hendrick (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1987).

²⁷ Post, 7-8. For a fuller elaboration of the early socialization of hatred, see Jerrold M. Post, "'When Hatred is Bred in the Bone': Psychocultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism," *Political Psychology* 26, no. 4 (2005), 616-636.

²⁸ Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism in Context* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

²⁹ This typology is a modification of the typology introduced by Alex Schmid, *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1983).

³⁰ Jerrold M. Post, "Killing in the Name of God: Osama bin Laden and Radical Islam," *Foreign Service Journal* (December 2001); with expanded political profile of bin Laden, see Jerrold M. Post, "Killing in the Name of God: Osama bin Laden and Radical Islam," in *Know thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and their Strategic Cultures*, ed. Barry R. Schneider and Jerrold M. Post (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: U.S. Air Force Counterproliferation Center, 2002).

³¹ Ariel Merari, April 2003, personal communication with author.

³² Recently, women have joined the ranks of suicide bombers, and the age range has broadened considerably, from 13 to 57.

³³ Daniel L. Byman, "The Rise of Low-Tech Terrorism," *The Washington Post*, May 6, 2007, B3.

³⁴ Chris Quillen, "A Historical Analysis of Mass Casualty Bombers," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 25 (2002), 279–292. However, Quillen does not include the theater attack discussed by Byman in his database of mass casualty attacks. See Brian Michael Jenkins, *The Likelihood of Nuclear Terrorism*, RAND Paper P-7119 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, July 1985), 7; Jenkins identified only 7 incidents involving more than 100 fatalities from 1901–1985, and only about 12 more with 50 to 100 fatalities.

³⁵ Brian Michael Jenkins, *Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?* RAND Paper P-5541 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, November 1975), 4–5.

³⁶ Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate, "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States," April 2006, available at <www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf>.

³⁷ J. Michael McConnell, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Intelligence Community for the Senate Armed Services Committee," February 27, 2008, available at <www.dni.gov/testimonies/20080227_testimony.pdf>.

³⁸ Remarks by National Security Advisor Stephen J. Hadley to the Proliferation Security Initiative Fifth Anniversary Senior Level Meeting, Washington, DC, May 28, 2008, available at <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/05/20080528-3.html>.

³⁹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. and ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 6.

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