

Revisiting the Pyramid: Militant Islamism as a revolutionary movement

by

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1. Introduction¹

Let us return to September 11-12, 2001, to the personal shock and anger we felt as we realized that nearly three thousand civilians and soldiers had been murdered on U.S. soil. Americans assured themselves, and were assured by our mass media, that across the globe a collective outrage toward the perpetrators had been the reaction of a civilized world. This was self-delusion. Humanity did not, in fact, stand as one against the most monstrous terrorist act in American history.

Most Americans were spared images of a far different kind from those searing days, images such as those of cheering crowds of Muslim Arabs in Lebanon, joyfully celebrating the mass murder of American civilians.² As we mourned in shock, those joyful crowds, those spontaneous mass celebrations, also really occurred. Such celebrations of an act of war primarily directed against civilians, committed by nineteen young, Muslim, Arab men, should not have eluded so many of us.

As analysts of social and political phenomena, a search for meaning even in such celebrations, is necessary even as we wrestle at personal levels with anger and other emotions not customarily part of the research processes in the social sciences. Any attempt to study terrorism must acknowledge at the outset the impossibility of a fully disinterested, dispassionate approach to the topic. Anger under circumstances such as presented by September 11, 2001, is not a symptom of some malady within us, whether as social scientists or as citizens. Anger in

¹ Portions of this article appeared previously in the *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* (Fall 2006). Prof. Bowen's research related to this article, including travel and study in the Middle East, was sponsored by the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, Washington, D.C.

² Washington Post (Sept. 12, 2001): A25.

the face of mass murder is not something pathologic to be treated by therapy, or perhaps a pill. Anger can spur us to struggle to pursue answers about why our tidy, self-flattering flattering orthodoxy from the 1990s has proven so inadequate.³ From that struggle can emerge a new capacity to discern our actual world more clearly, guiding us to recognize the limitations inherent in lazy nostrums that too often can fill the interpretive matrixes that structure and shape our perception. This study, in its broad contours, presents a guide to the difficult road where that struggle can take us.

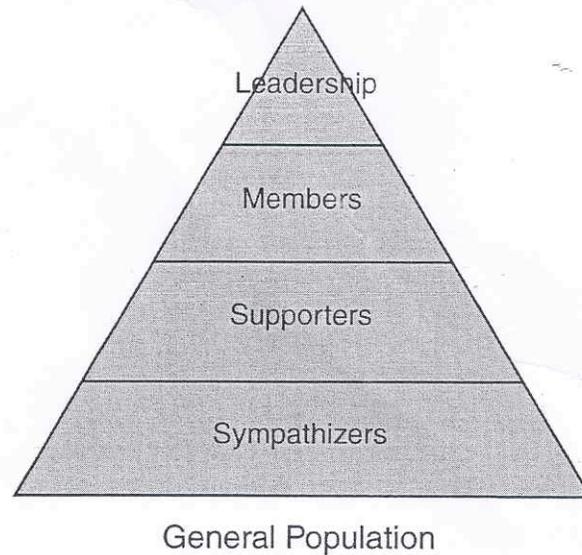
- It begins with basic definitions, focusing on the apparently simple issue of “what is terrorism?” We start the inquiry here because without definitional clarity, further steps toward better knowing how to respond to our enemy may falter. We need first to answer what terrorism is so that we can refine focus onto our applied needs: who are the terrorists, and how can we stop them?
- The analysis that then follows will be organized around the broad categories found in Madeline Gruen’s model of “The Pyramid of Terror,”⁴ a model that closely adheres to the traditional division of labor used for generations in the study of revolutionary movements.⁵ Ultimately, significant modifications in this model will be shown to be warranted.

³ Here I am thinking of the conceit first associated with Frances Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *National Interest* (Summer 1989); and the run of subsequent triumphant tomes such as Michael Mandelbaum, *The Ideas that Conquered the World: Peace, Democracy, and Free Markets in the 21st Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002).

⁴ Madeleine Gruen, “Terrorism Indoctrination and Radicalization on the Internet,” in Russell Howard and Reid Sawyer, eds. *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* second edition (Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill, 2006): 355.

⁵ E.g., Thomas Greene, *Comparative Revolutionary Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974) divided his short volume into key chapters on Leaders, Followers, Ideology, Organization, Techniques, and External Support.

The Pyramid of Terror



Using Gruen's foci to structure the analysis, the study will examine several parts of the terrorism problem, depicting:

- (1) its leadership: how leaders' life experiences have shaped the guiding ideology of militant Islamism into a global movement that relies on terrorism;
- (2) its foot soldiers: what operational terrorist cells do, using a brief case study of the 9/11 attacks, or "Planes Operation," to explore subsequent trends that represent something substantial that truly is "new;"
- (3) its supporters: the roles played by supporters of militant Islamism, exploring the ways societal leaders indirectly support terrorism; and
- (4) its popular base: the levels of sympathy for militant Islamism that exist among publics in key states in the Muslim world, in terms of support for the leaders of militant Islamism, their goals, and the tactics employed by the operational cells.

This study has an applied purpose. In discovering the influences that shape these often not young, not always Arab, but invariably Muslim men and women into shock troops who are readying to again commit mass murder of Americans, the complexity of succeeding in the task of

opposing militant Islamic terrorism will emerge. We best can orient thinking about how to arrive at this important goal by addressing key assumptions in how the U.S. currently is proceeding. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte in testimony to the U.S. Congress early in 2006, stated (emphasis added): "... An important part of Al-Qaeda's strategy is to encourage a grassroots uprising of Muslims against the West. Emerging new networks and cells . . . reflect aggressive *jihadi* efforts to exploit feelings of frustration and powerlessness in some Muslim communities, and to fuel the perception that the United States is anti-Islamic. **Their rationale for using terrorism against the United States and establishing strict Islamic practices resonates with a *small subset of Muslims*,**"⁶ but "most Muslims reject the extremist message and violent agendas of global *jihadists*."⁷

Thus, the central theme driving this study grows directly from Negroponte's assumption, which is a reigning assumption in much of the literature about terrorism: **is it true that the movement we confront is a "small subset of Muslims" and that "most Muslims reject" either the *jihadists*' message or their use of terrorism?** Overall, the reader of this study will confront striking evidence to the contrary: much suggests that the Militant Islamic terrorist movement is neither "small," nor a fringe group with marginal appeal. Rather, evidence tending toward a quite opposite conclusion will emerge: a broad and supportive social base, not a "small subset" of Muslims, may be nourishing an evolving and growing contemporary *jihadi* movement, one that has significant breadth in its appeal. With U.S. Armed Forces now apparently overstretched, we may wish to believe that the problem is narrow. But the social harbors discussed in this study appear to sustain an enemy more far flung than the current venue in which the U.S. military primarily are engaged -- Afghanistan and Iraq-- , and far more diverse in their support than appropriately should be characterized as "rejected" societal outcasts or misfits.

⁶ John D. Negroponte (U.S. Director of National Intelligence), "Annual Threat Assessment," statement to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, (February 28, 2006): 5. <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2006/February/Negroponte%2002-28-06.pdf>

⁷ Negroponte: 6. For an academic presentation that adhered to congruent assumptions, see: Neil Smelser and Faith Mitchell, eds., *Terrorism: Perspectives from the Behavioral and Social Sciences* (Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, 2002): "We emphasize, however, that Islam-inspired terrorists are a minority of terrorists, considered worldwide, and that the vast majority of Islamic peoples have no connection with and do not sympathize with terrorism..." (27).

Definitions

Definitions are a primary starting point in order to study all political phenomena. Legally, under U.S. Senate Joint Resolution 23, the United States is at war with terrorists who committed the acts of Sept. 11, and those who assisted or harbored them, either directly or indirectly, so to prevent a future attack.⁸ What is terrorism? It is premeditated violence, or the threat of violence, directed against civilian or military targets for political effect. As terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman memorably put it: “terrorism [is] the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.”⁹

Which terrorists so defined are of concern to American security, and thus concern this inquiry? In responding to September 11, 2001, Pres. George W. Bush demarcated the set as those terrorists with “global reach.” These persons who soon would fill the cross hairs of an increasingly military U. S. foreign policy were, to Bush, “[t]hose who plan, authorize, commit, or aid terrorist attacks against the United States and its interests — including those who harbor terrorists. [They] — threaten the national security of the United States.”¹⁰

This statement identified the immediate threat in Fall 2001, but can it answer sufficiently the question of who, specifically, is the enemy we confront more than five years later? Evidence to inform our best answer carefully must be weighed, for how we define the evolving enemy greatly will shape the counter-terrorism strategy we should adopt. Initially, it was tempting to define the enemy narrowly. On September 11, 2001, it seemed most to be those 19 men in our planes. Though some voices (e.g., Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz) immediately advocated a broad campaign against all state sponsors of terror including Iraq,¹¹ a stronger consensus within the Bush Administration deemed it sufficient in Fall 2001 to Summer 2002 to radiate outward only a little: target the Al Qaeda organization that sent those 19, and the state,

⁸ <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c107:S.J.RES.23.ENR>:

⁹ Bruce Hoffman, from *Inside Terrorism* (Columbia University Press, 1998), in Russell Howard and Reid Sawyer, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* first edition revised (Guilford CT: Dushkin / McGrawHill, 2003): 23-24. The thorny issue of finding a consensus definition of terrorism best is engaged in the updated edition of Alex P. Schmid and A. J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature* (Somerset, NJ: Transaction, 2005).

¹⁰ George W. Bush, President of the United States, “President Signs Authorization for Use of Military Force bill,” (Sept. 18, 2001): <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010918-10.html>

¹¹ James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Penguin, 2004): 300 states “In those early days [after 9/11] Wolfowitz pushed for the broadest possible response. ‘It’s not going to stop if a few criminals are taken care of.’”

Afghanistan, that harbored their commanders. Quietly, a global campaign to choke off funding from those who aid these groups also was begun. By 2003, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, an American nemesis contained by an embargo and sanctions for more than a decade, also was targeted in what was said, at considerable cost, to be a military campaign substantially related to the Global War on Terror. This war coincided with Iraq becoming more of a magnet for international extremists. With hands full in the eastern Middle Eastern region by 2006, Negroponte and the Bush Administration appeared tempted to radiate little further; they continued to suggest our enemy to be those states and/or organizations who have continued to support and sustain the insurgency in Iraq and Al Qaeda.

But as each of these responses to the question "who is the enemy" has widened the circle in need of vigorous counter-terrorist actions, emerging evidence prods the U. S. to go considerably further. Since Americans are stingy, parsimonious with time and treasure, strong psychological reasons may drive analysts and policymakers to select the most narrow answer. It is both comforting and apparently more feasible to slay a single dragon than to find oneself living in a Kingdom of Unlimited Dragons. But a psychological need for simplicity should not be confused with our deeper need for clarity to guide policy responses toward the terrorists.

This study argues that the genuine enemy is far broader than commonly has been identified: it will suggest an emerging transnational revolutionary movement, Militant Islamism, to be the enemy. Militant Islamism is a broad, somewhat scattered, ideological movement that expounds its ideology, recruits its operatives, trains them, and directs revolutionary violence in a decentralized manner. While the internet is fundamental to these processes and facilitates all of them, the movement is not without tangible manifestations: it has branches physically on the ground in dozens of countries. Some of these are out in the open and appear well organized; some are secret. Some branches are linked to legitimate political parties; others are autonomous. In every place where it has found significant support, Militant Islamism is a more than a political label, more than a vehicle through which elites select who among them is to rule.

In several ways, militant Islamism differs in form and function from the narrow tasks political parties fulfill in democratic societies' through elections: militant Islamism invariably retains a clandestine side, and preparations for war fighting distinguish it. Only rarely have Western political parties employed paramilitary wings, e.g. Germany's National Socialists of the 1920s and 1930s. Yet, similar to many modern political parties, Militant Islamism has become a

movement that in enjoys very substantial levels of measurable popular support. Where repressive political conditions permit only limited open political participation, the movement fields electoral candidates independent of identifying labels (e.g., Egypt); in an handful of states, it consistently has won a significant minority of seats in provincial (e.g., Pakistan) and national (e.g., Lebanon) legislatures. In one proto-state, the Palestinian Authority, in January 2006, its adherents were elected to majority status in the national assembly. Polls that will be cited later in this study tend to indicate this electoral result to be the sharp tip of something much larger.

Charting the extent to which Militant Islamism has become a multinational revolutionary movement, and identifying its forms, are the central tasks of this study. By its conclusion, the reader will learn that this emerging revolutionary movement often has been nourished by mass support, frequently has been sanctified by socially influential “norm entrepreneurs,”¹² increasingly is being legitimized through ostensibly fair electoral mechanisms, and thus now is dignified by institutions not directly tied to any violent acts committed by “terrorists.”¹³ The article, overall, will demonstrate that this movement is not appropriately conceived as small group of social outcasts, and that the problem extends far beyond the limits of the Arabic speaking Middle East. In key parts of the globe both within and beyond the Middle Eastern region, militant Islamists are neither socially isolated nor widely reviled; nor are the goals these militants openly espouse unpopular; nor are their tactics repellent to disturbingly large numbers of Muslims. Not all Muslims support it, to be sure.¹⁴ Defeating Militant Islamism, in other words, may entail efforts as Herculean as once were required for the defeat of the worst scourges of the last century, a popular Nazism and a nuclear-equipped Soviet Communism, and it very well may take as long to get the job done.

Knowing the contours of the real enemy requires answering a series of questions. The inquiry begins but cannot end with knowing about the group that sent those nineteen young Arab

¹² The concept of social leaders as “norm entrepreneurs” in the context of terrorism was introduced by Steven Simon and Jeffery Martini in “Terrorism: Denying Al Qaeda Its Popular Support,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2004 / 2005). Discussion of religious authorities in Islam playing an inciting role in this regard is found in Shmuel Bar, *Warrant for Terror: The Fatwas of Radical Islam and the Duty to Jihad* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

¹³ E.g., “There is evidence [Taliban leader Mohammad] Mullah Omar initially opposed a major Al Qaeda operation against the United States in 2001, Thomas Kean, et. al. *The 9/11 Report*: 251:

<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

¹⁴ See Kim Ezra Shienbaum and Jamal Hasan, *Beyond Jihad: Critical Voices from Inside Islam* (Bethesda MD: Academica Press, 2006).

Muslims, Al Qaeda.¹⁵ In turn, each stratum on the “Pyramid of Terror” will receive attention. In its analytic conclusion, the study will offer a modified “pyramid” as an improved model for use in analyzing the revolutionary terrorist movement that is Militant Islamism.

2. Leadership: Men who guide the Militant Islamist enemy

The broad appeal of Militant Islamism, a hydra-headed enemy, begins to be reveal itself as we look down the diverse paths that led three key figures to the top of the movement. Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, and (the late) Abu Musab al Zarqawi represent well the multinational origins and transnational appeal of our enemy.

A Saudi Arabian citizen by birth, Osama bin Laden,¹⁶ (b. 1957), is one of 54 children of, and one of the youngest sons of, Mohammed bin Laden, a wealthy Yemeni immigrant to Saudi Arabia and a Syrian mother. His father died in 1972. Osama’s first wife, a relative and also a Syrian, entered an arranged marriage with bin Laden when the boy was the tender age of 17. These are typical patterns followed by millions, not deviations from the norm. Today, as a stateless person with strong family ties in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden has emerged as the poster child of Al Qaeda, a transcendent inspiration to the trans-national brotherhood of killers he organized, men who openly declare all Americans, civilian or military, to be their targets anywhere on Earth.

A tall young man educated as an engineer, when a student Osama was strongly influenced by Abdullah Azzam (b. 1941 in Jenin, on the West Bank)¹⁷, a Palestinian scholar of Islam then teaching in Saudi Arabia, a man with whom Osama later re-connected with in Peshawar, Pakistan, the hub of international resistance to the abuse of Afghanistan by infidels during the 1980s. Like many, Osama was transformed by discovery in his teens of the burning

¹⁵ Each 9/11 hijacker is briefly profiled at: [http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/2002/dci_testimony_06182002/DCI_18_June_testimony_new.pdf#search=List%20of%20hijackers'](http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/2002/dci_testimony_06182002/DCI_18_June_testimony_new.pdf#search=List%20of%20hijackers), and more extensively in Thomas Kean, et. al. *The 9/11 Report* : 55: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

¹⁶ This section borrows heavily from: Roland Jacquard, *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002). See also: Peter Bergen (2006), *The Osama I know: An Oral History of the Making of a Global Terrorist* (NY: The Free Press, 2006); Yonah Alexander. *Usama bin Laden's al-Qaida: profile of a terrorist network* (Ardsley, New York: Transnational Publishers, 2001); and Peter Bergen (2002), *Holy War, Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden* (NY: The Free Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Jean-Charles Brisard, *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Other Press, 2005): 19. An accessible short biography of Azzam is Jonathan Figchel, “Sheikh Abdullah Azzam: Osama bin Laden’s Mentor,” Institute for Counter-Terrorism (Israel: Sept. 27, 2001): <http://www.ict.org.il/>.

relevance of his Islamic faith. Duties which he has presented as faith-based drove him to choose to go to the aid of fellow Muslims, the Afghans, and to help them expel the unbelievers, the Soviets, who invaded and dominated that hard land beginning in the winter of 1979.

We can locate Bin Laden's first role on the Pyramid of Terrorism to be on the third strata, that of a supporter. In this indirect capacity he served initially as an arms supplier and fund raiser to the Islamic resistance fighting in Afghanistan. Based in Peshawar, Pakistan, Osama at first ventured only briefly into the war zone to the west (i.e., Afghanistan), staying a few days once or twice a year. But by 1982, as a man of 25, he chose a more active and sustained commitment; and by 1984 he had connected again with his former teacher, Azzam, to form up in an organized way to help: the Jihad Services Bureau. Aided by his personal wealth and by connections to other rich Saudis back in Arabia, he was able to establish a "guesthouse" to channel other *mujahideen* (i.e., fighters on behalf of Islam) seeking to fight in Afghanistan when first they would arrive in Peshawar. At once the owner of a road construction company and an arms supplier, through the Services Bureau bin Laden built up an organization of individuals whom he had helped. These were the "Arab Afghans," and from the database he assembled of these fellow internationalists who had come to fight religious war against the Soviet Red Army, Al Qaeda (The Base) was born. Osama also is reported to have participated directly in some fighting, blurring in practice the clear conceptual lines drawn between fighting "members" and non-fighting "supporters" on our Pyramid of Terror.

Most of these foreign fighters elected to return to their diverse homelands after the defeat of the Red Army and its withdrawal to the USSR in February 1989, but Osama held on to their phone numbers and addresses. In Peshawar, bin Laden had become a celebrity, not just a veteran of the *jihad* but a leader of the internationalists who had contributed to what they saw as Islam's victory. As the Afghan refugees in Pakistan began to consider returning to their homeland, some of these "Arab Afghans" also found the post-Soviet milieu attractive, and these men stayed on in Afghanistan to contribute further to factions still engaged in a growing civil war against the post-Soviet but still pro-Soviet regime led by Mohammad Najibullah. Overall, the 1980s network of "Arab Afghans" scattered and did not remain a single, unified fighting force under paramilitary discipline in a specific place.

With this network in its infancy, Osama returned home to Saudi Arabia a changed man, but he returned to a conservative land ever slow to change. There he found few religious

authorities as committed as he was to the struggle against forces he had come to see as still aligned against Islam. In frustration, he turned to further study, self-teaching himself more about the ways of the Koran, setting a model for others: go down the path to knowledge that is the Koran, free of clerical guides.

But the world, again, intruded. A man now of action as much as of religious contemplation, Osama grew frustrated. His frustration in Saudi Arabia peaked after the 1991 war brought American troops onto what he regarded as the most holy soil, and his radical politics about the presence of American infidels, as well as other issues, eventually brought him into conflict with the monarchy, the House of Saud, with whom his family had elaborate and extensive commercial and financial ties. Indeed, it had been the bin Laden family's construction company that had renovated the most holy of Muslim places in Mecca, a several billion dollar project. In sociological terms, Bin Laden had become a disaffected member of the elite.

During the early 1990s, bin Laden deepened his relations with other militant Islamists. After he slipped out of his virtual house arrest in Saudi Arabia to return to Pakistan in 1991, he arranged through his ally Ayman al Zawahiri a cooperation agreement with the Iranian *pasdaran* (guardians of the Islamic revolution), beginning a relationship that was strained almost from the start due to Iranian attempts to control al Qaeda. Part of the agreement called for the international allies of the Iranian Shi'ites to work cooperatively with Al Qaeda. This was especially important in regard to Hezbollah, the Lebanese "Party of God," whose terrorist mastermind, Imad Mughneyh, "maintained excellent relations" with bin Laden throughout the 1990s.¹⁸ Fortified by this and a series of other expanding contacts for his men, Osama then chose a more permanent exile in Sudan. Cordial relations were established with Hassan al-Turabi, a leading Islamist then highly influential with Sudan's rulers.¹⁹ In Sudan, Osama again applied his engineering skills and his business acumen, organizing road building and other large projects for the increasingly Islamist government of that state. He also set about to linking up with others to further refine the form his internationalist organization, al Qaeda, would take.

After expulsion from Sudan in 1996, bin Laden returned to Afghanistan, where he served as a main source of finance and technical expertise for the Taliban, the religious militia that had

¹⁸ Jacquard: 109.

¹⁹ On this period, see J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins, *Revolutionary Sudan: Hasan al-Turabi and the Islamist State, 1989-2000*, (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003).

appeared in Kandahar in the early 1990s and had grown to become the de facto government of Afghanistan after taking Kabul in 1996. Some from his network of militants slowly reassembled, and liaison work in outreach toward other militant Islamist groups quickened. Between, 1996 and 1998, bin Laden outlined his grievances and stated his intentions toward the United States.²⁰ Initially in August 1996, in the London newspaper *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, bin Laden presented a vast list of complaints, some of which faulted the U.S. Secretary of Defense, and others which objected to the jailing of 1993 World Trade Center bombing ringleader Sheikh Omar Abdur Rahman; still other criticisms denounced U.S. policies toward Iraq, repression of Islamists in Saudi Arabia (or, as he put it, “the land of the two Holy Places”), decrying the absence of purely *shari'ah* (or Islamic) law in the Muslim world and the presence of “man made law” even in Saudi Arabia. Most emphatically, bin Laden complained about the continued presence of U.S. Armed Forces inside Saudi Arabia. The House of Saud was unmoved, and few in the U.S. security bureaucracies were refocused even though the document stated that “**it is essential to hit the main enemy** who divided the *Ummah* (i.e., the community of all Muslims) into small and little countries and pushed it, for the last few decades, into a state of confusion [:] The Zionist-Crusader alliance... Clearly after Belief (*Imaan*) **there is no more important duty than pushing the American enemy out of the holy land**” (emphasis added).²¹ At this point, bin Laden’s anti-Americanism presented itself in the wrapping of a national liberation struggle focused substantially on Saudi Arabia: “Terrorizing you, *while you are carrying arms on our land*, is a legitimate and morally demanded duty” (emphasis added).

In Taliban-run Afghanistan, bin Laden’s vision continued to broaden and he began to speak as a voice for the entire Muslim community, not just Saudis. In the same London newspaper on February 23, 1998, his organization invoked Islamic religious sanctification for a transnational Islamic cause. Joined with several other groups, bin Laden issued a much shorter²² religious *fatwa*, openly declaring religious war on the United States: “The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies--civilians and military--is an individual duty for every Muslim who

²⁰ The 1996 Declaration of War is found in Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005): 23-30; the 1998 reiteration is at 58-62 of that same source. The documents also are online: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html 1996; <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/fatwah.htm> 1998.

²¹ By holy land, bin Laden was referring to Saudi Arabia.

²² By “shorter” I mean: the 1998 fatwa runs a mere 1038 words; the 1996 denunciation runs 11,522 words.

can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it..."²³ In the West, still almost no one noticed. In August 1998, and again in October 2000, U.S. government sites were attacked in East Africa and Yemen.²⁴ Three and a half years after his explicit declaration of war came the attacks on U.S. soil of 9/11, finally demonstrating to all Americans that the threat was real.

Leader No. 2

One of the co-signatories of the 1998 *fatwa* was **Ayman al-Zawahiri** (b. June 19, 1951 in Cairo), the leader of what purported to be an organization calling itself the Jihad Group in Egypt. Zawahiri also was cut from the first team of the state of his birth, in his case the top group of Egyptians. His great uncle, Abdelrahman Azzam Pasha, was the first Secretary General of the Arab League.²⁵ Ayman's mother's family had longstanding ties to the House of Saud, the royal family of Saudi Arabia. Ayman's grandfather on his mother's side, Abdulwahab Azzam, a professor and later President of Cairo University, had gone on to become a diplomat. In this capacity, he served as Ambassador to Pakistan, Yemen, and to the court of the House of Saud, heading up King Saud University after presiding over its founding. Ayman's other grandfather - according to captured Al Qaeda documents that repeatedly refer to the whole family as "wealthy"-- served as one of the Imams at the famous Al-Azhar mosque²⁶ which Egyptian tourism sites present as the "oldest university in the world."²⁷ Ayman himself was raised in the affluent Cairo neighborhood of Maadi, and was educated as a medical doctor, as was his father (who died in 1995) and two of his sisters.

Ayman became a member of the clandestine militant Islamist organization known as the Muslim Brotherhood in 1965 at age 14. Some sources have reported him to have studied under the guidance of Sayyid Qutb, the leading ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, during this

²³ The 1996 Declaration of War is found in Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005): 23-30; the 1998 reiteration is at 58-62 of that same source. Online: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html & <http://www.ict.org.il/articles/fatwah.htm>.

²⁴ On the U.S. response, see: Ryan C. Hendrickson, "The Clinton Administration's Strikes on Usama Bin Laden: Limits to Power," in *Contemporary Cases in U.S. Foreign Policy: From Terrorism to Trade* Ralph G. Carter, ed. (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, copyright 2002; issued 2001): 196-216.

²⁵ Jacquard: 102.

²⁶ "A brief summary of Doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri's life may God protect him," Combating Terrorism Center, U.S. Military Academy-West Point: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/2RAD-2004-600457-Trans.pdf>

²⁷ <http://www.touregypt.net/azharmosque.htm> . The Mosque itself is somewhat more modest on this point, see: <http://www.alazhar.org/english/profile.htm>

period.²⁸ Like Osama, Dr. Zawahiri had been transformed by great events of his times. In this case, one was the 1967 “6 Day War,” in which Israel roundly had defeated Egypt, Syria and Jordan. This catastrophe shook the young man to the core. The sixteen year old Zawahiri then became caught up in the collision between his religious values and the secular Egyptian state he lived in. In 1979, Ayman joined another Militant Islamist group, the Egyptian Islamic *Jihad*, which at the time was more committed to direct terrorist actions than was the aging Brotherhood.

In the years that followed, Ayman was radicalized, rejecting most Egypt’s steps toward peace with Israel, and the trials and executions of fellow Islamists. Ayman’s alienation from his state became complete in September 1978, when a formal peace treaty with Israel was signed: Zawahiri preferred war. To successfully win back lost national territories in Sinai, Egypt’s Pres. Anwar Sadat had ended the state of war with Israel. Zawahiri, and Muslim militants who thought like him, perceived Sadat to have placed national objectives ahead of sacrosanct Islamic interests that required opposition to a Jewish state.

Zawahiri’s ties to the revolutionary opposition to Sadat further would shape him. After Sadat, the enlightened Arab leader, was gunned down by Islamic Jihad militants on October 6, 1981, Ayman and hundreds of other Islamists also were jailed in the repression that followed. Zawahiri served a three year term in jail for illegal possession of a gun. Released in the mid 1980s, Zawahiri traveled broadly: Al Qaeda documents even claim he visited the U.S. during a junket that also took him on visits to Sudan and Saudi Arabia in this period. He then joined thousands of other Arabs across the region seeking to contribute to the success of the *jihad* in Afghanistan. In 1985, he joined the medical staff of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Hospital in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he treated many who suffered war injuries on the Afghan front. In the final stages of the anti-Soviet Afghan war, he served as a front-line surgeon inside Afghanistan, first meeting Osama bin Laden in this period.

Sources differ on whether Zawahiri returned to Egypt or avoided his homeland due to fear of arrest. Whatever truly is the case, there is no doubt that Ayman had been radicalized by the experience in Afghanistan and by the conditions militant Islamists were experiencing in Egypt in the early 1990s. There is no doubt that many of Zawahiri’s compatriots --Egyptian former *mujahideen* fighters in Afghanistan—did make the move into Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the

²⁸ Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: Statements of Osama Bin Laden* (New York: Verso, 2005): 58. For Qutb’s main ideas, see: Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Cedar Rapids IA: The Mother Mosque Foundation, 1981).

secretive organization of Militant Islamists that had killed Sadat a decade earlier and which, as an underground opposition, opposed the pro-U.S. government of Sadat's successor, Pres. Hosni Mubarak.

Dr. Zawahiri ultimately elected to go to the Sudan in 1992; and he joined Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan when both were expelled from that state in 1996. With Osama and three others,²⁹ he issued the now famous February 1998 declaration of a "World Islamic Front" (cited above) which specifically declared all Americans to be targets: "To kill the American and their allies – civilian and military— is an individual duty incumbent upon every Muslim in all countries..."³⁰ Dr. Zawahiri's group back in Egypt also remained active, and in 1997, militants of his Egyptian Islamic Jihad attacked foreign tourists at the famous ancient ruins at Luxor with machine guns. For this in 1999, he was sentenced to death *in absentia* by an Egyptian court. The next year he was to some degree forced to renounce his leadership position in Islamic Jihad, though this may have been a tactical maneuver designed to better insulate the Egyptian Islamists from repression associated with responses to al Zawahiri's actions.³¹

Summarizing, in Osama and Ayman in the later 1990s we find two middle aged, wealthy men, men of strongly religious views, men experienced in trans-Islamic armed struggles in non-Arab lands, men who each now were stateless and in search of a sanctuary. Both men had come to subscribe to a virulent analysis that focused on endemic problems of all Muslims, and that found in anti-Americanism a solution to many of the Muslims' problems. These were men with social status, substantial skills, and plentiful material resources, features that were attractive to the leaders of Afghanistan, a nation then run by a militant Islamist government organized by the Taliban militia.

²⁹ The other signatories were: Abu Yasir Rif' ai Ahmad Taha on behalf of al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, the organization led by the "blind sheik" Omar Abdel Rahman (whose group committed the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center); Sheikh Mir Hamza, leader of the Pakistani political party Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan; and Maulana Fazlur Tahman, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, an important opposition political party in Pakistan.

³⁰ Lawrence: 61. This manifesto first was brought to the attention of a wider audience by Bernard Lewis, "License to Kill," *Foreign Affairs* (November / December 1998).

³¹ Jacquard: 109-109.

The emerging leadership: semi-independent actors modeled on (the late) Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

We now turn to a third leadership trend within Militant Islamism, that represented by the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Nearly a generation younger (b. October 20, 1966 – d. June 8, 2006), Zarqawi was the *nom de guerre* of Ahmad Fadlil Nazzal Al-Khalayleh, who dropped his birth name in favor of one that connotes ties to Zarqa, a major city in eastern Jordan. The choice seems deliberate. Zarqa is a city that has figured prominently in the history of international terrorism, a fact widely known in Muslim Islamist circles, and a fact equally beyond the perception of many even well informed Westerners. In 1970, it was on a deserted Jordanian military airfield outside Zarqa that Palestinian militants of the secular Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine blew up three Western commercial airliners (one TWA, one Swiss Air, one British), setting off the “Black September” repression of Palestinian militants by the Government of Jordan. In 1993, another young man from Zarqa, Mohammed Salameh, attempted to collect the deposit paid for the Ryder van used in the first attack on the World Trade Center in New York, giving crucial evidence to authorities who later would break the case. Identified as part of the militant group led by the Egyptian exile “blind sheik” Omar Abdel Rahman, Salameh was convicted and given a life term by a U.S. court. That first attack on the World Trade Center is under-appreciated as an attempt at mass casualty terrorism by followers of the Militant Islamist creed. The sentencing judge in those cases, U.S. District Court Judge Kevin Duffy, stated that the plotters intended to set off a cyanide cloud to kill thousands, but failed: ““Thank God the sodium cyanide burned instead of vaporizing... [or] everybody in the north tower would have been killed.”³² Finally, Zarqa also was the home town of 22 year old Saeed Hotari, the member of Hamas (the anti-Israel Islamist organization) who on June 1, 2001 blew himself and 21 young Israelis up in front of the Dolphinarium disco in Tel Aviv.³³

Zarqawi was a Jordanian of modest background: his family descended from Bedouin tribe of the Bani Hassan, one of the larger such groups in Jordan, though some others of this tribe have long lived outside the kingdom. He also was of the Khalayleh clan, a large extended family network. His father was a municipal employee, and the family lived in a modest home adjacent

³² John Sopko, "The Changing Proliferation Threat," *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1996/97); reprinted in: Helen Purkitt, ed., *World Politics 98/99* (Guilford CT: Dushkin/McGraw Hill): 197.

³³ Jean-Charles Brisard, “Zarqa and the Zarqa Tribe,” *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (New York: Other Press, 2005): 4-9. Much of the biographical sketch that follows relies on Brisard.

to the municipal graveyard in the suburb of Ma'soum. His neighbors in Zarqa included large numbers of Palestinian refugees with whom he strongly identified; his own father (Fadil Nazzal Mohammed Al-Khalayleh, b. 1926) was a veteran of the 1948 war waged by the Arab states against the establishment of Israel. Former teachers interviewed by Brisard in 2004 described him as a distracted and weak student. Though some reports have referred to him as having been "pious," Brisard's confidantes among his school peers reported him to rarely be interested in things of a religious nature. His years in school ended in 1982 after ninth grade, and details of the next few years of his life playing sports and fighting in the streets are elusive. A brief patronage job in local government, secured through his family's clan connections, brought little success; he was fired after six months. From 1984-86, he served his requisite military obligation in the Jordanian Army; was discharged, and became a bit of a neighborhood hoodlum, sporting tattoos, getting in fights, and drinking heavily. Determined to arrest this trend away from the faith, his mother prevailed upon him to begin religious instruction at the Al-Husayn Ben Ali Mosque in Amman, where he fell in with many Palestinians though he was ethnically Jordanian, not Palestinian, by birth.

In contact with Islamist youths inclined toward action for the first time, Zaraqawi decided that he, too, needed to confront the infidels menacing the faithful, and was persuaded that the place to do so was Afghanistan. But, he was too tardy in his arrival in Afghanistan to engage the retreating Soviets, so Zaraqawi's *jihad* initially led only to Peshawar, Pakistan. From there he turned to the internecine blood letting that followed the exit of the Red Army from Afghanistan, joining up for a time with one of the more erratic warlords' forces, those of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar, a survivor of two decades of war in Afghanistan, headed up the Hezb-e-Islami organization, a group experienced in training Algerian militant Islamists as well as European Muslims in the arts of *jihadist* war.³⁴ In this context, Abu Musab gained valuable experience in fighting in and around Khost, though more as a foot soldier than a leader, or doctor, or financier. He also appears to have made contacts internationally that later would bear fruit.

In his first pilgrimage to the heart of the matter, Zaraqawi reached the periphery, but not the inner circle of international *jihadism*. But his military / terrorist training in the late 1980s seems to have had brought him into some contact in Afghanistan with Osama bin Laden's Al

³⁴ Jacquard: 109-110.

Qaeda.³⁵ In terms of his ideological development, Zarqawi appears to have been most impressed there by taped sermons by Abdallah Azzam, Osama's religious mentor, that were still circulating even though Azzam himself had perished in a car bombing in 1989.

Zarqawi returned to the complex alleyways of Islamism in Jordan in 1993, and found there his own Islamist mentor to mirror Osama's Azzam: the Palestinian, Abu Mohammed Al-Maqdisi, "one of the most conspicuous theoreticians of jihad in the early 1990s," who taught him that "democracy... is the religion of pagans."³⁶ The two organized the clandestine organization *Bayt Al-Iman* to oppose the Hashemite rulers of Jordan and to prepare attacks against Israel. This was quite out of sync with the agenda of the largely secular rulers of Jordan, who were warming toward Israel in preparation for a full peace treaty with the Jewish state at that time. Zarqawi and Maqdisi each soon was jailed, in 1994; in 1996, Zarqawi's already harsh two year confinement was finalized at a trial where he was sentenced to 15 years.

During his years of incarceration at the Suwaqah, the Al-Salt, and the Jafar prisons, Zarqawi emerged as a leader among prisoners in "a formidable breeding ground in which the most divergent Islamist causes were thrown together."³⁷ Though isolated from larger society, Zarqawi remained in close touch with supporters beyond the prison walls: "supporters outside the prison never stopped visiting the two (i.e., Zarqawi and Al-Maqdisi), bringing them letters and delivering letters from them."³⁸ He was freed in March 1999 as part of a general amnesty issued by the new Jordanian king, Abdallah, in a risky gesture of accommodation toward the various foes of his father, Hussein, who had died in January 1999. Zarqawi then returned to Zarqa for only one month to visit his wife and family before setting off for Hayatabad, Pakistan to become a full time terrorist. Here he again briefly was jailed, this time in a failing repression of foreign Islamists by the soon-to-be-deposed civilian government of Benazir Bhutto. Upon his release, he went for a short time to Karachi, but near the end of the summer of 1999, he returned to Afghanistan. Taking advantage of his contacts from prison and with Maqdisi (who was well

³⁵ Brisard: 25-26.

³⁶ Brisard: 33.

³⁷ Brisard: 47.

³⁸ Hazem Al-Amin, writing in *Al-Hayat* (London: December 14-15, 2004) developed a portrait of Zarqa and of Zarqawi's ties to terrorist groups there and elsewhere in Jordan. Excerpts from that inquiry are available in translation at: Middle East Media Research Institute, "Special Dispatch Series No. 848: *Al-Hayat* Inquiry: The City of Al-Zarqa in Jordan – Breeding Ground of Jordan's Salafi Jihad Movement," (January 17, 2005): <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP84805>

known and respected by Al Qaeda), Zarqawi ingratiated himself to Abu Zubaydah, Al Qaeda's head of operations and a fellow Jordanian. By 2001, he would take an oath of allegiance to Osama bin Laden,³⁹ rising in the organization to become a "lieutenant," but not a top leader in Al Qaeda.

Zarqawi remained to a certain degree independent, and his followers called themselves *al-Tawhid*, developing their own separate financing, recruits, and contacts. After a time, Zarqawi relocated from Kabul and Kandahar, where Bin Laden et. al. were most of the time, to Herat, in western Afghanistan near the Iranian border. There he was active training younger new *jihadists* from Palestine and Jordan in the arts of terror, uniquely instructing in the use of chemical weapons at his training camp. Zarqawi was a man with organized ambitions, and while somewhat like the other Al Qaeda leaders' in ideological orientation, he had an even broader focus. During the late 1990s, *al-Tawhid* formed cells of supporters not just in South Asia and the Middle East, but in Hamburg, in Spain, and in other Western countries. There, Zarqawi's followers targeted primarily Jordanian and Jewish symbols and sites. For one of these, the so-called "Millennium Attack" on Jordanian tourism sites including the Radisson Hotel in Amman, Zarqawi was one of 26 terrorists convicted in the plot; he was given a fifteen year sentence *in absentia*. The Radisson raid of 1999 failed; but it and two other sites in Amman were attacked successfully on November 9, 2005, by Zarqawi-dispatched suicide bombers; 58 innocent people—virtually all Muslims—died.

After the failure of the millennium plot and in anticipation of repression to come, either on bin Laden's instructions or on his own initiative, Zarqawi began the spadework to develop a new base in the mountainous northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan. After several trips from Herat to Kurdistan in 2000, Zarqawi emerged as a leader of Islamists in the region, and new camps were established.⁴⁰ To move his men and equipment there, Iranian collaboration—or at least acquiescence—was essential; with this accommodation, his chemical and biological weapons training facility at Sargat was established. Old allies from his Jordanian prison days, and from the *Bayt Al-Iman* organization, converged there to augment the extant Ansar al-Islam fighters who had taken up with Zarqawi. After 9/11, the American attack on Afghanistan, and the fall of Al Qaeda's hosts, the Taliban Government of Afghanistan in Fall 2001, Zarqawi and many of his

³⁹ Brisard: 67.

⁴⁰ Brisard: 77-79.

men in Afghanistan made their way across Iran to this base in Kurdistan, in northern Iraq. By this time, Zarqawi emerged as the clear leader of this diverse pack of terrorists, though Ansar al-Islam also had had its own origins and founder, Mullah Krekar. Krekar, whose primacy had been eclipsed by Zarqawi, fled into a safe exile in Norway in 2002.⁴¹ Other substantial elements of Zarqawi's network seem to have remained in Iran.

If Osama and Zawahiri remain men of ideas who principally plan or authorize actions by others, Zarqawi emerged before his death in a U.S. air raid (June 2006) as a man primarily of direct action, leading multinational teams of terrorist volunteers. In death he remains an inspirational leader, setting a model as an operational commander for others to follow: "If bin Laden is the Robin Hood of jihad, [Abu Musab] Zarqawi has been its Horatio Alger, and Iraq his field of dreams."⁴² Personally, he was responsible in 2004 for the beheading of American Nicholas Berg. Zarqawi's Islamism also appeared to differ slightly from that of Osama. While Osama urged Muslims to set aside rivalries with other Muslims in his 1996 communiqué,⁴³ Zarqawi openly denied that the Shi'a branch of Islam, in fact, was of Islam. In February 2004, a captured Zarqawi letter advocated a strategy of fomenting a civil war against the Iraqi Shi'ites.⁴⁴ To understate matters considerably, this position appears to have put limits on the level of support Iran, one of the last remaining state sponsors of Militant Islamist terrorism, could give him or his surviving organization. Zarqawi expressed a particularly venomous attitude toward "apostate" Sunni Muslims. For example, he openly took credit for sending Sajida Rishawi (a woman) and several other suicide bombers to Amman, Jordan to attack a Muslim wedding party, and three hotels on November 9, 2005. Fifty seven died in that attack that did much to roil Jordanian public opinion – opinion that had previously tended toward support for extreme Militant Islamism (see below) – against Zarqawi.

⁴¹ Krekar (birth name: Najmuddin Faraj Ahmad) was indicted by the Jordanians in the Millennium Attack case, but as there is no extradition treaty between Jordan and Norway, the Ansar-al-Islam leader remained outside the reach of the law; Brisard: 82.

⁴² Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting it Right* (New York: Times Books, 2005).

⁴³ The 1996 document states, for example: "An internal war is a great mistake, no matter what reasons are there for it."

⁴⁴ Version released by the Coalition Provision Authority (February 12, 2004): http://www.cpa-iraq.org/transcripts/20040212_zarqawi_full.html ; also reproduced in Brisard: 233-251.

Thus, despite apparent ideological, strategic, and doctrinal differences, Zarqawi's group, al-Tawhid, in 2005-06 moved away from targeting U.S. soldiers alone, to embrace Al Qaeda's tactic of dramatically murdering innocents. Formally merged with Al Qaeda in 2004, even after Zarqawi's death, his surviving contemporary group continued to go by the name he chose, "Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers" (i.e., Iraq). Letters intercepted in 2005-06 that were sent among Osama, Ayman, and Abu Musab, as well as statements transmitted by them indicated almost a fawning respect by Osama for Zarqawi's militant achievements. Indeed, in the month of May 2005 alone, more suicide bombers attacked coalition forces in Iraq than had Palestinian suicide bombers attacked Israelis in the preceding twelve years.⁴⁵ Most were Zarqawi's bombers; rejoicing was widespread in Iraq when two U.S. five hundred pound bombs brought down Zarqawi's safe house on him, dealing him fatal injuries. But, as a martyr to the cause of Militant Islamism, in death Zarqawi remained representative of the new face of transnational terrorism: willing to travel, willing to die in carrying out militant actions against apostate Muslims and Western targets.

Stepping back from this blizzard of biographical details to analyze, what do these roots of the leadership of Al Qaeda demonstrate?

- In each case, the young man found a strong sense of identity in a politicized reading of his religious affiliation;
- By organized contact with others of similar views, each found a channel for personal direction, fulfillment.
- Via practical action, each chose to put his religious identity into effect through violence. Each joined a *jihad* that was a practical, armed conflict.
- Each experienced encouragement and success through these choices. An empowering victory over the Soviet Union reinforced deeply internalized religious doctrines, doctrines that repeatedly speak of ultimate success, triumph, of Islam. Within a certain strand of Muslim society, each enjoyed enhanced status.
- Each was punished by the conservative state of their birth: two were jailed, one briefly was prevented from following the radical path by house arrest.

⁴⁵ International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The *Jihad*: Change and Continuation," *Strategic Comments* 11, 7 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, September 2005): <http://www.iiss.org>

- To pursue their growing sense of mission, each chose exile from their homeland.
- Thus, a trans-national perspective, one larger than Saudi, or Jordanian, or Egyptian nationalism, was woven into the core experiences that shaped the lives each of these three leaders of Militant Islam.

These broad strokes point to a distinctive pattern in socialization, a pattern substantially at variance from the path followed by most other young Arab men, other young, devout followers of Islam, who completed school and went to work. But the pattern in these three biographies raises a deeper issue. Why would violence be a thread each would weave into their larger cloth of religious identity? Here we must digress for a moment to examine the issue of “influences” at a level different from personal biography.

The emergence of Militant Islam as a potent cluster of networks, of organized armed men, and of willing “self-starter volunteers” in the cause, is also the story of the power of ideas. Militant Islam is not just a set of groups to be identified, men to be arrested. Militant Islam is the most potent political ideology in our times.

Ideologies are political creeds. They are whole world views: sets of values logically integrated; values that guide the believer to a political program; political programs built around an imperative sense that changed destiny for humanity awaits. Across the academy, across the West, we can find Political Science courses, Sociology courses, Philosophy courses on Political Ideology. The grand old men studied in them, Marx, Lenin, Mao, Hitler, are also grand old dead men; and the ideas engaged move the hearts of few in this age. We are, as it were, behind the curricular curve. But if the typical content of college courses, the typical Political Ideology 201, is a dated, stale tour of “yesterday’s was-isms,” the need to study the rising Political Ideologies of our age is growing acute.

Few Americans know Sayyid Qutb, an Egyptian radical executed by the Nasser regime in 1966. But to many boys across the region from Morocco to Iraq, and to most young members of Palestinian militant Islamist organizations, Sayyid Qutb is a “must read.” Many carry his most popular work, *Milestones*, as a sort of latter day pocket icon, along the lines of the uses put to the *Quotations of Chairman Mao* in late 1960s China: a club with which to figuratively beat “class enemies” during the day, and a nurturing guide to cozy up with to study at night.

Qutb argued a case that had great influence on Zawahiri (we know), Osama (we can infer), and Zarqawi (we suspect). Qutb argued a short set of major points, professing to rely on *his own reading* of a single source, the Koran, as his guide. Not mediated by clerics, but distilled alone, at times isolated and alienated in the decadent West (i.e., Greeley, Colorado, in 1949)⁴⁶, Qutb found blazing insights that the follower is told he/she now also can find, alone, reading just the Koran,... guided, perhaps, by the quiet hand of Sayyid on their shoulder:

- First, he argued that the conflict between believers in Islam, i.e., those who act properly in following the word of God, and those who don't, whom he called *Jahiliyyah*, is permanent, unchangeable, not amenable to compromises, or deals.
- Second, he reiterated what amounts to a conventional view in much of the region, stating that this clash will unite a now too divided Muslim faithful, pitting the power of their God against the states of the unbelievers. Somewhat unconventionally, he widened his targeting to include communists and capitalists alike. This was a departure from the reigning pieties of the educated at the time he wrote this—the 1960s—, a time when many secular Arabs were leaning toward alliance with the Soviet Union as the natural ally of a “post-colonial” Arab world.
- Third, -- and this was what was most original in Qutb—he argued that *all existing states in the Muslim world were also Jahiliyyah*: "...all the existing so-called 'Muslim' societies are also *jahili* societies" ... "all these societies [are] unIslamic and illegal"⁴⁷. Accordingly,
- Fourth, he argued that the believer needs to retreat from his own, corrupted society to purify himself, so better to prepare to act in this world to change it.
- Fifth, he argued that in order to confront and transform the world too filled with *Jahiliyyah a vanguard group is needed*: ““Only such a revivalist movement will eventually attain to the status of world leadership... It is necessary that there should be a vanguard... that this vanguard should know the landmarks and the milestones of the road toward this goal"... "Islamic belief should at once materialize into a practical movement..."⁴⁸. This insight directly mirrors the emergence of Leninism in Western socialist thought in the early

⁴⁶ See Robert Siegel, “Sayyid Qutb’s America” National Public Radio transcript: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1253796>

⁴⁷ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Cedar Rapids IA: The Mother Mosque Foundation, 1981): 82.

⁴⁸ Qutb: 9-10, 41.

20th century, in that a party of *full time professional revolutionaries* is defined in the ideology to be essential if the aims of the movement are to be realized.⁴⁹

- And finally, he outlined the goal to be the re-creation of the Caliphate, the God-guided Muslim empire that Militant Islamists imagine to be the character of the scheme of things under the Arab Empire at its height.

Other religious authorities, some well established, some activists, also played important roles in shaping the worldview of our three men, and in legitimizing these broad innovations in Militant Islamic ideology. Sheikh Hassan al-Turabi, instigator of the 1989 Sudanese coup d'état, served as a spiritual guide to Osama and Ayman during part of their exile in Sudan.⁵⁰ Abdullah Azzam, with whom Osama in the 1980s would form the "Services Bureau" in Peshawar, Pakistan (a root from which Al Qaeda emerged), also was a theological influence on the young Osama: tapes of Azzam's sermons seem to have fascinated Osama during his period of study at Abdul Aziz University (Saudi Arabia).⁵¹ But both al-Turabi and Azzam substantially adhered to the broad outlines of Qutb's thought. Essentially, they adapted tenets of Qutb's thinking to action political programs. Thus, modern Militant Islamism stems in large ways from Qutb's precepts and from his analysis. We next must consider the human agents through which leaders inspired by Militant Islamist ideology have impact through terrorism.

3. Operational Members

Much recent scholarship has focused on the apparently changed nature of the organizational structure of Al Qaeda. Most influentially, Arquilla et.al. in 1999 described a new terrorist model of which al Qaeda is a representative part as "netwar:" a model of terrorist organizations in which hierarchical command structures have morphed into new, flatter arrangements.⁵² In this dichotomy, hierarchical terrorist organizations in the 1980s are

⁴⁹ V.I. Lenin, "What is to be Done (1902)," in *Lenin on Politics and Revolution* ed. James E. Connor (New York: Pegasus/Bobbs-Merrill, 1968): 31-78, especially 62: "...the organization of the revolutionaries must consist first and foremost of people who make revolutionary activity their profession... Such an organization must not be extensive and must be as secret as possible."

⁵⁰ Roland Jacquard, *In the Name of Osama Bin Laden* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2002): 27-36.

⁵¹ Thomas Kean, et. al. *The 9/11 Report*, p. 55: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

⁵² John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, from "Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism," in Ian O. Lesser, John Arquilla, Bruce Hoffman, David Ronfeldt, Michele Zanini and Brian Jenkins, *Countering the New Terrorism* (RAND Corporation, 1999).

conceived to have employed acts of terror as part of a strategy of coercive diplomacy, seeking to influence a broad audience in the West and in targeted states (e.g. Israel) to pressure their governments to consent to policies that would reward the terrorists' demands. Thus, old terrorism in the Middle Eastern region is conceived to resemble terrorism by ethno-nationalist groups in other world regions, e.g. Ireland or Sri Lanka. In contrast to this known type of terrorism, the more loosely guided netwar terrorists of our present age are conceived to employ wholesale-scale terror as part of an agenda that has setting off global conflict –war-- as its chief strategic aim, with an ultimate objective of transforming the entire global system. If old terrorists wanted lots of people watching but few dead, modern terrorists appear to want lots of people both watching and dead. Their audience is both in the targeted societies and in the societies from which they seek to recruit new operatives.

The netwar model usefully points toward elements that have evolved in terrorists' structures and goals, but the contrasts drawn between the new and the old terrorism in the Middle Eastern region also can be overstated. The quintessential act of the new terrorism, the "Planes Operation" of Al Qaeda – the terrorists' name for the attacks on the U.S. of September 11, 2001 – involved hierarchical elements. Most especially: 9/11 was centrally planned, funded, timed, and executed on orders of Osama bin Laden. Originally proposed to the Al Qaeda group in Afghanistan in 1996 by Khalid Sheikh Mohammad (hereafter: KSM), the project was approved by top Al Qaeda authorities before KSM undertook to recruit operatives to carry it out. Funded largely, though not entirely, by central Al Qaeda decision makers, it cost approximately \$400,000 to one half million dollars to carry out. The 19 operatives were provided this money through the organization and apparently did not self-finance to any great degree. Initially designed to take place during July 2001, the organization responded flexibly, but hierarchically, when chief operative Mohammad Atta conveyed through KSM that the date for the attack needed to be moved back a couple months. While close day-to-day supervision by Al Qaeda's top commanders in Afghanistan was absent, representing a degree of departure from the requirements of a strictly hierarchical "command and control" model, all key elements of the operation nevertheless were designed, approved, timed, financed, and ultimately carried out by organization members who earlier had sworn allegiance in person to Osama bin Laden.

Tactically, the "Planes Operation" employed "swarming," one of the distinguishing characteristics Arquilla et.al. cited to most clearly distinguish modern (or "new") from historic

(i.e. “old”) terrorism. “Swarms” of simultaneous, multiple attacks appear designed to multiply the shock effect created by sensational wholesale acts of killing in the new terrorism. Clearly, the use of four hijackings on 9/11 represented an operationalization of “swarming” as described by Arquilla et.al. two years prior to the attack. Importantly, the fear of additional hijackings that day reinforced the effectiveness of this magnifier on the consciousness of any American who lived through that day. Once a “swarm” of attacks takes place, the targeted public simply cannot for some time be sure the full extent of the attacks has passed. “Swarming” magnifies the effect of the limited resources Militant Islamist terrorists can employ.

Many, but not all,⁵³ subsequent attacks by Al Qaeda and allied Militant Islamist groups also have employed “swarming.” The Bali bombings of October 2002 struck sites within minutes of each other, killing 198. A “swarm” of four truck bombings over three days in November 2003, in Istanbul, Turkey, involved 73 operatives and killed 57. The total cost was about \$170,000.⁵⁴ Thirty operatives⁵⁵ orchestrated the March 11, 2003, attacks on four trains and/or train stations in Madrid, Spain, and for a total cost of about \$15,000⁵⁶ they killed 191.⁵⁷

⁵³ E.g., the April 11, 2002 truck-bomb attack on German tourists at the ancient synagogue at Djerba, Tunisia was a single attack. In 2006, a Spanish court convicted a Pakistani and a Spaniard as accessories in this attack: http://www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/05/10/spain.tunisia.bombing/?section=cnn_latest

⁵⁴ Karl Vick, “Suspect in Al-Qaeda Bombings Disrupts Trial in Turkey,” *Washington Post* (March 21, 2006): 11. (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/20/AR2006032000802.html>)

⁵⁵ “Madrid Bombing Suspects” BBC News online (March 10, 2005): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/3560603.stm>

⁵⁶ Mark Rice-Oxley, “Why terror financing is so tough to track down,” *Christian Science Monitor* (March 8, 2006): 4. (<http://academic.mbc.edu/gbowen/TerroristFinancing2006.htm>)

⁵⁷ “Transit Systems as Terror Targets,” BBC News Online (July 7, 2005): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4659547.stm>; Pamela Rolfe, “29 Indicted for Roles in Madrid Bombings: Judge Says Al-Qaeda Inspired Local Cell,” *Washington Post* (April 12, 2006): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/11/AR2006041101567.html>

For about \$2000,⁵⁸ 43 bombers and their operational assistants⁵⁹ bombed London four subway cars and transit buses, killing 56 in July 2005.⁶⁰

The extent to which direct operational command was exercised by Al Qaeda organizational leaders in each of these “swarming” terrorist operations is a matter for detailed assessment in each case, and how guiding would be a theory based on the evidence from so small a set of cases is still more problematic. More generally, Sagemen⁶¹ studied the biographies of 172 terrorists and found that a range of social networks engaged these individuals, gave direction and meaning to their often diffuse anger, helping to shape the organizational forms their terrorism ultimately took. Whether all militant Islamist terrorist operatives will come to the movement through recruitment, or self-recruitment, processes similar to those Sagemen found remains unclear. Other ideas about how to identify operatives border on hunches, but not all hunches should be dismissed out of hand. Paz earlier theorized presciently from a thin evidentiary base, pointing in advance to the contemporary trend toward cells that are multi-national in their composition, especially those in Europe and North America.⁶² Hard findings proving any theory about operatives ultimately may be limited by the necessarily incomplete range of data informing such theories. As Michael Scheuer, one of the best informed U.S. analysts of terrorism recently noted, “the West's accounting of Islamist manpower --at the foot soldier and leadership levels-- is, at best, tenuous.”⁶³

However, as chart 2 demonstrates, a readily evident evolution in the “new terrorism” has been the trend toward falling costs: wholesale killing has gotten a lot cheaper. Complicated

⁵⁸ Rice-Oxley. Rice-Oxley reported the lower figure here. Other reports put the sum required lower still, at “several hundred pounds:” Sarah Lyall, “London Bombers Tied to Internet, Not Al Qaeda, Newspaper Says,” *New York Times* (April 11, 2006): <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/11/world/europe/11london.html>. My higher figure comes from a better informed source and may be more reliable: a lecture May 29, 2006 by Institute for Counter-Terrorism expert Yoni Figchel at Tel Aviv University, delivered to the Academic Fellows of the 2006 Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, of which this author was a member. The point to be emphasized is that none of these sums is particularly high.

⁵⁹ “July 21 Attacks: Arrests and Charges” BBC News online (March 7, 2006): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4732361.stm>

⁶⁰ “London Bombers staged ‘dummy run,’” BBC News online (Sept. 20, 2005): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4263176.stm>.

⁶¹ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁶² Reuvan Paz (2001), “*The Brotherhood of Global Jihad*,” (Israel: unpublished manuscript at PRISM website, October 2001): 15 pp, plus two appendices (10 pp).

⁶³ Michael Scheuer, “Al-Qaeda's Next Generation: Less Visible and More Lethal,” *Terrorism Focus* 2, 18 (October 4, 2005).

“swarming” operations may now be within the creative capability of wholly autonomous “self-starter” cells of volunteers familiar with the ideology of militant Islamism, trained by reading resources they find on the internet, but not formal members of any organization. Or, they may still be operational agents of distinct terrorist organizations. This determination is a matter that the criminal trials in each case will have to establish. What is undeniable is that the level of financing for such operations no longer appears dependent on Osama’s checkbook, if it ever was. But, even if the London attacks were wholly initiated by the small group now facing charges there, it is also clear that the development of this autonomous capability has its origins in a strategic decision made by a central organization under withering U.S. attack.

Chart 2: Evolution of Financing of Terrorist “Swarming” Operations

event	cost	# operatives	# killed
USA: 4 airplanes, Sept. 11, 2001	\$400,000 – \$500,000	19	2996
Turkey: 4 truck bombings, Nov. 2003	\$170,000	73	57
Madrid: 4 train bombings, March 2004	\$15,000	30	191
London: 4 transit bombings, July 2005	\$2000	43	56

4. Supporters

How big *is* this movement: how wide is the range of its appeal? Here we engage more readily available evidence that speaks to the issue of whether Militant Islamism represents some sort of fringe group, a marginal enemy, or not. Are contemporary international terrorists correctly viewed as latter-day pirates, i.e. men living on the periphery of society, violent men who prey on a largely bullied community? Or, alternatively, are contemporary international

terrorists better understood as an expression of an important, integral part of contemporary Muslim societies?

Military historian Robert O'Connell suggested the pirates analogy.⁶⁴ Perhaps pirates once had seven, eight in ten Jamaicans, or Panamanian, cheering them on. Mr. Gallup wasn't around when Captain Morgan sailed the Caribbean, so that matter is to a considerable extent anyone's guess. A stronger body of historical evidence, however, seems to point toward the historic pirates' unpopularity, though the lusty sacking of port cities certainly did have appeal to a certain strata of young men who in a sociological sense might be said to resemble the 9.11 hijackers. In late 2005, a wave of genuine piracy menaced shipping on the coast of East Africa, suggesting that the study of piracy is not merely of historic interest. So, perhaps O'Connell is on to something. But to see contemporary *jihadist* terrorism as akin to piracy may mingle two quite different phenomena. Historic piracy was feared, unpopular, and more resembled the wild plunderers seizing and ransoming cargo vessels lately on the high seas off Somalia. Militant Islamist terrorists, on the other hand, often display patience, discipline, and a near complete absence of an agenda driven by personal financial betterment. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the Al Qaeda leader who planned the 9.11 attack, did so for five years. Nearly all modern Islamist terrorists seek not booty, or even territorial bargaining as a worldly "gain" through their violence. Indeed, it is wholesale killing that has become an end unto itself to them.⁶⁵ Thus I think the "pirates" metaphor mis-aligned. Militant Islam is *not* like the pirates of old.

Considerable evidence supports the conclusion that the (a) ideals, (b) leaders, and (c) chief tactics of militant Islamist terrorism enjoy substantial support. Each of these foci now will be addressed.

⁶⁴ O'Connell suggested this analogy to the author in a private communication. He is best known for: Robert O'Connell, *Of Arms and Men* (NY: Oxford U.P., 1989); Robert O'Connell, *Ride of the Second Horseman: The Birth and Death of War* (NY: Oxford U.P., 1996).

⁶⁵ John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, from "Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism," in Ian O. Lesser, John Arquilla, Bruce Hoffman, David Ronfeldt, Michele Zanini and Brian Jenkins, *Countering the New Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1999). Arquilla argued that 1980s terrorists and modern ethno-nationalists used hostages and terror as part of a strategy of "coercive diplomacy," to gain worldly goals; modern "netwar" terrorists differ, and use terror to wage war of a virtually unlimited kind without connection to a bargaining process that could be said to resemble pirates sacking cities in order to earn future payments of tribute.

(a) Support in the Middle East is widespread for instituting Islamic law, an ideal championed by militant Islamist terrorist movements.

An extensive survey of public opinion in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Palestinian territories was conducted late in 2004 and issued by its sponsor in February 2005.⁶⁶ The authors' principal concerns were to explore differences in attitudes toward different Western states, and a chief finding emphasized throughout the study was that France and its leaders are not nearly so reviled as are U.S. and British policies, and our leaders. These findings echo findings in many other studies. But among the topics also explored were questions that addressed the preferences of the sample toward transforming their societies to more closely adhere to the rules set down in Islamic law, or *shari'a*. It is pertinent here to remind the reader that, following Qutb, one of the key critiques made by militant Islamist terrorists is that contemporary Muslim states inadequately embrace Islamic teachings as the basis of law and governance. This argument enjoys broad support: approximately two thirds of the Muslim respondents in Egypt, in the Palestinian territories, and in Jordan agreed that *shari'a* should be the sole source of law in their country; and a further 30-35 percent in each state affirmed the more moderate position that *shari'a* should be "a source" of law.⁶⁷ Very few subscribed to a Western ideal of separating secular (i.e., governmental) from religious authority. Levels of support were somewhat lower in Lebanon and Syria, but only in Lebanon did even as many as thirty percent of Muslims oppose use of *shari'a* as a basis for law. The authors of the University of Jordan study emphasized that publics across the region embrace an elastic view of what constitutes Islamic law (*Ijtihad*), with less than ten percent in each country holding to the extreme fundamentalist view that the meaning of Islamic law is settled, and has been settled for all time.

Social role partly can explain varying levels of support for a religious basis for law, but in none of these states did a majority among social elites support keeping Islamic rules separate from legal codes. When attitudes of various elite groups in the core countries of the Middle East (i.e., Egypt, Palestinian territories, Jordan) were compared to the overall sample, less ardor for *shari'a* as the sole source of law turned up. In Jordan, for example, two thirds of the national

⁶⁶ Center for Strategic Studies (C.S.S.), "Revisiting the Arab Street: Research from Within," (Amman: Center for Strategic Studies of the University of Jordan-Amman, February 2005): <http://www.cssjordan.org/new/REVISITINGTTHEARABSTREETReport.pdf>

⁶⁷ C.S.S., "Revisiting the Arab Street...": 52.

sample supported the “*shari’a* as the sole source” position, but only 28 percent of media elites, and around 40 percent of business elites did. In Egypt, over sixty percent of the national sample supported the “*shari’a* as the sole source” position, but only slightly more than thirty percent of media elites, and about 35 percent of business elites, did. In the Palestinian territories, about 65 percent of the national sample supported the “*shari’a* as the sole source” position, but only about twenty percent of media elites did. A majority among Palestinian business elites, however, supported exclusive use of *shari’a* law.⁶⁸

Levels of education, however, did not correlate with attitudes toward “*shari’a* as the sole source” of legislation. Whether an Egyptian, a Jordanian, a Lebanese, or a Palestinian has minimal, high school, or collegiate levels of education, only small variances turned up in levels of support for instituting *shari’a* law in their countries. In reporting these data, the C.S.S. authors pooled these states’ samples, stating “58% of the respondents with low education, 59% of those with moderate education, and 56% with higher education believe that Shari’a must be the *only* source of legislation in their countries” (emphasis in original).⁶⁹ Similarly, age does not explain the upsurge in support for instituting Islamic law as the sole basis for national legislation: a majority in each age cohort group favors it, and only 10 to 13 percent in each age group in these states oppose such direct religious influence.

(b) Support also is widespread for the leaders of the militant Islamist terrorist movement.

In the lands of Islam, from Morocco to Indonesia, and across a broad swath of sub-Saharan Africa, Osama is not widely feared; he is popular.⁷⁰ Not among all, to be sure, but among disturbingly large percentages of the population Osama, Ayman, and Abu-Musab are heroes. Anecdotal evidence of this abounds: “Osama” has become a popular birth name for new children; Osama T-Shirts have been observed to be selling briskly in various open markets. Let us try to bring a draftsman’s precision to the brush strokes anecdotes can supply to this disturbing painting.

⁶⁸ C.S.S., “Revisiting the Arab Street...”: 52.

⁶⁹ C.S.S., “Revisiting the Arab Street...”: 52-53.

⁷⁰ A widely read early look into this topic was: Dale Eickelman, “Bin Laden, the Arab ‘Street’, and the Middle East’s Democracy Deficit,” *Current History* (January 2002): 36-39.

Real evidence to substantiate the popularity of Islamist extremists quickly can become a controversial definitional point. Prima facie, it could be argued, for example, it might be argued that Hamas' victory in the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006 supports this conclusion. But such an assertion needlessly would provoke contentiousness among readers regarding the appropriateness of including Hamas, or any Palestinian militant group, in this analysis. Rather than engage that point now, it is evidence about widespread popular support for the leader of Al Qaeda that most directly supports the thesis of this study, and which now must be presented.

The Pew Center for Research, a reputable U.S. institution, repeatedly has polled Muslim publics on these matters using teams of trained nationals in each country studied. These polls show that across the Muslim world Osama bin Laden is a popular, not a reviled, figure. In a poll Pew released in June 2003, the question was asked about leaders who could be counted on to “do the right thing.” When that was asked about Osama bin Laden, 71 percent of Palestinians, 58 percent of Indonesians, 55 percent of Jordanians, 49 percent of Moroccans, and 45 percent of Pakistanis stated that they then regarded Osama bin Laden as a leader in whom they have confidence he will “do the right thing.” That same poll, incidentally, showed **no fewer than 3 in 4 respondents in every single Muslim nation** were disappointed that Iraqis had not resisted the U.S. invasion more.

Chart Two⁷¹

	Had confidence Osama bin Laden will “do the right thing” (2003)	Real number this represents
Palestinians	71 %	n/a
Pakistan	45 %	66.7 million
Jordan	55 %	2.9 million
Morocco	45 %	13.5 million
Lebanon	25%	.55 million
Indonesia	58%	124.4 million

⁷¹ Pew Center for Research, “Views of a Changing World” (June 2003): p. 3; <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/185.pdf> (attitudes about Iraqi resistance to U.S., at page 4); World Bank, *World Development Report 2005* (Oxford U.P., 2004): pp. 256-257.

That was one poll, a random slice in time, perhaps. As social scientists, we want to see replication, trends. The next year, 2004, a poll of Saudis⁷² –commissioned by the monarchy – asked “do you agree or disagree with the sermons and rhetoric of Osama bin Laden most of the time?” and about how they felt about the U.S.A. Chart three (below) illustrates that in the heart of the Muslim world, the land of Mecca, Osama outpolls the U.S.:

Chart 3

	How do you feel about the sermons and rhetoric of Osama bin Laden (2004)	Real number ←	Do you favor strong and close relations with the United States (2004)
Agree with	48 %	10.8 M	41 %
Disagree with	37 %	8.3 M	57 %

A third poll, by Pew, done in 2005 found attitudes toward Osama to have become more favorable in Jordan (60 percent favorable) and in Pakistan (51 percent favorable), and to have declined in Indonesia (35 percent favorable) and Morocco (26 percent favorable). (Only very small levels of support for Osama were found Lebanon and Turkey). One thing is clear: Militant Islamic leaders in 2003-05 enjoyed substantial support right across the Middle East, in its core, the land of Mecca, and in its periphery (Morocco), and beyond. Most disturbing to the smug view that this is a problem among Arabs, only, is the finding that support is high in the two most populous non-Arab Muslim countries, Pakistan and Indonesia.

(c) Support for the tactics employed by militant Islamist terrorists

Especially since the suicide attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, suicide bombings have, to a Western eye, earned the reputation of being wretched, at least to the uninitiated public. In the academy, on the other hand, a camp has evolved that sees in suicide terrorism a rational strategy with a payoff,⁷³ something of a last option of the weak: “suicide

⁷² Poll: Washington Post (June 8, 2004): http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/daily/graphics/saudipoll_060804.html ; Population: World Bank, *World Development Report 2005* (Oxford U.P., 2004): pp. 256-257.

⁷³ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win : The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (NY: Random House, 2005). Among the best responses to this “rational actor” camp was that penned by the sagacious Walter Laqueur, who found in the

attack as a weapon of terror is usually chosen by weaker parties against materially stronger foes when fighting methods of lesser cost seem unlikely to succeed."⁷⁴ In this tendentious formulation, murder has become a form of political communication.

But across North Africa to Pakistan, to Southeast Asia, to a substantial percentage of Muslim society, suicide bombings are popular. The actual attacks on the twin towers – three thousand dead Americans— are a matter researched as if stumbling through a mine field of fantasy. Some evidence of the bizarre Muslim response to 9/11 is anecdotal: CBS News in September 2002 featured a long segment in which Pakistanis of all income levels (e.g., including medical doctors and other professionals) freely expressed their belief that Jews, not Osama, had committed the attack.⁷⁵ More disgustingly, more than a year after the attack a Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Nayef Ibn Abd-Al-Aziz, memorably denied that any of his citizens even were involved: “It is impossible that 19 youths, including 15 Saudis, carried out the operation of September 11.”⁷⁶ These sorts of outrageous comments provoke wonder, but do not inform us very well, regarding the breadth of the problem.

Overall, the 9/11 attacks themselves, the 3000 dead Americans, remain no large embarrassment in the lands of Islam: the men who attacked us are heroes, the acts themselves are popular, and this view has held up for over four years. Not among all, to be sure, but among disturbingly large percentages of Muslim populations, mass murderers of Westerners are heroes. Shockingly, support rises with socio-economic and educational level. In October 2005 –four years after the attack– the Gallup Organization polled publics in eight Muslim countries, probing the characteristics of those who still said they supported the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. According to a May 2006 Washington Post summary of Gallup’s study, those who regularly attended prayer services were no more likely than those who did not to approve of 9/11, and: “about 25 percent of all Muslims with higher-than-average incomes supported the 9/11 attacks– slightly more than

New Terrorism not rationality but unusual fanaticism: Walter Laqueur, *No End to War: Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Continuum Books, 2003): 29: "religious and nationalist fanaticism is the predominant feature of terrorism at the present time..."

⁷⁴ Scott Atran (2003), "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299 (March 7, 2003): 1534-1539.

⁷⁵ CBS News (Sept. 4, 2002): transcript available at <http://academic.mbc.edu/gbowen/BigLieMideast.htm>

⁷⁶ Middle East Media Research Institute, "Special Dispatch Series No. 446," (December 2, 2002): <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=saudiArabia&ID=SP44602>

those who had below-average incomes or were poor.”⁷⁷ High school or college graduates were found to be more supportive of extremism (44 percent) than were less educated Muslims (38 percent).

The problem levels of public support for the chief tactics Osama, Ayman and Abu Musab have employed can also be examined in a more generic ways. The Pew Center for Research has examined over several years the high, continuing levels of public support for the principal tactic of all Militant Islamists, suicide bombing. Support levels seem most to vary depending how we phrase the question. A first poll below, shown in Chart 4, is from 2005, and it shows significant minorities in diverse Muslim countries to support the general idea of suicide terrorism “in defense of Islam” *in the respondents’ own countries*:

Chart 4⁷⁸

Suicide bombing in defense of Islam: is it acceptable in “our country”?

	Found it acceptable in 2005	Real number this represents
Turkey	12 %	8.4 million
Pakistan	25 %	37.1 million
Jordan	30 %	1.59 million
Morocco	9 %	2.7 million
Lebanon	25%	.55 million
Indonesia	16%	34.3 million

Chart above includes those who answered that it is “often justified” or who answered “sometimes it is justified.” Lebanese figures reduced by ½ to reflect the fact that these questions were asked of, and responses can be extrapolated to, only the Muslim portion of the national census.

Bombing ones’ fellow citizens is a tough matter to rationalize, apparently. When the question is put more generically, the numbers rise, and the already shocking results become more disturbing. Since Pew asked this question over several years, we can identify the trend over the several years of our War on Terrorism; it is summarized in Chart 5, where again those who

⁷⁷ Richard Morin, “Unconventional Wisdom: A Terrifying Truth About Terrorism,” *Washington Post* (May 11, 2006): 2. To access original *Washington Post* story on this, scroll down from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/10/AR2006051001912.html> Unfortunately, despite having access to Gallup’s Archive through a departmental subscription, the original poll cited by the *Post* did not seem to be available.

⁷⁸ Pew Center for Research, *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics* (July 2005): 37: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/248topline.pdf>; World Bank, *World Development Report 2005* (Oxford U.P., 2004): pp. 256-257.

responded it is “often justified” have been combined with those who answered “sometimes it is justified.”

Chart 5 ⁷⁹

Is suicide bombing in defense of Islam justified?

	Found it justifiable in 2002	Found it justifiable in 2004	Found it justifiable in 2005
Turkey	13%	15 %	14%
Pakistan	33%	41%	25%
Jordan	43%		57%
Morocco		40 %	13%
Lebanon	73%		39%
Indonesia	27%		15%

Not all here is depressing, and we might even be rewarded if our approach is motivated by a well intentioned desire to glean hope from whatever results. Such a reader would be able to generate statements from this data such as: “While support for suicide bombing is rising in Turkey and Jordan; it has fallen in Pakistan, Indonesia and Morocco.” Indeed, the interpretative commentary Pew offered with their 2005 study included some phrasings not too different from that one. The report itself spun the story with a subtitle: “Support for Terror Wanes Among Muslim Publics,” even though that conclusion was entirely inconsistent with parts of the report itself, e.g. the Jordanian sub-sample.

Looking a second time at the absolute numbers, not at the trend, something more worrisome appears, as is shown in Chart 6 (below). What this view illustrates is that there are millions of potential allies to the small number terrorist masters, and the smaller still number of actual suicide terrorists. Political scientists who engage in the study of comparative revolutionary movements – a subfield often curiously unconnected to the modern study of terrorism—has shown that in other contexts it never is necessary to have most of the population become actual combatants. After reviewing the literature about revolutionary movements of the left, right, peasants, workers, etc., Thomas Greene put this point many decades ago “But even

⁷⁹ Pew Center for Research, *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics* (July 2005): 38: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/248topline.pdf>

revolutionary movements that succeed are based on a small percentage of the total population. A revolution involves minorities fighting minorities.”⁸⁰ Thus, a focus on the absence of majorities in favor of this or that leader, this or that tactic, substantially misses the point.

Chart 6

Real numbers of supporters of suicide bombing “in defense of Islam” in 2005

Turkey in 2005 had 9.9 million who support suicide bombing “in defense of Islam”	Pakistan in 2005 had 37.1 million who support suicide bombing “in defense of Islam”	Indonesia in 2005 had 9.9 million who support suicide bombing “in defense of Islam”
Jordan in 2005 had 3 million who support suicide bombing “in defense of Islam”	Morocco in 2005 had 3.9 million who support suicide bombing “in defense of Islam”	Lebanon in 2005 had .85 million who support suicide bombing “in defense of Islam”

These issues become still more pertinent as we examine responses to further differences in the phrasing of the questions so to include objects close to U.S. policy. Taking the abstractions out of this, and posing the question about groups widely unpopular in the region, support for suicide bombing rises if the objective of the bombers is to kill Jews, or the somewhat different phrasing, Israelis, in Chart 7 (below). This distinction seems of greater importance in the West than it is to Militant Islamists, who openly declare their war to be against Jews, not Israelis, or “Zionists.” On February 23, 1998, when the London Arabic-language daily *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* published bin Laden’s declaration of *Jihad*, the document that is widely regarded as a Declaration of War on the West⁸¹, it called for the killing the Americans, Jews and their allies and referred to this as “a commandment for every individual Muslim.” Again: not Israelis, not Zionists: Jews. Anti-Semitism drips throughout Militant Islamist discourse.⁸² Interestingly, when Pew asked Europeans, Muslim Middle Easterners, and others “what religion do you think

⁸⁰ Thomas Greene, *Comparative Revolutionary Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974): 47.

⁸¹ Bernard Lewis, “License to Kill,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1998).

⁸² Middle East Media Research Institute, “Contemporary Islamist Ideology Justifying Authorizing Murder,” MEMRI Special Report 25 (January 27, 2004): <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sr&ID=SR2504>

of as most violent”, scarcely any Europeans found Judaism to be violent, but nearly all –well over 80% in the region of the Middle East—believe the exact opposite.

Chart 7

Is suicide bombing against Israelis justified?⁸³

	Found it acceptable in 2004
Turkey	24
Pakistan	47
Jordan	86
Morocco	74

In light of this finding, it should not surprise us that nearly nine in ten Jordanians told Pew that suicide bombing of Israelis was justified, bombings that in almost every case have targeted civilians, not military forces. But so did one in four Turks, the most secular of Muslim states. And so did three in four Moroccans. Even among non-Arab Muslims, nearly half of all Pakistanis find suicide bombings justified. Consider what the percentages shown in Chart 7 represent in real numbers (as shown in Chart 8, below):

Chart 8

Turkey in 2004 had 16.9 million who support suicide bombing of Israelis	Pakistan in 2004 had 69.7 million who support suicide bombing of Israelis
Jordan in 2004 had 4.6 million who support suicide bombing of Israelis	Morocco in 2004 had 22.2 million who support suicide bombing of Israelis

On the matter of broad public support for suicide terrorism targeted against Israelis, the most pertinent sample to investigate is the Palestinian one, and there the issue becomes more complicated. Here the questions posed differ from those asked by Pew, and seek to measure the effectiveness of the tactic, not whether its use is “justified.” On the one hand, the Gallup

⁸³ Pew Center for Research, *A Year After Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Higher than Ever, Muslim Anger Persists* (March 16, 2004): <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/206.pdf>: p. 34.

Organization, reported on the eve of Hamas' ascent to majority status in the Palestinian parliament (January 2006) that when asked, Palestinians prefer to pursue self-determination using "non-violent" methods (54 percent) rather than to use "armed struggle and military solutions" (28 percent). But more Palestinians (44 percent) on that same poll stated that suicide bombings had improved their chances of winning a state, than those who thought suicide bombings had weakened their chances (34 percent). Only one in three Palestinians at that moment thought it a good idea to give up on the then year-long cease fire.⁸⁴

As the principal concern in this study has been to illuminate the global dimensions of the threat posed by militant Islamist terrorism, it is pertinent to reiterate that though Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri mentioned targeting Jews when they declared war in 1998, they also declared war on Americans. In the eyes of Al Qaeda, its associated groups, and others who subscribe to their ideology of militant Islamism, we all are fair game, anywhere, anytime: civilians or government officials. This is not a movement focused on the international laws of war which might, if it was declared by a competent authority, permit targeting of U.S. troops. This international movement targets American civilians: e.g., sixteen year old Daniel Wultz of Florida perished as a result of the April 17, 2006 suicide bombing in Tel Aviv. There are instructive elements in these ideology-laden manifestos that carefully don't just mention Israelis, but that embrace a broader framework for killings, and use the time-honored phrasing of anti-Semites throughout history. Osama targeted Jews, not Zionists, not Israelis, in his 1998 declaration. This distinction is important, as the congregants of Neve Shalom congregation, in Istanbul, Turkey, must appreciate. Neve Shalom has been attacked three times; it has never had ties with Israel. The most recent attackers of Neve Shalom – and of British targets in Istanbul virtually at the same time – declared themselves to be in service of the cause of Al Qaeda, but they did so with substantial local assistance.

We now turn to Pew's evidence of global Muslims' support for murdering Americans, as is illustrated in Chart 9, below.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Lydia Saad, "Insights into Hamas' Victory: Detailed Findings," (Gallup News Service, January 27, 2006).

⁸⁵ Pew Center for Research, *Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics* (July 2005): 38: <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/248topline.pdf>: 38.

Chart 9

Is suicide bombing against Westerners in Iraq justifiable?

	Found it justifiable in 2004	Found it justifiable in 2005	Real number in 2005
Turkey	31 %	24 %	16.9 million
Pakistan	46 %	29 %	43 million
Jordan	70 %	49 %	2.6 million
Morocco	66 %	56 %	16.8 million
Lebanon		49 %	1 million
Indonesia		26 %	55.7 million

What encouragement can be taken by the small declines revealed in Chart 9? When assessing the size of the social support base from which to replenish a movement of Militant Islamist suicide bombers, this reading emphasizes the constant elements in these apparently declining levels of support. While it is true that fewer approve of attacks in their own country, and more approve attacks on “Westerners” (i.s., Americans) in Iraq, and still more approve attacks on Jews, we can get lost in the minutiae of these variations. What is more important to recognize is that a large segment of Muslim society has come to sympathize not just with the abstract goals of Militant Islamism, and not just with their leaders. Significant minorities, and in some cases (e.g., Jordan) overwhelming majorities sympathize with their tactics. In an age of *Al Jazeera* television and broad access to its visual accounts, support for suicide bombing can no longer be explained away as a response to an abstraction. In 2006, that support must to be understood to consciously include Muslim publics of significant size who freely embrace as appropriate the use of such ugly tactics as attacking worshipers in a non-Muslim religious houses of worship, travelers on buses, shoppers on city streets.⁸⁶ (Attacking mosques, on the other hand, still seems to cross a line among some, as riots in Iraq after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, in February 2006, would seem to show.)

5. Conclusion

Students in American universities often are taken aback when shown the picture alluded to at the start of this study, a picture of a cheering crowd in Lebanon, September 11, 2001. They

⁸⁶ This is not to deny that significant publics also oppose such extremism. Indeed, one element yet to fully play out is the extent to which U.S. policy may de-legitimize Muslim opponents of the extremists in the eyes of Muslim publics; see the influential: Michael S. Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs* (January / February 2002).

initially recoil from believing that a spontaneous gathering of Beirut residents really took to the streets elated at the fall of the Twin Towers. In a form of national collective dissonance, we Americans simply could not receive the information conveyed in that picture, and we were spared having to wrestle much with such a conundrum because few news editors or publishers had the courage to publish it.⁸⁷ But, the boundaries of good taste have evolved even in a world still able to be enraged by cartoons. Social scientists can, and must, look with open eyes at the public opinion trends from the Middle Eastern region, and their meaning. To understand the practical significance of contemporary hatred requires a more sustained analysis than is possible by individualizing it, by personifying it as the mad utterances of unstable individuals, as was the temptation after the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, openly called for the extermination of Israel, as happened in late October 2005.⁸⁸

This is because Militant Islamist terrorists enjoy broad support when targeting Americans. The same Americans who were the rescuers of the Islamic Kosovars in 1999? We Americans, the liberators of Kuwait in 1991? We Americans, the strong hand that brought to an end the genocide against the Bosnian Muslims in the mid 1990s? Surely, less sympathy for bombing us with hidden explosive belts will be found, we errantly suppose.

The attitudes summarized in this study simply are the tip of an iceberg of hate. They also show light onto apparently unrelated issues, such as how it is possible that three Christian school girls in Indonesia, walking to school, could have been attacked, beheaded, and their attackers somehow have melted away, without being apprehended in 2005. Or how three churches could be burned down in Pakistan in Fall 2005 with little response from firefighters, or other authorities. These threats we fail to see if all we are shown is a well dressed crowd angered by Zarqawi's suicide bombings in Amman, Jordan.

The true threat is not only from Al Qaeda, Osama, the bad doctor (i.e., Zawahiri), and their full time minions. The true threat will not go away if we catch them, their "generals," or any number of "third in command" people. It is a false reading of the enemy to believe that the war was lost by a tactical mistake at Tora Bora, Afghanistan late in 2001. It is false simplicity that leads many to assert that George Bush alone causes us to still be at war. No matter how

⁸⁷ *Washington Post* (Sept. 12, 2001): A25.

⁸⁸ Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch Series No. 1013 (Oct. 28, 2005): <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iran&ID=SP101305>

often these mis-readings of the evidence are repeated, Militant Islamists across the world remain at war with us, as much as Osama bin Laden has been the leading inspiration to this movement since the 1990s.

A new mental picture is needed to properly evoke this changing challenge, a modified pyramid of the structure of our enemy. Below, such a model is presented below, one that can with more accuracy depict:

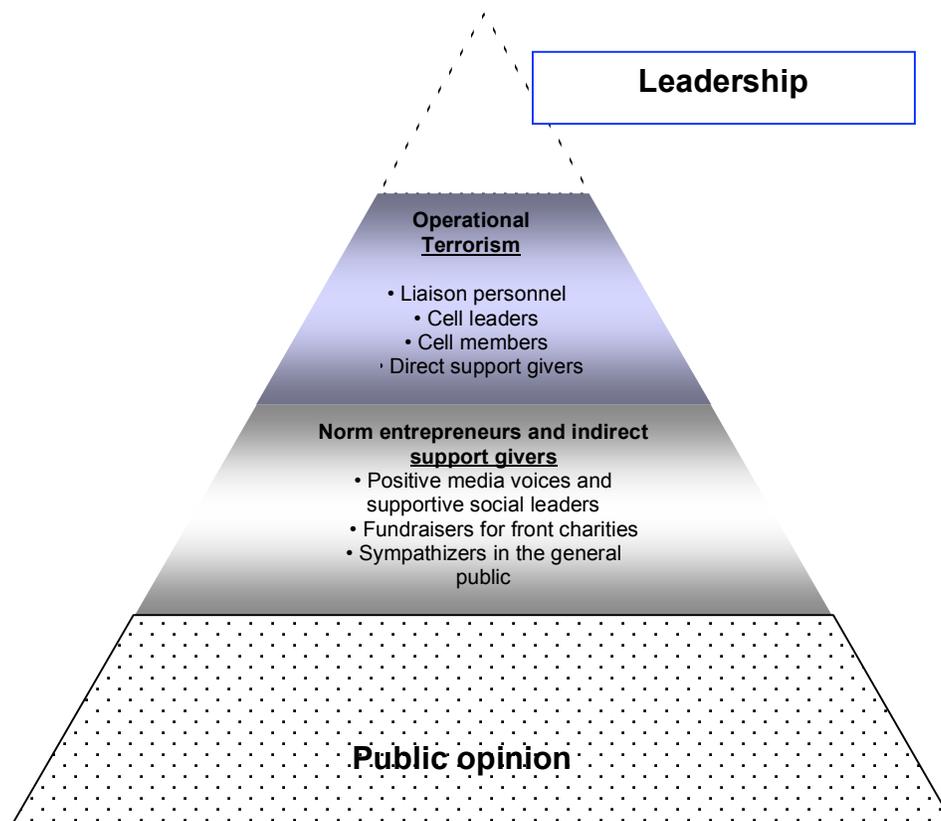
- that the leadership of contemporary Militant Islamism is often more inspirational than a commander, and that it nearly always resides outside the state in which operational cells are active;
- a model that reflects contemporary knowledge about Militant Islamic terrorism's operational cells, that understands them as adaptive actors⁸⁹ that rely as much on direct assistants (e.g., providers of safe houses, false identity papers, bomb materials) as they rely on killers willing to die;
- a model flexible enough in the way it conceives the limits of the enemy to accommodate the "emergence of autonomous, self-recruited cells of like-minded young men and women."⁹⁰
- a model that recognizes that in many ways contemporary Militant Islamist terrorism grows by virtue of the chosen acts of those who provide *indirect* support, influencing audiences at mosques and readers of news and editorials to aid terrorist operatives.

If one thing is clear from the evolution of Militant Islamic terrorism, 2001-06, it is that in practice sharp lines do not exist between support providers and those who sympathize with the aims and tactics of the movement. In these several ways, the new terrorism better is illustrated by the Modified Pyramid of Terrorism model provided below:

⁸⁹ e.g.: "The new terrorism resembles a virus that morphs as its environment changes. Individual cells and nodes evolve their own strategy." Russell D. Howard (Brig. Gen., U.S. Army - retired), "Understanding Al Qaeda's Application of the New Terrorism -- The Key to Victory in the Current Campaign," in Russell Howard and Reid L. Sawyer, eds., *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* second edition (Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill, 2006): 100.

⁹⁰ International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The *Jihad*: Change and Continuation," *Strategic Comments* 11, 7 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, September 2005): <http://www.iiss.org>

A Modified Pyramid of Terrorism



As several new studies have shown, the Al Qaeda of 2001 has metastasized, its ideals spread like an invasive cancer, and like a cancer, the new toxic cells have been nourished by the tissues surrounding.⁹¹ As cogently has been argued, the 2004 attacks in “Madrid demonstrated the global reach of bin Laden’s ideas, not his operations.”⁹² In Bali (Indonesia), Mombasa (Kenya), Taba (Israel), and Madrid (Spain), “attacks have emanated from cells that, while undoubtedly motivated and inspired by Al-Qaeda, nonetheless have sought to ‘operationalize’ the

⁹¹ Jessica Stern (2003), *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (NY: Harper/Collins, 2003). The phrase “*jihad* metastasized” comes from: International Institute for Strategic Studies, “The *Jihad*: Change and Continuation,” *Strategic Comments* 11, 7 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, September 2005): <http://www.iiss.org>. For an opposite argument, one that sees a receding appeal to Muslim ideals as a basis for recruiting terrorists, see: Ray Takeyh and Nikolas K. Gvosdev, *The Receding Shadow of The Prophet: the rise and fall of radical political Islam* (N.Y.: Praeger, 2004).

⁹² Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting it Right* (New York: Times Books, 2005).

group's ideological agenda according to their own interpretation and on their own initiative."⁹³ It is not the infiltration of alien Al Qaeda agents modeled on the 9.11 murderers, but self-starter groups of men born in the West that most must be feared. Born in England and raised in tight-knit Muslim communities such as in Leeds, it was these sorts of men who found Allah to guide them to kill dozens in July 2005 on London's Underground and on its buses.⁹⁴ Better border security could not have stopped them, though that certainly is no good reason not to tighten things up along the Rio Grande.

The revolutionary ideals expressed nearly a half century ago by Sayyid Qutb, lionized in the 1990s by Osama bin Laden, organized in the new millennium by Ayman al-Zawahiri and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, these ideals of Militant Islamist terrorism have been reproducing themselves. More importantly, the "self-starters" of Militant Islam are not just popping up in permissive Britain. Nor is the United States immune, as plots in Lackawanna, New York⁹⁵ and Toledo, Ohio have demonstrated.⁹⁶ The problem is wide, disturbingly wide, already.

We must fashion policy responses to terrorism that address both the organized men who are planning the next wave of suicide attacks, and this broad, this disturbingly broad, social base. Several barriers, political and intellectual, inhibit development of policies sufficient to effectively engage and defeat this threat. One quite proximate barrier is apparent: much of the American public, some of our government, and large sectors of the academy, are in denial of plain, obvious facts.

⁹³ See: Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, et. al. "Trends in Terrorism: Threats to the U.S. and the Future of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act," Rand Corporation publication No. MG-393-CTRMP (Santa Monica CA: Rand Corporation, 2005); and Jonathan Schanzer, *Al-Qaeda's Armies: Middle East Affiliate Groups and the Next Generation of Terror* (Washington D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Studies / S.P.I. Books, 2004). There is no consensus, however, on this point, e.g., it has been argued that Al Qaeda remains a top-down organization, and in Spain in 2004 *did* direct the Madrid attack: Dan Darling, "Willful Ignorance," *Weekly Standard online* (March 22, 2006).

⁹⁴ International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The *Jihad*: Change and Continuation," *Strategic Comments* 11, 7 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, September 2005): <http://www.iiss.org>

⁹⁵ PBS, "Chasing the Sleeper Cell": <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/sleeper/etc/script.html>

⁹⁶ M.R. Kropko, "3 Charged with Planning to Attack Troops," *Washington Post* (Feb. 22, 2006): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/21/AR2006022101088.html>