

The background image shows a large, diverse crowd of people gathered for an outdoor event. In the foreground, a man in a dark suit stands at a wooden podium on a blue carpeted stage, facing the audience. The podium has a microphone and a small table next to it. The crowd is dense and fills the upper two-thirds of the frame. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting a daytime event.

THE IDEOLOGICAL

# WAR ON TERROR

Worldwide strategies for counter-terrorism

EDITED BY  
ANNE ALDIS AND GRAEME P. HERD

# THE IDEOLOGICAL WAR ON TERROR

This volume is the first to examine current attempts to counter ideological support for terrorism (CIST) worldwide. While terrorist groups legitimize and justify their use of violence and terror and gain new recruits and supporters through the use of ideology, the book asks and strives to answer the following questions: to what extent do existing CT strategies de-legitimize ideological support for terrorists? What further measures might be undertaken? How might we understand and measure success and, on the basis of the case studies, what policy recommendations can be made?

To answer these questions and to assess CIST activities objectively the editors have put together a wealth of case studies covering Europe and Eurasia, the Middle East, the Asia Pacific region, South Africa and South and Latin America. Examining the relationship between terrorists, political extremists and ideology, each chapter highlights effective policies to counter that support and suggests how CIST might be located more closely within a counter-terrorism strategy.

This volume thus re-examines terrorists' strategic goals and sources of legitimacy and the nature of their ideological support, examines current US and regional CT strategies and assesses their success in de-legitimizing terrorists and undermining their support, and finally provides a strategic synthesis and policy recommendations in light of the research findings.

This book will be of much interest to students and analysts of political violence and terrorism, security studies and politics in general.

**Anne Aldis** is Head of the UK Defence Academy's Conflict Studies Research Centre. She is co-editor of *Russian Regions and Regionalism* (2003), *Russian Military Reform 1992–2002* (2003) and *Soft Security Threats and European Security* (2005).

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# PREFACE

This book evolved from a project sponsored by the US Office of the Secretary of Defense entitled: 'Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism: Synthesizing Strategies Worldwide' (CIST), March–September 2005. The project specifically focused on addressing our understanding of 'known unknowns' – as highlighted by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld:

Today we lack the metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror. Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the *madrassas* and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?

(Rumsfeld 2003)

The project has involved the participation of analysts from or coordinated by the US Department of Defense funded regional and global educational institutions – Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, National Defense University, Naval Postgraduate School, Near East and South Asia Center for Strategic Studies – as well as from the Conflict Studies Research Centre, UK, the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and the Centre for Asymmetric Threat Studies, Sweden.

In order to provide a comparative analysis of CIST case studies selected from Latin and South America, Europe and Eurasia, the Asia Pacific region, Africa and the Middle East, the project asked each researcher to select his case study on the basis that it addresses, *inter alia*: terrorists that belong to a group with global reach or who possess capabilities that concern the Department of Defense; terrorist groups that pose a strategic threat to a key US ally; and terrorist groups that illustrate effective or ineffective ideological legitimization efforts and/or effective or ineffective responses to counter such legitimization.

Each case study then sought to identify and characterize the nature of the relationship between ideological support and terrorist activities, to identify and characterize the nature of a state or regional organization's effort to counter ideological support for terrorism, and on that basis to assess the effectiveness

## PREFACE

of such CIST activities. Lastly, we asked each researcher to suggest policy considerations to increase the effectiveness of CIST activities.

At a workshop held in Garmisch in September 2005 the researchers had a chance to reach a collective assessment of the effectiveness of current CIST efforts globally. We were able to begin to synthesize current approaches, identify ‘good practice’, note both successes and failures and the reasons for them. We also discussed the policy implications of the studies, the nature of metrics that allow an assessment of the effectiveness of such policies and future teaching and research implications.

This book presents the key case studies and research findings of the CIST project, but as with all such activities is in reality a work in progress – CIST activities by definition must always evolve.

The views expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies (GCMC), the United States Department of Defense, the German or United Kingdom Ministries of Defence, or the United States, German or British governments.

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February 2006

# Part I

## INTRODUCTION



# APPROACHES TO COUNTERING TERRORISM AND CIST

*Magnus Ranstorp and Graeme P. Herd*

The January 2006 landslide electoral victory of Hamas plunged Palestinian politics and the Israeli–Palestinian peace process into the abyss. A core issue remains whether Hamas can reconcile ideological strategic goals with practical and temporal realities in a very tough neighbourhood. Few analysts expected that the local publication of the Mohammed caricatures in Denmark would translate into a global firestorm of protest among moderate and radical Muslims worldwide, each of them skilfully exploiting the issue for tactical gains. These separate events starkly demonstrate the forceful role of ideology used by extremists in a globalized context. They also illustrate the difficulty of shaping a coherent and timely response to the ideological influence of extremism and the coming battle for the US government to effectively wage its ‘Long War’.

It is now clear that the coming decades will be defined by a war in the shadows, where Western intelligence agencies will continue to try to identify and degrade a constantly innovative and adaptive terrorist adversary that is global in reach. This enduring battlefield will have no definable frontiers, no apparent or visible enemies and these battles will be waged not only physically but also ideologically and across the virtual domain. This ideological battlefield is proving increasingly complex, elusive and multifaceted in an era of globalization where like the famous ‘butterfly effect’ one small local event translates in seconds into global consciousness. Additionally, the ideological battlefield requires understanding the culture of the enemy and an architecture that provides synergy of messages across simultaneous levels. It is clear that the terrorist adversaries understand how to do this much better than we do. This will be the ultimate and decisive challenge in the global war on terrorism.

The ideological front in such a war has been severely understudied. This introductory chapter in our volume of collected experience will primarily focus on al Qaeda in its case study material, though the theoretical approaches it outlines naturally have much wider applicability, as, we hope, do the lessons of the book.

In the near aftermath of 9/11, Abu Ubeid al Qurashi, a senior al Qaeda leader and a lieutenant to Osama bin Laden, provided one of many retrospective strategic

analyses of how successful the September 2001 strikes had been and their enduring legacy. He underscored that with 9/11, al Qaeda had destroyed the underlying elements of US strategic defence architecture: early warning, preventive strike and the principles of deterrence. Specifically, al Qurashi emphasized that al Qaeda ‘had entered the annals of successful surprise attacks – perhaps the most impressive – as the pain it caused put every individual in American society on constant alert for every possibility whether emotionally or practically’ (al Qurashi 2003). It also undermined the preventive strike capability, argued al Qurashi, due to the flexibility of the organization, its amorphousness and its lack of permanent bases. He ended with the rhetorical question: ‘how can people who strive for death more than anything else be deterred?’ (ibid.). Embedded within this strategic publication by al Qaeda was the belief that asymmetry would allow it ‘ghost-like’ qualities, and that it would endure over several generations of preachers and clerics guiding it toward new engagements with enemies, whether near or far, and across time and space. In other words, al Qaeda would be everywhere but nowhere.

It is too early to know or even assess the durability of al Qurashi’s predictions. It is, however, certain that ideology will play a major formative role in shaping the character of various forms of asymmetric adversaries for the future and the direction as well as the intensity of violence employed. In many ways, it is clear that al Qaeda’s ideology is a constant work in progress with many directions or influences by salafist-*jihadi* thinkers and clerics and that its multiple strands change character according to circumstances. To some extent it is debatable whether strategy is primarily driving tactics or the other way around.

### **Understanding terrorist motivation: the role of ideology**

The absence of boundaries is not restricted to the ideological sphere. If we take a terrorist group like al Qaeda as an example, we can see that analysts have struggled to impose some semblance of conceptual clarity as to what al Qaeda constitutes today. Is there a functioning hierarchical command and control structure with the remnant of a senior al Qaeda core leadership still at large? Or do there exist, in parallel, semi-autonomous franchises, affiliates that sometimes connect back to classic al Qaeda structures; or do they simply operate autonomously as a leaderless *jihadi* resistance, bound by a common ideological vision and with multiple affiliates and operational centres of gravity in different regions across the world? Is the al Qaeda phenomenon today more representative of an ideology, a decentralized movement rather than a structured networked entity?

The debate about this conceptual challenge is likely to continue to rage among analysts. Whatever the prevailing designs of the al Qaeda phenomenon, the durability and strength of its networked design is, according to David Ronfeldt, dependent on the integrative capacity across five levels in theory and practice ‘in which the organisational design is sustained by a winning story and a well-defined doctrine, and all this is layered atop suitable communications systems and strong personal and social ties at the base’ (Ronfeldt 2003: 18).

Ronfeldt's conceptual framework is useful in disentangling and understanding divergent but parallel analytical efforts and approaches to al Qaeda. On the organizational level, analytical paradigms have been created to explain the modalities of various networked organizational designs; some emphasize the social network paradigm (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996; Raab and Milward 2003: 413–39; Castells 1996), the crime-terror nexus (Williams 2001; Dishman 2005), some borrowed from corporate management and organizational theory (Macallister 2004; Mayntz 2004; Bolman and Deal 1997), while others have synthesized and developed complexity theory (Russ and Uhl-Bien 2003) (focusing on the dynamics of networks) as well as 'dune' typology (Mishal and Rosenthal 2005). On the doctrinal level there is a plethora of different schools of thought, with some trying to locate its nature within extremist Islam more broadly speaking and some specifically deconstructing the ideological content of revolutionary salafi-*jihadist* thinking through the multiplicity of tracts by key strategic thinkers.<sup>1</sup> Others adopt a more generic approach, analysing the applicability of revolutionary insurgency and guerrilla warfare strategy and literature on al Qaeda, including so-called fourth generation warfare, while others apply a rational choice paradigm (Pape 2005).

On the technological level, some analytical efforts emphasize cyber- and subcultures (Kahn and Kellner 2003) as a feature of the effects of the dark side of globalization and post-modernity while others focus on the methodologies granted by cyberspace in enhancing the command, control and communication structures and behaviour used by radical Islamist groups (Thomas 2003; Salisbury and Gopal 2003).

On the social level, some analytical approaches have focused on explaining the decisive personal ties between militants that assure loyalty and trust within and between groups, networks and cells (Sageman 2004, 2005) while others stress the psycho-cultural dimensions or the tribal and cultural aspects underpinning clandestine social relationships and behaviour (Post 2005a; Wadley 2003).

Finally, on the narrative level, some analysts focus on violence as a form of strategic signalling (Hoffman and McCormick 2004); others unpack the propaganda dimensions while other analysts have convincingly employed a social movement theory approach towards understanding the processes of Islamic activism (Wiktorowicz 2004b; Chandler 2005).

All these multidisciplinary social science approaches are useful tools towards understanding the pieces of the analytical puzzle, and identifying specific facets of radical Islamic activism embodied under the umbrella of 'al Qaedaism'. However, collectively they reveal the sheer complexity in conceptualizing what governs those militants rallying behind the revolutionary banner of al Qaeda as an ideology, a movement.

Again David Ronfeldt offers an insightful additional paradigm to partially navigate through this conceptual nightmare by arguing that al Qaeda and its affiliates represent a global tribe waging segmental warfare (Ronfeldt 2005). This culturalist approach is often absent from the debate but is valuable in offering us an alternative dimension, as it posits that the militant salafi-*jihadist* groups underneath the al Qaeda ideological umbrella 'are using the information age to



reiterate ancient patterns of tribalism on a global scale. The war they are waging is more about virulent tribalism than religion' (ibid.: 1). According to this paradigm, Ronfeldt argues that al Qaeda recreates the tribal milieu in form, function and social appeal for diehard members and in widening the pool of potential new constituents. Whilst not minimizing the religious ideational package projected by al Qaeda and its affiliates, the tribal paradigm projects the powerful role and value of upholding codes of honour – respect, pride, trust, dignity, reciprocity and revenge – to the centre stage, conferring legitimacy to their own action against self-professed enemies, and as a powerful mobilizing instrument to widen their social and popular appeal. Recurring themes of humiliation, injury and insult by arrogant self-aggrandizing intruders are pervasive themes in ideological tracts and statements by al Qaeda inspired leaders and clandestine elements. Al Qaeda and its affiliates naturally and skilfully tap into powerful tribal motifs that easily 'arouse both the heart and the mind' among Muslims globally, fused 'against an outside enemy, and a *jihadi* narrative so compelling that it amounts to both an ideology and a doctrine' (ibid.). As such, the tribal paradigm represents a hidden but real new dimension in efforts to counter the appeal of 'al Qaedaism' and in understanding the behaviour of what comes after al Qaeda itself. As underscored by Graham Turbiville Jr, discoveries of Arabic poems in remote al Qaeda training camps and caves in Afghanistan 'addressed the central causes, actions and consequences of al Qaeda's war against infidels and suggested they had a strong mobilizing role as well as providing new insights to those who studied them' (Turbiville 2005: 37). This then becomes not only a battle against religious content but also confronts the culture of extreme tribalism within transitional societies.

Understanding the processes of radicalization and recruitment is a complex task<sup>2</sup> but can be broadly divided into an internal and external dimension. In many ways it is a kaleidoscope of factors, much like vectors, that push individuals towards radicalization and enable their recruitment. Some of the internal factors relate to: a prevailing lack of public Muslim debate about the justification of violence; polarizing public rhetoric and stigmatization, and political polarization; identity crisis; alienation from society; the presence of radical imams; glorification of *ji*had and martyrdom; youths trapped in a downward spiral of discrimination, stigmatization and criminalization – making them susceptible to recruitment efforts; etc. On the external dimension, Western policy is a source of radicalization of individuals in Muslim communities. Some of these external factors are related to the perceived injustice suffered by Muslims across several key regional conflicts (such as Chechnya, Iraq, Kashmir and the Palestinian territories) that exposes Western double standards and leads to passive and active contributions to these struggles by Muslim communities within Europe. Both the internal and external factors emphasize the primacy of grievances and discontent with almost inexhaustible lists of precipitating factors. Moreover, these two dimensions are interchangeable; personal grievances are transformed into global ones and vice versa; and the public and private spheres become intertwined.

As urged by David Leheny (Leheny 2002), the vast literature on social movements may also have a lot to offer the study of terrorism. In particular, this

framework may be the most relevant to our understanding of radicalization and recruitment. The groundbreaking theoretical framework developed by Quintan Wiktorowicz of using social movement theory in relation to religious mobilization and radicalization is ideally suitable for deepening our understanding of these processes across diverse contexts.<sup>3</sup> According to Wiktorowicz, there are three broad parallel processes that explain how and why Muslims in Western liberal democracies are drawn to radical Islamic groups: through cognitive openings; religious seeking; and constructing sacred authority.

First, a cognitive opening (a willingness to be receptive to the message) is a prerequisite given the extremist views espoused by radical movements. A crisis (moral shock) or outreach activism (to germinate a sense of crisis through interaction and discussion) can achieve this. A principal ingredient in the West acting as a catalyst towards a cognitive opening is a profound identity crisis, beginning with a series of questions about what it means to be Muslim in a non-Muslim land.<sup>4</sup>

Second, an individual experiencing a cognitive opening may then experience 'religious seeking' – 'a process in which an individual searches for some satisfactory system of religious meaning to interpret and resolve his discontent' (Wiktorowicz, unpublished paper). It is in this process of seeking that those that are drawn to militant groups complain about the failure of mainstream religious leaders to address pressing issues, including politics, and they complain that these mainstream leaders represent an archaic, non-intellectual approach to a religion failing to engage often second and third generation university-educated Muslims. These disaffected seekers are vulnerable to the message and mechanism of engagement (through intense debate and dialogue) by more extremists groups, providing them with a vehicle for an intellectual and spiritual voyage. Many of these radicals use personal social networks to facilitate religious seeking (Joint Military Intelligence College 2004).

Third, the role of charismatic leadership is crucial as radical groups attempt to promote their spiritual leadership as a reputable religious authority. The issue of (Weberian) charismatic leadership has been explored exhaustively in Scott Appleby's excellent biographies of fundamentalist leaders, *Spokesmen for the Despised* (Appleby 1997). A characteristic trademark of the salafist-jihadi self-declared clerics is to compensate for their lack of distinguished clerical education with a focus on contemporary political events and issues with a bearing for Muslims. In other words, they bridge doctrine with practical realities that naturally appeal to a younger alienated and disenfranchised audience. They are often opportunistic in conveying a more radical and extreme message that mixes and blends issues from conflict zones and contexts around the Muslim world.

Understanding how these processes work is critically important. Where then does recruitment occur? Across regional contexts three principal areas are identified as natural avenues where the conversion processes from radicalization to active recruitment are particularly pronounced and serve as an intense vehicle into extremism: (1) the role of radical mosque environments, private study groups and universities; (2) prisons; and (3) the role of cyberspace in spreading the ideology of 'al Qaedaism' and its parallel recruitment role.

In a European context, the radical mosque environment came to the fore after the 9/11 attacks, especially as the British capital became commonly known as Londonistan – a geographically specific ideological magnet for extremist views to which home-grown and foreign radicals flocked. In these radical mosque environments, talent-spotters and recruiters identified likely candidates, whom they approached and invited to private study groups. In these closed-door meetings, potential recruits were educated by *jihadi* veterans as to the necessity of defending fellow Muslims under siege in conflict zones, from Chechnya and Kashmir to Algeria and Iraq. Graphic and gruesome videos were shown from these battlefields, stirring the emotions of the recruits while the legacy and example of Abdallah Azzam became the ideological sustenance to support the *jihadist* cause – to become and serve as the elite of the elite spearheading the reawakening of Muslims everywhere. These recruitment processes were sometimes combined with foreign visits to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere, and even led some to participate in *jihadist* struggles abroad. Most Western intelligence services are cognizant of the potential ‘blowback’ effect of the Iraqi conflict as a select number of European residents have travelled there via Syria to actively participate in the conflict alongside other foreign insurgents. French intelligence sources estimate that 80–100 nationals have disappeared into the conflict. According to British law enforcement, an estimated 50 nationals have disappeared abroad in relation with terrorist missions, both potentially active and in a logistical support role. A major concern is that the Iraqi returnees might provide advanced skills in explosives training, further recruitment and potentially even in terrorist missions against their own governments. This concern is accentuated by the parallel networks associated with Abu Musab al Zarqawi across Europe.

A second area of recruitment of *jihadists* across Europe is in prisons, especially among recent converts to Islam. Many of these recruits are joining to atone for their past sins as these groups provide a sense of belonging and a sense of mission. This type of recruitment has occurred across Europe and the crime-terror skills brought to bear by prisoner recruits are another operational advantage. A crime-terror nexus pattern is emerging across Europe where salafist-*jihadi* networks are working together with criminal gangs from the Balkans in procuring explosives, weapons and fraudulent identity documents.

The third recruitment mechanism is in cyberspace, in radical *jihadist* chat rooms and al Qaeda affiliated websites. On the offensive level, this platform has provided recruiters with infinite avenues to reach radicalized Muslim youths, with whom they have later established personal e-mail contact with disclosure of personal details to ensure they are not a security risk and to enable background checks to be made before physical contact is established.

The growing role of the cyber sphere also serves as a medium for propaganda and even as a recruitment tool, expanding the social interaction between the local and the global *jihadist* milieu (Lia 2006). In this sphere, al Qaeda’s forces in the Arabian peninsula have been particularly active, establishing online magazines such as *Sawt al Jihad*, *Muaskar al Battar* and *al Neda*, which carry

directives and interpretations by al Qaeda's Centre for Islamic Studies, and research. Publications have appeared dedicated to female *jihadists*, raising the profile of female operatives beyond their already established more passive logistical role. This full-spectrum cyber-dimension allows for infinite avenues for the communication of directives internally within and between operational members and sympathisers. This cyber sphere can of course serve as a honeypot for Western intelligence services, providing fingerprints of operatives and potential recruits. Yet it has been clear that many of the terrorist cells are well versed in counter-surveillance techniques and the *modus operandi* of Western intelligence services in monitoring all forms of electronic communication. From encryption of computer files and CD-Roms to untraceable SIM cards, single-use Thurayya satellite phones and mobile phones, al Qaeda affiliates and associates have used coded 'flagged' spam e-mails, common chat rooms and simple electronic dead drops to communicate between cell members and between the operational centre and the periphery. Among the creative shell game techniques used is the establishment of yahoo and hotmail accounts with pre-arranged, shared usernames and passwords. The operational cells communicate by lodging a draft message – a dead drop – on the server without ever having to send or receive electronic mail. It is very clear that al Qaeda has invested heavily in knowledge architecture, using the infinite constellations afforded by cyberspace or the so-called 'dark underside' of globalization. The culture of terrorism and technical knowledge has spread with the uncontrollable, 'organically developing structures' of modern society.

These radical *jihadi* websites, with *Sawt al Jihad* and *Muaskar al Battar* at the forefront, are spreading directives, interpretations and inspiration to a new generation of cadres who can adapt them to their local circumstances. As such, they provide a crystal clear insight as to where energy will be expended by the polymorphic al Qaeda-inspired cells and are invaluable for the intelligence analyst on the strategic level. Among the most important documents produced recently by al Qaeda's Centre for Islamic Studies and Research is the 113-page document entitled *Management of Barbarism* (Naji 2005). In the phase aimed at establishing Islamic states, the document identifies key vulnerable priority targets: the Arabian Peninsula, Nigeria, Jordan, the Maghrebi states, Pakistan and Yemen. This document points to a division within the al Qaeda-inspired milieu: whether to prioritize igniting terrorism against near (Arab) or distant (Western) enemies. According to those favouring the near enemy, terror attacks should be guided towards tourist targets and oil installations to stretch the adversary's resources and as a vehicle to attract new *mujahidin* support. They also advocate developing a sophisticated media and propaganda strategy, specifically geared towards having military officers joining the *jihadi* ranks. *Management of Barbarism* emphasizes the priority of kidnapping diplomats, an action that, like Iraq, is milked for its immense propaganda value, and the execution of those captured to create a maximum shock effect. Today a main security fear is that shock tactics like kidnappings and beheadings may be exported from the Iraqi conflict theatre to European cities in an effort to engulf the enemy governments through conflagration attacks.

For those *jihadi* circles favouring taking the terror war to more distant enemies, cyberspace offers a vehicle to issue repeated threats, principally directed against coalition states in Iraq and those adopting tough counter-terrorism measures in the wake of 9/11. The so-called legacy of the Madrid-effect, in trying to influence the public and politicians, is likely to channel salafist-*jihadi* cells and networks towards answering the call to strike against wavering states with troop commitment in the Iraqi conflict. The polymorphic threat of ‘al Qaedaism’ is a strategic threat to Europe, specifically highlighting the problem of social integration and ghettoization of major European capitals. The murder of the controversial Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh by the Islamist fanatic Bouyeri sparked a wave of xenophobia, islamophobia and retribution against ethnic and religious minorities in the Netherlands.<sup>5</sup> In many ways terrorism exposed the latent issue of the radicalization and recruitment of extremist Muslim youths throughout Europe.

### **Approaches to CIST and target audiences**

A major feature in crafting approaches to countering terrorist ideology (CIST) is to account for inherent diversity across faith-based orientations and contexts. Husain Haqqani (2005) has suggested that in the battle for ideas we need to bear in mind that in the Muslim world there are four types of groups that need to be addressed: fundamentalists, traditionalists, secularists and modernists.<sup>6</sup> These categories are useful to represent the multiplicity of the audiences and the complexity of engaging and projecting counter-narratives and messages to prevent further radicalization by any of these groups.

*Fundamentalists*, it is argued, want to ‘go back to Islam’, to return to the Golden Age of Islam – the closest time to the prophet. Within this conception all else is *bid’a*, innovation, and the less innovation the better the Muslim. History becomes part of the ideology – ‘whatever early Muslims did becomes part of the belief system rather than something that may have been a requirement or an exigency of the political, social and economic or whatever circumstances that prevailed at the time’ (Haqqani 2005). Their core argument is not derived from the scripture but rather how people practised it. In this context it is useful to differentiate between two groups – radicals who reject the modernity of the West and want to eliminate it, and extreme radicals who will use the technology of destruction as a vehicle to get back to that age. This principally is the explanation for the difference between the Taliban and al Qaeda.

The other three groups can be characterized as follows. *Traditionalists* want to ‘stay with Islam’ and do not look for a theological basis for everything – they are comfortable with the way practices have been handed down and uncomfortable with modernity. There are many traditionalists but it is not appealing to the young. *Secularists*, such as Ba’athists, Arab nationalists, Pancasila ideologists in Indonesia, and Kemalists in Turkey, have preferred to ‘move forward without Islam’. These groups believed that the role of the state was to diminish the role of religion in people’s lives. They have interacted with the West as they dominated post-colonial governments in the Muslim world. Some are Jacobins – radical

secularists – and have pushed the traditionalists into the fundamentalist camp. Their ideological alternatives have mostly failed and they are considered to offer little to contemporary societies. *Modernists* wish to ‘move forward with Islam’. This group is primarily driven by a realization that the Muslim world needs to understand theology in a more contemporary light. These forces want to keep the religion but change its practices, to adhere to Islamic values but ‘interpret some of them and their practical manifestations and applications in light of modern ideas’ (ibid.). Not many articulate this vision in the Arab world though it is more prevalent in Southeast Asia.

Therefore a potential avenue would be to more skilfully use NGOs and civil society to work in partnership with modernists. These analytical views are interesting and useful but only partially advance our understanding of the nature of ideology. A complementary approach is to recognize that tackling the religious message in itself may not be sufficient; rather it is essential to change cultural practices that underpin and drive norms of behaviour (Ronfeldt 2003). This ‘culturalist’ dimension is often overlooked and is underutilized in our toolbox of different forms of engagement. Others have suggested that a priority is to understand and counter the vortex of salafi-*jihadist* ideology and its role in the radicalization process. Jeff Cozzens has forcefully argued that development initiatives may be a useful avenue to expose contradictions ideologically and as a vehicle to craft effective counter-narrative strategies (Cozzens 2006). All these different approaches bring with them partial clues as to where the centre of gravity of intervention ought to be. However, it is an extremely difficult and complex task to craft effective strategies to simultaneously deal with the core of the extremist ideological messages and to prevent a large and undefined constituency of supporters across different levels of involvement crossing the Rubicon into extremism and potentially terrorism and political violence.

### **Approaches: 9/11 and beyond**

This section examines the approach of the US government (USG) to the war of words and war of ideas that has been termed countering ideological support for terrorism (CIST) and notes its weaknesses. Within the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the US military has a dominant role, fighting Taliban and al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan and insurgents in Iraq, a theatre deemed to be the central front in GWOT. Let us therefore first examine the role of the Department of Defense (DoD) in CIST activities and then the role of the Department of State.

In February 2006 the DoD published a National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism (US Department of Defense 2006). It was developed by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and supports the national government strategy for the war on terrorism by outlining strategic guidance for military activities and operations. The Plan emphasizes that violent extremism, in its various forms, is the primary threat to the United States, its allies and interests, and that the global war on terror is a war to preserve ordinary people’s ability to live as they choose in free and open societies. The Plan defines the conflict as a struggle of moderate

and extremist ideas within Islam rather than a religious or cultural war, with the US prepared to ally itself with those that are moderate in their belief to achieve its aims. According to the Plan, the US will continue to lead an international effort to deny violent extremist networks the components they need to operate and survive. To that end, expanding international partnerships to combat violent extremists, denying terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction and institutionalizing the strategy against violent extremism, both domestically and internationally, are all to become areas of focus for the DoD (Wood 2006).

The US military has also defined its role as ‘establishing conditions that counter ideological support for terrorism’ (Caslen 2005). The DoD has five elements in its CIST role: security, military operations, humanitarian support, military to military contacts and conduct of operations. It suggests that it is committed to understanding the culture, customs, language and philosophy of the enemy in order to more effectively counter extremist ideology and defeat it. It wants to deny extremist terrorist networks what they require to operate and survive. In more concrete terms, this includes reducing the role of religious figures and leaders who promote extremism, breaking ties and critical nodes between them and their supporters, developing and creating opponents (moderates) and isolating audiences from the message. To kill or capture extremist messengers and deter the audience from listening – through humanitarian support to alleviate suffering for example, or conducting military operations so as to reduce alienation – appear to be the direct and indirect DoD means to a CIST end. A decisive point is reached when societies lead the fight against the extremists at the tipping point of moderates against hardliners.

This approach has a number of weaknesses and limitations. First, the hallmark of extremist groups such as al Qaeda is their *adaptability*. As noted above, extremist and terrorist groups can become more a state of mind (ideology) and less an operational structure to survive, to inspire the wider Muslim community and other movements, and remain the Islamist vanguard. Although the DoD may recognize the changing nature of al Qaeda – from group movement to a network with few focal points – the DoD does not appear to incorporate this new understanding into its planning. The DoD’s CIST component appears to be centred on psychological operations and information warfare deployed in theatre at the tactical and operational level against specific groups. There is no strategic application. A military strategy to destroy the centres of power of terrorist groups is not enough. The DoD has an operational/mechanistic approach, whose primary role is to take out the structures and to kill or capture the messenger. This assumes that the Department of State (DoS) takes care of the message. The DoD counter-terrorism strategy appears to undermine CIST efforts in that the strategy overlooks the consequences of its own campaign on the movement. These actions may create more radicals than they remove, undercutting the role of the DoS.

Karen Hughes, the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the DoS, is charged with devising a CIST strategy for the US government. An Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy, a congressionally mandated panel, has stated:

For what can be heard around the world, in the wake of the invasion of Iraq, the prisoner abuse scandal at Abu Ghraib, and the controversy over the handling of detainees at Bagram and Guantanamo Bay, is that America is less a beacon of hope than a dangerous force to be countered. This assertion, repeated in newspaper columns, on radio and television broadcasts, and via the Internet, diminishes our ability to champion freedom, democracy and individual dignity.

(Schweid 2005)

It noted that 'America's image and reputation abroad could hardly be worse' and that 'there is deep and abiding anger toward US policies and actions'. It cited polling that found that large majorities in Egypt, Morocco and Saudi Arabia 'view George W. Bush as a greater threat to the world order than Osama bin Laden' (Schweid 2005).

Ambassador Edward P. Djerejian has assisted Hughes in drafting a CIST strategy and chaired a 2003 panel that recommended changes in public diplomacy efforts. His committee accepted that 80 per cent of the overseas perception of the US was determined by policy choices and feelings about US values. The other 20 per cent could be affected by public diplomacy efforts, a margin that he noted could be a 'critical factor for the struggle for ideas' (Kessler and Wright 2005).

A Heritage Foundation report suggests four broad courses in the Middle East and it is likely that the DoS will adopt such recommendations in some form: promote regional and local media initiatives that combat extremism; invest in education for the long term; engage opinion leaders in Middle Eastern countries; and improve the quality of public diplomacy officers serving in the Middle East (Johnson *et al.* 2005). At present the CIST strategy of the DoS Office of Public Diplomacy with Karen Hughes at the helm is even less defined than that of the DoD. Before a confirmation hearing Hughes noted 'the power of our ideals' and stated: 'Given a fair hearing, I am sure they will prevail' (Hughes 2005). To that end the DoS will 'utilize diplomacy to identify, disrupt and destroy terrorist organization of global reach' (US Department of State 2003b).

A number of weaknesses and limitations in the DoS approach can also be noted. An underlying assumption is apparent – US values/ideals are innately superior and appealing to all terrorists (indeed it assumes that given the chance, everyone would live like Americans), if only they get a fair hearing. This assumption is false; fundamentalist ideas and ideals are resilient. A terrorist group provides a rationale for its pursuit of political power that justifies the choice to use violence in order to recruit followers (both true believers in the cause and opportunists who like action and the feeling of belonging). These motives develop a sense of camaraderie that ensures group loyalty, solidarity, and self-protection.<sup>7</sup> To put it another way, the DoS cannot dissuade terrorists whose goal is submission to God with the temporal promises of democracy.

At best the DoS CIST strategy aims to 'amplify the moderate voice' and 'counter the extremist voice' (Belt 2005: 67) by using Islamic radio, TV, curriculum for madrasahs and political workshops at think tanks to promote moderate Islam.



However, at worst the strategy is ‘disingenuous, imperialistic, deceptive and dishonest – suffering from a lack of conceptual unity, lack of unity of effort, and lack of strategic principle. It has huge gaps – mismatches and imbalances between means and ends’ (ibid.: 60). As Belt argues:

Imagine how foolish it would be if a record company, intent on capturing a certain market with higher quality music, merely amplified the product of a group of amateur musicians playing without a conductor. Our newest strategy basically does this; it merely amplifies the existing message of a small, disparate group of disorganized courageous Muslims willing to speak out.

(Ibid.: 65)

The DoS does not address the nature of US policies and the perception of them in the types of terrorist groups that the US has declared war upon. This repeats past policy mistakes – in Afghanistan the US brought radical Arabs to fight the Soviets and helped train them and reinforced and radicalized their ideals – a short-term gain (defeat of the Soviets) brought together and helped fuse fundamentalists into an internationale. It is widely argued that Iraq has the same function today, as does support for corrupt authoritarian strategic partners in the region. The public diplomacy efforts undertaken by the DoS do not appear to address global, regional and national perceptions of US policies undertaken in the name of GWOT.

CIST is perhaps the most underdeveloped and understudied aspect of countering terrorists. Many reports and governmental strategies pay lip service to its importance, but there appears a general failure to define its nature, scope and contours, and it is thus hardly surprising that CIST efforts are weak and unfocused. To be effective, the USG, as well as other states that take a lead in countering terrorists and violent extremists, needs a CIST strategy that is global, self-supporting and sustainable. At the moment it is fragmented, implemented piecemeal, unfocused and contradictory.

### **Structure of the book**

It is to this end that the book provides a comparative analysis of CIST case studies selected from Latin and South America, Europe and Eurasia, the Asia Pacific region, Africa and the Middle East. The introductory section of the book concludes with an in-depth examination of al Qaeda by Rohan Gunaratna.

The next five chapters deal with case studies taken from the Greater Middle East, beginning with an examination of ‘Saudi Arabia’s conundrum and the al Qaeda insurgency’ by Richard L. Russell. Russell argues that GWOT is weakly conceptualized. It is too ambitious and open-ended, confusing tactics with targets, hindered by false analogies, and seduced by naïve and idealistic understandings of the power of democracy. He calls for a much more clearly and narrowly defined enemy – global Islamic insurgency. This insurgency is led by al Qaeda, driven

by the pursuit of power, a militant ideology and wounded pride. The Greater Middle East is its primary area of operations and the toppling of the monarchy in Saudi Arabia a priority. He argues that US strategy is to ensure that Salafist *jihadist* organizations are unable to take control of the kingdom. The Saudi regime faces an 'acute counterinsurgency conundrum. It must reduce the ideological power of al Qaeda, much of which comes from the religious segment of Saudi society from which the royal family gains its political legitimacy'. He argues that 'Notwithstanding the whirlwind of conferences and task forces on the role of public diplomacy, ultimately the most powerful weapon in the American arsenal is the unvarnished truth. And over the longer timeframe, the truth will expose the lies upon which the barbaric global Islamic insurgency is built.'

Fariborz Mokhtari, in a chapter entitled 'Countering terrorism: Hizbullah's appeal', notes that since 1992 Hizbullah (*Hezb-Allah* – party of God) has begun to resemble an effective political party while maintaining a network of charitable institutions, although it has not repudiated violence. It has received substantial financial, military, political and organizational assistance from Iran and diplomatic, political and logistical support from Syria, but these links are now in transition. The US has to deal with Hizbullah as a political party, one that can further US strategic interests. He argues that linguistic and cultural subtleties are all-important and counter-arguments must be ethically grounded: 'Four distinct audiences are to be targets of our well-calibrated message: the domestic audience, the Western Allies, the Muslim world, and the non-Muslim, non-Western world'. As a result, in order to be clearly comprehended by different audiences, the message may require different forms of expression appropriate to those audiences. Given that the fundamental struggle between terrorists and governments is over gaining public opinion support, extreme measures such as arbitrary arrest and preventive detention must be avoided as counter-productive. The US should 'state its position clearly, act accordingly, justify its conduct, and remain consistent'.

Anne Marie Baylouny discusses US attempts to counter Hizbullah's al Manar satellite television service, as a source of increasing anti-Americanism and 'hateful propaganda' in 'Countering Arab television? Assessing the effect of Alhurra'. The US has attempted to amplify an American perspective and counter al Manar through the launch of its own television station, Alhurra (the Free One). She argues that Alhurra has become irrelevant because it has failed to resonate with its target audience: 'It cannot be critical of the US due to its structure and organizational funding, but to effectively draw viewers from other stations for news coverage it must cover a variety of viewpoints as the others do, which inevitably involves criticism of US policies'. Attempts to ban al Manar have proved counter-productive. But as Hizbullah has gained increasing support amongst the Lebanese population and become more mainstream, so too has al Manar toned down extremist rhetoric and messages. A more effective US response would have been to participate in debates and dialogue by using existing media channels and encouraging Islamist groups to enter mainstream politics.

We then move our focus to Central Asia, with two chapters devoted to countering ideological support to violent extremism in this region. Rouben

Azizian, in a chapter entitled 'Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan', argues that extremist religious ideologies in Central Asia spread, paradoxically, least well in areas where Islam has been traditionally present, and best where Islam has not deeply spread its roots and there are social and economic grievances (overpopulation, unemployment and crime). Regional security organizations have limited effect. The US cannot continue to balance counter-terrorism and human rights agendas in its relationships with Central Asian states without seriously undermining one or the other, and so is in need of a new strategy for the region: 'The challenge remains how the US can support secular and moderate Islamic regimes and movements, foster tolerance, and promote freedom of expression without being identified with the oppressive actions of Central Asian regimes'.

Ehsan Ahrari then examines 'Countering ideological support: the case of the Ferghana Valley' through the prism of the activities of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HT) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and attempts to counter ideological support for these groups. HT is a decentralized, secretive, cell-type structure that seeks support for non-violent radical change to create an Islamic caliphate. The ideology is disseminated using both modern IT and traditional leaflets, costs are low and HT attains its popularity by focusing on political repression in the region and latent anti-Americanism. IMU is prepared to use violence and gains support through 'the overall environment of political repression, the absence of avenues of political participation, a general discouragement or condemnation of even conventional observance of Islamic rituals, proclivities for terrorism, and, above all, acute economic underdevelopment'. IMU uses Internet chat rooms and encryption, and has links to organized crime (for finance) and al Qaeda (for ideological support). Uzbekistan's CIST efforts focus on 'controlling Islam' domestically and cooperating internationally. Ahrari argues that the US lacks a specific CT strategy for Central Asia, let alone a CIST component and needs to develop public diplomacy to win the hearts and minds of the Muslim world.

From the Greater Middle East we move to Southeast Asia and devote three chapters to this region. Rohan Gunaratna presents a second chapter entitled 'Combating al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah in southeast Asia'. This group uses al Qaeda as a 'pathfinder, model for emulation, and the vanguard of the Islamic movement'. In order to counter them, Gunaratna argues, the sources of mistrust and misunderstanding between Muslim and non-Muslim should be reduced. Militants and extremists who advocate intolerance can be marginalized through support for moderates, those who advocate cooperation and non-violent responses to conflict. Institutions of authority for Muslims should be built and maintained as they can frame debates in a moderate way and so anchor debates in tolerance. In the short term, he believes, operational counter-terrorism (the US model) can monitor suspected terrorists, collaborators, supporters and sympathizers and conduct timely arrests, but four years after 9/11 it is now necessary to engage in strategic counter-terrorism. The virulent ideologies that sustain terrorism can be weakened by a range of ideological, educational, media, legislative and financial initiatives and developing a longer-term approach is key to resolving regional conflicts. 'Without preventing the ideological politicization and radicalization of

the Muslim communities in the migrant diaspora of the West and the territorial communities of the south, the threat will persist. Building capabilities to fight the strategic campaign requires greater political will and public understanding. Investment in building capabilities to end catalyst conflicts is central to reducing the long-term threat.'

In 'It's the *story*, stupid: neutralizing radical Islamism in the southeast Asia theatre', Kumar Ramakrishna argues that al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah (JI) regenerates itself largely through the powerful ideological appeal of a radical Islamist 'storyline'. He posits that Indonesian Muslims and the *ummah* are under attack by a putative global conspiracy spearheaded by a 'Jewish-Crusader Alliance' – the US, Israel and, in the southeast Asian context, governments backing GWOT. An indirect counter strategy to attack and neutralize the meta-narratives of the storyline must be developed, Ramakrishna says. It must involve much more than just programmes aimed at alleviating largely religio-cultural and socio-economic grievances. It demands more resources for modernizing both secular and Islamic education; more nuanced public relations campaigns showcasing US and regional government attempts to improve the lot of ordinary Muslims; a more sophisticated strategy for helping moderate Muslim scholars discredit the radical Islamist message; and much greater sensitivity to the potential political implications of public policy, military strategy and tactics. Ways must be found to sharply reduce occurrences such as the Abu Ghraib affair in Iraq and the Krusik mosque and Tak Bai incidents in southern Thailand. Such events generate 'political oxygen' that skilled radical Islamist ideologues can exploit to fuel their virulent storyline. US and regional officials, commanders and rank and file security personnel must learn how to be more 'propaganda-minded'.

Muhammad Haniff Hassan focuses on 'Counter-ideological work: Singapore experience'. He notes that 'terrorism occurs when opportunity, motivation and capability meet. Prevention of terrorism requires the elimination of at least one of these three: motivation, which is often driven by an ideology'. Ideology can indoctrinate the public to become sympathizers, sympathizers supporters, and supporters terrorists. The Singapore government placed the primary responsibility of combating such ideologies on the shoulders of the moderate Muslim community. Some initiatives sought to directly counter the ideology and others to indirectly contribute in preventing its spread. The opinions of Muslim scholars carry weight. A concern about the welfare of families of detainees helped win back hearts and minds, and to integrate them back into society, preventing children being radicalized. Muslim community leaders were briefed on arrests before details were disclosed to the media. Counter-terrorism and counter-ideology works need to take into consideration different cultural and contextual realities: policy that worked for one group or one area may not be successful elsewhere.

From Southeast Asia we switch to Latin America and three chapters, beginning with 'Terrorism in the Southern Cone' by Salvador Raza. In the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay), two patterns of terrorists emerge. The first is oppositional or conspiratorial, centred on militant university-based intellectuals, in which terrorism achieves a political end such as bringing

down a dictatorial regime. The second is strategic, where violence becomes an end in itself, self-justifying through its ability to highlight perceived fundamental structural injustices. Currently, oppositional terrorism has waned and strategic terrorism is not operationally manifest, with the Southern Cone being used only for fundraising and recruiting purposes. If a theatre of operations does emerge then it will be located in the 'triple border' region between Brazil and Paraguay, or Uruguay and Bolivia, with urban centres providing logistical, social and ideological support. A broad spectrum of policies, including establishing more efficient political financial mechanisms for the control and supervision of investment and trade, better policing and integrated intelligence against organized crime, and a focus on defining the problem as criminal rather than political would best undercut ideological support for terrorists here, Raza argues. Ideological and intellectual distancing from the notion of terror is important, as is 'characterizing the problem as a phenomenon external to the region and dissociated from the local culture'.

In 'Confronting terrorism in Latin America: building cooperation in the Andean Ridge', Boris Saavedra argues that the use of institutional confidence and security-building measures (CSBM) is a fundamental tool to enhance security cooperation to combat non-traditional threats, particularly 'fragility, political instability, economic stagnation, a growing gap between poor and rich, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, organized crime and terrorism'. In this region there are no real military threats between neighbours and democracy is the goal and the accepted model for governments. But there are two major non-military threats. First, the inability of governments to control national territory and its societies in a fair and just manner. Second, internal factions or non-state actors seeking violent change within the borders of the state. Ungoverned spaces are breeding grounds for instability, criminality, insurgency, regional conflict and terrorism. National strategy to 'fortify public institutions, eradicate corruption, and educate public servants in inter-agency coordination is a major priority'. The level of transparency, accountability and legitimacy offered by responsible governance best addresses these sources of instability. This should not entail a remilitarization of internal security, and CSBMs should be 'built bottom-up within the national level'. The US should respect regional partnerships, 'change its traditional attitude of directing, and be more willing to listen to others'.

John Fishel and Mary Grizzard focus on 'Countering ideological support for terrorism in the Circum-Caribbean'. They begin by noting that in Latin America terrorism is not considered a primary strategic threat, though the prevalence of ungoverned spaces and criminal gangs (particularly in the prison population in the US) can act as an enabler for international terrorists: 'terrorists may seek safe-haven, financing, recruiting, illegal travel documentation, or access to the United States from the area and pose serious threats'. Anti-Americanism in the region is driven by opposition to US policies rather than a rejection of democratic values, and reducing anti-Americanism is a necessary prerequisite for increasing security cooperation, which can then seek to reduce the capability potential of terrorists in the region. To that end, US financing and support of anti-crime and anti-terrorist

efforts in Latin America are important, as is listening to partners, seeking their advice and respecting their alternative policy choices. Fishel and Grizzard believe the US should stress that it seeks to address the problems and threats which states in the region have identified.

Our last case study section draws the reader's attention to Europe and Africa. In 'Countering Islamist radicals in eastern Europe', György Lederer argues that there is a thin dividing line between 'hate propaganda, inflammatory mosque sermons, threats to Salafism's critics' and 'logistical support to terrorist cells, recruiting, hiding, training and cash conduit'. Islamic youth groups and transnational Islamist 'humanitarian' organizations, primarily supported by Saudi Arabia and Iran, have been actively proselytizing, but these efforts failed, in most cases due to a combination of factors including the 'secular and hostile environment, women's freedom and social responsibilities, Western influence and the missionaries' incompetence'. In Bosnia, a Salafi ideology and anti-American worldview reflect a general crisis in society and have influenced several hundred Bosniak graduates of foreign Islamic universities, particularly those of Saudi Arabia. Only Bosniak intellectuals and theologians can effectively discredit the home-grown salafis, he writes. Radical Islamist networks in post-socialist eastern Europe need to be identified, a databank on the region's Islamist organizations should be created and the cooperation of indigenous Islamic institutions, or at least their tacit approval, should be sought. State structures have neither the will or capability to carry out this task, he believes.

David Africa, in his chapter 'Countering ideological support for terrorism: a South African case study', focuses on QIBLA, a terrorist group operating in South Africa that was established in 1979, inspired by the Iranian revolution. It aims for an Islamic State despite Muslim minority status. It is marginalized amongst Muslims, uses front organizations to mobilize and recruit and ties itself to global political and religious issues, domestic moral issues, and social issues. Fronts are critical in fundraising and the ideology is used to maintain public presence, contest for hegemony, create instability, and develop cadreship. Communication is the key element in mobilization strategy – Islamic radio stations, mosques, Internet chat groups (global and local) and statements are becoming gradually more militant, he argues. South Africa has developed a CIST strategy that involves legislation, effective intelligence and an integrated security response. It is integrated into security and policy processes, involves high-level engagement and inter-agency working groups, and engages a broad spectrum of Muslim groups. It has marginalized extremists by providing a platform for moderates to speak, cutting funding and access to mosques. This has forced militants into the open and so undercut their support.

The book has a final chapter in which Graeme Herd and Anne Aldis attempt to synthesize strategies worldwide, presenting a perspective on the policy implications of the research findings of the CIST project, as well as suggesting some metrics that might allow a more accurate assessment of the effectiveness of a CIST strategy. As with all such activities, it is in reality a work in progress – CIST activities by definition must always evolve but this book endeavours to

widen the scope of the debate by providing examples of ineffective and effective policies and suggesting future improvements. We hope that it will be of interest and relevant to policy-makers, policy implementers, and the wider academic and practitioner community.

### Notes

- 1 Foremost among these studies are Wiktorowicz and Kaltner 2003.
- 2 Wiktorowicz 2004a. These themes are elaborated more in Quintan Wiktorowicz's excellent new book: idem 2005.
- 3 For the best studies on Islamic movements and social movement theory, see Wiktorowicz (ed.) 2004b.
- 4 For example, see Joint Military Intelligence College 2004.
- 5 For example, see Nesser 2005.
- 6 These categories are adapted from Haqqani.
- 7 These points are taken from an unclassified slide presentation by Michael Knapp, 'Al Qaeda's Use of the Mass Media in Info/Netwar', Africa and Middle East Division, NGIC.

# IDEOLOGY IN TERRORISM AND COUNTER TERRORISM

## Lessons from al Qaeda

*Rohan Gunaratna*

### **Introduction**

Ideology is a powerful message that motivates and propels ordinary human beings into action. Ideology, a dynamic and an evolving belief system, is created by the interpretation of events by ideologues. Ideology, not poverty or illiteracy, is the key driver of politically motivated violence.<sup>1</sup> Ideology frames organizational structure, leadership and membership motivation, recruitment and support, and shapes the strategies and tactics adopted by the group.

*Jihadi* ideologues and group leaders craft their ideology by interpreting, reinterpreting or misinterpreting religion and politics. Ideology is used to attract and retain recruits as members, supporters and sympathizers. The personal history and worldview of an individual may make him or her more or less susceptible to a particular terrorist or extremist ideology.

Using ideology, contemporary *jihad* groups recruit followers from a cross-section of society – the rich, the poor, the educated and the less educated. To generate both recruits and support, they indoctrinate their potential and existing support base. Ideology is inculcated by disseminating it in the form of information or propaganda using lectures, speeches, pronouncements, writings, etc.

To counter the threat posed by a group, its operational infrastructure must be dismantled and its conceptual infrastructure eroded. As terrorism is a vicious by-product of ideological extremism, government and society must develop an ideological response to make it difficult for terrorist groups to replenish their human losses and material wastage.

In the post-9/11 environment, the centrality of ideology in political violence, especially terrorism, has become increasingly evident both to analysts and to policy and decision makers.<sup>2</sup> To counter terrorist ideology and to provide an alternative ideology, it is necessary to know its key ideologues, organizational structures, the evolving ideology, and the target audience – the community.



## Al Qaeda

Al Qaeda is a *jihād* organization with a global reach. In keeping its original mandate, its principal aim was to inspire and incite Islamic movements and the Muslim masses worldwide to attack those who threaten Islam and Muslims. In defence of Islam and its adherents, al Qaeda conducts attacks on iconic targets of the US, its allies and friends to inspire and instigate a perpetual campaign. Although al Qaeda does not enjoy widespread support among the Muslim masses worldwide, it seeks to exploit the anger, suffering and the resentment of Muslims against the United States. America's lack of understanding of the Muslim world – for instance its invasion of Iraq – has given a new lease of life to terrorism and extremism. Considering the support for the global *jihād* movement in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and elsewhere, the campaign has been a partial success. While al Qaeda conducted one major attack every year prior to 9/11, al Qaeda and its associated groups conducted one attack every three months after 9/11. Many of these groups today seek to emulate al Qaeda tactics, and more importantly believe in the global *jihād*. The most hunted terrorist group in history has spawned several similar groups.

Al Qaeda inherited a global infrastructure from the anti-Soviet multinational Afghan *mujahidin*. Its real strength is not al Qaeda membership *per se* but its overarching highly appealing ideology. Instead of building support for al Qaeda the group, it seeks to reinvigorate the global *jihād* movement.<sup>3</sup> In addition to training its 4,000 own members (October 2001 estimate, Western intelligence community), al Qaeda, Taliban and other groups trained 20,000 members in its camps in Afghanistan from 1989 to 2001. Most of the *mujahidin* that fought against the Soviets disagree with al Qaeda and its associated groups.

Today, al Qaeda's real power is the disparate groups it has trained, financed, armed and most importantly ideologized. The al Qaeda network (al Qaeda group plus its associated groups) and ideologically affiliated cells comprise the al Qaeda movement. Since al Qaeda attacked America's most iconic landmarks, the threat posed by al Qaeda has been surpassed by the emergence of a global *jihād* movement, consisting of al Qaeda and other groups that advocate global *jihād*. The global *jihād* movement has four overlapping components.

First, al Qaeda group was established by Osama bin Laden, the unofficial representative of the Saudi Kingdom to the Afghan *jihād*. Abdullah Azzam, bin Laden's Palestinian-Jordanian mentor, was the ideological father of al Qaeda. The group's global *jihād* ideology has great appeal to both associated groups waging the local *jihād* in conflict zones and radicalized Muslim cells in the migrant and diaspora communities of the West. Also known as al Qaeda core, al Qaeda central or al Qaeda classic, post-9/11 al Qaeda group is operationally weak but ideologically potent.

Second, al Qaeda's operationally associated groups consist of an umbrella of 30–40 Asian, African and Middle Eastern groups. Also known as the al Qaeda network, al Qaeda provided these groups with training, weapons, finance and ideology in Pakistan, Sudan and Afghanistan; in conflict zones such as Bosnia,

Chechnya and Mindanao; and through the Internet. They hold declared or undeclared membership of the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and the Crusaders formed in February 1998. They include the Salafi Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), Takfir wal Hijra (TWH), Tawhid wal Jihad (al Qaeda of the Two Rivers), Laskar-e-Toiba (LeT), al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah (JI), and Abu Sayyaff Group (ASG).

Third, al Qaeda's ideologically affiliated cells are operationally unconnected to al Qaeda but driven by an ideology of global *jihad* articulated by it. 'The Supporters al Qaeda',<sup>4</sup> the cell responsible for the bombing of the trains in Madrid on March 11, 2001, and the disrupted British cell led by Omar Khayam<sup>5</sup> were self-financed and independent of al Qaeda's operational control. The post-Iraq robust Islamist milieu in North America, Europe and Australasia is transforming support cells to execution cells.

Fourth, Sunni groups operationally unconnected with al Qaeda but steadfastly advocating global *jihad* could be violent or non-violent, for instance extremist groups – Hizb ut-Tahrir, al Mahajaron in the UK – and violent groups – Laskar Jihad and Front Pembela Islam in Indonesia. Some of these groups have publicly criticized bin Laden and al Qaeda but they believe in global *jihad*.

As a result of US-led global action, al Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden has severely weakened. Nonetheless, the high-impact 9/11 attack, US-led coalition intervention in Afghanistan, the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the media reporting on Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay have strengthened support for like-minded associated groups and cells as well as Islamist groups unconnected to al Qaeda. Exploiting the suffering, resentment and anger of the Muslims, the terrorist and extremist groups are now able to replenish their human losses and material wastage and continue the fight. Al Qaeda has morphed from a group of 3–4,000 members in October 2001 to a movement of several tens of thousands. Today, the global *jihad* movement, consisting primarily of Sunni groups connected or unconnected to al Qaeda, is even more robust.

The threat is not monolithic. The global *jihad* presents a multidimensional threat against the US, its allies and friends. The global *jihad* challenges the infidel (non-Muslim) and the apostate (Muslim) regimes. The threat is both ideological and kinetic.

### **Al Qaeda's history in brief**

Osama bin Laden alias Osama Mohammad al Wahad alias Abu Abdallah alias al Aaqa was born in 1957. Son of the late Mohammad bin Awdah bin Laden from Yemen, bin Laden grew up in Saudi Arabia. His father became a construction magnate and renovated the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The richest non-royal Saudi family, the bin Ladens are highly respected by both the Saudi royal household and the public.

After graduating from university in Saudi Arabia, bin Laden became deeply religious and assisted the Islamist movement against the communists in Yemen. After the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, he arrived in Pakistan

and subsequently in Afghanistan to assist the Afghan groups in their protracted campaign. In 1984, Dr Abdullah Azzam, a Palestinian Jordanian, who came to oppose the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, founded Maktab al Khadimat lil Mujahidin al Arab (MAK), known commonly as the Afghan Service Bureau. MAK provided significant assistance to the Arab *mujahidin* and to their families. Bin Laden joined hands with Azzam, who became his mentor. As MAK's principal financier, bin Laden was considered the deputy to Dr Azzam. At the height of the foreign Arab and Muslim influx into Pakistan–Afghanistan from 1984–6, bin Laden spent time travelling widely and raising funds in the Arab world. Azzam recruited several thousand Arab and Muslim youths to fight the Soviet presence, and bin Laden channelled several million dollars' worth of financial and material resources for the Afghan *jihad*. MAK operated independently of Western and Pakistani governments that assisted in the fight. MAK rarely interacted with the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, but it tapped into the vast Muslim Brotherhood network and the resources of the Saudi government (Jane's World Insurgency and Terrorism 2004). The fighting and relief efforts were assisted by two banks – Dar al Mal al Islami, founded by Prince Mohammad Faisal in 1981 and Dalla al Baraka founded by King Fahd's brother-in-law in 1982. The banks channelled funds to 20 non-government organizations, the most famous of which was the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO). Both IIRO and the Islamic Relief Agency functioned under the umbrella of the World Islamic League led by Mufti Abdul Aziz bin Baz.

Immediately before the Soviets withdrew, Azzam and bin Laden decided to form a vanguard group – al Qaeda al Sulbah – that could unite the whole Muslim world into a single entity. Azzam was the ideological father and the intellectual leader but gradually bin Laden took over (Gunaratna 2002: 2). Bin Laden's initial worldview was shaped by Dr Azzam, formerly of the Muslim Brothers. Towards the end of the anti-Soviet Afghan campaign, bin Laden's relationship with Azzam deteriorated. The dispute over Azzam's support for Ahmad Shah Massoud, who later became the leader of the Northern Alliance, caused tension. Bin Laden preferred Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, former Prime Minister and leader of the Islamic Party (Hizb-i-Islami), who was both anti-communist and anti-Western. Furthermore, together with the Egyptian members of al Qaeda, bin Laden wished to support terrorist action against Egypt and other Muslim secular regimes. Having lived in Egypt, Azzam knew the price of such actions and opposed it vehemently. Azzam and bin Laden went their different ways. In Peshawar, Pakistan, Azzam was assassinated by the Egyptian members of al Qaeda.

Following his death, the ideological vacuum was filled by Dr Ayman al Zawahiri, the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. A professional medical practitioner and a qualified eye surgeon, Zawahiri became both bin Laden's doctor and mentor. After Azzam's death, bin Laden took over MAK and then transformed it. Using MAK trainers and camps, bin Laden built al Qaeda. Al Zawahiri, a well-known hardliner, became his deputy and the principal strategist of the *jihad* movement.

Before the movement was popularly known as such, al Qaeda was a concept attributed to Syed Qutb in his writing as '*al-qaedah al-sulbah*' (the solid base).

This term refers to the successful early Muslim generation who received education and guidance from the Prophet Muhammad in the house of Arqam bin Abi Arqam. They were companions of the Prophet whose devotion and commitment towards the Islamic struggle against Arab pagans were unparalleled by later generations. They became a source of inspiration and a model for Muslims to emulate because of their success as well as testimony of their excellence by the Prophet. In conceptualizing al Qaeda, Azzam drew from the pages of Islamic history. In general, what he did was to define its composition, aims, and purpose in view of the struggle of an Islamist movement after the victory over the largest land army in the world – the Soviet military. While the concept was transformed to meet the changing landscapes it was never intended to be a terrorist organization (ibid.: 3).

### *Al Qaeda's features under Osama bin Laden*

Al Qaeda is not a conventional organization but a transnational network. It does not rely on state sponsorship but multiple sources of support. It is a highly patient organization promoting a multigenerational campaign. These three characteristics made al Qaeda an unprecedented threat and an unpredictable adversary. The meticulous and exhaustive preparation of attacks makes al Qaeda truly unique. Unlike governments, al Qaeda is not event but campaign driven, making it a strategic threat. As al Qaeda makes careful preparations, investing significant time and energy, without sound intelligence the timely prediction of its attacks is nearly impossible. Al Qaeda does not believe in immediate reaction to an attack carried out against it. Al Qaeda doctrine stipulates that it should always wield the initiative. Al Qaeda decides when and where to attack. After the US fired 70 cruise missiles into Afghanistan in 1998, al Qaeda decided to strike America at home using US airplanes, an operation that would take three years to plan, prepare and execute.<sup>6</sup>

Immediately after September 11, al Qaeda planned to attack Heathrow airport using aircraft hijacked from eastern Europe and US financial targets using the UK as a launching pad. These plans were disrupted in Pakistan and the UK. Two successive waves of strikes in London in July 2005 suggest the appeal of al Qaeda's call that 'it is the duty of every good Muslim to wage *jihad*'. Al Qaeda's real strength is to meticulously study the gaps in security and strike at targets that will have strategic implications.

### *Al Qaeda ideologues*

The founding charter of al Qaeda was formulated by Abdullah Azzam probably in late 1987 and early 1988 and published in *Al Jihad*, the principal journal of the Arab *mujahidin* in April 1988. He envisaged al Qaeda as an organization that would channel the energies of the *mujahidin* into fighting on behalf of oppressed Muslims worldwide, an Islamic 'rapid reaction force', ready to spring to the defence of their fellow believers at short notice. Azzam described his original concept:

Every principle needs a vanguard to carry it forward and, while focusing its way into society, puts up with heavy task and enormous sacrifices. There is no ideology, neither earthly nor heavenly, that does not require such a vanguard that gives everything it possesses in order to achieve victory for this ideology. It carries the flag all along the sheer, endless and difficult path until it reaches its destination in the reality of life, since Allah has destined that it should make it, and manifests itself. This vanguard constitutes al Qa'idah al Sulbah for the expected society.

(Azzam 1988: 46)

The forceful words articulated to shape the organization did not generalize the means to include terrorism. He was a firm believer that 'the end does not justify the means'. *Jihad* as he saw it was invoked as a religious obligation in defence of Islam and Muslims against a defined enemy, not a speculative one. This is best demonstrated in the Afghan-Soviet war, to which he dedicated his life immediately before his death. Any attempt to speculate beyond this perimeter would be out of proportion. Azzam rejected a proposal by MAK's Egyptian members – Abu Ubaidah al Bانشري, Abu Hafs alias Muhammed Atef, and subsequently Dr Ayman al Zawahiri – to utilize *jihadi* funds to train *mujahidin* in terrorist techniques and tactics. He went so far as to issue a *fatwa* (religious decree) ruling it as a violation of Islamic law. Azzam was against the killing of non-combatants and would never endorse the current terrorist tactics.

The same, however, cannot be said of Dr Ayman al Zawahiri. He is the person largely responsible for al Qaeda's mutation into what it is today. He not only filled the vacuum left by Azzam but transformed bin Laden from a guerrilla who killed soldiers to a terrorist who killed civilians. Before al Zawahiri joined al Qaeda, he was already a practising terrorist, the mastermind of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, one of the most deadly organizations in the Middle East. Al Zawahiri's experience against oppressive and repressive political regimes in Egypt made him 'battle hardened', compelled to continue the struggle against the present day *jahlia* (anti-Islamic period) at all costs.<sup>7</sup>

With the mobility of al Qaeda leaders confined to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, Abu Musab al Zarkawi in Iraq emerged as al Qaeda's *de facto* operational commander. Zarkawi sought to wage a global *jihad* but disagreed both with bin Laden and Zawahiri on the issue of the Shias. While the al Qaeda core wanted Zarkawi to target the new Iraqi government and the coalition forces, Zarkawi also targeted the Shias. Nonetheless, both Zarkawi's and his mentor's – Abu Mohammed al Maqdisi – commitment to global *jihad* was unequivocal.

### *Al Qaeda's worldview*

Al Qaeda's worldview has changed over time. It perceives the US and Israel leading a global conspiracy against Islam and the Muslims, and perceives American hegemony as affecting the Muslim nation. Al Qaeda detests America's presence in the Arabian Peninsula, especially in Saudi Arabia; US support for

the Israeli state; US assistance to pro-Western dictatorships around the Middle East; and since the first Intifada in 1987 bin Laden has highlighted the neglected future of the Palestinians. Al Qaeda blames the US for everything and holds the US government, American people, and US foreign policy responsible for bringing chaos to the Muslim world. The only way the Muslim nation could live under the shade of Islam, al Qaeda ideologues argue, is to be united and work towards the establishment, by force if necessary, of an Islamic nation adhering to the rule of the Caliphs. It is with this in mind that bin Laden issued the 1988 *fatwa*. Al Qaeda targets both non-Muslims and Muslims that do not share al Qaeda's worldview. To bin Laden and al Qaeda, it is a religious duty of Muslims around the world to wage *jihad* on the American land, American citizens, Israel and Jews. After 9/11, the targets include US allies, primarily Europe, Canada, Australia and friends, and primarily Muslim countries that support the West. Those Muslims who do not heed this call are declared apostates, people who have forsaken their faith.

Al Qaeda's main aim is to establish Islamic states wherever Muslims live. The methodology for achieving this is *jihad*. Al Qaeda's ideology, often referred to as '*jihadism*', is marked by a willingness to carry out armed struggle against those who in their view try to prevent the establishment of an Islamic state. '*Jihadism*' is at odds with nearly all Islamic religious thought. '*Jihadism*' as practised by al Qaeda has its origins in the Middle East. As a concept, it is often associated with the work of two modern Sunni Islamic thinkers: Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab and Syed Qutb. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab<sup>8</sup> was an eighteenth-century reformer. He claimed that Islam had been corrupted a generation or so after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. He denounced any theology or customs developed after that as non-Islamic, and in doing so tried to reform more than 1,000 years of religious scholarship. He and his supporters took over what is now Saudi Arabia, where Wahhabism remains the dominant school of religious thought. Syed Qutb was an Egyptian scholar of the mid twentieth century. He declared Western civilization an enemy of Islam and denounced leaders of Muslim nations for not following Islam closely enough. He preached that *jihad* should be undertaken not just to defend Islam, but to purify Islam. Other contemporary ideologues – Abu Mohammed al Maqdisi, Abu Qatada al Filastini and Abu Hamza al Masri – contributed significantly to al Qaeda's worldview.

As an extension of these ideologies, al Qaeda often couches its grievances in 'Third Worldist' terms familiar to any contemporary anti-globalization activist, often framing modern political concerns, including social justice, within a divine and religious narrative. *Jihad* in the form of armed struggle in the name of God then becomes the means to attain freedom and rid the *ummah* of injustice. It is a way to punish the cruel as they have inflicted cruelty upon the *ummah* (Al Jazeera TV 2004). The *jihad* they wage is a 'defensive *jihad*' in the face of perceived aggression by the enemies of Islam and the Muslims. The presence of US and other non-Muslim troops in Saudi Arabia after the 1991 Gulf War was a turning point in the life of bin Laden. Although the US troops established a presence at the invitation of the Saudi royal family, bin Laden justified his fight by renewing his commitment to 'defensive *jihad*'. He publicly criticized the Saudi royal family and

alleged that their invitation of foreign troops to the Arabian Peninsula constituted an affront to the sanctity of the birthplace of Islam and a betrayal of the global Islamic community (Fisk 1996). As the Saudi government rendered him stateless, bin Laden advocated violence against it and the United States. As it was difficult to strike inside Saudi Arabia, bin Laden's ire increasingly focused on the United States. Following a period of exile in Sudan and Afghanistan his radical views sharpened. *Jihad* to al Qaeda followers was deemed justifiable in order to defend the dignity and pride of the nation, a noble duty which had been neglected by the Muslim leaders. Al Qaeda's conviction in political ideology couched in religious terms is therefore not easily swayed by cheap promises and materialistic gains. So long as there is no sincere attempt to meet its demands, al Qaeda will have sufficient support for the continuity of the *jihad*.

In May 1996, after bin Laden moved from Sudan to Afghanistan, he became more violent. He issued a declaration of war against the United States in August 1996. By moving to Afghanistan, he became an internationally recognizable figure with the opportunity to openly present his views. As the leader of al Qaeda, he underlined its resentment towards the US, described as the 'alliance of Jews, Christians, and their agents' (Al Islah 1996). Even though he did not possess Islamic religious credentials or authority, bin Laden issued a *fatwa* in 1998. He claimed that the United States had made 'a clear declaration of war on God, His messenger, and Muslims' through its policies in the Islamic world. This is another example of al Qaeda's *jihad* ideology which set the organization in motion.

With *jihad* comes the belief in martyrdom. Al Qaeda's operatives firmly believe that Allah guides and rewards those who sacrifice themselves for a noble cause. They are ever willing to sacrifice themselves without hesitation. The notion of a noble and blessed death achieved through martyrdom has been firmly embedded in their collective psyche. They view their acts as a sacrifice which is needed in order to achieve the goal of establishing the religion of Allah on earth. Their struggle yields one of two things: victory or martyrdom.

The *baiah* or the pledge of allegiance serves as an assurance that those affiliating themselves to the organization are committed to the organization's ideology. By instituting it, the organization is freed from conceptual problems arising from differences in opinion. To a certain degree, through it an acceptable level of uniformity is maintained which contributes to the organization's stability and ease of management and administration.

They also have the notion that 'true Islam or pure Islam' can only be established if the essence of Islamic society and its fundamentals are instituted. This requires the setting up of an Islamic state. Of course to achieve this end, the present Muslim society needs an Islamic movement which will provide leadership and spiritual guidance (Azzam 1988). The Islamic movement is needed to keep in check the threat posed by a global conspiracy trying to eradicate the Muslim identity by spreading godless and atheistic views among the Muslim masses. The arguments articulated in support of the ideology provide additional momentum for it to travel far and wide. As a result, a pan-Islamic ideology developed. In view of

the prevalent animosity and prejudice against Islam, and the Western hegemony, Islamic governments can never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. The battle concept was total war, 'by pen and gun, by word and bullet, by tongue and teeth'.<sup>10</sup> Re-creating the Caliphate, thereby uniting the whole Muslim world into a single entity, is a logical conclusion drawn by al Qaeda to help bring the Muslim communities out of this dilemma (Gunaratna 2002: 21).

### **The impact of ideology: the driving force**

What actually motivates al Qaeda is not power, wealth or fame but an ideological belief in their struggles (Silm 2004). The trap to be avoided by Western scholars is the common assumption that al Qaeda and other *jihad* groups are driven by publicity in pursuit of their broader goal (Gunaratna 2002: 3). These groups fight existing governments they perceive as hostile to Islam and governments that have departed from the course of God and refused to apply the Shari'ah. They feel that their mission is legitimate and embark on actions which reflect the bitter historical and practical experience of those involved in the struggle.

To build support for their fight against the West, al Qaeda presents a common grievance that Muslims are the ones on the receiving end and therefore actions against the Muslims' enemies are worthy. Drawing lessons from the worldwide Muslim response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, al Qaeda ideologues now seek to unite the Muslims in a *jihad* against the West. In the last century, the many mujahidin factions that existed allied together to face the Soviets, a common enemy. They put aside their differences. Muslims could, regardless of nationality, fight side by side and attain victory for all. The individuals that filled the ranks of the mujahidin during this war, who came from all strata of society, proved that greater achievements could be attained through unity based on common objectives. Momentous events such as the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the defeat of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, the collapse of communism, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War precipitated the creation of over one hundred contemporary Islamist movements in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, the Caucasus and the Balkans.

Although demonized in the Western media, bin Laden is seen by his followers and those who fought with him in the Afghan war thus:

He not only gave us his money, but he also gave himself. He came down from his palace to live with the Afghan peasants and the Arab fighters. He cooked with them, ate with them, dug trenches with them. This is Bin Ladin's way. His credentials include fighting in the famous battles of the whole Afghan war. In these battles the mujahidin came out victorious convincing them how the Soviet's huge military machine could be defeated by unconventional methods.

(Ibid.: 21)



The victory is often interpreted by al Qaeda ideologues as the will of men being singlehandedly defeated by the will of God. The internalization of the victory brought about a feeling of power derived from the belief that their effort had received divine legitimacy and a clear indication that the path they had taken was guided. Bin Laden's followers believe that it was the action of the mujahidin primarily supported by the Muslim world that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ending of the Cold War. They also believe that the US had achieved its goal of becoming the sole global superpower through what bin Laden and his fellow mujahidin had achieved in Afghanistan. Bin Laden later justified his actions by stating that MAK and its Islamist allies were being persecuted by 'an ungrateful US' which had also taken credit for the defeat of the Soviets.<sup>11</sup>

The presence of US troops in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s at the height of the Gulf War and likewise the US military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq were perceived by al Qaeda as acts of aggression (Blanchard 2005: 5–6). Such perceptions generated widespread support and propelled al Qaeda forward, and helped it transform into its present state. The US-led coalition intervention in Afghanistan has been instrumental in decentralizing al Qaeda's members but also dispersed them across the globe. Fragmentation and difficulty in communication with the central command forced them to reorganize into smaller, manageable and fluid groups which focused on attack against American interests worldwide as a form of retaliation. The US invasion and occupation of Iraq has widened the theatre of conflict. Today, there is unprecedented support for *jihad* groups, including al Qaeda. The situation in Iraq is producing greater unity among disparate groups and galvanizing greater support for extremism and terrorism (al Zawahiri nd). Today, al Qaeda, working with Abu Musab al Zarkawi's Tawhid wal Jihad, has urged its followers to target both the domestic governments and Western interests.

### **Strategies and tactics**

Al Qaeda's ideology seeks to move, incite and mobilize the Muslim nation until it reaches a revolutionary ignition point. Although even 9/11 has failed so far to effectively mobilize Muslim support, there exists a significant dissatisfaction with the United States and its foreign policy amongst the many Muslim societies in the Middle East and Islamic world. The trend is rising and will be used to further the cause. Al Qaeda's ideology has created a network of autonomous cells. To circumvent the governments' technical means of intelligence-gathering, they cleverly reverted to one-to-one contact, primarily via couriers. This explains why al Qaeda's German, British, Spanish, Dutch and Belgian cells acting in concert was discovered only during *post facto* investigations into the background of Muhammad Atta and the other 9/11 conspirators. Even after the 7/7 attacks in London, it is very likely that there are other unknown cells in the UK functioning independently.

Al Qaeda has a unique structure combining highly centralized ideological indoctrination and coordination on the one hand, but highly decentralized and

self-sustaining practical activity on the other. In the al Qaeda structure, bin Laden is the Emir, essentially the military commander, whereas al Zawahiri is the strategic thinker, the ideologue (Abedin 2004). Even so, they still allow the peripheral organizations plenty of flexibility. The militants felt that striking at the Arab regimes' Western sponsors (the 'far enemy' as opposed to the 'near enemy') would be the best means to improve local conditions. This strategy, which bin Laden and those around him aggressively advocate, remains contentious among Islamic radicals, especially in Egypt (Burke 2004a).

They differ significantly from more traditional terrorist organizations in that they do not depend on state sponsors. In addition to mounting its own operations, al Qaeda operates as a franchise by providing financial and logistical support, as well as name recognition, to terrorist groups operating in such diverse places as the Philippines, Algeria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Somalia, Yemen, Kashmir and Iraq. Local groups may act in the name of al Qaeda in order to bolster their own reputation – even if they are not receiving support from the organization. Cooperation amongst groups has been known to exist. In addition to JI, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Abu Sayyaff Group, for instance, often acted as a local liaison providing safe houses for visiting al Qaeda operatives (Jane's 2002). The al Tawhid wal Jihad in Iraq group is another example.

Today, the al Qaeda infrastructure has been destroyed. Nonetheless, the group is capable of conducting attacks as lethal as 9/11. Although bin Laden and his associates are scattered or have been arrested and killed in great number, the organization has survived and the ideology is intact.<sup>12</sup> Although Afghanistan is no longer a central hub for Islamic militancy, al Qaeda's worldview that 'it is the duty of every good Muslim to wage *jihād*' is keeping the struggle alive. Al Qaeda's concept of global *jihād* to gain support from politicized and radicalized Muslims has worked to an extent sufficient to sustain a terrorist campaign. This radical internationalist ideology – sustained by anti-Western, anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic rhetoric – has adherents among many individuals and groups, few of whom are currently linked in any substantial way to bin Laden or those around him. They merely follow his precepts, models and methods. They act in the style of al Qaeda, but they are only part of al Qaeda in the very loosest sense. With the diffusion of al Qaeda ideology, especially after 9/11, the threat has moved beyond the group and the individual. Israeli intelligence services now prefer the term '*jihadi* international' instead of 'al Qaeda' (Burke 2004a) and the British Special Branch refer to al Qaeda and its associated groups as 'international terrorism'.<sup>13</sup> Although al Qaeda and its associated groups have been destroyed in Europe and North America, an al Qaeda movement of networked individuals has survived. These, when mobilized by committed and experienced individuals, ensure periodic attacks.

### **Al Qaeda's current disposition**

After it had played such a vital role in the defeat of communism, Afghanistan was neglected by the international community. Afghanistan became the crucible where

contemporary *jihad* groups were spawned and shaped. After the Afghan–Soviet war, the *mujahidin* who returned to their homelands joined opposition political parties, religious bodies and other groups. They campaigned against dictatorial Muslim rulers and corrupt regimes. They wanted to replicate their success by creating Islamic states. Their very presence to a certain extent served as a catalyst for religious debate, social instability and political unrest. While non-violent campaign turned violent, violent campaign escalated. As a result many governments imprisoned the Afghan veterans, and others were denied entry, expelled and made stateless (Gunaratna 2002: 5). The US invasion of Iraq, the US overreaction to 9/11, has created a new land of *jihad*, increasing the threat severalfold. Although there are under 100 al Qaeda leaders and members in Iraq and under 1,000 Afghan trained terrorists in Iraq, the very act of invading a Muslim land has produced and continues to produce terrorists and extremists. It is vital that the counter-terrorism community understands this.

More than the group, al Qaeda's ideology poses an unprecedented threat. The global challenge is to challenge the ideology. Western strategy comes in the form of targeting its leadership, crippling its command and control, and disrupting its current and future support bases. Five years after 9/11, the West has had very limited success. Al Qaeda remains a capable organization, infrequently packing surprises. It must be tackled in an unconventional way – a blend of hard and soft power. Only by using military force with ideological appeal can a wedge be driven between the terrorists and the potential followers. It is central that the counter-terrorism community understands that without marrying hard power with soft power, the al Qaeda-led *jihad* movement cannot be defeated.

Especially after the US invasion of Iraq in March 2003, America's war against terrorism is perceived by Muslims all over the world as an unprecedented assault on Islam. They feel besieged by America. The American response is primarily military. It failed to bring the historical, ideological and social dimensions into its calculations. No doubt America has the material resources to extend its influence everywhere but it lacks the ideological and moral fibre to sustain this kind of domination. Here one could see the scenario whereby material power is confronting spiritual and ideological power. Therefore, it is not surprising that al Qaeda almost always challenges Western secularism and capitalism represented by America with Islam's basic body of literature, the Quran and the Sunnah. For Muslims worldwide, these are both extremely rich and powerful. In the ongoing battle against Islamist terrorism there is a pressing need to appreciate the full strategic significance of the Islamic worldview and spirituality.

In a campaign against global *jihad*, the US-led Western governments should think strategically. Most *jihad* organizations have meagre resources and often it is the overreaction of states that has empowered them to evolve into formidable foes. The invasion of Iraq, though entirely justifiable from a humanitarian perspective, has made this task more difficult. Several new groups have been spawned and existing groups have strengthened themselves. The mistakes in Abu Ghraib or Guantanamo Bay must not be repeated (Hentoff 2004). The unintended consequences of US actions have increased the ideological power of the violent

Islamists. If countries are to win the war on terror, the US-led coalition must eradicate existing enemies without creating new adversaries. Many experiences in counter-insurgency warfare attest that it makes good sense to target the enemy and to win over the general population. Whilst counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency campaigns must be conducted with the end objective of victory, retaining public support at all times is central.

It helps to remember that the protagonist, bin Laden, who conducted the 9/11 operation, is still alive and is directing his efforts at attracting those Muslims who have hitherto shunned his extremist message. As a master propagandist, he attempts to take the moral high ground. He knows that only through mass participation will he reap the fruit of success. Mistakes made in the 'war on terror' could very well contribute to his worldview receiving immeasurably more support around the globe than it did three years ago, let alone 15 years ago when he began serious campaigning. The objective is to eliminate the threat of terror, or at least to manage it in a way that does not seriously impinge on the daily lives of ordinary citizens. Bin Laden's aim is to radicalize and mobilize. If those directly responsible for conducting the campaign are hasty in their decisions, actions and reactions, bin Laden will continue to achieve his goals of further politicizing and radicalizing the Muslims. *Jihad* ideologues and bin Laden believe that time is on their side. Although the threat has moved beyond bin Laden, the fact that bin Laden is still alive and pontificating is a reminder that the Western strategy to fight al Qaeda is flawed.

The success of the war on Islamist terrorism depends heavily on how the threat is perceived and the campaign is managed at the policy, strategic, operational and tactical levels. As a start, the West in general and the US specifically must reflect upon their current and past policies towards the Muslim world, in particular the Middle East. More equitable policies and treatment will preserve our collective wellbeing and interests instead of pursuing selfish gains at the expense of others. In effect, the US should seek to change the reality in the Middle East and beyond. It is the only country that has the military, diplomatic, political and economic power to do so.

Mainstream Muslims should be encouraged to fight the Muslim leaders who use and misuse religion for their political ends. Islam is a way of life and from the perspective of the Muslims the teaching of the Quran and the Sunnah is adhered to in order to achieve the good life in this world and happiness in the life to come. In short, the Quranic thesis is that all life, being God-given, is a unity, and that problems of the flesh and of the mind, of sex and economics, of individual righteousness and social equity are intimately connected with the hopes which man may legitimately entertain with regard to his life after death. If this could be understood and accepted, then the dominating effect of Islamist terrorism which is condemned by Islam itself could be prevented from interfering with the discussion on Islam, and therefore allow a meaningful dialogue to be developed.

Once this is achieved, grievances could be more effectively addressed, thus eliminating the possibilities of their being manipulated and catapulted into terrorism. The Islamic world must be allowed to decide whether or not to emulate

the more successful Western secular models but never lock, stock and barrel; rather in a conscious manner, making adjustments where necessary in an attempt to apply them to local conditions. Mutual respect must always be there and a gradual change must be insisted upon. Learning to respect and safeguard each other's dignity applies in this case. Outward differentiation in the form of moral preferences must not diminish the global mutual desire to create a better world for all. Without a better understanding of the threat, the West cannot effectively sustain the campaign against the multiple *jihad* and Islamist movements.

### Notes

- 1 In the pre-9/11 environment many scholars attributed terrorism to poverty and lack of education. Yet Osama Bin Laden, Emir-General, al Qaeda comes from the richest non-royal Saudi family and Dr Ayman al Zawahiri from one of the most educated families in Egypt.
- 2 Three years after 9/11, as the US strategy on 'war against terrorism' began to falter, the US government started seeking to craft its campaign as 'a struggle against violent extremism'.
- 3 Osama bin Laden kept the name of al Qaeda a public secret until the US attacked Afghanistan in October 2001. He did not focus on building support for al Qaeda, the single group, but for the wider *jihad* movement, throughout the 1990s and beyond.
- 4 Briefing by CNI, the Spanish Intelligence Service, December 2004.
- 5 Briefing on Operation Crevice, SO 13, New Scotland Yard, December 2004.
- 6 The 9/11 Commission Report provides insight into the operation including the different phases and timelines.
- 7 See published extracts from al Zawahiri 2001.
- 8 For more detail see 'Syeikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab (1115–1206H/1701–1790M)', <http://media.isnet.org/islam/Etc/Wahab.html> (accessed 6 December 2004).
- 9 *Al Quds Al Arabi* 1998b. The *fatwa* argued that defensive jihad was necessary 'in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque [Jerusalem]'.
- 10 Al Qaeda training manual recovered by the British Police in Manchester, n.d. n.p. p. 2.
- 11 Interviews with al Qaeda members, 1999–2002.
- 12 Of the original 3–4,000 members in 2001, under 500 are still alive or active, according to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies database on Al Qaeda Wanted, August 2005.
- 13 Interview, Keith Weston, Director, Police International Counter Terrorism Unit, Thames House, London, November 2004.

Part II

THE GREATER MIDDLE  
EAST



# SAUDI ARABIA'S CONUNDRUM AND THE AL QAEDA INSURGENCY

*Richard L. Russell*

The Bush administration for the past several years has declared that the United States is embarked on a 'war on terrorism', but that conceptualization is too ambiguous and open-ended to be of much use for crafting strategy. As Eliot Cohen wryly comments, the concept of a Global War on Terror 'makes as much sense as if Americans had responded to Pearl Harbor by declaring a global war on dive bombers' (Cohen 2004: 16). 'Terrorism' is a means of warfare, not an entity or group of individuals who can be killed as objectives in war. Declaring a war on terrorism is all too reminiscent of Woodrow Wilson's naïve goal of waging World War I to 'end all wars'. The United States will never be able to extinguish 'terrorism' from the planet any more than it could 'end all wars' or stop the resort to violence that has been a staple of human affairs for thousands of years.

Proponents of the 'war on terrorism' slogan counter that ending terrorism is an achievable objective and that it could eventually be made to go the way of slavery or piracy as practices that are not accepted by international norms of behaviour. That argument might seem plausible, but the analogy is empirically false. Slave trades – especially for the sex industry – as well as piracy on the high seas in Asia still plague the planet. The United States has set for itself an impossible objective.

A more direct and useful strategic declaration would have been that the United States is at war with al Qaeda and any organization, network, or state that aids and abets al Qaeda operations. Such a direct statement of strategy would have been more readily accepted and understood at both home and abroad as a legitimate policy. It would have clearly articulated our national objective of seeking out and destroying the organization responsible for the slaughter of some 3,000 civilians on American soil. It would have been a foundation for strategic planning which sets a goal – to kill al Qaeda operatives and destroy their bases of operation and support – that is within the reach of American power.



If the United States is to successfully deal with the formidable threat posed by al Qaeda, it needs to be clear-eyed about identifying the enemy, his strategic objectives, and bases of political, economic and military support. Viewing al Qaeda as a terrorist organization implies that it is a small and *ad hoc* network akin to a criminal gang that periodically raises its head to commit acts of violence directed principally against civilian targets. But this does not do our adversary justice. The United States would be wiser to recognize al Qaeda as a global Islamic insurgency armed with a worldview and ideological support that finds fertile ground throughout the greater Middle East. Al Qaeda's strategic objective is to topple the existing political, military and economic order in the Middle East – especially, in the Persian Gulf, in Saudi Arabia – at the expense of regional and global American interests and power.

### **Al Qaeda as an ideologically motivated insurgency**

American strategy runs the risk of remaining confused and convoluted if it continues to see *jihadists* as mere terrorists and not the vanguard of a global Islamic insurgency with a special area of operations in the greater Middle East. American policymakers gravely underestimate a political decision-making body, informed by a militant Islamic worldview, that has strategic objectives to achieve with violence directed against its perceived adversaries. While al Qaeda lacks the configuration of a modern nation state – at least, as yet – it still has a strategy that must be fully grasped if it is to be effectively destroyed.

Insurgency better captures the nature, threat, and challenge posed by al Qaeda. Bard O'Neill defines insurgency as

a struggle between a nonruling group and the ruling authorities in which the nonruling group consciously uses *political resources* (e.g., organization expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.

(O'Neill 1990: 13)

The US Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency Operations* manual describes a phenomenon that aptly applies to al Qaeda as 'subversive insurgency' in which the insurgents gain power

from social dissatisfaction and government failure to meet the aspirations of the people. A mass movement encouraged or directed by a hard insurgent core, develops slowly in a long evolutionary process until armed fighting occurs through a percipient event.

(US Marine Corps 1980: 10)

Insurgents use terrorism as a tool to achieve political goals, and the terror is not an end in or of itself. Insurgents use terrorism as a form of warfare,

in which violence is directed primarily against noncombatants (usually unarmed civilians), rather than operational military and police forces or economic assets (public or private). The active units of terrorist organizations are normally smaller than those of guerillas, being composed of individuals organized covertly into cells. Their actions are familiar, consisting of such things as assassinations, bombings, tossing grenades, arson, torture, mutilation, hijacking, and kidnapping. While the targets of such violence may at times be arbitrary, often they are carefully chosen in order to maximize their political impact.

(O'Neill 1990: 24)

This characterizes al Qaeda operations over the past decade, and even more starkly on 9/11 and afterwards. Al Qaeda engages in attacks against noncombatants, but also takes on military, government and economic targets, as evident in operations in Saudi Arabia against National Guard and police positions, against a US warship in Yemen, and against American soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And al Qaeda is using the classic forms of insurgency. Michael Scheuer elaborates that,

the threat America faces from bin Laden is not the episodic terrorist campaign typical of those perpetrated by traditional terrorist groups. It is rather a worldwide insurgency against 'Christian Crusaders and Jews,' which is being waged by groups bin Laden has controlled, directed, and inspired.

(Scheuer [Anon] 2002: xviii)

Perhaps Daniel Byman has most succinctly and accurately captured the threat: 'Al Qaeda is probably best defined as a religiously inspired, global insurgent movement that often uses terrorist tactics' (Byman 2003b: 412).

Al Qaeda's pursuit of death and destruction is aimed at achieving a grandiose militant Islamic vision of power and politics, especially in the greater Middle East, and wielding power over the West, which al Qaeda's worldview blames for the blights of the Arab world. As Michael Doran astutely observes, 'Al Qaeda's long-term goals are set by its fervent devotion to a radical religious ideology, but in its short-term behaviour, it is a rational political actor operating according to the dictates of *realpolitik*' (Doran 2002: 56). And the essence of *realpolitik* is the pursuit of power. Byman judges that 'Bin Laden's grievances are focused on power – who possesses it, why it is used, and (in his judgment) how it is abused' (Byman 2003a: 145).

Al Qaeda's ideology has a powerful and wide appeal in the Middle East, an essential ingredient for an effective insurgency. Galula recognized the role of ideology in an insurgency when he wrote that 'The Insurgent cannot seriously embark on an insurgency unless he has a well-grounded cause with which to attract supporters among the population' (Galula 1964: 13). Rohan Gunaratna explains that bin Laden and his deputy al Zawahiri,

are followers of the Salafi strand of Islam ... the Salafi strand aims to return the entire nation to the sublime Koran and the Prophet's authentic Sunnah. It also strives to revive Islamic thought within the boundaries of Islamic principles (meaning the presentation of realistic Islamic solutions to contemporary problems) and to establish a true Islamic society governed by Allah's laws.

(Gunaratna 2002: 27)

The key, according to Scheuer, to understanding bin Laden's actions and appeal, is his belief that Islam and the Muslim world are being attacked by a more modern, powerful, and predatory version of the medieval Catholic Crusaders: the United States, Britain, or the West generally, allied with Israel, India, and Russia, and supported by apostate Muslim regimes. Armed with his version of reality, bin Laden has said that Muslims are required by God to wage *jihad* to defend themselves, their creed, and their land against the new Crusaders (Scheuer [Anon] 2002: 53).

Brian Jenkins identifies the crux of the issue: 'The enemy here is an ideology, a set of attitudes, a belief system organized into a recruiting network that will continue to replace terrorist losses unless defeated politically' (Jenkins 2002: 24).

The region is ripe with wounded pride and perceived insults from the West that fuels anti-American sentiment and primes populations to passively support al Qaeda and provide the seedbed for active insurgent recruits. The Pew Trust, for example, in extensive polling, assesses that

In the Muslim world, opinions about the US have been negative for decades, but in recent years that broad dislike has taken on an aspect of outright fear. In a 2003 Pew survey, majorities in seven of eight predominately Muslim nations said they believed the US may someday threaten their country – including 71% in Turkey and 58% in Lebanon.

(Pew Research Center 2005)

A 2003 public opinion poll in Saudi Arabia found that 95 per cent of those polled had either a very or somewhat unfavourable view of the United States while only a minuscule 4 per cent had a favourable view.<sup>1</sup>

The Islamic insurgency is waging a *jihad* against the United States which it sees as the global infidel and its Middle Eastern security partners which al Qaeda views as apostates. Walter Laqueur assesses that,

On the whole, violence is sanctified in Islam if it is carried out against infidels or heretics 'in the path of Allah' ... The faithful live, at least in theory, in a permanent state of war with the non-Islamic world, and this will change only if and when the nonbelievers have accepted the one true faith.

(Laqueur 1999: 129)

Bernard Lewis elaborates that,

According to Islamic law, it is lawful to wage war against four types of enemies: infidels, apostates, rebels, and bandits. Although all four types of wars are legitimate, only the first two count as *jihad*. *Jihad* is thus a religious obligation.

(Lewis 2003: 31)

Some observers judge that the threat posed to the West is not simply a small portion of the global Islamic community who are militant fundamentalists, but comes from Islam as a whole. Samuel Huntington is probably the most articulate and sophisticated scholar of this school of thought. He argues that,

The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the US Department of Defense. It is the West, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposed on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West.

(Huntington 1996: 217–18)

Even if the validity of Huntington's thesis is debatable, bin Laden and his lieutenants readily embrace it as reality. 'For bin Laden and those who follow him, this is a religious war, a war for Islam and against infidels, and therefore, inevitably, against the United States, the greatest power in the world of infidels' (Lewis 2001: 50). Bin Laden publicly spelled out the goals of al Qaeda's global insurgency in a *fatwa* (ruling) published as a 'Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders' in February 1998 which pronounced that,

To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim who is able, in any country where this is possible, until the Aqsa Mosque [in Jerusalem] and the Haram Mosque [in Mecca] are freed from their grip and until their armies, shattered and broken-winged, depart from all the lands of Islam, incapable of threatening any Muslim.

(Lewis 1998: 15)

Power, ideology and wounded pride are the engines driving al Qaeda's strategy more directly than economic stagnation in the Middle East. To be sure, al Qaeda finds recruits among young men who are idle, frustrated, and face dim prospects

for livelihood but these conditions in themselves would not be enough to generate large numbers of suicide bombers. As Michael Mazarr assesses,

Economic decline, the deprivation of freedom, and general desperation and lack of hope are, in fact, precisely the problem. But it is the mindset produced by this situation – a mindset to which radical extremisms of all sort have always appealed, and for which the radical dogmatists stand ready to offer a framework of blame and hate and violence and totalitarian politics – that seems the more proximate cause of the threat we now face.

(Mazarr 2004: 49)

The common wisdom that the ‘root causes’ of terrorism lie in poverty, unemployment and inequality rests on empirically shallow grounds. Laqueur notes that,

The experts have maintained for a long time that poverty does not cause terrorism and prosperity does not cure it. In the world’s 50 poorest countries there is little or no terrorism and in the Arab countries (such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but also in North Africa), the terrorists originated not in the poorest and most neglected districts but hailed from places with concentrations of radical preachers.

(Laqueur 2004: 50)

In contrast, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America also suffer from political and economic problems, but do not produce young men who figure as prominently in al Qaeda ranks as do young men from the Middle East and South Asia. And many of the 9/11 conspirators hailed from middle class backgrounds, not from the poorest rungs of Middle Eastern societies.

Another commonly, and overly, voiced diagnosis is that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is a ‘root cause’ of al Qaeda’s insurgency. Many commentators seem to suggest that if only Israel negotiated a peace with the Palestinians, al Qaeda would lay down its arms. Here again, Laqueur offers some iconoclastic thinking:

Osama bin Ladin did not go to war because of Gaza and Nablus; he did not send his warriors to fight in Palestine. Even the disappearance of the ‘Zionist entity’ would not have a significant impact on his supporters, except perhaps to provide encouragement for further action.

(Ibid.: 52)

Palestinians, moreover, so far have not shown up as foot soldiers in al Qaeda ranks nor have al Qaeda foot soldiers shown up in droves in the front lines of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.

Similarly, many commentators have argued that the United States needs to pull its military forces out of the Persian Gulf to lessen al Qaeda’s appeal. But

alas, reality clashes with that common wisdom as well. Even though the United States removed its forces from Saudi Arabia after the 2003 Iraq war, al Qaeda has yet to lessen its efforts to target the United States or its allies, as evident from the suicide bombings in Madrid and London. In short, al Qaeda's religious war against the West is on whether or not the United States has military forces in the Middle East.

The al Qaeda insurgency is especially powerful because it has successfully tapped the tools of globalization, including air transport, telecommunications and computers to maintain and manage a global Islamic insurgency.<sup>2</sup> As Thomas Mockaitis observes, 'The current threat differs from earlier insurgencies primarily in scope and complexity. Previously insurgents operated in a local arena; now they act on a global stage' (Mockaitis 2003: 22). The combatant commander of American forces in the Middle East, General John Abizaid, likewise assessed that 'The enemy has a virtual connectivity we haven't seen before with guerrilla groups' (Ignatius 2004). And al Qaeda has proved itself to be an international insurgency *par excellence* with supporters and operations in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Europe.

### **Prowling for territorial sanctuary**

Two critical factors for the success of any insurgency are sanctuary and popular support. As Lawrence observed,

It seemed that rebellion must have an unassailable base, something guarded not merely from attack, but from the fear of it ... It must have a friendly population, not actively friendly, but sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy. Rebellions can be made by 2 per cent active in a striking force, and 98 per cent passively sympathetic.

(Lawrence 1940: 133–4)

As Laqueur notes, 'Bases are needed for guerrilla units to recover from their battles, to reorganize for new campaigns and for a great many other purposes' (Laqueur 1998: 394). These other purposes include recruitment, training, indoctrination, planning and arming personnel.

Al Qaeda leaders appreciate the importance of sanctuary for their insurgent forces. Ayman al Zawahiri, drawing on his experience of attacking the Egyptian government, wrote that 'A *jihadi* movement needs an arena that would act like an incubator where its seeds would grow and where it can acquire practical experience in combat, politics, and organizational matters' (Al Zawahiri 2001). Benjamin and Simon point out that

A core tenet of al Qaeda's strategy is that radical Islamists must gain control of a nation, from which they can then expand the area controlled

by believers. Holding a state, in their view, is the prelude to knocking over the dominoes of the world's secular Muslim regimes.

(Benjamin and Simon 2003: 134)

Al Qaeda lost, only temporarily from its viewpoint, safe haven in Afghanistan and is working to take it back. Al Qaeda too is working to perpetuate a state of chaos in Iraq, hoping to control the post-Saddam government and to exploit the country as a hub for insurgent operations.

Attacking the states viewed as 'apostate' is a high strategic objective for the insurgency. The greatest apostate regimes in the region, from al Qaeda's perspective, are in Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. As Doran judges al Qaeda's strategic perspective,

In order to save the world from depravity, it is imperative to topple these rulers from power immediately. In this project, al Qaeda sees itself as one military arm of the enclave of true believers. Its overriding priority is to carry out Islamic revolution by whatever means available.

(Doran 2002: 56)

As Jonathan Stevenson captures the objectives, al Qaeda seeks to overthrow the 'near enemies', the Arab regimes, especially in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, that have close relations with the United States, making them apostate states and inimical to Islam (Stevenson 2004: 10).

Insurgencies in general make for especially bloody warfare, and the coupling with al Qaeda's militant Islamic ideology will give the United States and its regional security partners a hard, protracted, and bloody long-term struggle. Insurgencies manifest themselves in a ruthlessness and barbarism that is all too often overlooked by observers. Laqueur is a notable exception. He astutely observes that,

guerrilla war is an excellent outlet for personal aggression, it provides opportunities for settling accounts with one's enemies, and conveys a great sense of power to those hitherto powerless. While sadism has never been official guerrilla policy, there has always been more deliberate cruelty inflicted in guerrilla wars than in the fighting of regular army units, subject to stricter discipline.

(Laqueur 1998: 399)

This brutality fuels terror that 'is used as a deliberate strategy to demoralize the government by disrupting its control, to demonstrate one's own strength and to frighten collaborators' (ibid.: 401).

Al Qaeda's methodical throat-slitting and decapitation of foreigners publicized on television and the internet portend the barbarity of the warfare yet to come, which al Qaeda sees as justifiable behaviour. Lewis notes that the Islamic rules of war 'against the apostate are very much harsher than those governing warfare

against the unbeliever. He may not be given quarter or safe conduct, and no truce or agreement with him is permissible' (Lewis 1988: 85). He emphasizes a point that is especially pertinent to Saudi Arabia, which is charged with apostasy by bin Laden:

The principle of war against the apostate, however, opened the possibility of legitimate, indeed obligatory, war against an enemy at home, which in modern times has been developed into a doctrine of insurgency and revolutionary war as a religious obligation and a form of *jihad*.

(Ibid.: 90)

Al Qaeda leaders make plain their strategic objective of capturing territory in the Middle East to anchor their global insurgency. Al Zawahiri portrays this strategic goal vividly by arguing that victory for the Islamic movements against the world alliance cannot be attained unless these movements possess an Islamic base in the heart of the Arab region and that mobilizing and arming the nation will be without any tangible results until a fundamentalist state is established in the region. He admits that this task will not be easy, but argues that it is the hope of the Muslim nation to restore its fallen caliphate and regain its lost glory.<sup>3</sup>

### **Vulnerable centre of gravity in Saudi Arabia**

Notwithstanding al Qaeda's formidable capabilities to reconstitute using twenty-first-century technology, the control of territory remains a critically important feature for a potent insurgency. One of al Qaeda's strategic goals is to overthrow apostate regimes, the richest and guiltiest of which is Saudi Arabia. Al Qaeda wants to gain control – not just the permissive operating environment that it has had in the past in Sudan and Afghanistan – to marshal the full resources and power of a modern state to expand its global Islamic revolution. As General Abizaid rightly concluded, 'The clear military lesson of Afghanistan is that we cannot allow the enemy to establish a safe haven anywhere' (Ignatius 2004).

Al Qaeda places a high priority on attacking the regimes in Egypt and Pakistan, but its leadership is likely to view Saudi Arabia as the centre of gravity in its war against the West and apostasy. The al Qaeda leadership sees the Saudi–American relationship as defiling Islam's holy shrines in the kingdom and resents what it sees as the American and Saudi royal family's exploitation of the kingdom's oil wealth. Al Qaeda no doubt judges that the overthrow of the Saudi regime would be a devastating reversal of American power in the Middle East, portend the overthrow of the regimes of the other Arab Gulf states and Egypt, and give al Qaeda the prestige of caretaking the holy sites, and the wealth and territory needed to expand its influence in the Gulf and beyond. As Benjamin and Simon observe, 'For Osama bin Laden, Saudi Arabia is the essential field of *jihad*. It is also increasingly vulnerable' (Benjamin and Simon 2003: 185). The United States, moreover, is heavily dependent on Saudi Arabia's oil wealth to fuel its economic power while Washington has no such dependence on the regimes in



Egypt or Pakistan. In short, and to paraphrase Clausewitz, al Qaeda sees Saudi Arabia as the United States' centre of gravity in the Gulf.

Al Qaeda is popular inside the kingdom, which gives the insurgency fertile grounds for recruitment and operations. 'Support for al Qaeda itself appears strong in much of the Kingdom' (Byman 2005: 5). Veteran Middle East correspondent Thomas Lippman observes,

There appears to be a large pool of poorly educated, narrow-minded, violence-prone men who are steeped in the religious absolutism that the regime itself has promoted for 20 years, principally to reestablish its Islamic religious credentials... The messages they hear from the country's xenophobic religious establishment – anti-Western, anti-Semitic, anti-feminist – reinforce their convictions.

(Lippman 2004: B2)

The Saudi religious establishment, the Wahhabists, and the Saudi royal family have a longstanding relationship based on mutual interests and benefits. As Roy explains,

Each needs the other, the monarchy for legitimacy, the clergy for funding and to ensure its religious hegemony in the kingdom (against Shias and other Sunnis). The clergy enjoy wide autonomy; it is dominated by the Sheikh family, while there are no members of the Saud family among the *ulama*.

(Roy 2004: 237)

But while the Saudi royal family relies on the Wahhabis for political and religious legitimacy, the Wahhabis also provide ideological legitimacy to al Qaeda. Roy puts his finger on the core issue: 'The predicament of the Saudi monarchy is that the main contestation of its authority comes from within its basis of legitimacy: the Wahhabis' (ibid.).

The Saudi regime was in a state of denial in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks of the threat posed by al Qaeda to its own security. The Saudi leadership was extraordinarily slow in recognizing the militant Islamic insurgency attacking both the United States and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef, for example, as late as November 2002 declared in an interview to an Arab Gulf newspaper that there were no al Qaeda cells in Saudi Arabia as well as repeating his earlier allegation that Israel was behind the 9/11 attacks (Whitlock 2005). These comments, coming from the head of Saudi internal security organs, hardly suggest a cold-eye analysis of the threat needed to undertake a decisive and sustained counterinsurgency campaign in the kingdom.

The al Qaeda insurgency since 9/11 stepped up attacks in Saudi Arabia, making the threat hard to ignore even for an aged and lethargic political leadership. The Saudi leadership is old and conservative and it remains to be seen if it has the grit to fully take on the insurgency, especially because al Qaeda has deep pockets

of political and monetary support inside the kingdom. As Byman rightly points out,

The Saudi government is highly personalized, with institutions often being little more than a brittle shell surrounding one individual. Decision making is highly centralized, and the number of competent bureaucrats is low.

(Byman 2005: 8)

While the Western press touts the new and 'reform-minded' Saudi King Abdullah, he is 82 years old and unlikely to undertake anything beyond marginal reforms to Saudi society and government or to challenge the Saudi religious establishment any more than his predecessor King Fahd.<sup>4</sup>

Some Saudi princes in the generation after that of Fahd, Abdullah, Crown Prince Sultan, and Interior Minister Nayef might more clearly see the dangers posed by al Qaeda and the militant Islamic ideology to which the regime has wedded its political fortune. The former Saudi ambassador to the United States, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, is a notable figure in this regard. In summer 2004, Bandar wrote an exceptional article in the Saudi government newspaper *Al Watan* in which he called for Saudi public support for waging a *jihad* against al Qaeda in the kingdom. Bandar wrote in uncharacteristically stark and realistic terms that 'War, ultimately, means tragedy, pain and sacrifice. The harder, faster, more determinedly and more aggressively a war is fought, the fewer the casualties' (*Washington Post* 2004). Bandar warned that if the war was waged

hesitantly, in hope that [the terrorists] are Muslim youths who have been misled, and that the solution [to the crisis] is that we call upon them to follow the path of righteousness, in hope that they will come to their senses—then we will lose this war.

(Ibid.)

It is uncertain how much influence younger and aggressive princes the likes of Bandar will have in shaping the regime's counterinsurgency campaign. Given the influence accorded seniority and consensus in Saudi decision-making, smart money would put odds on the regime failing to wage an aggressive counterinsurgency campaign. The ageing leadership is more likely to opt instead for a conciliatory approach to al Qaeda and its Wahhabi ideological backers to preserve their hold on power even at the risk of paving the way for the war-losing strategy envisioned by Bandar.

Al Qaeda had largely not conducted major operations inside the kingdom, with the notable exception of the bombing of a Saudi National Guard building in 1996. Some observers suspect that the Saudis may even have bought al Qaeda protection with lavish funding so long as the insurgency conducted operations against American interests outside the kingdom.<sup>5</sup> Al Qaeda abruptly changed gears in May 2003 when it killed 35 people – including nine suicide bombers

– in bombings of three housing compounds for foreigners in Riyadh. It launched another bombing in November 2003 against a compound in Riyadh that housed Arab families in which 17 people were killed.<sup>6</sup> These attacks marked a watershed in that many in the royal family shifted from sympathizing with al Qaeda to seeing the insurgency as a threat to the House of Saud's power.

Al Qaeda insurgents were emboldened by the success of their 2003 attacks and have since mounted an array of diverse operations in the kingdom:

- A Riyadh police headquarters in April 2004 was struck by a suicide car bomber who killed 4 policemen and wounded 148 people.
- Insurgents in May 2004 went on a shooting spree at a petrochemical company in Yanbu on the Red Sea and killed six Westerners and one Saudi. Three of the gunmen apparently worked at the company and used their entry passes to gain access to the targets. One was dragged behind a car through city streets.
- Also in May, three al Qaeda insurgents stormed a residential compound of foreigners in Khobar, carefully separated Muslims from non-Muslims and executed 22 foreigners. The insurgents escaped through a police cordon, which raised suspicions of collusion between the insurgents and the police.
- In a bold move, al Qaeda insurgents in December 2004 attacked the US consulate in Jeddah and killed five consulate staff. Four al Qaeda gunmen were also killed.
- Smaller al Qaeda insurgent attacks in 2004 included: a German citizen gunned down on a Riyadh street; an American expatriate kidnapped and beheaded; a BBC cameraman killed and his colleague seriously wounded; and an Irishman, a Briton, and a Frenchman killed in separate attacks (Asser 2004; Corera 2004).

The insurgents are no doubt trying to spark an exodus of expatriates working in the security and oil sectors of the economy to demonstrate their power as well as to undermine that of the Saudi regime.

Al Qaeda's internet displays of operations vividly show the frailties of Saudi security services to increase new recruits to al Qaeda ranks, encourage active insurgents, and increase passive support for the insurgency from a larger swathe of the Saudi populace. Despite al Qaeda attacks that have killed Saudi civilians and security personnel, a sizable minority of the Saudi public probably remains receptive to al Qaeda's militant ideology and goals. Al Qaeda's internet propaganda is a powerful tool for cowing and intimidating the Saudi majority and security forces who support the royal family.

Al Qaeda's use of terrorist attacks over the past several years in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere is designed, in part, to broaden its global appeal. As Galula astutely noted of the use of terror by insurgents,

The purpose is to get publicity for the movement and its cause, and by focusing attention on it, to attract latent supporters. This is done

by random terrorism, bombings, arson, assassinations, conducted in as spectacular a fashion as possible, by concentrated, coordinated, and synchronized waves.

(Galula 1964: 58)

These words, written in the 1960s, appear prophetic in the aftermath of al Qaeda's global operations in 1998 against the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the 9/11 attacks, and more recently operations in Madrid and London, and they probably portend similar future operations in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi al Qaeda insurgents, moreover, are now gaining combat experience in operations against US and Iraqi forces in Iraq. If they survive battle, many will return home as an infusion of combat talent for al Qaeda's insurgent ranks inside Saudi Arabia, which probably, in turn, will lead to a surge in operations inside the kingdom. Young Saudis are eagerly responding to calls for *jihad* in Iraq and make up a large number of the al Qaeda suicide bomber population there. Twenty-six Saudi imams in November 2004 signed a statement urging Muslims to join the insurgency against US forces in Iraq (Whitlock 2005). This belies the Saudi regime's claims to have tempered the *jihadi* zeal of its religious establishment. Saudi nationals are heavily represented in lists of al Qaeda suicide bombers posted on various websites that the insurgency uses to attract more recruits (Glasser 2005). As John Bradley warns,

The ideological bonds that tie the insurgents in Iraq and Saudi Arabia have been made explicit. Those who beheaded American Paul Johnson in Riyadh signed their claim of responsibility 'the Fallujah Brigade'.

(Bradley 2005: 212)

While the al Qaeda insurgency in Saudi Arabia may be making progress toward more ambitious and sustained operations in the kingdom, the capability and reliability of Saudi internal security forces are in doubt. Saudi security forces have had their ranks penetrated by militant Islamists in the past. Troops from the Saudi National Guard, the regime's key forces for protecting the royal family, were involved in the bloody 1979 uprising at the Grand Mosque in Mecca (Benjamin and Simon 2003: 87–91). The Saudis claim that they have learned from past mistakes and do better now in vetting their security forces for militant Islamists. Such a feat, however, would be extremely difficult because militant Islamic ideology is deeply and widely pervasive in the kingdom especially in the lower socio-economic rungs of Saudi society that provide the bulk of security and military force personnel.

Some anecdotal information indicates that al Qaeda has already penetrated Saudi security forces. Scheuer reports, for example, that during the 2001 American military campaign in Afghanistan an al Qaeda computer was recovered that contained classified Saudi government documents apparently stolen by al Qaeda sympathizers in the Saudi government (Anon 2004: 72). The May 2003 bombings against the Riyadh residential compounds depended on a significant level of insider knowledge of the three targets which was almost certainly provided by the Saudi

security detail at the compound (Bradley 2005: 113). During the November 2003 attack on another Riyadh residential compound the attackers drove a Saudi special security forces car and were dressed in police uniforms (ibid.: 114). Although the depth of al Qaeda penetration of the Saudi military and security services is uncertain, there is no doubt of the police's religious allegiances to al Qaeda: 'It is an open secret than many of them, if not the vast majority, support Osama bin Laden' (ibid.: 115).

While there has been a lull through much of 2005 in major al Qaeda operations in Saudi Arabia, it may just be the calm before the storm. Bin Laden in December 2004 called for a new phase in his campaign to oust the regime. He publicly urged followers via an internet-released audiotape to mount a peaceful revolution and called on them not to miss a 'golden and unique opportunity' to kill Americans in Iraq. Bin Laden added that if the peaceful revolution failed then Saudis would have no choice but to resort to violent attacks against the royal family (Whitlock and Glasser 2004). Bin Laden may have emphasized 'peaceful' to dampen negative Saudi public opinion caused by past al Qaeda operations that caused the deaths of Saudis as well as foreign infidels. A fair number of Saudis view the killing of foreigners inside the kingdom as legitimate and justified while they oppose al Qaeda operations that kill Saudis.

### **Washington between a rock and a hard place**

American strategy in the campaign against al Qaeda – or any other Salafist *jihadi* organizations that might move in to fill the breach – must be aimed at ensuring that the Islamic *jihadists* never gain control of geopolitically important states such as Saudi Arabia. The kingdom is riddled with weaknesses and vulnerabilities that al Qaeda and its affiliates are certain to bore in on in the coming decades.

The relative lull in al Qaeda attacks in Saudi Arabia in 2005 in comparison to the bloody attacks of 2003 and 2004 might indicate that Saudi security forces have gained the upper hand against the insurgents, at least for the time being. On the other hand, al Qaeda operations in Saudi Arabia might just be taking a back seat as insurgents focus on Iraq. The al Qaeda insurgency is an intelligent and nimble one with the flexibility to rapidly adapt and evade government counterinsurgency measures. Riyadh might not have to wait long before Saudi *jihadists* return home to regroup to attack Saudi Arabia's security forces, political and economic infrastructure and expatriate communities.

The Saudi regime is in an acute counterinsurgency conundrum. It must reduce the ideological power of al Qaeda, much of which comes from the religious segment of Saudi society from which the royal family gains its political legitimacy. This will be a formidable political task, especially for the cautious and consensus-building group of octogenarians that head the Saudi regime. The jury is out on whether the Saudi regime has the grit, determination, courage and discipline to diminish the influence of the Wahhabists who are aiding and abetting al Qaeda.

The United States' people tend to be optimistic and idealistic and see 'freedom on the march' with the end of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and the withdrawal

of Syrian forces from Lebanon. Through lenses shaded with a romanticized view of the benefits of democracy and liberty, we project linearly the flourishing of democracy in the future Middle East. From our worldview, we believe that the proliferation of democracies will reduce the incidence of war between states and dissipate the political repression that gives rise to the militant Islamic ideology which we see as the seedbed for global Islamic insurgency.

The grand American strategic balancing act will be to encourage liberalization and increase political space in countries such as Saudi Arabia, but not so fast or ambitiously as to cause the existing institutions to collapse, leaving political vacuums to be filled by militant Islamists. Today we worry that the Taliban is reconstituting to re-challenge the government in Kabul, but imagine if a Taliban-like group seized the reins of political power in Saudi Arabia, a state which exercises real geopolitical and economic power. Riyadh controls a quarter of the world's proven oil reserves. For all the vices, weaknesses, duplicities and hypocrisies of the Saudi Royal family, they might still be a moderating influence on the Saudi body politic.

To some observers these scenarios are not grounds for serious concern. Such a sanguine view is probably based more on a 24/7 news cycle than a sober appreciation of history. The Middle East may be glacially paced in major political transformations, but when change does occur it tends to come in volcanic eruptions. Few enjoying the lifestyle of Beirut in the early 1970s would have predicted Lebanon's precipitous nose-dive into civil war in the 1980s, from which it is still recuperating. Few too would have predicted as late as 1978 that the Shah's regime was on the cusp of extinction. The point is that the US must always work to guard against the next volcanic eruption in the region, especially in Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia where Washington's 'war on terrorism' tent is pitched.

George Kennan famously argued for the Cold War policy of containment that the United States only had to be true to itself to prevail in the long term. Kennan's wisdom is true today and for the future. The US's best course for countering Islamic ideology is to exercise a steady hand in statecraft while working to improve our own society and welfare to serve as the example for others. If we allow ourselves to become captive of our own political ideology to the disregard of power realities, we will become in the eyes of the world not an example to emulate but a hypocritical creature to deplore. Notwithstanding the whirlwind of conferences and task forces on the role of public diplomacy, ultimately the most powerful weapon in the American arsenal is the unvarnished truth. And over the longer timeframe the truth will expose the lies upon which the barbaric global Islamic insurgency is built.

### Notes

- 1 A Saban Center for Middle East Policy poll cited in Cause 2003: 5.
- 2 On the relationship between globalization and militant Islamic terrorism, see Cronin 2002.

- 3 Al Zawahiri 2001, excerpts from London's *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* newspaper translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 2 December 2001, made available by the Federation of American Scientists at <http://www.fas.org>.
- 4 For an analysis of the likely prospects for a successive string of aged Saudi leaders, see Henderson 2005.
- 5 For an example of suspicions which have surfaced in the media, see Hersh 2001.
- 6 The BBC's website at <http://news.bbc.co.uk> is an excellent source of information on al Qaeda operations in Saudi Arabia. On the incidents cited here, see Asser 2004. The attack in 1996 on the American compound in Khobar Towers which killed 19 American airmen is not mentioned because the leading suspect in the attack is the Saudi Hezbollah with assistance from Iran rather than al Qaeda.

# COUNTERING TERRORISM

## Hizbullah's appeal

*Fariborz Mokhtari*

### Introduction

The name Hizbullah (*Hezb-Allah* – party of God) did not originate with Shiite groups in Lebanon, now commonly associated with the term. Hizbullah first appeared in its modern political context during the Iranian Revolution of 1978 as a pro-Khomaini slogan that rhymed with the Ayatollah's first name which means spirit of God: *Hezb faqat Hizbullah, Rahbar faqat Rohollah* – Party, only God's party, leader, only God's spirit.<sup>1</sup> The general meaning associated with the name at the time was that of adherence to Islamic rule under Ayatollah Khomaini's guidance as chief theologian and Islamic jurist. The political movement in Lebanon by that name was not founded until 1982, partly as a reaction to Israel's invasion of Lebanon. The movement has been known as Islamic Jihad, Revolutionary Justice Organization, Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, and Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine. Liberating Lebanon, Palestine and Arab lands have been stated goals of the movement. Hizbullah has a long and violent history, but it has since 1992 appeared to be reforming itself, to participate in Lebanon's parliamentary elections, and to resemble a political party while maintaining a network of charitable institutions. Despite this evolution, the movement retains a militia force of 20,000 and has not repudiated violence.

Hizbullah has been charged with the suicide bombings of the US Embassy in April 1983, the US Marine Barracks in October 1983, and the US Embassy Annex in September 1984 in Beirut. Three Hizbullah members are among the FBI's most wanted terrorists for hijacking a TWA plane in 1985 and killing a US Navy diver on board. Hizbullah has been linked to several kidnappings and detentions (of US, Israeli and Western hostages), an attack on Israel's embassy in Argentina in 1992, bombing of Israel's cultural centre in Buenos Aires in 1994, and capture of three Israeli soldiers in the autumn of 2000. The Hizbullah-sponsored, pro-Syrian demonstration in Beirut on 8 March 2005 (after an anti-Syrian rally precipitated by former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination on 14 February) suggests an influence that can mobilize hundreds of thousands at short notice.<sup>2</sup>



Hizbullah has received substantial financial, military, political and organizational assistance from Iran and diplomatic, political and logistical support from Syria (Howard and Sawyer 2004: 510–11). Evidence suggests, however, that the movement may be in the midst of a transition.

### **Hizbullah: terrorists or political party?**

Although closely linked to Iran, it is not accurate or realistic to assume that all Hizbullah activities are ordered or approved by Iran's clerical rulers. Those who assert that Hizbullah's every movement is orchestrated by the rulers in Tehran should recall that it was Hizbullah that blew the cover off what became known as the 'Iran-Contra Affair' in 1986. Former national security advisor Robert McFarlane had already travelled to Tehran and US weapons had been shipped to Iran. At the same time, Hizbullah had maintained a freeze on abductions of Americans and released three hostages. Hizbullah leaders, however, wanted to put an end to their patron's direct dealings with the United States. A little known magazine published in Baalbek – a Hizbullah controlled part of Lebanon – reported the top-secret arms-for-hostages deal on 3 November, unravelling the initiative.<sup>3</sup> Hizbullah's spiritual leader Muhammad Hossain Fadlallah has been critical of *Velayat-e Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurisconsult), a doctrine put forth by the late Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran. Fadlallah considers himself a grand ayatollah and as such theologically superior to Iran's 'supreme leader' Ayatollah Khamenei, whose rank owes more to political rather than scholarly considerations (International Crisis Group 2003b: 12–14).

More recently, there is reason to suggest that Iran's assistance to Hizbullah has been dwindling, which may explain at least in part Hizbullah's increasing eagerness to participate in electoral politics and the fact that they are considering the possibility of disarmament. Iran's role in Lebanon may also be on the wane. Iran reportedly deployed 2,000 Revolutionary Guards to protect Lebanon's Shiite population after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, but began a gradual withdrawal five years ago and reportedly left Lebanon almost entirely (15–20 personnel may have remained) by April 2005.<sup>4</sup> The relationship between Iran's current regime and Hizbullah is a two-way street. Still, Iran's support has been crucial for Hizbullah's financial, political and military survival. Hizbullah's presence on Israel's border, on the other hand, has offered Iran a forward deterrence capability against potential Israeli air attacks (Mokhtari 2005a and b).

Hizbullah's roots go back to 1974 when Imam Musa Sadr created *Harekat al Mahrumin* (Movement of the Deprived), which evolved into *Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnania* (Legions of Lebanese Resistance) or AMAL in 1975. Sadr disappeared on a trip to Libya on 31 August 1978, almost three months after Israel invaded Lebanon. Nabih Berri, an attorney, emerged as AMAL's leader, but Sadr's mysterious disappearance gained him a mythical status. Israel's second invasion of Lebanon on 6 June 1982 precipitated a split within AMAL as Nabih Berri was accused of being too soft. Husayn al Mussawi, a secular Shiite, a member of AMAL's Command Council and its second in command, left the organization

with his followers to form the more militant 'Islamic AMAL', soon to transform into Hizbullah. The new organization gathered within it the Lebanese Da'wa Party, Muslim Ulama's Association, Muslim Students Association, and others that had existed as far back as the 1970s (Hajjar 2002: 2–8; Hamzeh 2004: 6–26; Pape 2005:131–2).

Whatever its origins, Hizbullah is more than a terrorist organization today. It is an effective political party with parliamentary representation (the parliamentary elections of June 2005 resulted in 72 seats for the Hariri-Jumblat alliance, 35 seats for the Hizbullah and Amal Shia alliance, and 21 seats for General Aoun and his allies (*Ya Libnan*, 20 June 2005, [http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2005/06/lebanon\\_electi\\_2.php](http://yalibnan.com/site/archives/2005/06/lebanon_electi_2.php))) and a social movement with scores of charities, medical facilities, schools, a seminary (Najaf College) and a popular television broadcasting station. It controls 60 per cent of Lebanon's Shiite municipalities and has accepted a ministerial post in the country's government (*Economist* 2005). Indications generally suggest that Hizbullah is trying to enter Lebanon's mainstream politics.

It was Lebanese flags, rather than the banners of their party, that they brought to the mass rally in Beirut on 8 March. There was a moment of silence at that rally for Hariri, and a message to the opposition that Hizbullah wants a share of the country's power ... The Lebanese opposition to Syria is at peace with Hizbullah's political role.

(Ajami 2005: 29, 31)

Hizbullah's highest decision making body, the Supreme Consultative Council (*Majlis a-Shura al Qarar*), consists of several clerics and a few military leaders,<sup>5</sup> headed by Secretary General Sayyid Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. A General Convention (*Al Mu'tamar al 'Am*), headed by a 12-member Executive Council, oversees implementation of the Council's directives. Nasrallah and his deputies are *ex officio* members, and four district representatives (Beirut, Southern Suburbs, the South, Biqa valley) and five members appointed by the Supreme Council supervise local daily affairs. An 11-member Political Bureau chaired by Ibrahim Amin-as-Sayyid plays an advisory and coordinating role to the Executive Council and the numerous party committees in charge of security, social services, religious activities, and a variety of assistance plans (medical, housing, utilities, financial, sanitation, etc.) (International Crisis Group 2003b: 2). In the period 1988–2002, Hizbullah constructed 78 schools, hospitals, infirmaries, mosques, cultural centres, agricultural centres, homes and shops, as it rehabilitated 10,528 others (Hamzeh 2004: 50).

Hizbullah's popularity and prestige, particularly among Lebanon's poor Shiites, politically disenfranchised for decades before the country's civil war, ought not to be overlooked. Hizbullah filled a vacuum by providing public services as well as a powerful political voice for a population whose government had failed them. The June 2005 elections clearly showed Hizbullah's popularity among Lebanon's voters. Hizbullah-supported candidates outpolled their

nearest challengers by ten to one, and the turnout was greater than in the 2000 elections. Every seat contested in the 5 June election – the national elections are conducted over four Sundays – was won by either Hizbullah or AMAL candidates (Boustany 2005).

The movement, however, has to transform to survive. Although open resistance to Israel's occupation of Lebanon gained the movement both respect and legitimacy in the region and Hizbullah's leaders and supporters assumed credit for having driven Israel out of Lebanon, Israel's withdrawal has removed much of Hizbullah's reason for maintaining its militia and its militancy. The question of whether keeping Hizbullah's armed militia is justified, for example, arose nearly two years before Hariri's assassination. The issue culminated for the US in the Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003, which gave President George W. Bush authority to impose sanctions against Syria, with implications for Hizbullah's armed wing. President Bush, in his State of the Union Address of 2 February 2005, asked Syria to leave Lebanon. On 15 March 2005, he stated, 'I would hope that Hizbullah would prove that [it is] not [a terrorist organization] by laying down arms and not threatening peace' (Ajami 2005: 27–31; <http://www.angusreid.com/polls/index.cfm?fuseaction=viewItem&itemID=6914>).

Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah stated in an interview with the French Newspaper *Le Monde* that his group was 'quite ready to discuss all subjects with Lebanese parties, including the arms of the Islamic Resistance' (*Khaleej Times Online*, <http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2005/April/middle...>). In addition, Israeli sources have confirmed a noticeable drop in Hizbullah's profile and its encouragement of Palestinian groups to conduct terror attacks. While Israel's intelligence community had earlier publicly accused both Iran and Hizbullah of inciting violence and obstructing disengagement in Gaza, a member of the Israeli General Staff revealed to Israel's *Haaretz* on 6 April 2005 that the predictions had proven inaccurate (<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=561482>) although isolated incidents have occurred.<sup>6</sup>

*Haaretz* reported on 4 April 2005 that a number of meetings between a Western unofficial delegation and senior members of Islamic organizations in the Middle East and East Asia had taken place in Beirut in late March. The Western delegation was said to have included the former EU envoy to Palestine and veteran MI6 agent Alistair Croke; RAND consultant Graham Fuller; Fred Hof, associated with the Mitchell Report; Geoffrey Aronson of the Foundation for Middle East Peace; Mark Perry of Jefferson Waterman International – a former advisor to Yasser Arafat; and a retired senior CIA official. Moussa Abu Marzouq, deputy to Hamas leader Khaled Meshal, and two members of the organization's diplomatic bureau, Sami Khater and Osama Hamdan, represented Hamas. Nawaf Musawi, head of the Hizbullah's foreign relations department spoke for that organization. Abu Marzouq and his colleagues reportedly stated that in late 2003 they offered to halt attacks on civilian Israelis (excluding settlers in territories). Then deputy director of the CIA George Tenet, according to the report, travelled to Cairo for

talks about the offer, but Israel rejected the deal. Despite the rejection, no Israeli was harmed for three months, until Ismail Abu Shnab was ‘assassinated’. Musawi asserted:

there is nothing in Hizbullah’s ideology that makes an enemy of the Jews and it will respect any agreement that is reached between the Palestinians and Israel. Our enemy is the occupation, especially the occupation of Muslim holy cites in Jerusalem.

(‘ Hamas wants power, Hezbollah has already won’,  
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=566574>)

According to *Haaretz*, he compared Hizbullah to the Irgun and Stern Gang at the founding of Israel. ‘After Israel leaves the Shaba Farms on the Golan, Hizbullah will proclaim an end to Israeli occupation of Lebanon and become part of Lebanon’s regular army...’. The report concluded that Middle East scholar and former special advisor to heads of Shin Beth Security Service, Mati Steinberg, ‘agreed that an Israeli withdrawal from Shaba would enable Hizbullah to move from being a problem to being a solution’ (ibid.).

The Lebanese polled in April 2005 on the subject of disarming Hizbullah expressed mixed views (Table 4.1).<sup>7</sup>

Table 4.1 Disarmament poll

	<i>All</i>	<i>Maronite</i>	<i>Sunni</i>	<i>Shiite</i>
<i>Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?</i>				
<i>Hizbullah should be disarmed.</i>				
Agree	6%	18%	3%	0%
Agree, if peace exists	18%	17%	28%	14%
Only if Hizbullah Agrees	31%	51%	28%	6%
Disagree	41%	8%	31%	79%
<i>Do you support or oppose the US pressuring Syria to disarm Hizbullah?</i>				
Support	26%	53%	14%	9%
Oppose	61%	29%	70%	82%

The Lebanese June 2005 elections confirm that Hizbullah’s political support is significant. More importantly, the United States has support among the Lebanese that could be enhanced or may be squandered. Recognizing and respecting Lebanon’s political dynamics of change are crucial in forcing Hizbullah either to return to its terrorist tactics, or seize the opportunity to purge itself and its inglorious past policies. The possibility that the United States may have to deal with Hizbullah as a political party in Lebanon, and that the political party may in fact be in a position to help the United States, is not entirely far-fetched. If so, a deliberate but determined policy will serve the US strategic interest better than a testy, absolutist approach.

### Law, ethics and extremism

The campaign against global extremism reflects a kaleidoscope of perceived ethical implications. The philosophical and the intellectual aspects of warfare are inevitably linked to the legal and the operational ones (e.g. rules of engagement). The concepts of *jus ad bellum* (justice of war) and *jus in bello* (justice in war) address the justification for going to war versus the justification for the manner in which war is fought, but the distinction is often not made, causing confusion. If clarity prevails, judgments in regard to when and how one should go to war are to be within the boundaries of prudence and are not divorced from the tradition of just war. Prudence, as Michael Ignatieff argues, holds that in public policy what works may not always be right and what is right might not always work. If rights are to bow to security 'there had better be good reasons, and there had better be clear limitations to rights abridgement' (Ignatieff 2004: 8, 9).

Attempts at ethical streamlining often bear unsatisfactory outcomes and oversimplification may result in bureaucratic incidences of injustice against vulnerable individuals or minorities.<sup>8</sup> Defining terrorism as illegal, for example, does not point to a solution, for it addresses a symptom. The desired focus ought to shift to prevention. Is terrorism in its essence a legal or a political problem? Are ethical concerns relevant? Is ideology an independent variable driving terrorism? Argument with a confirmed terrorist would be of little utility, for a common moral basis necessary for a meaningful discussion would be lacking. The solution may be found in addressing terrorist leaders' potential audiences, likely supporters, and possible recruits. There is more than a grain of truth in the saying that terrorism is theatre, for it is fundamentally designed to coerce public opinion. One may indeed question whether terrorism as we know it could exist without the modern media.

Countering an absolutist terrorist stand with another may escalate social apprehension and damage the governmental image on which the population relies for its peace of mind. That President George W. Bush has frequently invoked God in his statements may not appeal to an ardently secular audience, but if well articulated, may in fact resonate with the people of faith, regardless of religion, nationality and culture.

Aristotle believed that proper behaviour depended on character rather than laws and regulations (Watson 1999: 55). Nowadays, however, the individual's sense of responsibility which may have been eroded as legality rather than ethics, has become the standard of good citizenship. Ultimately, however, it is likely that ethical arguments and policies, as well as their proper implementation, are our most effective instruments in combating terrorism.

In presenting arguments against terrorists, sensitivity to the language used is important. The use of correct terms (misguided revolutionary rather than Islamist, terrorist rather than *jihadist*, *harabah* (unholy war) rather than *jihad*) and cultural symbols (campaign rather than crusade) is crucial; and serious attention to religious convictions and anti-colonial sentiments is important. While bin Laden's actions are reprehensible, he manipulates cultural icons effectively and he speaks in an idiom understood locally. Al Qaeda thus claimed it attacked the United States

and its allies to liberate the holy lands of Islam in congruence with principles of justice and freedom. Arguments against al Qaeda directed at al Qaeda's potential supporters that overlook linguistic and cultural subtleties will inevitably fall flat and eventually prove ineffective.

Consequently, the United States must justify its behaviour and criticize its opponents with equal vigour. It is imperative to articulate ethical grounds for actions. Factual issues could be clarified and legal matters persuasively explained. Four distinct audiences are to be targets of our well-calibrated message: the domestic audience, the Western Allies, the Muslim world, and the non-Muslim, non-Western world. That is not to prescribe four different messages, for doing so would be hypocritical, and very likely to be found out as such. It is to say, however, that the message, in order to be clearly comprehended by different audiences, may require different forms of expression. We must articulate the right message, but what is correct in our way of thinking may not resonate in other societies. Considering that battles between terrorists and governments are fundamentally over public opinion, we should steer away from extreme measures such as arbitrary arrest and preventive detention for they clearly play into the hands of the enemy (Ignatieff 2004: 18). The French, one may recall, won the battles in Algeria but lost the war despite having wiped out the National Liberation Front (FLN). A calm, level-headed government policy with the appearance of business as usual may appear counter-intuitive, but it denies the terrorists the attention they so badly seek.

Countering extremism is not an exclusively American fight. UN Security Council Resolution 1368, passed the day after the September 11 attacks, declared any act of terrorism a threat to international peace and security. A follow-up Resolution 1377 stated that acts of terrorism endanger innocent lives and the dignity and security of human beings everywhere, threaten the social and economic development of all states and undermine global stability and prosperity (McMillan 2004: 2). Thus the moral and legal basis to define terrorism and terrorists as common enemies of humankind exists. Fighting terror, if understood to be everybody's fight, persuades all nations to join in the effort. The persuasion, however, will not be effective if it champions only the American defining moment, indifferent to those of others. Historic similitude and cultural symbolisms could help shape a sympathetic global attitude. It is worthy of note that a hand may be overplayed by either side. The Tamil Tigers, despite their brutality and persistence, finally realized that terrorism may have worked as a tactic but failed as a strategy (Ignatieff 2004: 68).

We must be willing to accept the unpleasant truth that our effectiveness against terrorist organizations requires at the very least cooperation of the countries in which the groups are to be found. The prerequisites for the cooperation are the willingness of those nations and their governments. The governments may be enticed but the peoples must reach a consensus to hold all acts of terrorism devoid of legitimacy in the same light as slavery, piracy and genocide (McMillan 2004: 3).

A strategy to counter terrorism must include education. War, after all, must be a thin slice of a greater strategy. We may never manage to eradicate terrorism

completely, but education – properly understood and broadly defined – is the most important long-term prescription to build character, to marginalize terrorism, and to contain terrorist tendencies. Undiluted liberal arts education is particularly important in reinforcing ethical values. Let us not forget that many terrorist leaders have had advanced degrees, but their education has often been of the black-and-white type of learning.

Our modern democratic emphasis on rules, bureaucracies, regulations, laws, rights and litigation under the premise of equality in pursuit of liberty, has diminished in our society both virtue and liberty. The importance of character has depreciated further by specialization and division of labour. The cost of that efficiency has been the fragmentation of responsibility. The armies of minor functionaries who collect and file people's personal information every day are undiscerning to the consequences of a deportation order to be issued to a refugee whose application for political asylum may be pending. Fragmentation of tasks, whether through commissions or political assembly-lines, eliminates individual responsibility. Such industrial bureaucracy with information-age technology could create frightening nightmares.<sup>9</sup>

Richard Weaver's view regarding the 'superiority of an ideal' (Weaver 1984: 1–2) is compelling, for it suggests the germ of understanding for our modern, seemingly educated terrorist's alienation. The nihilistic motives of terrorists in search of a moment of powerful glory, 'a moment of violence that will transform a ... nonentity into an avenging angel', must be understood (Ignatieff 2004: 113). That psychological need for an instant of power and glory is a matter to be addressed urgently. Admiral James B. Stockdale, a US Navy aviator shot down over Vietnam in 1965 and imprisoned in Hanoi for seven and a half years, wrote in 1978,

Most of us prisoners found that the so-called practical academic experiences in how to do things, which I am told are proliferating, were useless. I'm not saying that we should base education on training people to be in prison, but I am saying that in stress situations the fundamentals, the hard-core classical subjects, are what serve best.

(Stockdale 1978: 21)

If a legitimate state of war with al Qaeda exists, we need a morally admissible standard for 'unconventional warfare', and the hard-core classics could be valuable. It is ethically appropriate to pursue a campaign against terror. Credibility demands, however, that the United States as well as other countries respond to terror without ambiguity. Doing so may require a new body of law to address unconventional war, covert operations, and espionage. Such a formulation will involve international legal and philosophical expertise, cultural awareness, and political courage. It will also take time. Nevertheless, an international convention to formulate legal guidelines to be ratified by all countries may be a valuable first step towards a global agreement.

## Expectations

The man in the global street expects the United States to state its position clearly, act accordingly, justify its conduct, and remain consistent. The United States, with its diverse nation, however, cannot speak with a single voice easily. The media and interest groups actively seek and reflect different views and interpretations making a singular voice on behalf of the United States impossible to craft. Yet claiming our common Judeo-Christian-Islamic heritage domestically and internationally to emphasize our philosophical points of convergence will be helpful. Mainstream Islamic jurists – as well as some revolutionaries – have rejected the interpretation of the Koran<sup>10</sup> and the concept of *jihad* (which stands for exertion, primarily against the shortcomings of the self) put forth by terrorists in every Muslim country. At the Islamic Conference in Spain on 11 March 2005, for instance, a large number of Muslim theologians issued a strict religious opinion (*fatwa*), identifying Osama bin Laden as an apostate (*kafir*) (Free Muslim Coalition against Terrorism 2005). But extremists have dismissed the theologians as lackeys of the ruling elites who themselves are accused of having sold out to Western imperialists. A sound and consistent argument skilfully delivered will eventually prevail, for to deny that, is to ignore the human capacity for learning.

It is worth noting that Musa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) are common names among devout Muslim families. An interested party is far more likely to find bridges connecting us through Islam than barriers keeping us apart. Consider Islam's basic obligations: 1) belief in one God, 2) prayer, 3) charity – giving alms, 4) fasting – at certain times of the year and giving the food not consumed to the needy, and 5) pilgrimage. None of the 'Five Pillars of Islam' are alien to the Western religious convictions. Abu-Nasr Mohammad Farabi (circa 870–950), the famed Islamic philosopher known as *the second teacher* (after Aristotle) considered 'war as an end in itself [to be] the supreme vice that can have no place in the regime whose end is the supreme virtue'. There may also be numerous virtuous nations with different religions, Farabi taught. 'By presenting divine laws, jurisprudence, and theology as parts of political science, he [Farabi] pointed to the possibility of a neutral discussion of all religions or sects and of the features common to them all.'<sup>11</sup> Renewed interest in the classics of Eastern as well as Western philosophy may reawaken new generations of all nationalities to appreciate the existing wealth of accumulated knowledge at their disposal. Familiarity with Farabi's teachings, for instance, is as important for us in the West as it is crucial for the societies in which terrorist masterminds recruit.

Terrorism and insurgency are political acts that seek objectives through violence. Terrorists may be viewed in several categories: *Nationalist*, *Religious*, *State-Sponsored*, *Radical* (leftist extremist), *Reactionary* (rightist extremist), and *Anarchist*. Religious terrorists resort to violence in pursuit of divine commands as they define them, in search of sweeping changes. Nearly half of the terrorist groups identified in recent years have been religious and not all related to Islam. Aum Shinrikyo of Japan, the Jewish group affiliated with the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, and some White supremacist groups in the US, are examples. State-



sponsored terrorists are foreign policy tools of certain states wishing to wage war on adversaries through surrogates. The current regimes in Iran, Cuba, North Korea, Sudan and Syria and the former regimes in Iraq and Libya are recognized examples, having supported Hizbullah, the Abu Nidal Organization, and the Japanese Red Army. Radical terrorists wish to destroy capitalism to establish a socialist society. The German Baader-Meinhoff Group, the Japanese Red Army, the US Weathermen, and Italy's Red Brigade fit in that category. Reactionary terrorists seek to abolish liberalism and liberal democratic governance. Neo-Nazis and neo-Fascists appear to defy reason and celebrate instinct and racial supremacy. Anarchist terrorists, most active in 1870–1920, but reappearing in movements denouncing globalization, consider any external (involuntary) regulation of human conduct contrary to liberty, and wish to abolish all governmental institutions to replace them with free, unrestricted volunteer associations. In 1901, a Hungarian anarchist assassinated President William McKinley of the United States. Thus viewing Muslims as suspects and relating terrorism to Islam are demonstrably wrong.

Suicide terrorists differ from ordinary terrorists in their relationship with their communities. They tend to be politically conscious, exposed to national liberation aspirations and familiar with insurgent strategies. Suicide terrorism may signify a realization that an insurgency has failed, necessitating a strategy of last resort (Pape 2005: 93). Terrorism, particularly suicide terrorism, inverts structural military conditions of coercion. Military coercion in international relations is commonly imposed by the stronger state on the weaker. Terrorism reverses the relationship, making the weaker the source of coercion and the stronger the target (*ibid.*: 29). The reversal empowers the weak significantly.

Ordinary terrorists murder innocent people intentionally and seek safety in places impossible to attack without endangering innocent lives. Terrorists thus assure that government forces wishing to fight back will have to violate the same moral principles for which they confront the terrorists in the first place. The Just War Tradition recognizes this dilemma.

Consider the hypothetical extreme case of a terrorist gang taking hostages to trade for their imprisoned terrorist comrades and killing the hostages one at a time to hasten the government's capitulation. Would society support the government's retaliation by killing the incarcerated terrorists in a similar manner to stop the murder of the hostages? Would doing so serve the higher interests of a liberal society? Considering that terrorist acts are mere tactics and most terrorists manipulated instruments, one may anticipate the possibility of gradual transformation through acquired wisdom and maturity. If terrorism is a tactic, it follows that it remains useful for only as long as it is effective. A tactic no longer of use is readily (and quite logically) abandoned. Examples of such transformation may be found in South Africa (ANC), Israel (Irgun and Stern), and a number of Latin American countries, e.g. FLMN in El Salvador, FSLN in Nicaragua, Tupemaros and Montoneros under different names in Uruguay and Argentina, and others in Brazil and Venezuela.

### **What is to be done now?**

The attacks of September 11, 2001 changed the United States and altered international relations forever. For the United States the greatest impact was perhaps psychological: a sudden realization of US vulnerability. The United States had for 200 years – certainly prior to the Cold War – relied on its geographical advantage as a country protected by two oceans and two benign neighbours to keep hostilities far away from its borders. While military forces of most countries were designed and deployed to secure national boundaries, US forces were prepared by the second half of the twentieth century to project power and face foes around the globe. The US attitude towards the use of force, one may argue, had to a large extent been based on the success of this strategy and the territorial invulnerability it implied, despite the emergence of intercontinental ballistic missiles.

The events of September 11, 2001, however, illustrated a new type of vulnerability that the United States' overwhelming forces could not deter. A few civilians armed with nothing more lethal than box-cutters had exploited advanced Western technology and access to global communication systems to attack the United States within its own borders. The centres of terror had separated from states, could move from place to place and strike anywhere at any time. Furthermore, they had few fixed assets and held millennial goals making them oblivious to deterrence as previously perceived. The emergence of this threat therefore forced the United States to re-evaluate ethical and political assumptions underlying the international order it had itself sponsored after World War II. The results of this re-evaluation appeared in the US National Security Strategy published by the Bush Administration in September 2002.

The use of terror as a means of exercising political power is perhaps as old as the human species. The cult of the Assassins founded by Hassan Sabbah that terrorized the Middle East and parts of Europe, Africa and Central Asia from the eleventh to the end of the thirteenth century is one of the best known. The cult's public doctrine, with references to religion and an Islamic sect (the Ismailis), differed from that of its leaders, who upon achieving the heights of enlightenment were freed from religious and moral obligations. The leaders, one may presume, could thus justify political assassinations without the pangs of moral or religious consciousness. Other terrorist groups have included Jewish Zealots of the first century in Palestine; the Thuggee of the seventh century in India (the cult of Kali); Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) in nineteenth-century Russia; extremists in Serbia who triggered World War I by assassinating Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in 1914; and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) with its first hijacking of a commercial airliner on 22 July 1968, among others (Council on Foreign Relations 2004).

Neither terrorism nor suicide terrorism is limited to Islamic fundamentalists. Nor is the rate of suicide in Muslim communities most associated with suicide terrorism suggestive of cultural tolerance for suicide. Suicide rates in Christian and Jewish societies happen to be significantly higher (Pape 2005: 181). The

Tamil Tigers, decidedly not religious, committed 76 of the 315 suicide attacks reported between 1980 and 2003. The secular Marxist Muslim PKK (*Partia Kargar Kurdistan* – Kurdistan Workers Party) carried out another third of the suicide attacks. The PFLP and Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, with Marxist-Socialist pedigrees, were responsible for 31 of the 92 suicide attacks against Israel. Overall, Islamic fundamentalism is associated with less than half the suicide attacks in 1980–2003 (ibid: 11, 15–17). What distinguishes suicide terrorism from ordinary terrorism is its effectiveness. The 315 suicide attacks killed on average 12 persons per attack (excluding September 11), while 4,155 incidents of ordinary terrorism in the same period killed 3,207, or less than one victim per attack. Suicide attacks have accounted for about 3 per cent of all terror attacks but claimed nearly half of the total deaths from terrorism in the period studied (ibid.: 28).

Faced with terrorism, a government must act. The best solution is prevention which requires allocation of considerable resources. To focus on preventing terrorism when terrorism does not appear threatening, requires heroic efforts by the national leadership, always facing fierce competition for allocation of limited resources. Preventing terrorism, much as preventive maintenance, is likely to be postponed in favour of more pressing demands of the moment. Unfortunately, when terrorism bursts on the scene the nation is often unprepared, surprised, angry, and inclined to blame the government. Sudden disbursements after a terrorist attack, however, will not address the crisis in its entirety. What is then a government to do when faced with a terrorist crisis?

First, it must recognize that a terrorist recruit is likely to have experienced a personal crisis, with a deep sense of frustration. Such personalities are particularly vulnerable to indoctrination, which they often receive in prison. Recent research findings reveal that a high percentage of terrorists had been incarcerated for petty crimes. Prisons are often schools of terrorism, recruiting new inmates who may know little of the religion or the ideology in the name of which they commit terrorist acts when freed. The recruiters are experienced characters familiar with the prison system and in touch with the outside through cell phones and computers.<sup>12</sup> Governments must, therefore, take a hard look at their prison systems to prevent their institutions of rehabilitation from functioning as universities of terrorism.

Second, a government must not overreact, for doing so plays into the hands of the terrorists. Calm but effective anti-terror policies judiciously applied with the appearance of business as usual – as opposed to an emergency – would be best.

Third, it should recognize that time is of the essence and personal, partisan, and departmental rivalries should be sacrificed, at least for a time, for the greater national interest. Any division among the ruling elite will be cleverly exploited by crafty manipulative terrorist or insurgent organizations.

Fourth, lessons learned from previous insurgencies must be reviewed and relearned. Repeating the mistakes of previous generations is asinine and costly.

Fifth, winning the allegiance of the population from whom the terrorists are recruited and among whom they hide, must be a priority. This is easier said than done, but essential. The terrorist is then as a fish thrown out of water.

Sixth, fighting terrorism requires specially educated, trained and equipped units, for traditional armed forces would be as efficient in countering terrorists as conducting micro-surgery on an eye using butcher knives and axes. Such units require flexibility, mobility and mental preparedness to adjust to changing terrorist tactics with superior agility.

Seventh, counter the opponents' advantage of familiarity with their base of operation by physically separating them from the population that supports them, occupy the zones of their previous operations by visible overwhelming presence, and persuade the population to turn against the terrorists, to see them as tormentors rather than liberators.

Eighth, accept that human intelligence is irreplaceable, even with the fanciest of technological miracles. Gadgets and technological devices are in essence 'things' that could never replace an intelligent human mind familiar with cultural nuances, languages and human sentiments.

Ninth, calm down the population's fears and anxieties by emphasizing normalcy and 'business as usual'. Declaration of emergency, emergency legislation, extralegal measures, fiery speeches and flooding public places with specially armed and uniformed personnel will add to the sense of social anxiety and may create a crisis mentality bordering on mass psychosis.

Tenth, take the war to the terrorist and avoid mistakes, for every little infraction, every mistaken arrest, every misdirected raid, and every mistargeted bombing will strengthen the terrorists who will turn them into propaganda boons (see Tomes 2004).

The above steps will neutralize a terrorist or insurgent group but will not cure the social ailment. The cure requires education, preparation, commitment, constant vigilance and plenty of time. Combating terrorism ought to constitute much more than just military or police action.<sup>13</sup>

## Conclusion

For better or worse, in the current campaign against terrorism the focus is on west Asia, commonly called the Middle East – a colonial term in its origin.<sup>14</sup> At a time that mutual understanding is essential, neither side sees the other as seen by the self. The 'Middle Easterners' would like to see the United States as a former exploited colony that has managed to liberate itself by a militia against a superior well-trained and well-equipped military force. They like to see the United States as a former agricultural developing country that has managed to industrialize and achieve great technological heights as well as wealth. In short, they like to see the United States as a model to emulate. By the same token, they expect the United States, because of its past colonial history, to be more sympathetic towards them than towards the former colonizers. The United States, however, does not commonly view itself as a former colony with reservations against former colonizers. To be perceived as replacing British or French colonial rulers in the region will not foster endearment. To be seen as a champion of fairness as in the Suez Crisis of 1956 – checking the British-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt – will.

There is also a philosophical divide that separates the United States from the 'Middle Easterners'. As Robert Nozick has pointed out, one may observe the current distribution of resources, broadly defined, through either a *time-slice view* (as a snap-shot of the present to be subjected to some preconceived pattern of just distribution), or a *historical view* (which considers everything present intimately linked to the past and affected by it) (Nozick 1974). The United States, satisfied with its present great power and wealth, has reason to gravitate towards a time-slice view of things. The aggrieved, on the other hand, have a greater penchant for a historical view, thus keeping the memories of their past alive. Addressing the many problems of the Middle East requires a genuine consciousness of the two different perceptions of justice.

In the war on terrorism vigilance is required to safeguard societies against terrorists but even more vigilance is necessary to protect liberal democracies against corrosion from within. In our enthusiasm to find a quick solution to the social disease of terrorism, we may easily turn the prescribed cure into a more serious malady. We could, if not vigilant, win battles beyond our borders yet lose the war at home by undermining liberal democracies within our own societies. That would indeed be a compound calamity.

Finally, we must recognize that terrorism is a mere instrument to impose upon societies, irrespective of race, nationality or religious confession. To assume terrorism to be anything other than a tactic mires us in the endless debate confusing the tactic used versus the justice of the conflict. Terror may be used to impose an ideology upon a reluctant society, but it is not an ideology nor has it an ideology of its own. Some terrorist organizations are death cults with inverted values that hold love of life to be a manifestation of weakness. If a cult member's own life is to be sacrificed, the lives of potential victims could not (in his mind) be any more valuable (Ignatieff 2004: 127). Such characters may be beyond the reach of reason, but we should not give up on the potential recruits desperately in search of meaningful lives. To seek an 'ideology of terrorism' is to misconceive ideology. To study terrorism one must distinguish recruiters from recruits. The recruiters devise and constantly fine tune schemes as predators lurching on a herd's fringes. The recruits are the prey, the weak, the confused and the lost, fallen behind or edged to the fringes, made vulnerable to predators awaiting opportune moments to strike.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Rohollah – rouh-Allah – means spirit of God, which happened to be Ayatollah Khomeini's first name.
- 2 The number of Hizbullah supporters who turned out was conservatively estimated at 500,000 (*The Economist*, 12 March 2005: 47).
- 3 Naftali 2005: 188–9. Colonel Oliver North, who oversaw both the Iran initiative and assistance to Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries (Contras), it was revealed, had overcharged the Iranians to fund the Contras.
- 4 *VOA News*, 13 April 2005, based on a *Washington Post* report citing US and European officials (<http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-04-14-voa12.cfm?renderforprint=1>).

- 5 Reported to have seven to 17 members. International Crisis Group, for instance, suggests seven, Hajjar (2002) seventeen.
- 6 On Friday 14 May 2005 'IDF planes, gunships and tanks destroyed Hezbollah posts in Lebanon, in response to Hezbollah shelling of IDF positions' (*Haaretz*, 15 May 2005, <http://www.haarets.com/hasen/objects/pages/printArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=575884>).
- 7 Zogby International/Information International/The Arab American Institute. Methodology: interviews with 600 adults in Lebanon.
- 8 This is a particularly serious tendency in times of crisis. Consider for instance the typecasting of all Middle Easterners after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, or the internment of US citizens of Japanese descent during WWII, facilitated by bureaucratically enabled mass production of injustice.
- 9 Weaver 1984: 56, 64. Brinton (1965: 171) states 'The government of the Terror is a dictatorship by commission'.
- 10 Hizbullah's spiritual leader Sheikh Muhammad Fadlallah condemned the September 11 attacks 'as incompatible with Islamic law and perversions of the true meaning of jihad' (see Council on Foreign Relations 2004).
- 11 Strauss and Cropsey 1987: 221, 224. Farabi was an Iranian who wrote in Persian as well as Arabic. His name has been erroneously recorded by some familiar only with his works in Arabic as Al-Farabi.
- 12 Research conducted in Spain, Turkey and Israel, presented at the Istanbul International Conference on Democracy and Global Security, 9–11 June 2005. Some 60 per cent of terrorists arrested in Turkey had been in prison before. Research findings by Pedahzur and Perliger of the University of Haifa, Israel, panel 24; Daniel and Jay, College of Criminal Justice, USA, panel 32; and Taymur, Turkish National Police/University of North Texas, USA were particularly compelling.
- 13 For an expanded discussion of the steps mentioned see Krawchuk 2005.
- 14 The term is so commonly used that it has lost its colonial significance. Few nowadays stop to ask, Middle East in reference to what? Only with Europe designated as the centre, would the near, middle or far east have meaning.
- 15 I am indebted to my colleague Dr William Olson for the analogy of the herd, the predators and the prey. See Glasser 2005.

## COUNTERING ARAB TELEVISION?

### Assessing the effect of Alhurra

*Anne Marie Baylouny*

The current US administration has identified the Lebanese Islamist group Hizbullah as a key threat, and the group's media as a source of increasing anti-Americanism. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld blamed Al Jazeera, the leading Arabic language news station, for encouraging Islamism by broadcasting beheadings of hostages in Iraq, a charge the station denies (Smallman 2005). In President George Bush's State of the Union address in 2004, he focused on Arab television stations he claimed are responsible for 'hateful propaganda' against the US, distorting news and showing explicit images producing anti-Americanism (Cochrane 2004b). Al Manar, a satellite television service launched by the Lebanese Hizbullah, is one of those stations. The US maintains that al Manar is anti-Semitic and promotes hatred, and lists its sponsor Hizbullah as a terrorist group.

To counter what is viewed as the promotion of anti-Americanism, hate and terrorism, the administration banned al Manar from American airwaves in December 2004 (Yadav 2005). The US launched its own television station, Alhurra, to compete with messages from Arab media outlets generally, and promote the American point of view. Here is a clear case of an American attempt to counter the ideology associated with terrorism. Are these efforts likely to succeed, winning the hearts and minds of Arab and Muslim TV viewers? To answer this question, an analysis of Hizbullah's appeal is necessary. What messages is the organization's station actually carrying, and with which constituencies do they resonate? How does banning the station affect its credibility? In this study I analyse al Manar's ideology and link it to its bases of support. I then examine the American actions to counter this ideological influence, and how those attempts are received in the Arab world.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of promoting the American perspective in the Middle East, the new US satellite station has become largely irrelevant, serving mainly to demonstrate the supposed danger of Arab media. Ironically, the launching of the US station has added to the popularity and credibility of al Manar. Alhurra cannot replace

stations such as al Manar, even in the absence of a US credibility problem in the Middle East. As social mobilization theories have demonstrated, perspective or frames of reference must resonate with the audience to be accepted; promotion of a viewpoint is not unequivocally received and believed. The reception depends on community outlooks, values and identity, to name a few. Alhurra communicates values consistent with the American way of life, highlighting the glamorous side of globalization and identification with Israel, for example, while al Manar speaks to the struggling middle class, promotes community values and respect, and highlights the plight of Arab victims. Such a perspective, formerly identified as third worldism, is not unique to al Manar or Arab media, but finds parallels in local and community movements worldwide.

Al Manar has indeed moderated its coverage, not in response to competition from the US station, but through factors unconnected to US actions. As the opportunity for participation in Lebanon's political arena increased for Hizbullah, al Manar became progressively more national and Lebanon-focused, marginalizing discourse aimed at a supra-national Shi'a or Muslim community. With the prospect of Hizbullah gaining a cabinet position with the 2005 elections, the station's more extreme rhetoric became muted. This finding has far-reaching implications, demonstrating a non-confrontational method of mitigating an organization's radical stances.<sup>2</sup>

### **The problem: al Manar's media ideology**

The Lebanese Islamist party Hizbullah<sup>3</sup> began its television station al Manar (the Lighthouse) in 1991 broadcasting locally in Lebanon. In May 2000, al Manar began transmitting by satellite. Al Manar is generally available throughout the Arab world on satellite, and in Lebanon over land. The station is banned in Europe and the United States. Al Manar has bureaux and correspondents around the world, and is most famous for its coverage of Hizbullah operations against Israel's army in southern Lebanon, through reporters 'embedded' with Hizbullah troops. Polls list al Manar as one of the top four news stations in the Middle East, particularly for news on Palestine.<sup>4</sup> The station identifies itself as '*qanat al muqawama*', the station of the resistance, and has been labelled 'resistance media' by one Arab editor (Jorisch 2004a: 23). It is viewed as one of the new, politically independent media (Sharabi 2003). Al Manar won the most awards of all competitors at the 8th Cairo Television and Radio Festival.

Al Manar is funded by Hizbullah. Though precise costs or amounts are not known, one source put the annual expenses of the station at \$10–15 million (Abu-Fadil 2004; Jorisch 2004a: xiii). Funding from Iran dropped dramatically after the end of the Lebanese civil war, the party's participation in elections, and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Meanwhile, Hizbullah has increased its revenue from non-Iranian Shi'a and Lebanese sources. Revenue comes from expatriate remittances, donations and tithes.<sup>5</sup>

Arab satellite television does not generally subsist through advertising; stations are politically geared and funded.<sup>6</sup> Particularly in Lebanon, each major political



trend has its own station, which at times the leader personally finances. While ads are of secondary importance, they indicate the market where the station is popular, the most important of which is the Gulf. Al Manar relies particularly little on advertising. With a mix of global and local supporters, al Manar is theoretically attractive to advertisers. However, the station reportedly turns down 90 per cent of potential advertisers due to the violation of its standards. It declines commercials for alcohol, tobacco, or ones in which women are presented as objects for sale or temptation (Abu-Fadil 2004). Advertising on the station is also less appealing to Gulf advertisers for political reasons, since Shi'a are seen as a separate community.<sup>7</sup> Until 2004, ads were broadcast only on the land-based station. Large American and European companies advertised here, until a scandal brought this to the attention of the US Congress. Subsequently, American and many European advertisers withdrew (Jorisch 2004b). Currently, advertisements on al Manar are infrequent and few, airing mainly in prime time, for local and regionally-based goods.

Al Manar contains a variety of programming. Some is overtly ideological, communicating Hizbullah's viewpoint. The bulk of programming, however, is either unremarkable, consistent with programmes on Arab stations in general, or modernisationist and non-confessional, promoting the rule of law, democratic participation, and education of viewers. This latter aspect may surprise those accustomed to viewing Hizbullah as a fount for hatred (Jorisch 2004a), but is wholly consistent with the organization's domestic role in Lebanon. The station advocates community, developmentalism, the Palestinian cause, and maintenance of the Islamic resistance (Hizbullah). It stands against materialism, Israeli aggressive actions, the US in Iraq, and confessionalism in the Lebanese political system. It emphasizes unemployment, corruption, and the need to cross confessions and join together as a nation.

Common to other Arab media are entertainment programmes and serials, many of which al Manar purchases from Egypt and Syria. Comedies such as '*Ashna wa shufna*', and historically situated series, set during Ottoman times, are examples of this. The station also airs sports shows. Many children's programmes resemble public television elsewhere in the world. There are cartoons, computer-generated 'Teletubbies'-style shows, and puppet shows that warn against smoking. Other programmes for children include American movies such as *Rain Man* and Disney cartoons (Lancaster 2005).

Numerous programmes seek to educate, paralleling Western public broadcasting such as PBS. This includes scientific interviews on meteors and geology, new technology from the US, and 'Discovery'-style programmes on animals, geared toward the needs of the constituency (such as new cow-milking technology, for example). Histories of Arab countries are broadcast. Public service-oriented spots promote the rule of law, admonishing viewers to 'Obey the law; do not break the law'. During elections in Lebanon, spots focused on the importance of voting and Lebanese unity. The elections were spun as an affirmation of democracy, a message to the US, counter to the interests of Bush, the US and Israel. 'Your vote protects Lebanon', a spot stated ('*sawtak biyahmi Lubnan*'). Another spot advertised '*wihda Lubnan*', or one Lebanon. The power of the Shi'a community

was reiterated, in both a get-out-the-vote perspective and one which sought to remind those elected of the Shi'a role in their victory.

Al Manar broadcasts popular and relevant household programmes. Mornings, after the news, are devoted to a weekly theme, usually geared toward women. One week discussed child rearing, how both mother and father have roles in child socialization. Professors discussed their psychological perspectives on the family and children. Another tackled the problem of what to do when a child does not want to go to school. Other episodes discussed plant arranging, summer fruit, and new women writers. One segment hosted a local clothes designer who utilizes intricate sequin patterns in her clothes.

Segments of another programme discussed difficulties a family could have and proposed solutions. The segments aided parents in socialization tactics for their children, teaching them to keep their own problems away from their children, how to talk to children to prevent them from misbehaving, and emphasizing the importance of education for children, equating it to alleviating the suffering of the community. One segment discussed women's rights in Islam. Another showed children asking their parents to help poor families, as was done in the Prophet's time. Another segment stressed the centrality of the martyr's children and their education, seen as role models for others.

Community solidarity and the need for cooperation are emphasized. One series, '*Ahl al medina*' (the People of the City) emphasized the need of individuals for each other, and their inability to live an individualistic life alone. These community values and traditions are also linked to the resistance. We are all responsible for our brothers and community – do not forget the martyrs and resistance fighters, one spot states. Others tie the culture of the simple, traditional Lebanese people to support for the resistance. A spot shows children playing, men smoking *arghileh* (water pipe), women cooking in traditional pots, and Lebanese celebrations before showing the resistance. Town hall type programmes are also produced and aired by the station, such as '*Nafitha "ala al mujtama"*' (window on the community). People gather and express their opinions on particular social problems and other topics.

Further, this community is not limited to the Shi'a, but includes other confessional groups in Lebanon and the Palestinians there. According to an official at the Lebanese Ministry of Information, al Manar compared favourably to other stations which merely advertised their own political viewpoint, excluding alternative trends from airtime.<sup>8</sup> Al Manar remains neutral in these 'Crossfire'-type programmes, he stated, in order to increase its viewership. Christians and subjects involving Christians were treated respectfully, a fact noted by interviewees. One historical programme centred on Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Surprisingly, al Manar is not overtly religious compared to other religiously-affiliated stations, according to audience opinion. Religious interpretations and discussions are minimal. Al Manar reiterates its religious identity mainly through broadcasting the call to prayer, and like other stations includes more religious programming during Ramadan. Religious-educational game shows centre around children's knowledge of the Quran. One show involved Palestinian and Lebanese

children averaging 8–12 years of age, over half of whom were girls, competing to recite verses.

Local values also cater to the humble or struggling social classes, demonstrating the positive aspects of a non-materialistic lifestyle. Programmes demonstrate women's lives and the household, as the good mother rejects commercialism and Western culture. In one series, a girl envies the conspicuous consumption apparent in Beirut, moving to work in an expensive boutique and date boys. Eventually, she recognizes the error of her ways and returns home to work in community-valued endeavours, regretting the time spent envying the possessions and lifestyle of others. A public role for women is promoted within an Islamic framework. At least half of the announcers and programme hosts are women, all veiled (with the *hijab*, the scarf covering the hair). However, not all the women appearing on the shows are veiled, and commercials (on the local station) show women unveiled. Further, professional women are interviewed for their specialties.

The community is defended by Hizbullah, and the importance of the resistance's work is reiterated. Resistance against potential Israeli incursion is equated to watchfulness, and Hizbullah is the vanguard of protection for the sovereignty of the Lebanese state. This is exemplified by the spot 'protection of the resistance is protection of Lebanon' (*himaya al muqawama, himaya Lubnan*). Spots highlight resistance activities, demonstrating Hizbullah soldiers in hiding watching the border with Israel. '*Bil-murraad*' (in the lookout) states that no one can approach the border without being detected. A bird is shown getting near the border, it is trapped, and then the remains of soldiers' uniforms are seen. Another reiterates that 425 resolutions attempted to get Israel out of Lebanon: one resolution succeeded in the task – that of *al muqawama* (the resistance). Another touts the resistance as safety for the generations. Spots demonstrate the sacrifice of resistance fighters for the safety of the Lebanese. In one, a woman is shown sleeping at night, a second woman sitting next to her baby sleeping in the crib. All eyes are sleeping, but there are eyes watching out for your safety – the eyes of *al muqawama*, as resistance soldiers are shown watching the Israeli border at night. Overall, the messages and ideology mirror those used by armies in other parts of the globe, touting the suffering of the soldiers on the citizens' behalf, pride in resistance actions, and soldiers' own self-respect earned through military service.

Other shows for children focus on and reiterate the need for a resistance. '*Asdiqa' al-manar*' (Friends of al Manar) is a game show set as a pretend war game, with youngsters 10–15 years old fighting with fake weapons (guns, grenades, swords, arrows) against an enemy that appears Western. The fighters maintain a sense of community, enacting a form of brotherhood, sharing food and bonding. The series '*Fatat al muqawam al Quds*' (Jerusalem Resistance Boy) involves a young fatherless boy (a recurring theme) who wants to find his father who went missing in a war. To do so, he learns to fly planes, starting with paper airplanes, then with flying school lessons. Unable to find his father, he joins the military – Hizbullah's Islamic Resistance – and tries to recruit his friends to join. Religion is not mentioned.

Al Manar's main claim to fame is its broadcast of Hizbullah military operations against the Israeli army in southern Lebanon. Episodes of Israeli troops killed there were initially shown on al Manar (Charara and Domont 2004: 170), and later aired on Israeli TV (Dellios 2000). To reinforce its victories, mainly for its own constituency, the station's psychological campaign 'Who's next?' shows Israeli casualties and a blank space for future soldiers (Hamzeh 2004). The station broadcasts some spots in Hebrew, aimed at demoralizing the Israelis, but this campaign was arguably more important for the group's domestic constituency, providing evidence of Hizbullah's activism in fighting the enemy. Segments recount Israel's incursions into Lebanese and Arab soil, and Hizbullah's responses.

Coverage of Israel and the Palestinians is central in the station's news also.<sup>9</sup> Interviews include those in Islamist groups such as Hamas, from which some observers conclude that al Manar is a voice for terrorism. The Palestinian right of return in international law is another topic in this vein. Al Manar is perceived to be speaking out for the Palestinians, the 'underdog', against the Israeli oppressor, and airs news and viewpoints not seen on other stations. Programmes highlight the historical actions of Israelis, seeking to uncover their crimes and terrorist actions, such as the Spider House, Terrorist-Zionist Crimes, and others (Hamzeh 2004). One spot states, amid dramatic music, '*al Quds fi khair*' (Jerusalem is in danger). The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is highlighted in al Manar's lighter 'human interest' programming as well. Game shows such as '*al Muhimma*' (the mission) have contestants trying to enter Jerusalem and answer historical questions, mainly regarding Israel and resistance organizations in other countries. In two series ('*al Aidun*' and '*Yatathakkarun*'), Palestinian elders recount oral histories, telling stories of village life in the homeland (Khalili 2004: 17). Another programme reunited a Palestinian family who moved from Beirut to Gaza with the members of the family who stayed in Lebanon. Along with pictures and direct interviews, the interviewer discussed how the individuals remember their family, family stories were recounted, and they discussed the pain of *ghurbeh* (being distant) and the feeling of *hanin* (nostalgia) for family. One show, for which the station received fierce international criticism, focused on the Jews in history, called 'The Diaspora' or '*al Shattat*', and contained significant factual inaccuracies (Harb and Leenders 2005: 182). This was a Syrian-made drama that the station said it purchased quickly without viewing the entire series in advance. Whether this is true or not is less important than the station's realization that airing the series was a mistake (Charara and Domont 2004: 171).

Internationally, al Manar follows American domestic and foreign politics closely. Regarding US positions on Lebanon and Syria, one spot states, 'This is how the US deals with UN resolution 1559' (calling for Syria to withdraw from Lebanon), while depicting a man holding a large wooden stick the size of a bat, tapping it hard against his hand, menacing and ready to strike. This is followed by another scene, with the words 'and this is how the US treats UN resolutions regarding Israel'. The screen shows a man picking the petals of a daisy and states: it applies, it does not apply, it applies, and so on. As in alternative reporting in the West, the Bush administration is seen as anti-Muslim, and Christian Zionists

as behind much of those policies. The station distinguishes between Christianity ('true' Christianity) and the actions of Zionist Christians. Jewish interests are seen as powerful in determining US policy and electoral outcomes. Israel is viewed as behind the banning of al Manar in France, and American reports from the Congressional Research Service are used to support the assertion of AIPAC (pro-Israeli) and Saudi funding of American elections.

Potential threats against the Arab and Muslim worlds are reported. The station communicates the idea that Israel is hegemonic in the region, tightly connected to the US, and that Israel and the US want a weakened Lebanon and Syria, unable to resist Israel's actions. Iraq was targeted to fragment the country, not make it sovereign. American troops in Iraq are referred to as 'the American occupation army'. Details of torture, indictments and alleged rapes by American troops are reported, and more importantly, the station quotes American media reports regarding those issues. Further, while the US emphasizes the threat facing it in Iraq to mobilize domestic support, al Manar spins this same fact as a positive, demonstrating the power of the opposition.

In addition, al Manar programming highlights any mistakes or *faux pas* of the US. It emphasizes that Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib are not being discussed in the US nor are those responsible punished. Lawsuits and problems about the Pentagon that are reported in the US press are carried by the station. Importantly, American moves to correct problems are also reported, such as the Congressional meeting to research events at Guantanamo Bay. Flaws in the US are emphasized, such as discrimination against Blacks, the situation of American Indians, and slavery. Spots and filler segments highlight negative actions of the United States. One historical piece, 'WAR', focuses on US invasions of other countries. Another shows UN proposals favourable to Arabs, and the US veto of them.

In other foreign policy issues, Syria is praised for its support of Hizbullah's fight against Israel, and the relationship between Syria and Lebanon is viewed as complementary. The Saudis are condemned for not financially helping others and being corrupt. Further, the station is not a mere mouthpiece for Iran. Al Manar actively discussed and critiqued the new Iranian president, refuting the idea that he would, or indeed could, segregate the sexes in public. Civil society, including numerous women in parliament, is too developed to return to policies characteristic of previous harsh times.

In sum, al Manar does not conform to stereotypes of it (or of Hizbullah) that it marginalizes women or injects religion into all its programming. On the contrary, the station highlights practical problems of women and solutions proposed by them. The overwhelming majority of children's, entertainment, scientific and technological programmes are identical to those on any other station, American or otherwise. Where programmes differ in ways peculiar to the station, they communicate an alternative concept of the common good which relies heavily on the local community, a perspective the American station does not offer.

### **The US response: launching Alhurra and banning al Manar**

The US response to al Manar was to ban it entirely from the US and to promote its own channel, Alhurra (the Free One), to compete for Arab audiences.<sup>10</sup> The station was intended to move ‘the people of the region away from extremism and violence and toward democracy and freedom’ (Sefsaf 2004), countering the presumed negative image portrayed by Arab media stations. A triad of new US media were launched to this end in the Arab world: a satellite TV station, a radio station called Radio Sawa, and ‘Hi’ magazine, which together are publicly funded through a half a billion dollar grant to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, producers of the Voice of America. Alhurra is the commercial-free satellite station launched on Valentine’s Day 2004. The station was allocated \$102 million start-up funding by Congress (Rugh 2005), \$62 million for the first year, and \$40 million more for an Iraq-specific station (McCarthy 2004). Fifty-two million dollars were proposed for the station in 2005, and \$652 million requested for international broadcasting in 2006.<sup>11</sup>

Alhurra currently broadcasts only to the Middle East, and is less available than al Manar. It is available in Jordan, Iraq and Egypt for those owning satellites. However, some satellite providers do not offer it and there is heavy pressure on them to keep the station off (Cochrane 2004b). Poll results on Alhurra, apart from those reported to Congress,<sup>12</sup> demonstrate the lack of interest and trust in the station by the Arab viewing public. A survey by Zogby International conducted by Shibley Telhami in June 2004 across a number of Arab countries found no one turned to Alhurra as a first choice for news; a small amount, 3.8 per cent, picked it as a second choice (Wise 2005). A Palestinian poll found only 1.1 per cent watched Alhurra, whereas over 58 per cent viewed al Jazeera, 12 per cent al Manar, and 10 per cent al Arabiyya. Gallup’s poll concluded that 6 per cent of Iraqis watched Alhurra in the previous week. A survey by the Arab Advisors Group found fewer Egyptians watched the station (3 per cent) than viewed BBC World (5 per cent) or the government’s Nile News (9 per cent) (*ibid.*). A survey of satellite users in greater Cairo found that most viewers (over 64 per cent) felt Alhurra was not trustworthy as a news source; college-educated viewers trusted the station a bit more than those with only a high school diploma (Arab Advisors Group 2005). In comparison, almost 86 per cent felt al Jazeera was trustworthy, and almost 67 per cent felt CNN was trustworthy (*ibid.*). Tellingly, only 8 per cent of Alhurra’s small viewing public deemed the station’s coverage trustworthy (Wise 2005). The polls that indicate higher viewership for the station also show its irrelevance as a news source. One poll indicates that around a quarter of Jordanians and Saudis watch Alhurra at least once a week but it is not a primary source of news for them (McCarthy 2004).

Direct interviews confirmed the conclusions of pollsters. The most common audience reaction to Alhurra was indifference. It is seen as just another station, similar to al Manar in that neither is commercially supported, and neither can claim to be unbiased: both explicitly seek to communicate a message funded by

political considerations. ‘What’s different about Alhurra? Why don’t you ask what al Manar and Alhurra have in common?’ one educated woman asked. Throughout Lebanon and Jordan, people overwhelmingly believe that Alhurra shows them what the US wants them to know. Young Iraqis living in Jordan have hope in the US plan for Iraq and therefore watch Alhurra to see the vision of their future. The few positive opinions of Alhurra mentioned only the entertainment coverage or the cultural interview programmes. In Beirut, while some Christians watch the station, recent interviews indicate that for the overwhelming majority of the population in the Muslim areas Alhurra is ‘all but dead’. If Alhurra succeeds in obtaining a serious audience, it will be among the upper class and those already pro-American.

The US station is accused of preaching, condescension and cultural inappropriateness (Sefsaf 2004). Its name, the ‘free one’, assumes the traditional US stance of representing the better society but contradicts its actual journalistic nature (Kuttab 2004). Owned by a government and under strict guidelines regarding its coverage, critics argue that it cannot be free. The imposed limitations include not airing interviews with leaders of terrorist groups, such as the Taliban, or negative aspects of the coalition presence in Iraq (Sefsaf 2004). Similarly neglected are major issues of concern to Arab viewers, such as the Abu Ghraib scandal and the plight of the Palestinians (Cochrane 2004a). The spin of events also differs. People are not ‘martyred’ but ‘killed’, and the station does not call terrorism ‘so-called terrorism’ as other Arab stations do. Further, the common greeting used by Arab channels, ‘*al sallamu ‘alaykum*’, viewed as religious, is avoided in Alhurra, whose hosts instead say ‘welcome back’ (Wise 2005). Ironically, this last aspect fuels perceptions that the US is against the region’s religion.

In fact, the station’s news coverage differs markedly from other stations in the area. Breaking news is particularly problematic for the station, adding to the problems in becoming a news source in times of crisis. Alhurra was broadcasting a cooking show when Sheikh Yassin was assassinated by Israel, and in contrast to all the Arab television stations, Alhurra remained in the kitchen. The others switched to cover the breaking news. The station’s director later admitted this was a mistake (McCarthy 2004). Similarly, the Cairo Khan el Khalili terrorist incident that killed three tourists was not covered for over an hour after other stations had switched (Wise 2005). The station’s heavy reliance on pre-produced, Western and sub-titled programmes has been addressed recently, with the addition of more local material, specifically town-hall type debates and coverage geared to the elections in Iraq, Palestine and the US.

Coverage is heavily weighted toward statements by American officials. During my research, President Bush’s speeches were covered extensively, occasionally taking up most of news broadcast time. Interviews with American officials about American events were translated and shown in Arabic. American military officials in Iraq were interviewed when events occurred in Iraq, and Israeli officials spoke on events in southern Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority. Reporting a clash between Hizbullah and the Israeli army in Southern Lebanon, newscasters stated that the Israelis knew it was coming, that it was not a surprise to them. This is

important since the knowledge and competence of the Israeli army have been discredited by its unsuccessful occupation of the area. Coverage of the military skirmish focused on the Israeli side, showing Israeli soldiers preparing for war. Newscasters discussed the 'message' that Israel was attempting to send. This contrasts with al Manar's coverage of the same events, which focused on the Arab perspective of the event, the Palestinians and Lebanese.

The US point of view is communicated clearly through news shows and promotional spots. Alhurra's promotional spots emphasize elections and protest in the Arab world. One spot ends with King Abdallah of Jordan saying in English that 'we' are making the Middle East a better place, after pictures of the Syrian President Bashar al Asad and Syrian troops leaving Lebanon. Other spots show Iraqis voting and Egyptian and Lebanese protestors (ibid.). News talk shows are preoccupied with establishing the authoritarian nature of Iran, demonstrating the accomplishments of professional, Westernized Arab women, and refuting complaints about corruption in Morocco, for example. Corruption is central to Islamist grievances, a cause presumably common to the US.

By far the station's most popular shows are its non-news coverage, including travel, documentary, fashion, cinema and music programmes.<sup>13</sup> It also has interviews with local fashion designers and writers. Hollywood events such as the Golden Globes and the Emmy awards are broadcast (live), along with baseball and football games to draw more male viewers. But the increase in such coverage is criticized by the Broadcast Board of Governors, the oversight body for Alhurra, since the station was intended for news. Mouafac Harb, the station's director, defends the fashion programmes, saying that people in the Middle East should see that there is a 'grand and beautiful world' beyond their borders (Wise 2005).

Alhurra is faced with what one writer described as an 'existential' problem (Rugh 2005), which results in the station either appearing to be the old-style government-sponsored propaganda, or evading Congress's dictates. It cannot be critical of the US due to its structure and organizational funding, but to effectively draw viewers from other stations for news coverage it must cover a variety of viewpoints as the others do, which inevitably involves criticism of US policies. Currently, the station treads the line between the two, aided partly by Congress's inability to directly monitor its broadcasts which are in Arabic (ibid.).

Added to the entrance of Alhurra was the banning of al Manar. The campaign in the US and Europe to remove al Manar from satellite stations began with an opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times* in October 2002. The piece accused American companies who advertised on the station of promoting terrorism (Jorisch 2003b). PepsiCo, Procter and Gamble, and Western Union were cited as advertisers on al Manar's local broadcasts (the satellite broadcast at the time was commercial-free). This was followed by a letter to Congress to put pressure on these companies, using the opinion piece as support. The advertisers pulled out, and pressure to ban transmission of the station increased. The station similarly drew ire from groups in Europe. The group having agreed not to air messages inciting hatred, the French Audiovisual Council granted it a licence, with a warning to stick to its word (aljazeera.net 2004a). However, it was indeed banned from French airwaves



and European ones in general, followed quickly by an American banning of the station in December 2004 (Drees 2004).

The immediate reaction to the banning of al Manar in Lebanon was defiance. In response to France's ban, 50 cable operators in Beirut halted the French station TV5 (Smallman 2005). The Lebanese Minister of Information declared it censorship of any opposition to Israel, and students demonstrated in support of al Manar (aljazeera.net 2004b). The banning was criticized by Reporters Without Borders, who warned against confusing anti-Israeli positions with the fight against terrorism (Smallman 2005). Al Manar voluntarily stopped broadcasting several days before the ban was to take effect, a move that prevented other stations on the same satellite network from being removed from the airwaves as well. This action won the station praise from other networks and its watchers, fuelling the image of the station as sacrificing for others (Yadav 2005).

### **Assessment: the effectiveness of countering al Manar**

Is banning al Manar and promoting an alternative likely to increase support for the US and its point of view? Paradoxically, US actions in fact empowered al Manar as an alternative to US views and propaganda. Similarly, establishing Alhurra enhanced the credibility of Arab media, seen as airing uncomfortable truths so dangerous the US has taken the trouble to counter them (Cochrane 2004a). Further, the widespread view that al Manar was banned due to pressure from Israel and pro-Israeli groups discredits the United States's proclaimed neutrality and its democratic values of press freedom. The effect is to reinforce the Arab sense of being 'besieged' by a global Israeli/American campaign (aljazeera.net 2005a).

The head-on ideological assault represented by Alhurra has proved counter-productive. The presence of the American station sets up a counterpoint and identifies particular views as clearly American, making rejection of those ideas clearer and adoption of alternative ideas more accepted. Alhurra adds to the sense of siege, legitimating the perception of being targeted by an American attempt against ideas, culture and values. Instead of entering the debate as desired, the US is adding fuel to it, arguably distracting the audience from the critical debate on government reform to take up a defensive position vis-à-vis the West.

The effect of satellite television is not unidirectional – consuming American media does not translate into accepting that perspective. Arab audiences are critical viewers with long experience with state-owned media, censorship and propaganda. Hence they judge stations by the degree of separation from government, and triangulate multiple media sources according to their own pre-existing beliefs and values (Centre for Strategic Studies 2005; Bishara 2004). As a result, a common viewing pattern is to flip between stations, comparing the coverage and perspectives, while keeping in mind the station's ideology.

The plethora of media alternatives complicates the question of what Alhurra adds. The station was intended by the US government to cover new and difficult issues presumably avoided by other Arab stations. However, Marc Lynch's recent research demonstrates that such an assessment of Arab television is false. Indeed,

Arab satellite stations regularly cover difficult and presumably taboo subjects, including Islamist movements, torture in local prisons, censorship, corruption, women's rights, government repression, and economic problems such as unemployment and child exploitation (Rugh 2005). This new coverage is heavily focused on self-criticism of Arab society.

Indeed, Alhurra cannot replace stations such as al Manar. The two offer differing symbols, messages and perspectives of what is important. In one, Israelis and Americans speak and act, they interpret news and events. In the other, Palestinians, Lebanese and Iraqis have voice and agency. Al Manar promotes community identity, solidarity and a modest life-style; Alhurra demonstrates the extravagance of Western capitalism. Al Manar gives voice and pride to the victims, and shows victory against an enemy. Alhurra's interviews are from the point of view of that enemy, rubbing salt in the wound, as it were. One man stated that the station represents the moderate Muslim – not extreme, but focused on issues close to the average Muslim's heart.

A better option than initiating new stations or banning existing ones is to engage the debate through existing media channels. Former Ambassador Rugh maintains that US officials should participate in existing stations, in effect entering the debate and creating dialogue among the players, not giving one-way monologues (Wise 2005). By denouncing those stations as anti-American instead, the US is sending a message that free speech is only allowed when it is favourable to the US (Rugh 2005). Some observers argue that for the Iraqi elections to have an effect outside that country, they had to be viewed on al Jazeera, not Alhurra (Lynch 2005).

In fact, US policy has begun to embrace this policy alternative, with administration officials participating in Arab media such as al Jazeera (Weisman 2005). Even more effective would be allowing Islamist groups opportunities for viable political participation. In the end, this factor more than any other was responsible for Hizbullah's emphasis on the domestic arena and al Manar's moderation of its broadcasts (Baylouny 2004).

## Notes

- 1 This research was undertaken with the aid of several (Arab) researchers watching al Manar between November–December 2004 and May–June 2005 in the United States, Lebanon, and Jordan. Alhurra was viewed in June 2005. Around 50 random street interviews were conducted in Lebanon and Jordan on both al Manar and Alhurra during June 2005. I supplemented this qualitative research with numerous surveys conducted on Arab media.
- 2 I use the terms extremist and radical to describe, respectively, intolerant, rejectionist viewpoints and advocacy of the use of violence.
- 3 On Hizbullah, see Hamzeh 2004, and Harb and Leenders 2005.
- 4 The top four news stations, which capture 70–80 per cent of satellite viewers, are al Manar, al Jazeera, LBC (Lebanese Broadcasting Company) and Abu Dhabi TV (Sharabi 2003). The majority of Palestinians watch three of these, excepting LBC (European Union Election Observation Mission 2005). Another poll found that for news on Palestine, Jordanians turn first to al Manar (28 per cent), then to al Jazeera (27.5 per cent) (Jorisch 2004a). See also Jad 2002.

- 5 As a religious party, Hizbullah receives tithes from the Shi'a community, which in Islam constitute one-fifth of individual income.
- 6 Interview, official at the Lebanese Ministry of Information, 24 June 2005; Figuié 2005: 486.
- 7 Interview, Lebanese Ministry of Information.
- 8 Interview, Lebanese Ministry of Information.
- 9 In fact, some observers assert that the station's broadcasts are crucial to the sustenance of the intifada (Fisk 2000).
- 10 The station's transliterated name should be al-Hurra, following conventional guidelines, since 'al-' is just 'the'. However, the station itself writes its name in transliteration as Alhurra. I follow their usage.
- 11 This includes the proposed expansion of Alhurra to European forums and the creation of a Farsi (Iranian) language satellite station (Wise 2005).
- 12 An ACNielsen and Ipsos-Stat poll claimed that 34 per cent reported watched Alhurra in the week before the survey. They were not asked how much they watched or if they turned to the station during a crisis. This is particularly important given the viewing characteristics of Arab audiences, who watch numerous channels for limited amounts of time each, complicating conclusions about viewer patterns and ratings (Sakr 1999: 6-8).
- 13 For the line-up, see the Alhurra web site, [www.alhurra.com](http://www.alhurra.com).

# ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN KAZAKHSTAN AND KYRGYZSTAN

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## **Introduction**

Radical Islam in Central Asia is in the midst of sweeping transformations. Despite the loss of their Afghan base, terror groups in the region are adapting and are mounting increasingly potent operations. This transformation has been in the making for some time. Over the past few years, Central Asia's terrorist groups have expanded their geographic reach and intensified their activities throughout much of the post-Soviet space. New alliances have also sprouted up. According to July 2004 testimony of the head of Tajikistan's National Security Service, Tokon Mamytov, the IMU, Tajik and Kyrgyz fundamentalists and Uighurs from Western China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region have joined forces to create a new clandestine umbrella organization, the Islamic Movement of Central Asia. Its purported goal: the establishment of an Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia (Agoulnik and Kelly 2004).

While regional experts agree that more has to be done to conquer religious extremism in Central Asia, they vary in identifying the direction, substance and form of anti-extremist activity. Some sympathize with Uzbek President Islam Karimov's brutal handling of the Andijan insurgency. Others prefer to engage the Islamists the Tajik way. There are those who see the main problem in an uncontrolled or a too controlled resurgence of Islam, and there are strong believers in social and economic progress as the only remedy. The recent series of 'orange revolutions' in post-Soviet space, including Kyrgyzstan, have led to yet another debate as to whether political liberalization presents opportunities or liabilities in fighting extremism and terrorism in Central Asia. The broad geopolitical scene of Central Asia remains complex and obscure. The great powers continue to compete more than cooperate in Central Asian affairs, thus enhancing the chances of extremist groups to capitalize on domestic shortcomings, mistrust between Central Asian regimes and incessant geopolitical ambition of powerful outsiders.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of locating the main geographic areas of religious extremism, in the past Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have been traditionally named as the most problematic and explosive. Their Islamization, along with suppressive governance, was considered conducive to extremist activity. At the same time, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were seen as less problematic due to their nomadic past, secularization and better governance. Some experts consider Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to be an irritant rather a threat. According to Kazakh scholar Nurlan Alniyazov, however, strange as it may sound, in areas where Islam has been traditionally present, and where religion has a profound impact on cultural, spiritual and everyday life, there is a natural resistance to radical movements, which are perceived by the people as something alien to their culture and traditions and unsubstantiated by the traditional teachings of Islam. In contrast, fundamentalist groups emerge in the areas where Islam has not deeply spread its roots (Alniyazov 2004: 175).

Islamic radicalism is on the rise in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and, if not treated consistently, may develop into a serious threat to the region and beyond. Destabilization there would seriously harm US strategic interests in particular. After the eventual withdrawal of US troops from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan becomes America's closest military partner, and Kazakhstan remains the strongest economic partner in Central Asia and perhaps the most promising candidate for political liberalization.

### **Evolution of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia**

Three successive waves of political Islam have swept over Central Asia during the 15-year period since the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The first wave appeared in Tajikistan in 1992, seeking to make the country an Islamic state. The Tajik civil war involved factions, but there were ideological overlaps of secular democracy, nationalist reformism and Islamization. The Islamic rebels belonging to the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) were initially concentrated in the southern provinces of Kulyab and Kurgan Tyube, but incrementally linked up with elements in neighbouring Afghanistan. By 1996 they were operating from within Afghanistan. Alarmed by the ascendancy of the Taliban (leading to the capture of Kabul in 1996) and signs that the Tajik Islamists were increasingly coming under the influence of rival benefactors, Russia and Iran swiftly closed ranks to bring about a Tajik settlement, giving Tajik Islamists a role in the government in Dushanbe.<sup>2</sup>

No sooner had the Tajik settlement come about, than the Uzbek militants who fought alongside the Tajik Islamists broke away and linked up with the Taliban. The years 1996–2001 saw the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) operating from Taliban-ruled areas within Afghanistan and stepping up violent activities inside Central Asia; Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in particular. The IMU was the second wave of political Islam to appear in Central Asia. IMU called for *jihad* against the established secular regimes, particularly that of Islam Karimov. The IMU also closely collaborated with al Qaeda and suffered as a result. In the

American military intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001, the IMU's cadres sustained heavy losses and retreated to Pakistan's tribal agencies – along with the Taliban.

At any rate, in the void left by the IMU, a third wave of political Islam has appeared in Central Asia – Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT – Party of Islamic Liberation). Unlike the earlier manifestations of political Islam, HT claims to be a pan-Islamic movement. HT subscribes to the goal of establishing a Sharia-based caliphate in Central Asia and 'dividing Russia along the line of the Volga' so as to liberate the 'originally Muslim lands'.

The three waves also represent three different forms of Islamic radical ambition and activity: power sharing with distinct regional and tribal characteristics (civil war in Tajikistan), anti-regime and nationalistic (Islamic insurgency in Uzbekistan) and externally sponsored and supranational (HT). While IMU and IRP are struggling to survive and remain relevant, their strength has been undercut, through efficient military suppression in the case of IMU, and through relatively successful integration into the mainstream political process in the case of IRP. This gives HT an objective advantage in Central Asia. HT also gains from its broad international background and network, its solid experience of legal and illegal propaganda, as well as proclaimed non-violent methods which confuse authorities as to how to deal with it (Tukumov 2004). HT is exploiting the similarity of social and economic grievances in the region as well as the continuing lack of trust and efficient cooperation between the Central Asian regimes in dealing with extremist organizations.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are the most vulnerable to the third wave of Islamic radicalism. First, they largely avoided the first two waves and have not developed a resistance mechanism to extremist slogans. Second, their traditional Islamic structures are weak and least prepared to deal with external influences. Third, they are relatively democratic and open, as opposed to the other three Central Asian states, but not genuinely pluralistic and liberal, which provides fertile ground for HT. Finally, the social instability in Kyrgyzstan after the 'tulip revolution' in March 2005 and the possibility of similar social disturbances in Kazakhstan offer HT new opportunities for spreading their ideology. Most analysts agree that the most vulnerable areas to HT in the two countries are the South Kazakhstan oblast in Kazakhstan, and the Jalalabad, Osh and Batken regions in Kyrgyzstan.

### *Kyrgyzstan*

Kyrgyzstan has been a fertile ground for the growth of fundamentalist Islam. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan among the five Central Asian republics adopted the most liberal approach toward Islamic fundamentalist organizations, allowing, for example, HT to pursue its activities relatively freely. At the same time, Kyrgyzstan's social and economic situation was deteriorating under the increasingly corrupt regime of Askar Akaev. Kyrgyzstan has common and poorly protected borders with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the two countries that have been experiencing serious Islamic radicalism, and a significant

Uighur population which has radical anti-Chinese and/or pro-independence aspirations.

Kyrgyzstan's most vulnerable region is its south. The Fergana Valley faces serious social and economic challenges of overpopulation, unemployment and crime. Kyrgyzstan became a transit area and training ground for militant Islamic groups. IMU militants infiltrated the southern region of Batken in 1999, causing serious disturbances. The 2002–3 bombings in Bishkek and Osh resulted in the conviction of Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationals who belonged to the IMU and who were trained in Afghanistan and Chechnya. In 2003, repeated attempts were made by the IMU to target the American Embassy in Kyrgyzstan. However, the IMU presence in Kyrgyzstan after 11 September 2001 has seriously declined.

Kyrgyzstan also faces a threat from Uighur separatists from the Xinjiang region in Western China, who may seek to strengthen themselves in Kyrgyz territory. China shares several hundreds of kilometres of border with Kyrgyzstan in Xinjiang. In November 2002 China conducted military exercises with Kyrgyzstan aimed at helping Kyrgyzstan to eliminate Uighur extremist groups.

It is, however, HT which has become the main source of concern for the Kyrgyz authorities. Southern Kyrgyz regions – including Osh and Jalalabad, which have large numbers of ethnic Uzbek residents – have traditionally been strongholds of HT support. Uzbeks make up 12.9 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan and 40 per cent of the population of the Osh region. According to official figures, 92 per cent of HT activists are Uzbek (Khamidov 2003a). At the same time, HT propaganda material has been heavily distributed in cities in northern Kyrgyzstan, including the capital. Leaflets have also been found in villages in the Issyk-Kul region. Kyrgyz law-enforcement officials report a surge in such leafleting. In addition to distributing materials by hand, HT activists are operating late at night, pasting leaflets to lampposts and in public places. The messages in the leaflets are confrontational in their tone. 'Let's rebel against the faithless', urged one. Others contain strong anti-American messages: 'The war that [US President George] Bush started is a colonial war aimed at achieving hegemony and control, imposing influence and reshaping the region according to the new American standards' (Vechernyy Bishkek, 12 April 2004).

According to Sadykzhan Kamuluddin, President of the Islamic Centre of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and former *mufti* and member of the Kyrgyzstan Supreme Council, Kyrgyzstan alone has about 2–3,000 members of the HT, suggesting that it was numerically strongest in Kyrgyzstan. Officials of a Kyrgyz state commission for religious affairs admit that HT poses a significant 'threat to national security' (Kabar News Agency, 12 July 2005). The state commission, which includes representatives from the Spiritual Directorate of Kyrgyzstan's Muslims and the state commission for religious affairs, works with the staff of the Interior Ministry and National Security Service and routinely provides analysis of Islamist leaflets and materials for use in court proceedings against suspects detained for links to the Islamist group. Commission members said the group's activities are increasing, especially in the south of the country.

Apart from carrying out political agitation in the Kyrgyz state, HT has also been accused of terrorist activities, although it has a stated agenda of non-violence. In November 2003, Kyrgyz State Security announced the capture of three HT members planning to blow up the US airbase at Manas. A number of Kyrgyz nationals have been caught as members of HT with explosives in Russia. Bishkek authorities have also reported from time to time developing links between extremist organizations like the IMU and the Islamic Movement of Turkestan and HT, and between HT and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and other Uighur separatist groups.

Akaev's government had taken several measures to control the spread of radical ideas. One was the adoption of a strict licensing system regulating the publication of religious printed matter, by the Ulema Council, Kyrgyzstan's foremost spiritual body for Islamic affairs. A number of other regulations were also passed by the Kyrgyz State Commission for Religious Affairs to govern religious expression and counter radical elements. In November 2003, the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic issued a ban on four Islamic groups. The activity of these groups, which the court officially labelled as terrorist and extremist, is considered illegal within the republic. These are HT, as well as the Islamic Party of Turkestan, the East Turkestan Liberation Organization, and the East Turkestan Islamic Party (Interfax, 14 January 2004).

Kyrgyz law-enforcement authorities have mounted a series of raids on the houses of suspected HT members. In Osh, for example, authorities arrested nine local residents in early April 2004 for allegedly distributing HT material ([www.oshmedia.kg](http://www.oshmedia.kg) 15 April 2004). Several HT supporters have been arrested in Bishkek. All the detainees are accused of violating Articles 297 or 299 of the criminal code, which forbid efforts to bring about 'the forcible change of the constitutional system', and attempts to 'foment national, racial and religious enmity'. Kyrgyzstan's National Security Service shut down an underground printing press in Jalalabad that produced materials for HT (Bishkek Public Educational TV, 11 May 2005). The two-month operation reportedly resulted in the confiscation of 300 leaflets, 400 magazines, and more than 1,000 brochures, most of them printed in Uzbek. The press was located in a private apartment.

The March 2005 parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan once again brought HT under close scrutiny by the international community. Its anti-government propaganda contributed to the public uprising against Akaev's government. At the same time, the HT leadership did not support the new government. HT members view the events of March 2005 as a reshuffle of power, lacking any radical policy departure. 'We will support the people and the government representatives only when they defend the interests of Islam. Disputes between the people and President Askar Akaev's government were part of a democratic ideology which is alien to HT', according to Dilyor, an HT activist in Kara-Suu (EurasiaNet, 15 May 2005).

Islamic radicals associated with HT remain on the sidelines of Kyrgyzstan's revolution, preoccupied with internal squabbling over the underground group's strategy and tactics. Nevertheless, HT leaders remain hopeful that the Kyrgyz



revolution will ultimately lead to the expansion of the Islamic movement's influence, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan.

New Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has been dismissive of HT's ability to influence Kyrgyzstan's political future. Meanwhile, his Prime Minister Feliks Kulov appears far more wary of HT's capabilities. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* in April 2005, Kulov warned that HT was prepared to take advantage of the 'vacuum' created by Akaev's sudden departure from power. The dissonance between the two Kyrgyz leaders can be attributed to their regional allegiances. Bakiyev comes from the south and does not want to emphasize the role of Islamic elements in projecting him to power. Kulov is a northerner and therefore freer in his evaluation.

Public support for HT has, however, slackened in recent months. One reason for the decline is an intensive government crackdown. Another, perhaps more important factor is the rise in political activism associated with the parliamentary election, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan. People discovered that they could seek redress of economic, social and political grievances through political channels, rather than joining HT, which must operate underground. In addition, mainstream Muslim leaders succeeded in putting spiritual issues on the political agenda, enabling public debate on religion's role in society. This significantly reduced HT's appeal as an outlet for discussion of spiritual issues. The democratic process may have weakened the appeal of HT. Until recently, HT's popularity was partly based on its role as an outpost of dissent in the authoritarian countries of Central Asia. But the revolution gave many Kyrgyz an alternative channel for voicing their discontent. It also gave them a rare opportunity for legitimate political participation. Revolution has made it easier for Muslims in Kyrgyzstan to gather at state-controlled mosques to discuss political and economic problems – something that was restricted during Akaev's rule and impossible in neighbouring Uzbekistan. With a loosening of such religious restrictions, according to some, the appeal of an underground outlaw group like HT is bound to fade (Khamidov and Saipov 2005).

Analysts say Kyrgyzstan's March revolution, in addition to dampening HT's appeal, has also deepened an existing internal split in the group. There have been suggestions that HT is no longer united in the goal of non-violent methods to achieve its ends. One branch still advocates a peaceful, global Islamic revolution. But another is pressing for a shift to more forceful means and focusing on revolution in a single country rather than regionwide. 'Experts say this split started one to two years before the revolution, when opinions changed within Hizb ut Tahrir', said Alisher Saipov, an independent journalist from the southern Kyrgyz town of Osh. 'These groups emerged after internal squabbling. At present, some Hizb ut Tahrir members say the debate over the method of fighting is ongoing – as are the splits' (Saidzimova 2005).

*Kazakhstan*

The Kazakh leadership is starting reluctantly to admit the growth of religious extremist activity in the country. Earlier, it was dismissing the danger and somewhat patronizingly suggesting that Islamism was present only in neighbouring states. It was supposedly marginal in Kazakhstan and limited to Uzbek and other ethnic minorities, such as the Uighurs, Chechens and Azerbaijanis, but not the Kazakhs.

The Chimkent region of southern Kazakhstan, which borders Uzbekistan, is regarded by the Kazakh authorities as the main breeding-ground for religious extremism in the republic. Kazakh officials speak of the widespread presence of 'Wahhabis', a term frequently deployed in Central Asia to describe both Islamic extremists and ordinary Muslims who worship outside state-controlled structures. The attention paid by the authorities to the Chimkent region in particular is easily explained: the overwhelming majority of the republic's 330,000 ethnic Uzbeks are concentrated there, making up around 18 per cent of its population. Generally, the Uzbeks are far more devout than the Kazakhs, and consequently the number of Islamic radicals among them is much greater (Rotar 2002).

The terrorist group 'Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahideen', which is structurally affiliated with al Qaeda, has been exposed and dismantled in Kazakhstan. According to Vladimir Bozhko, first deputy director of Kazakhstan's National Security Committee (KNB), the group included four female members, trained as suicide bombers, from the Southern Kazakhstan oblast. Bozhko added that group members were found to have about 2,000 audio- and videocassettes featuring terrorist propaganda, including messages from Osama bin Laden. The group also had fake passports and equipment to produce counterfeit documents, as well as components for basic explosive devices, ammunition, and weapons (Rotar 2004).

According to Bozhko, KNB operatives identified and detained one citizen of Uzbekistan, Abos Usmonov, who 'had received an assignment from abroad and, with his accomplices, he was preparing to organize terrorist acts in Uzbekistan against one of the high-ranking officials of that country'. Bozhko also stated that the Jamaat was administered from abroad through appointed leaders – emirs. One of them, Akhmed Bekmurzayev, was killed during the counterterrorist operations in Tashkent in March 2004. The second emir is Zhakshybek Biimurzayev, an ethnic Kyrgyz from Kyrgyzstan; he also had citizenship papers from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Investigators say the latter organized the terrorist attacks in Tashkent in March–April and July 2004 (Interfax-Kazakhstan, 11 November 2004).

East Turkestan (Uighur) radical groups connected to al Qaeda and Iraqi insurgents are present in Kazakhstan too. The Uighur community leadership in Kazakhstan is generally unhappy with President Nazarbaev's policy and accuses him of not caring about the plight of Uighurs in China. The government of Kazakhstan, hypersensitive to Chinese reaction, has always distanced itself from the East Turkestan problem and the plight of the Chinese Uighurs, despite the fact that the government's decision to ignore the reprisals against ethnic minorities in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region drew sharp criticism from Uighurs

living in the Almaty region. Demands for ethnic solidarity were clearly voiced at the founding Congress of the Interstate Committee of East Turkestan held in Almaty on 11 January 1992. Under pressure from the Muslim population, Kazakh authorities registered the East Turkestan Committee but simultaneously denied registration to the Organization for the Liberation of Uighurstan (Yermukanov 2004).

In October 2004, the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan recognized al Qaeda, the East Turkestan Islamic Party, the Kurdish People's Congress, and the IMU as terrorist groups, a decision that prohibits them from any activity in the country. The ban on activities of the Islamic Party of East Turkestan and the Kurdish People's Congress was obviously aimed at demonstrating Kazakhstan's support for Chinese and Turkish anti-separatist efforts on the one hand, and the government's commitment to fighting international terrorism on the other.

It is, however, HT that is becoming particularly worrisome for the Kazakh government as more cells are operating, spreading all over the country and no longer limited to the South. The number of Kazakh members of HT is on the rise too. Most of the new members are attracted to HT for social and economic reasons. Kazakhstan's economic progress may be impressive but it is not even and it has led to greater polarization in Kazakh society. In 2004, Kazakhstan arrested and tried more than 60 individuals suspected of participation in HT activities (US Dept. of State 2005). They were prosecuted under the criminal code for 'participating in activities of illegal organizations' and 'inciting social, national, tribal, racial, or religious hatred'. In March 2005, the Astana City Court ruled to recognize HT as an extremist organization and to ban it in Kazakhstan (Kazakhstan Today, 29 March 2005). The ruling came in response to a request from the Prosecutor-General's Office.

The lower house of the Kazakh parliament voted in May 2005 to adopt stricter anti-terror legislation, a set of amendments to 11 existing national security laws, imposing heavier penalties for 'extremist and terrorist activities', including 'terrorist financing', and more restrictive measures governing the activities and formal registration of religious organizations and political parties (Itar-Tass, 12 May 2005). One of the most significant amendments criminalizes the financing of political parties by foreign nationals. The move followed the adoption in February 2005 of a set of laws aimed at countering extremism.

The new legislation has, however, alarmed the religious communities of Kazakhstan as well as human rights groups. Law-enforcement agencies have already been accused of expelling Christian and Muslim missionaries. The amendments to Kazakhstan's law on religion would for the first time formally forbid the activities of unregistered religious organizations. A new article will be inserted in the Code of Administrative Offences to punish with heavy fines those leading, taking part in, or financially supporting unregistered or banned religious organizations. This will make it very difficult for small religious communities which are too small to register. Muslims who want to practise outside the structures of the state-sanctioned Muslim Board would likely face penalties. Missionary work without the appropriate registration would attract a fine, while foreigners would

be expelled from Kazakhstan. Human rights groups have expressed concern that the definition of 'extremism' in the law is so vague that it could be applied to any religious association.

Kazakhstan has positioned itself as a staunch supporter of the war on terror and is keen to promote an image of itself as being at the heart of Eurasian efforts to create a more stable environment, clearly benefiting domestic economic investment. But at the micro level, experts within Kazakhstan are beginning to question the state's anti-terrorist agenda and demonstrate diverse views on defining its future contours. Dosym Satpayev, Director of the Kazakhstani Risk Assessment Group, has attacked the current domestic system aimed at combating terrorism as inefficient. Speaking at a roundtable event in Almaty on 26 October 2004 under the rubric 'An Anti-Terror System in Kazakhstan: Illusions, Reality, and Prospects', he delineated the nature of the present counterterrorist facade in Kazakhstan. In Satpayev's view, 'maintaining the state monopoly over ensuring safety for the individual and society from terrorist threats' forms an impediment to reforming the present system. 'Unfortunately, Kazakhstan lacks a full-fledged anti-terrorist system, which should consist of a whole set of mutually related initiatives both from the state and society' (McDermott 2004).

### **International and regional counterterrorist cooperation**

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have been actively involved in international and regional efforts to contain religious extremism and terrorism. Almaty and Bishkek have signed most of the international anti-terrorism agreements and participate in the work of the UN Security Council's Counterterrorism Committee. In January 2005, Kazakhstan hosted the meeting of the Counterterrorism Committee in Almaty. In his welcoming remarks to the participants, President Nazarbaev stated that the forceful methods of fighting terrorism were not sufficient. Instead he called for strategies to deal with the root causes of the problem, such as human rights violations, poverty and environmental degradation. He also called the uneven process of globalization and the growing gap between the rich and poor nations another source of insecurity and instability (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan 2005). President Nazarbaev has been actively promoting an international inter-religious dialogue. The first meeting of leaders of world and traditional religions was held in Kazakhstan in 2003.

Central Asian states have been trying to energize the counterterrorism agenda of the so far inert Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO), which comprises Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Representatives of the security services from the CACO member states met in Dushanbe on 21 January 2005 to discuss cooperation in combating threats to the region. In a written statement after the session, participants said that they discussed the need for a common list of terrorist and extremist organizations and their known members in the CACO region. According to Tajik Security Minister Khayriddin Abdurahimov, 'this would enable the security services to fight terrorism and prevent the activities of terrorist organizations more effectively'. The meeting also examined simplified

extradition procedures for citizens of CACO member states involved in terrorist and extremist activities (Kazakhstan Today, 22 January 2005).

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan consider Russia to be their closest partner in dealing with religious extremism and therefore treat the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which also includes Armenia, Belarus and Tajikistan, as the key regional body in that sense. Kyrgyzstan hosts a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) counterterrorism centre in Bishkek as well as a Russian air force base in Kant. The CSTO has set up rapid deployment forces in the region. At the meeting of heads of CSTO member states in Moscow on 23 June 2005, future steps for strengthening multilateral military cooperation within the organization were discussed. The leaders allegedly discussed the possibility of opening a new CSTO military base in Kyrgyzstan – which presumably would be operated by Russia – and agreed to the creation of a centre to combat drug trafficking. Speaking at a news conference after the summit, Russian Defence Minister Sergey Ivanov said Russia was concerned by ‘the real terrorist threat in Central Asia’ (RIA-Novosti, 23 June 2005). In June 2004, the Kyrgyz, Tajik and Kazakh Border Services held joint exercises along their common borders to improve regional cooperation against terrorists. In July 2004, Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan held *Rubezh 2004* joint military counterterrorism exercises in Kyrgyzstan. *Rubezh 2005* exercises were held in Tajikistan on 2–6 April 2005, involving around 1,000 troops from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are also involved in the expanding anti-terrorist activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which also includes China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. On 15 June 2001, the SCO adopted the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. At a summit in Astana on 5 July 2005, the heads of the SCO member states approved a plan for fighting these ‘three evils’. In the declaration, SCO members pledged not to give refuge to individuals accused or suspected of such activities (Kazakhstan Today, 5 July 2005). Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov proposed at a meeting of the CIS Defence Ministers Council in Dushanbe on 24 June 2005 that the SCO should create ‘strong collective rapid-deployment forces to counter international terrorism and religious extremism’ (RFE-RL Tajik News Service, 25 June 2005).

The SCO’s anti-terrorist cooperation is, however, impeded by a number of factors. The Chinese formula does not fully resonate with other SCO members’ interests. Identification of separatists and extremists is particularly problematic. Russia does not want SCO to divert Central Asian states from a close military cooperation within CSTO. Kazakhstan is wary of joint military exercises in SCO and fears general transformation of the organization into a military grouping. Kazakh officials emphasize the confidence-building nature of the organization. Kyrgyzstan apparently turned down a Chinese offer of a military base on its territory. Acting Deputy Prime Minister Madumarov told a press conference on 29 July 2005 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, where he was on an official visit, that ‘The question of deploying a Chinese military base on Kyrgyz territory was raised at a very high level, but Bishkek’s position is unambiguous – we are not prepared

to turn the country into a military and political staging ground. We have enough strength and means to defend Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty' (Kazakhstan Today, 1 August 2005).

In accordance with the charter of SCO and its Convention on Fighting Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS SCO) started functioning from 1 January 2004 in Tashkent. RATS spent most of 2004 and 2005 elaborating the legal and normative basis of the SCO's cooperation in fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism. It has compiled a list of organizations to be banned in SCO states as well as a list of individuals sought for or suspected of terrorist, extremist and separatist activities. It is creating a database to collect and exchange relevant information. RATS has developed a plan of joint anti-terrorist exercises, but its location in Tashkent and the fact that an Uzbek general is in charge of it at the moment have coloured its activities and led to some misunderstandings and problems. Kazakhstan denounced the statement of RATS Director Vyacheslav Kasimov, who accused Kazakhstan of giving shelter to terrorists and even stated that 'parts of Kazakh territory have been purchased by Osama bin Laden owned companies' (Kazakhinform 9 February 2005). RATS also rushed to support Islam Karimov's crackdown on protests in Andijan even though Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan did not fully share the one-sided Uzbek interpretation of the Andijan events and under international pressure allowed the Uzbek refugees to flee from their territories to third countries. In a special statement on 26 May 2005 RATS fully sided with the Uzbek interpretation of the disturbances and accused members of 'Acromiya', the militant wing of HT, of coordinating the insurgency. It praised the 'resolute actions' of the leadership of Uzbekistan (SCO RATS 2005).

### **The US role**

The 11 September 2001 attacks led the US Administration to realize it was crucial to the national interests of the United States to greatly enhance relations with the five Central Asian countries to prevent them from becoming harbours for terrorism. According to Assistant Secretary of Defence Crouch in testimony in June 2002, 'our military relationships with each Central Asian nation have matured on a scale not imaginable prior to September 11th' (Crouch 2002).

Kyrgyzstan provided basing for combat and combat support units at Manas for US and coalition forces (in 2005, US troops reportedly numbered about 1,500). Uzbekistan provided a base for US operations at Karshi-Khanabad (in 2005, reportedly 900 US troops) and a base for German units at Termez. Kazakhstan provided overflight rights and expedited rail transshipment of supplies. Turkmenistan permitted blanket overflight and refuelling privileges for humanitarian flights. Tajikistan permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for refuelling and hosted a small French unit. US security assistance to the region was boosted in the aftermath of 9/11 but has since lessened somewhat. Security and law-enforcement aid was \$187.55 million in 2002, \$101.5 million in 2003, and \$69.6 million in 2004 (Nichol 2005b).

The US government has moved to classify various groups in the region as terrorist organizations, making them subject to sanctions. In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU resorts to terrorism, actively threatens US interests, and attacks American citizens. The designation made it illegal for US entities to provide funds or resources to the IMU; made it possible to deport IMU representatives from, or to forbid their admission to, the US; and permitted the seizure of its US assets. It also permitted the United States to increase intelligence sharing and other security assistance to Uzbekistan (US Dept of State 2002).

In August 2002, the United States announced that it was freezing any US assets of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), since the group had committed numerous terrorist acts in China and elsewhere and posed a threat to Americans and US interests. In September 2002, the United States, China and other nations asked the United Nations to add ETIM to its terrorism list.

On the other hand, the US has not yet classified HT as a terrorist group. According to the State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, 'despite [Eurasian] regional governments' claims, the United States has not found clear links between HT and terrorist activities' (US Dept of State 2002). Reflecting this view, US officials have criticized Central Asian governments for imprisoning HT members who are not proven to be actively engaged in terrorist activities, and for imprisoning other political and religious dissidents under false accusations that they are HT members. According to a November 2002 State Department fact sheet, HT has not advocated the violent overthrow of Central Asian governments, so the United States has not designated it a Foreign Terrorist Organization. The State Department is monitoring HT because it has 'clearly incite[d] violence' since 11 September 2001, such as praising Palestinian suicide attacks against Israel, denouncing the basing of US-led coalition forces in Central Asia, and calling for *jihad* against the United States and the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, the State Department has urged the Central Asian governments to 'prosecute their citizens for illegal acts, not for their beliefs'. Reportedly, in late 2004 the US Administration was reassessing its stance on HT (*Washington Post*, 27 December 2004).

The US Administration has officially rejected the idea of permanent military bases in Central Asia, but it does seek long-term security ties and access to military facilities in the region for the foreseeable future to deter or defeat terrorist threats. The *Washington Post* reported on 25 March 2004 that the Administration might be considering asking Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for long-term access to military facilities for emergency training and staging by rapid reaction forces under a new US military basing strategy. The countries might serve as 'forward operating sites' with only small US military support staffs or as 'cooperative security locations' with no permanent US military presence.

The US military cooperation with Central Asia is, however, facing serious challenges due to an angry Uzbek reaction to Western criticism of the Andijan events as well as China's and Russia's growing concern about the US's alleged role in sponsoring 'orange revolutions' in Central Asia. In the SCO summit's

final declaration on 5 July 2005, the Organization asked the forces in the US-led coalition in Afghanistan to clarify a timeframe for withdrawal from bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The declaration noted that several SCO countries have

provided their above-ground infrastructure for the temporary deployment of the military contingents of coalition member states ... Taking into account the conclusion of the active military phase of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan, the member states of the SCO consider it essential for the appropriate participants in the antiterrorist coalition to decide on the final timeframes for the temporary use of the above-mentioned infrastructure objects and the maintenance of military contingents on the territory of SCO member states.

([http://www.sectsco.org/news\\_detail.asp?id=500&LanguageID=2](http://www.sectsco.org/news_detail.asp?id=500&LanguageID=2))

Soon after, the Uzbek authorities asked the United States to pull all military forces out of the Karshi-Khanabad airbase. The decision came only days after US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited neighbouring Kyrgyzstan and received assurances from Bishkek officials that the US airbase can remain there as long as needed. In an interview with the Kyrgyz newspaper *Litsa* published on 21 July 2005, Kyrgyz National Security Secretary Miroslav Niyazov said that the withdrawal of the US military base from Kyrgyzstan will be possible only when Afghanistan is completely stabilized. 'In this, we must be guided by our national interests and the interests of Central Asia as a region. We will have to manoeuvre in this situation so that our country's security interests, as well as its national, territorial, and economic interests are not harmed.' While noting that Russia remains Kyrgyzstan's traditional strategic partner, Niyazov stressed, 'It is difficult today to imagine our society without the presence of the West and the United States. It would be desirable for us to build equal, businesslike relations with everyone based on the goal of developing our country.' Despite this reassuring comment, some sceptics believe that the Kyrgyz government treats the United States more like a source of economic help through increased rental fees for the use of the Manas basing facility rather than a genuine partner in combating Islamic radicalism.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

It is quite clear that US security cooperation with Central Asian states has reached a critical stage and needs to be seriously reassessed. It is impossible for the United States to continue balancing the counterterrorism and human rights agendas without seriously undermining one or the other cause. The Kyrgyz revolution and Uzbek counterrevolution suggest that a new strategy needs to be elaborated which would acknowledge the emerging extremist threats in Central Asia, the peculiarities of individual Central Asian states and the evolving trends in regional counterterrorism cooperation.



Some of those issues were identified and discussed at the 29 October 2003 *Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia of the Committee on International Relations of the US House of Representatives*. It was stated by the majority of the experts invited to the hearing that the secular regimes of Central Asia have little to no democratic legitimacy. Most of their rulers are Soviet-era Communist Party leaders. Almost no political space is left for secular opposition in these states. US objectives are thus jeopardized not only by the authoritarian parties of radical Islamic revolution, but also by the authoritarian nature of these regimes themselves – with their rampant corruption, declining living standards, poor delivery of public goods and services, and stagnant or declining economic growth rates. By being intolerant and undemocratic, these regimes inadvertently breed religious extremism. The experts' recommendations remain valid today and included suggestions to expand intelligence collection on HT, condition security assistance to Central Asia on economic reform, encourage democracy and popular participation, discredit radicals and encourage moderates. The challenge remains how the US can support secular and moderate Islamic regimes and movements, foster tolerance, and promote freedom of expression without being identified with the oppressive actions of Central Asian regimes.

Some, if not most, of these tasks cannot be fulfilled in Central Asia alone, separate from a consistent and efficient global anti-terrorist campaign. At the same time, the global campaign has to be enhanced by adequate regional effort. There is no evidence of the US seriously considering anti-terrorism cooperation with China and Russia in Central Asia. If the three nations can find a common language on nuclear developments in North Korea despite their differences of opinion on the North Korean regime, why is not an anti-terrorist forum possible in Central Asia? In Russia's case, it is necessary to separate Moscow's neoimperialist temptations from its genuine concern about radical Islam. China's separatist problem in Xinjiang is more likely to be resolved through a gradual political dialogue rather than the activity of Uighur radicals. It is not possible for the United States to continue dismissing or denigrating the SCO, which is becoming increasingly active in anti-terrorism. The United States needs to establish a dialogue with the SCO and recognize the constructive elements in its work.

It also needs to clarify the role of its basing facilities in Central Asia. Linking their operation to the campaign in Afghanistan only and, at the same time, implying a broader geopolitical context for their existence discourages the Central Asian states from considering the US as a key partner in dealing with their Islamic radicals. The United States should make better use of these basing facilities for training regional anti-terrorist forces.

Uzbekistan has discredited itself as a key strategic ally of the US in Central Asia. The US should therefore reorient itself to more benign and predictable partnerships. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan seem to be the best candidates for such a role. The US assistance to these countries would, however, have to vary. Kyrgyzstan is in dire need of economic and financial assistance to retain the momentum of the antiauthoritarian revolution. Kazakhstan, on the other hand,

needs to be diplomatically and politically assisted in preventing an ‘orange revolution’ through fair and open election processes.

### **Notes**

- 1 For a regional discussion of religious extremism in Central Asia, see Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies 2002, 2003a and b; Tukumov 2004; Kazakhstan Institute of World Economy and Politics 2005; International Centre for Strategic and Political Studies 2004; International Centre for Strategic and Political Studies and Royal Institute of International Affairs 2004.
- 2 For a discussion of the evolution of Islamic radicalism in Central Asia see Bhadrakumar 2005; Nazirov 2003; Gleason 2002; International Crisis Group 2003a and c.

# COUNTERING IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT

## The case of the Ferghana Valley

*Ehsan Ahrari*

### **The study**

The Ferghana Valley is where the battle of Talas was fought between the Arab warriors of Abbasid Caliphate and those of the Tang Dynasty of China. This battle marked the victory of Islam. During Soviet days, it was purposely divided in such a way 'that Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz were found on all sides'. This policy also enabled the Soviet authorities to be continuously 'called upon by the people in the region to help them manage conflicts that were bound to emerge as a result of these artificial divisions' (Slim 2002). Since the implosion of the Soviet Union into the five independent states of Central Asia, this valley straddles three countries, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Today, Ferghana Valley comprises seven administration provinces: three Uzbek (Andijan, Ferghana and Namangan), three Kyrgyz (Batken, Osh and Jalalabad), and one Tajik (Sugh, which was formerly known as Leningrad).

The Ferghana Valley remains one of the potential hotspots of Central Asia. What happens there 'for better or worse—has widespread ramifications for the region as a whole'. Because of its 'ethnic diversity, the highly concentrated and growing population including a high percentage of youth, high rates of unemployment and widespread economic stress, complex borders in a region occupied by parts of three newly sovereign states, and its recent history of tensions', this region remains a potential source of regional instability (UN 2000).

The Ferghana Valley has the largest population in Central Asia – up to 250 inhabitants per square kilometre, as compared to an average of 14 inhabitants per square kilometre in Central Asia (Appei and Skorsch 2002). The political consciousness of the general population toward Islam is on the rise. It is also a region where there have been several outbreaks of conflict involving different ethnic groups and conflict involving the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was labelled as a 'terrorist' organization by the US government in 2000. As a Central Asian specialist wrote, it

exhibits the most vivid example of the Islamic evolution taking place throughout the region and exposes Afghanistan's ideological impact on Central Asia. This is a hard, rural place, with cotton fields worked with sweat and picked by hand. The people are desperately poor. They see little that the new national governments have done to help their lives. Dissatisfaction is high, the lure of Islam as an answer to their dreary existence is strong.

(Rasizade 2002)

***Islamist and terrorist organizations, their strategic goals and the threats they pose***

The basic strategy of all Islamist groups is to alter political status in the Ferghana Valley. There are two pan-Islamist groups determined to bring about political change. They are *Hizb ut-Tahrir-e-Islami* or *Hizb Tahrir* (HT) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

*HT*

HT's founder was a Palestinian named Taqi-Uddin Al-Nabhani. This party was initially established in Jordan in the early 1950s in East Jerusalem. Like all Salafi movements (i.e. movements that pursue a reliance on the traditions of the *salaf*, or the pious ancestors of the days immediately following the death of the Prophet of Islam), the HT staunchly believes that the sanctity of Islam was shattered because of a general tendency to deviate from the practices of the Prophet and his companions. Thus, its strategic objective is to revitalize that glory by returning to the purest form of Islam. For this reason, HT advocates the establishment of a Caliphate (*Khilafah*). As explained in one of its press releases:

The *Khilafah* is the global leadership for all the Muslims in the world. Its role is to establish the laws of the Islamic Shari'ah and to carry the call of Islam to the world. It is a model completely distinguished from any other ruling style such as democracy, theocracy or monarchy. The Shari'ah that is applied in founding the ruling, in caring for the citizens' affairs, and in the external affairs is from Allah. It is a system of unity not a system of union. The system of government in Islam, which is the system of *Khilafah*, is a unitary system of one state and not a federal system. Muslims all over the world are not allowed to have more than one Islamic State.

(Hizb ut-Tahrir 2005a)

Thus, HT 'has a vision of uniting Central Asia, the Xinjiang Province in China, and eventually the entire *Ummah* (Islamic world community) ...' under the Caliphate (Rashid 2002: 115–36).

At least in Central Asia, HT is very secretive, largely as a result of the highly repressive practices of the Uzbek regime of Islam Karimov. Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid, whose writing is considered one of the most authentic sources on HT and other matters regarding Central Asia, states that this movement ‘is so secretive and decentralized that its leaders haven’t revealed themselves even to their own supporters, and only one member of each of the organization’s five-man cells is in contact with a member of another cell’ (Rashid 2000). Rashid writes that, at the local level, members of HT are organized in small *daira* (Arabic for cells; the Uzbek word for it is *halqa*). Each *daira* comprises five to seven members and is headed by a *mushrif*. Members of each *daira* only know each other. The *mushrif* is the person who knows or can contact individuals at the higher level of the organization. Each city or district may have one or more organization, whose leaders are called *musond*. *Musonds* are under regional leaders, *masul* (person in charge). *Masuls* are directly under the country leader, *mutamad* (Rashid 2002: 115–36).

HT operates on the basis of a three-stage tactic:

- First Stage: In order to form the party group, this stage is focused on culturing or educating people to believe in the ideas and the methods of the party.
- Second Stage: In this stage, the party members interact with the *ummah* in order to let the *ummah* embrace and fully incorporate Islam in their private and public affairs.
- Third Stage: This stage is focused on establishing Islamic government by ‘implementing Islam generally and comprehensively and carrying it as a message to the world’ (Hizb ut-Tahrir 2005b).

#### HT’S SELF PERCEPTION, SOURCES OF FINANCES, AND NATURE OF SUPPORT AMONG ITS AUDIENCE

HT perceives itself as a party that is on the right path of establishing a worldwide Islamic Caliphate. ‘Indeed, the group’s aim to create a single, worldwide Islamic government can best be described as Islamic radicalism’s closest equivalent to the Western concept of globalization’ (Rashid 2002: 121). HT envisages the governments of the Ferghana Valley countries as illegitimate, misguided, and anti-Islamic in orientation.

On a worldwide scale, HT communicates with its audience through a heavy use of modern technology, such as fax machines, computer discs and the Internet. That medium serves as the main channel for the distribution of its propaganda, literature, leaflets and messages. Even within Central Asia, it relies heavily on such technologies as photocopy machines, videos, computers, discs, and heavy use of e-mail for propagating its messages to those who have access to such technologies. It communicates with the masses by distributing leaflets, where modern communication facilities are not available. Its favourite propaganda letter, ‘*Shabnama*’ (night letter) is printed at night and ‘is pushed under people’s doors

like a newspaper'. 'Posters are also slapped up on village walls, even on the walls of police stations' (ibid.). It also relies on social and secretive networks in the Ferghana Valley to distribute its messages.

Activists distribute leaflets and books that often contain scathing criticisms of regional governments. They also rely on underground meetings rather than public speeches. These techniques make Hizb ut-Tahrir operatives hard to find and to silence. They also let the Hizb ut-Tahrir members send messages more quickly than the government can suppress or discredit them.

(Vali 2002)

According to the HT's website, 'The organization is entirely financed by its activists and we do not accept any financial assistance whatsoever from any government authority. Since Hizb ut-Tahrir's work relies upon the dissemination of thoughts, the costs of operating are minimal, as thoughts cost nothing' (Muslim Public Affairs Committee 2005). Still, it is also suspected of receiving funds from South Asian and other Gulf and Muslim charities and even some Muslim governments.

Given the closed nature of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it is difficult to independently assess the nature and the extent of the popularity of HT in the Ferghana Valley. The media reports on the issue have their own obvious and latent biases. Keeping this in mind, according to reports by RFE/RL, there is limited support for HT in Central Asia (Blua 2004). But the increased authoritarianism in the region and the brutal style of government is helping that organization. According to David Lewis of the International Crisis Group in the Kyrgyz city of Osh, HT is feeding on discontent, especially among the young who are attracted to it as an alternative form of political expression. He adds that HT's influence 'should not be exaggerated as it has little public support in Central Asia' (ibid.). Its core constituency is the Uzbek territory. On the other hand, another report describes the increased activism of the HT in Tajikistan this way:

Hizb ut-Tahrir, the nonviolent but banned Islamic movement that Central Asian presidents often invoke as a terrorist threat, is increasingly active in Tajikistan, especially in the capital, Dushanbe. Tajik authorities are taking steps to counter the movement's efforts to expand its appeal. The rise of Hizb ut-Tahrir's profile is also a source of concern for mainstream Islamic political leaders, including Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) leader Said Abdullo Nuri, who on September 4 [2002] portrayed the movement as a threat to Tajikistan's stability.

(Vali 2002)

A Kyrgyz journalist, Alisher Khamidov, also presents a positive portrayal of the reception of HT among its followers:

Central Asian governments have also employed local media outlets and state-controlled clergy to counter HT's messages. However, such efforts have not yielded significant results, as both the state-supported clergy and the media lack credibility among the wider public ... Unlike state supported clergy members and government officials, HT activists enjoy a reputation as highly honest, incorruptible, and determined individuals.

(Khamidov 2003b: 11)

A more meaningful way to comprehend how HT is being received by the population of that area is to examine how popular the notions of the separation of religion and politics, and Islamic governance are in the Ferghana Valley. According to one study,

Opinions on the feasibility of the separation of Islam from governance vary throughout the region. The basis for differentiation lies primarily in how people define their identity. Muslim identities are stronger in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the south of Kyrgyzstan, and less so in the north, where nomadism has been much more significant. The stronger the Muslim identity, the smaller the space tends to be between religion and the state. In all three countries, both government officials and the official Islamic establishments routinely express support for a separation of Islam from the state.

(International Crisis Group 2003c: 12)

On the issue of Islamic governance, which is one of the chief objectives of HT, the same study notes, 'There is a lack of popular support for Islamic governance in Central Asia, but support for secular liberal democracy also seems fragile' (ibid.: 11).

Thus, even though there are mixed reports on the popularity of or support for HT, the organization operates in an environment where it is capable of bringing its message to the populace. The notion of Islamic governance has a good chance of finding sympathetic ears as long as the existing governments fail to improve the political and economic quality of life of their citizens.

The chief source of HT's strength is its firm belief that it is on the right path. One of its leaflets states,

Hizb ut-Tahrir will never be destroyed, by Allah's leave ... It should be known that it never happened in the past, nor will it happen now, or happen in future that Hizb ut-Tahrir will be destroyed .... Despite campaigns of oppression, intimidation, and arrests, and attempts to destroy the Hizb undertaken by the [Muslim] regimes, Hizb Tahrir derives its strength from Allah ... and the *Ummah*, which increases in strength and popularity day after day.

(Hizb ut-Tahrir 2005c)

The major reason for whatever popularity HT has in the Ferghana Valley stems from the fact that it is determined to keep the focus of its audience on the political repression in the region. Its popularity is likely to be diminished once political pluralism starts to evolve there. Until that happens, HT is likely to face little hostility from its audience.

In assessing the popularity of this organization, its critics tend to ignore an important fact. The Ferghana Valley, indeed, all of Central Asia, is a region where orientation and knowledge of Islam was systematically suppressed when under the occupation of the former Soviet Union. It is also a region where current governments are systematically ensuring that a controlled version of Islamic education (which is derisively described as ‘official Islam’) is offered to the general populace.

In such a controlled milieu, HT has assigned itself the task of enhancing the knowledge of Islam. The Islamic knowledge and orientation offered by the religious scholars affiliated to HT are judged by independent sources as decidedly superior to the ones provided by half-educated ‘official imams’ (International Crisis Group 2003a and c). HT’s rationale is that, once Muslims become increasingly aware of their religious heritage and become practitioners, the chances of the attainment of its own objective of the establishment of the Caliphate would also increase. Such an expectation is based on, at best, wishful thinking, or even naiveté. Increased knowledge or commitment on the part of the residents of the Ferghana Valley, or even Central Asia as a whole, provides no guarantee that they would also become supporters of the establishment of the Caliphate.

Another source of strength of HT in the Ferghana Valley is its anti-Americanism. Even though Central Asia has not been traditionally known for a high manifestation of anti-Americanism, that reality might be changing as a result of the general unpopularity in the Muslim world of the continued US occupation of Iraq. There is little doubt that HT is capitalizing on this reality. Thus, despite insisting that it favours peaceful change, its rhetoric is becoming increasingly shrill and vitriolic. One of its leaflets issued in June 2003 states,

America has been seduced by the illusion of power. She gives no credence to anything other than her interests, however much harm she causes to others. She rejects any international agreement, whatever it is, if it does not put her above everyone else. That is why she has refused to sign up to the international court for war crimes, fearing that this may be extended to her soldiers ... The United States, encouraged by the unexpected ease in occupying Afghanistan and Iraq, has begun talking openly about reshaping the Muslim world according to her criteria and design. She has begun to draw up plans to break up the Muslim lands along federal or decentralist forms, which will shake and weaken the unity of the state. What is taking place in Afghanistan and Iraq attests to this. Also talk by politicians in the Arabian peninsula is paving the way for this, under the pretext of preserving security, fighting terrorism, women’s rights and extremist [thoughts] stemming from the education curriculum.

(Hizb ut-Tahrir 2003)



HT's decision to exploit anti-Americanism to build its own base of support in the region is a highly tenable tactic. It is convinced that the United States would not radically alter its policy of supporting the current governments of the Ferghana Valley anytime soon. Thus, its adoption of contentious anti-American rhetoric is not likely to hurt its cause. If the Bush administration is to adopt the role of a force for change in Central Asia – an unlikely development – HT is also expected to adjust its own rhetoric accordingly.

### *The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*

The IMU is a pan-Islamist *jihadist* party, whose presence and influence in the Ferghana Valley is felt even in the post-9/11 era. It was declared as a terrorist organization by the United States in 2000. As a *jihadist* party, it was originally committed to overthrow the government of Uzbekistan. However, later on it expanded its violent activities to include the rest of the Central Asian countries. The political leader of this party is Tahir Yuldashev, a Mullah. He was originally affiliated with the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) of Tajikistan; however, he broke from it around 1998, when that party, at the conclusion of a civil war in 1997, agreed to become part of the conventional political process in that country. Yuldashev also played a crucial role in establishing a link between the IMU and al Qaeda in 1999, when the Taliban were in power in Afghanistan.

The military strategist and commander of the IMU was Jumaboi Ahmad-zhanovitch Khojaev, also known as Juma Namangani. He is described in the Western lexicon as a 'born-again Muslim', meaning that his commitment to Islam and *jihadism* did not have long roots. What he lacked in terms of his long-term commitment to Islam, he made up for by emerging as a committed *jihadist*, carrying out numerous guerrilla attacks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Namangani was reportedly killed in November 2001 during the US invasion of Afghanistan. There is little doubt that Namangani's reported death – if it is true – has caused ample demoralization within the ranks of the IMU. However, the overall environment of political repression, the absence of avenues of political participation, a general discouragement or condemnation of even conventional observance of Islamic rituals, proclivities for terrorism, and, above all, acute economic underdevelopment have been serving as sources of sustenance, indeed, popularity of the IMU in the Ferghana Valley. This is especially true in Uzbekistan.

The expressed goal of the IMU is destruction of the regime of Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. The current regimes in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are also its targets, but the toppling of those regimes has not been assigned as high a priority as Karimov's.

In the late 1990s, the IMU established a strong linkage with al Qaeda and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and thereby became an important player in carrying out regional *jihad* in Central Asia, Chechnya, and the Xinjiang province of China. Yuldashev was reported to have travelled extensively in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and in the Persian Gulf region in order to establish

networks with al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, and received funding from friendly sources from countries of that region. Between 1997 and 2001, the IMU worked assiduously to establish its operating base inside Central Asia in order to carry out its regional *jihadist* activities. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorists attacks on the United States, President George W. Bush, in a speech on 20 September 2001, linked the IMU with al Qaeda. Targeting and eliminating the IMU have thus become important objectives of the United States' global war on terrorism.

Even though the IMU forces suffered a major setback during the military clashes with the US and the forces of the Northern Alliance in 2001, its own forces are reported to have again gathered strength. The strategic objective of the IMU remains to oust the current regime in the countries comprising the Ferghana Valley. In this sense, it also remains an important regional terrorist group.

#### IMU'S SELF PERCEPTION, SOURCES OF FINANCE, AND NATURE OF SUPPORT

The IMU envisages itself as an organization that is determined to topple the most corrupt and anti-Islamic governments of the Ferghana Valley and establish an Islamic government (a Caliphate) from the Caspian Sea to Xinjiang. In this goal, it fully supports HT. However, unlike HT, it is resolute about using violence to achieve its objectives.

In May 2001, Namangani reportedly launched a political party called the Hizb-e-Islami of Turkestan (Islamic Movement of Turkestan – IMT), which was expected to serve as an umbrella organization, subsuming all Islamist parties of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The IMT was reported to be behind several terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, Indian-administered Kashmir, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Smith 2003).

The IMU, like the HT, is fully committed to the Wahhabi doctrine of Islamic Puritanism. Reports of its membership state that it contains Chechens and Uighurs, aside from Uzbeks, Pakistanis, Kyrgyz, Tajiks and 'Afghan Arabs' (i.e. Arabs who fought in the US-sponsored war against the Soviet Union, when it occupied Afghanistan between 1979–89). The pan-*jihadist* predilections of the IMU are also apparent in the fact that Tahir Yuldashev travelled to Saudi Arabia in the late 1990s and picked a Saudi of Uzbek origin, Zubyr Bin Abdur-Raheem, as head of the religious leadership of the IMU (Rashid 2002: 145–8).

The safest mode of communication for the IMU is through the Internet and through the use of various Islamic 'chat houses'. Since no one knows who is at either end of the 'electronic conversation', no one knows the significance of what is being communicated. Also, the terrorist groups have become so sophisticated in encrypting their messages that even the spoken words do not communicate the real meaning of the conversation. The upside of such a means of communication is that it remains the safest way to correspond with the hard-core supporters without the risk of being exposed to the security forces of Central Asia and elsewhere. The chief disadvantage of using electronic means of communication in Central Asia is that it is simply not widely available. That region of the world still remains in the

information ‘dark ages’, because of the very closed nature of the governments that have little-to-no-use for electronic media.<sup>1</sup>

As an affiliate of al Qaeda, the IMU is not likely to have much trouble reaching worldwide groups of supporters. This is especially significant when one considers al Qaeda’s latest cyberspace tactic, whereby *ad hoc* websites pop up on the Internet giving instructions and sending messages to its supporters for carrying out terrorist attacks and related activities. Such websites do not exist for long, for fear of being tracked down by international law enforcement agencies.<sup>2</sup>

The IMU is a widespread and well-financed terrorist group. The best way to understand its sources of financing is to consider the fact that Central Asia’s proximity to the ‘Golden Crescent’ (comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) and the ‘Golden Triangle’ (comprising Myanmar, Laos and Thailand) makes it the most popular route for narcotics trafficking. The IMU has cleverly exploited this reality to earn hard cash. It still uses its connections with al Qaeda, and relies heavily on narco-trafficking over a number of Central Asian routes in order to finance its activities.

Given the sustained high level of political repression in countries of the Ferghana Valley, the IMU’s message for political change may get a positive reception. However, whatever positive reception this organization receives may not be translated into an automatic support for its advocacy of militant *jihād*. According to one International Crisis Group report,

only 3.6% of those surveyed in Uzbekistan believed that *jihād* is the use of force to protect Islam from non-believers; 4.9% said that force can be used only in critical situations and 12.9% that it is not acceptable to use force to protect Islam. Furthermore, 9.2% said it could never be used against their own government. A strong majority (60.1%) did not know about *jihād* at all or were reluctant to discuss it.

(International Crisis Group 2003c: 15)

The same study notes that 37.8 per cent of the Tajik respondents were unfamiliar with the concept of *jihād*, ‘but the rest usually said that it is acceptable if Islam is under threat, but not against one’s own government’. It adds, ‘Nearly a third (32.5%) believed that *jihād* is acceptable to defend one’s self against non-believers or in critical situations; 8.4% replied that it is never acceptable to wage *jihād* and 14.8% that it should never be waged against the government’. It goes on to note, ‘More people in Tajikistan think that *jihād* should not be used against the government than in Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan, possibly because of the associations of the Islamist factor in the country’s civil war’ (ibid.: 15–16).

Regarding Kyrgyzstan, the same study reports that its survey results

are somewhat different because of the less important role of Islam in general. Many people were unfamiliar with *jihād* (47.9%). Those who knew about it usually considered it acceptable to use force if Islam was under threat by non-Muslims or if otherwise prescribed in the Koran.

Nearly 30% believed that *jihad* is not acceptable under any conditions, while 10.1% thought it permissible in critical situations or against non-believers. Some Kyrgyz believe that their fellow citizens think of *jihad* more as warfare than do Uzbeks or Tajiks because of their Mongol heritage.

(Ibid.: 16)

What emerges from the preceding is that the *jihadist* message of the IMU is not getting much positive reception in the Ferghana Valley at large. This reality presents great opportunities for a systematic promotion of moderate Islam and democracy in the region.

It is safe to argue that the chief strength of the IMU is that it is operating in closed societies and under autocratic rules, where people may look with hope at other political entities that are offering solutions to their misery. Even in this context, the IMU does not have much of a political platform to improve the quality of life for the citizens of the Ferghana Valley. All that the IMU offers is the establishment of a Caliphate. It says nothing about what plan it has to make the Ferghana Valley (or Central Asia as a whole) an integral part of the increasingly globalized world. When the world is becoming increasingly complex, interconnected, and interdependent, no argument for the establishment of a Caliphate in the style of the seventh century is likely to sound like a viable alternative. Only as long as people continue to suffer under deteriorating economic conditions will they envision the IMU as some sort of alternative. However, the moment political liberalization and economic progress become regular phenomena of Central Asia, the IMU will either have to radically alter its political platform or face the option of becoming irrelevant. In this sense, the autocratic regimes really hold the key.

### **What is the response?**

#### ***The Ferghana Valley states***

The Ferghana Valley countries depict HT and the IMU as ‘terrorist’ organizations. They also describe them as ‘Wahhabist’ entities. By using those phrases, the Central Asian countries want to convey the message that those organizations intend to conduct *jihad*. Even though HT is a strong advocate of radical change in Central Asia, it does not believe in attaining that objective through violence. As such, it is not generally regarded as a terrorist organization. The IMU, on the other hand, is determined to topple the governments of the Ferghana Valley, especially Uzbekistan, through terrorist acts.

The Ferghana Valley countries have adopted a number of internal and external measures to control or even eradicate both HT and the IMU. Domestically, all state activities to cope with the challenge coming from Islamist or terrorist organizations fall under the general rubric of ‘controlling Islam’. This is an age-old tactic that was fervently used under Czarist Russia, and then by the Soviet Union.

Uzbekistan (and Turkmenistan) have ‘the most restrictive legislation on religious activity in the region’. The Committee of Religious Affairs (CRA) is in charge of overseeing all religious activities in Uzbekistan. This is not a decision-making body; it only implements decisions made by Karimov. The CRA controls the Muftiate (the Muslim Spiritual Board), ‘which in turn controls the Islamic hierarchy, the content of imams’ sermons, and the publication of Islamic materials’ (International Crisis Group 2003c: 5–6; *passim*).

The response of the government of Tajikistan is quite different from the governments in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, since it is the only state where an Islamic party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, is legal. However, in the recent past, ‘many of the same issues that face Uzbekistan have appeared, with growing government interference in religion, and fears that repression and interference will provoke radicalization of small parts of the population’. And, ‘unlike other Central Asian states, Tajikistan has no muftiate; instead, those responsibilities are placed on the Islamic Centre of Tajikistan ...’ *ibid.*: 13–16; *passim*).

Kyrgyzstan has had the most unperturbed attitude toward the notion of ‘control’ of Islam. However, toward the late 1990s, the government clamped down on the missionary activities of Islamic organizations (*ibid.*: 22–31).

The external (or regional) response of the Ferghana Valley states was to join an organization whose explicit aim was to fight regional terrorism. The Shanghai Five – formed in 1996 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan – emerged as such a body. The countries of the Ferghana Valley became involved in developing a common front to fight ‘three evils’: terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism (Jia 2001). The Shanghai Five changed its name to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in June 2001 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China 2004).

It is interesting to note that the organization was formulated by the two great powers of the region – China and Russia – as a forum to promote their strategic interests and, more to the point, to focus on the major contentious issues that were then part of the great power rivalry. Thus, the communiqué of the SCO in June 2001 expressed concern over the then impending decision of the United States to abandon the 1972 ABM Treaty, and America’s resolve to build national missile defence and theatre missile defence systems, and the legitimacy of the People’s Republic of China as the sole representative of both mainland China and Taiwan. Those issues were of least concern or interest to the Central Asian members of the SCO. However, those countries understood that, in order to maintain the unity of the SCO, they would have to go along willy-nilly with the strategic concerns of their powerful partners.

To be sure, China and Russia were also interested in suppressing the secessionist movements within their own borders, involving the Uighurs and the Chechens respectively. However, they were more interested in using the SCO ‘to eventually build a new regional security architecture that reinforces each other’s territorial integrity ...’. At the same time, Beijing and Moscow wanted to retrench the American interests in Central Asia as a whole (Yom 2002b). Thus, the SCO never really emerged as a forum where counterterrorism

strategies were developed to fight the IMU. The SCO developed periodic military exercises aimed at counterterrorism. Even then, the thrust of those exercises was to suppress the Uighurs in Xinjiang, or to capture or harass the Uighurs who escaped their homeland and took refuge in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In general, the Western assessment of the SCO – which is quite accurate – is that it could not marshal any military answer to the problems related to regional terrorism (ibid.).

### *The United States*

It was only after September 11, 2001 – when the US needed military bases in Central Asian countries to carry out its military operations that were aimed at dismantling the Taliban regime of Afghanistan – that the Bush administration decided to alter its strategic approach toward that region. The US sought military bases, and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were only too eager to provide such facilities. As one study points out, the Central Asian states accepted the Sino-Russian domination of the SCO ‘more out of need than desire’ (ibid.). However, when the United States sought military bases in the region, they viewed it as the opening up of new vistas of military and economic assistance. More important, the Bush administration’s clarion call of ‘either you are with us or you are with the terrorists’ was interpreted by the states of the Ferghana Valley as an unambiguous signal that America would spend its military might in eradicating the ‘terrorist’ forces in their region.

The Bush administration did not bother to elaborate its counterterrorism strategy in Central Asia. In the absence of an explicit strategy, one has to interpret the meaning of Bush’s global war on terrorism (GWOT) for Central Asia. It is safe to say that America’s counterterrorism strategy toward the countries of the Ferghana Valley (as well as for the Central Asian region) had the following features:

- Bases in Kyrgyzstan (Manas, where 1,500 US troops were stationed in 2005), Uzbekistan (Khanabad, where 900 US troops were stationed in 2005, a base for German units in Termez, and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez), and Tajikistan (which permitted the use of its international airport in Dushanbe for refuelling, and which also hosted a small French unit) were regarded as symbols of America’s resolve to stay in the region.<sup>3</sup>
- Passage in late 1999 of the ‘Silk Road’ language in Public Law 106–13, which served as a source of America’s ‘enhanced attention and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development ... democracy, and the creation of civil societies’ in the South Caucasus and Central Asian states (ibid.).
- Increased security assistance to Central Asian countries in the post-9/11 era.
- March 2002 declaration of US–Uzbek strategic partnership, which included ‘nonspecific security guarantees’ (ibid.).

## Conclusions

### *The Islamist side*

Both HT and the IMU used their ideology to underscore the commonality of Islam as a unifying force among all states in Central Asia. Whatever effectiveness or success these organizations experienced was the outcome of the autocratic nature of the extant regimes in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and the depressed economic conditions there.

Of the two, HT is likely to be more successful because of its continued emphasis on its non-violent *modus operandi*. That is also one reason why HT has gained sympathy among the populace. The IMU, however, has received palpably less popular support because of its practice of militant *jihadism* or terrorism, which is not at all popular in the Ferghana Valley.

The greatest disadvantage that HT and the IMU face within the political environment of the Ferghana Valley is that they advocate the establishment of a caliphate. It should be clearly understood that even the most committed and religiously oriented Muslims have a jaundiced view of all suggestions related to the creation of an Islamic government. In an increasingly globalized world – where interconnectedness and interdependence are *sine qua non* of daily living – 1,400-year-old notions of religious purity are not likely to be sold as the major political objective. Besides, there are also high chances that by overthrowing the existing autocratic order and by supporting the Islamist groups, the masses of the Ferghana Valley would be trading a secular but enslaved lifestyle for a religious and still enslaved lifestyle.

The strength of HT and the IMU is the fact that their messages are heavily peppered with the language of Islam. As people's knowledge and orientation toward Islam increases, their messages are likely to be closely scrutinized. At that time, the religion-based strength of the Islamist parties might turn into weakness, as people realize that a heavy dose of Islamic Puritanism may not serve as a panacea for what ails their polities.

### *The Ferghana Valley states*

There is little doubt that of the three sets of actors, the countries of the Ferghana Valley themselves have been largely clueless about finding realistic solutions to challenges related to their continued survival. Since the leaders in those countries are the product of the communist era, they remain inside their comfort zone by categorizing all Islamist forces as 'terrorists'.

When the Shanghai Five came into existence, countries of the Ferghana Valley snapped up the opportunity to join. Even though China and Russia – as the major powers in that organization – had more intricate political agendas, the Central Asian states still envisaged the Shanghai Five as the chief tool to fight regional terrorism. Enlarged into the SCO, the Shanghai Five was still unable to emerge as a potent entity in countering the threat from HT or the IMU.

The SCO members had economic cooperation as part of their general agenda. In addition, they focused on military cooperation, building counterterrorism institutions in member states and enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of the forces of the member countries, and even holding periodic war games to fight and defeat terrorist attacks. Despite these endeavours, the SCO did not prove effective in countering the guerrilla-type attacks of the IMU in the late 1990s and early 2001. It was largely as a result of the US invasion of Afghanistan that the IMU became a weakened entity.

The problem is that as major states, China and Russia's global agenda is likely to get a major share of the organization's attention. This reality has remained its Achilles' heel.

### *The United States*

If the United States did not previously pay much attention to engaging in Central Asia, it has made considerable progress in that direction in the post-9/11 era. To start with, it acquired military bases in the three countries of the Ferghana Valley. Even though it originally declared that it would pull its forces out of the region once the brunt of Operation Enduring Freedom was over, it has since changed its mind.

Under the general rubric of the global war on terrorism, that region is emerging as being of utmost significance to the United States. President Bush rightly observed in 2002 that failed or failing states serve as places for the steady growth of transnational terrorism. Afghanistan in the 1990s provided the ultimate proof of the correctness of that observation. Considering that all Central Asian countries could qualify as failing states, there is no way the United States would be able to minimize (much less terminate) the dynamics of its involvement.

The second reason why the US cannot afford to lessen its involvement is Central Asia's proximity to two of the most significant regions of the global narcotics trade. The direct connection between transnational terrorism and the global narcotics trade has long been established. If the United States is going to win its war on terrorism, it has to remain focused on eradicating the opium trade in the Golden Crescent, where its forces are currently deployed. It cannot achieve that objective by lowering its presence in Central Asia.

The third reason why the United States cannot afford to leave Central Asia is that an important aspect of America's global war on terrorism is the promotion of public diplomacy to win the hearts and minds of Muslims all over the world. The United States will have to develop public diplomacy campaigns specifically for Central Asia, where it does not face as much of a major challenge as it does in other Muslim areas of the world. The Pew Research Center (2005) reports that anti-American sentiments are not high in Uzbekistan, unlike in other parts of the Muslim world. Consequently, it behoves the United States not only to remain engaged in Central Asia, but also to do everything to promote pro-American sentiments there.



### **Notes**

- 1 The most promising aspect of the evolving information revolution in Central Asia is presented in an essay that describes the use of the Internet during the Andijan political demonstrations of May 2005 (International Research and Exchanges Board 2005).
- 2 For al Qaeda's capabilities of conducting cyberwar, see PBS 2003.
- 3 In addition, Turkmenistan provided 'blanket overflight and refueling privileges for humanitarian flights', and Kazakhstan provided 'overflight rights and expedited rail transshipment of supplies' (Nichol 2005b).

## Part III

# SOUTHEAST ASIA



# COMBATING AL JAMA'AH AL ISLAMIYYAH IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

*Rohan Gunaratna*

## **The threat landscape in southeast Asia**

This chapter will focus on the ideology of *al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah* (JI). The evolving ideology of this *jihadi* group has profoundly transformed the region's threat landscape. *Pedoman Umum Perjuangan al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah* (The General Guide for Islamic Groups), commonly known as the PUPJI,<sup>1</sup> the founding charter of JI, contains the core of JI's ideology.

Al Qaeda, the chief proponent and practitioner of global *jihad*, established a robust presence in southeast Asia, and its ideology significantly influenced JI, a faction of Darul Islam, a local *jihad* group, into becoming a regional group with a global focus. Although operationally JI is still a regional group, its focus is identical to al Qaeda, i.e. attacking targets of the US, its allies and friends. The ideological transformation of local and regional *jihad* groups to emulate al Qaeda's vision and mission of a global *jihad* is the most significant development in the post-9/11 environment.

Although the operational capability of al Qaeda has severely weakened during the past four years, the ideology of global *jihad* articulated by bin Laden and his group serves as a catalyst for 30–40 Asian, Middle Eastern and African *jihad* groups and for numerous cells in the West. Many *jihadists* increasingly view al Qaeda as a pathfinder, model for emulation, and the vanguard of the Islamic movement.

JI is southeast Asia's most active terrorist group. JI ideology evolved through three phases. In the first phase, the local *jihad* phase, Darul Islam (DI) campaigned for an Islamic state in Indonesia. During this phase, DI attacked several Indonesian targets. In the second phase, the regional *jihad* phase, JI campaigned for an Islamic caliphate in southeast Asia. During this phase, JI conducted several attacks in the region. In the third phase, JI campaigned for global *jihad*. During this phase, JI directly targeted or assisted al Qaeda to target the US and its friends. JI ideology was driven and shaped by political space and operational opportunities.

## Context

Like many other international *jihād* groups, JI began as a local *jihād* group and evolved into a global *jihād* group. After the leadership was forced to relocate from Indonesia to Malaysia, it came into contact with other foreign *jihād* groups. To advance its own agenda and that of the region, JI transformed itself into a southeast Asian *jihād* group. After participating in the anti-Soviet Afghan *jihād*, JI came into contact with al Qaeda, and thus shared its vision of global *jihād*. JI today is driven more by its newly acquired mission of a global *jihād* than its original mission to create an Islamic state in Indonesia or an Islamic caliphate in southeast Asia.

After September 11, JI is credited as conducting the second worst terrorist attack. Emulating al Qaeda, JI conducted a coordinated simultaneous suicide bombing in the tourist resort of Bali, killing 202 persons on October 12, 2002. The bombings were followed by several other attacks, including the suicide bombing of the Marriot hotel and the Australian High Commission, both in Jakarta, Indonesia. As the JI training camp Jabal Kuba in Mount Kararo in Mindanao, Philippines is still active, JI still retains significant capabilities to conduct terrorist attacks in the region.

## Background

Since its detection in Singapore in December 2001, JI has suffered significant losses throughout southeast Asia. Nonetheless, the JI terrorist network is still active and poses a significant threat both regionally and internationally. The historical roots of JI can be traced back to the rebellion led by DI (founded in 1949) in Indonesia which fought for an Islamic state in the 1950s. Over time, DI splintered and JI emerged as its most violent faction. Although individual DI members are co-opted by JI, DI as a group has abandoned violence. For instance, the JI leader of West Java Rois recruited DI member Heri Golun who became the suicide bomber of the Australian High Commission in Jakarta in 2004.

To establish an Islamic state of Indonesia, DI fought the Sukarno regime from 1948 to 1962. Motivated primarily by politics, the DI rebellion in West Java was led by Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo. Before the Second World War, Kartosuwirjo was active in Muslim nationalist politics in the then Dutch East Indies. He felt unhappy with the pre-independence political manoeuvring of Masyumi's components, and in 1947 began gathering his militia members together in West Java.

In 1948, Kartosuwirjo announced the establishment of the Islamic Army of Indonesia (*Tentera Islam Indonesia*: TII). For the next 13 years he continued his struggle to establish an Islamic state. When Kartosuwirjo was arrested in 1962, the rebellion was finally crushed. Beginning in 1966, General Ali Moertopo reactivated DI to protect Indonesia against the danger of communist infiltration across the Indonesian–Malaysian border in Borneo.

In order to discredit activities by the Islamists which could affect the elections in 1977, some 185 people believed to be members of Komando Jihad, a group sharing Kartosuwirjo's ideals, were arrested by the government. The founders of JI, Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir were amongst them. Both were deeply involved in *dakwah* (proselytization) activities. Although they were never a part of the original DI, they fully endorsed its aims. Due to their meetings with Haji Ismail Pranoto (Hispran in short) who was accused of leading the Komando Jihad, both of them were charged with having been inducted into DI by Hispran. It is no secret that both of them were known for making statements urging disobedience to secular authority and not acknowledging the validity of the Indonesian constitution. Sungkar and Ba'asyir rejected Pancasila as the state ideology and dared to criticize Suharto's government. Sungkar and Ba'asyir were tried in 1982 and sentenced to nine years in prison for subversion. Subsequently their sentences were reduced on appeal to three years and ten months. Facing imminent re-arrest, they fled to Malaysia. Sungkar was then-Indonesian president Suharto's number one enemy.

In Malaysia, Sungkar identified a number of sympathetic businessmen willing to take on Indonesian workers and supporting the establishment of an Islamic state in Indonesia. In an effort to seek additional funding for their cause, Sungkar and Ba'asyir went to Saudi Arabia. Contacts were also established with the *mujahidin* in Afghanistan. This opened the gateway for JI members to be politicized and radicalized – JI members were trained militarily and exposed to armed *jihad*.

In Malaysia, Sungkar and Ba'asyir managed to gain support from Malaysians for their cause. This gave them the strength to form their own organization. After a dispute with the Indonesian-based DI leader Ajengan Masduki, Sungkar formed JI in 1993. Sungkar's new group did not initially have a name but by 1995 Sungkar's followers were formed into small groups of eight to ten who would hold weekly meetings, and they were known as *al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah*.<sup>2</sup> Members of his first small cell included Riduan Isamuddin alias Hambali, Abdul Ghani, Jamsari, Suhauime, Matsah, Adnan and Faiz Bafana.<sup>3</sup> The weekly meetings included Quranic studies as well as activities to prepare members for *jihad*. JI was a more tightly structured organization than DI, but still having the same aim to set up an Islamic state in Indonesia. Although JI ideology evolved, like DI JI believed that through *jihad* an Islamic state could be established in Indonesia. Only later did their ambition grow into creating a pan-Islamic state in southeast Asia.

### JI's world-view expressed in the PUPJI

In the introduction of the PUPJI, the Central Leadership Council of JI wrote that God has outlined a number of set principles for mankind to lead their lives. First, the aim of man's creation is to worship Allah alone.<sup>4</sup> Consequently all worldly possessions, time, energy and thought must be channelled towards this end.

Second, human existence on earth is to serve as God's vice-gerent.<sup>5</sup> In this respect, man is responsible for ensuring that the earth is managed and developed within the confine of God's laws. He thus is required to prevent, eliminate and

fight all acts of corruption on earth as a result of the implementation of a way of life which falls outside the domain of God's law.

Third, life on earth is a test to filter and sieve members of the human race in order to determine who has performed the best deed. Good deeds are judged based on the fulfilment of two fundamental requirements, namely sincerity towards God and emulating the Prophet in life's endeavour.

Fourth, the apostles of God were sent by Him to establish the *dien*. The meaning of 'establishing the *dien*' or '*iqomatid dien*', according to the exegetes (*Mufasssirun*), is to establish a way of life based on the unity of God (*Tauhid*) which relates to establishing Islam in all its aspects, as explained by the companion of the Prophet Muhammad, 'Abdullah bin 'Umar, in his commentary of the *Surah al Fatehah*, which according to him include '*aqidah* (Islamic creed), '*ibadah* (act of worship) and *manhajul-hayah* (way of life).

The Prophet Muhammad in discharging his duties as the messenger of God has successfully integrated both the physical and spiritual aspects of life in total submission to the worship of God. His examples were then emulated by the Rightly-guided Caliphs, the other companions of the Prophet and later generations with varying degrees of success. Nevertheless the Muslim *ummah* still manage to retain a separate polity, coloured by their strong conviction towards Islam.

The fall of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 marks the beginning of an era where the Muslim community is exposed to moral decadence caused by modernity and a secular system. In order to correct this, JI, claiming to be one of the Islamic revival movements having the above world-view, strove to re-establish the Islamic caliphate as a solution.<sup>6</sup>

### **What is JI's ideology and why?**

JI ideology refers to the comprehensive and mutually consistent set of ideas by which JI makes sense of the world. It is an attempt to provide some explanation of how things have come to be as they are and some indication of where they are heading as a basis to guide their action. It also provides criteria for distinguishing truth from falsehood and valid arguments from invalid according to their perspective, and some overriding belief in what they are doing to which they may make a final appeal when challenged by outsiders. Although JI ideology relies on the Quran, the Sunnah and the interpretation of the venerable forefathers (*Salafush-Sholih*), it must be stressed that it is by no means a definitive interpretation of Islam and representative of the views held by the Muslim scholars.<sup>7</sup> This implies that it has its limits, that it is just one set of interpretation among others, and that it can be quite distinct from the truth and inconsistent with the general principles of Islam which allow an independent judgment to be made with full cognizance of the changing political, social and economic landscapes (Van Bruinessen 2004).

In their understanding of Islam as a universal religion, JI preaches the need to practise Islam in its totality, *Islam Kaffah* (PUPJI: 13, Anon 2003). Within this framework they hope to achieve peace in the worship of God by accepting the

Quranic guidance not only towards the spiritual good of the hereafter but also towards the good life – spiritual, physical and social – attainable in this world.

In giving their struggle further credibility, the concept of *al Wala' wal Bara'*<sup>8</sup> which specifies whom they consider their friends and enemies, is knitted into the fabric of the Islamic creed (*aqidah*), providing religious justification and legitimacy for their actions. In logical pursuance of this line of thinking they feel the obligation to rid the world of polytheism, falsehood and oppression so that mankind is guided to the highest level of morality and civilization by the establishment of the Islamic state.

The present state of the Muslim *ummah*, without the potent central leadership in religion, politics and military once enjoyed during the time of the Prophet and the Rightly-guided Caliphs, warrants the setting up of the *daulah Islamiyah* as an ideological state based on the holistic Islamic teachings. Its establishment would then ensure unity between religion and state, correcting the polarity caused by the dichotomy between the profane and the sacred caused by secular ideologies.

In pursuing this aim, JI stressed the need for individual Muslims to be in a group (*jamaah*). This according to them is a necessary precursor to the establishment of an Islamic state. Under this ideology, the individual Muslim is required to pledge allegiance (*ba'ah*) in order to be officially a member of JI. With this pledge, JI members become obligated to listen (*sam'u*) and obey (*ta'ah*) to the best of their ability in matters which do not constitute a sin to God, to the Amir as the leader of the group and other appointed leaders (*mas'ul*). When these conditions are not satisfied, the person is disqualified from membership and is seen as having committed a sin by dishonouring his *ba'ia*. (PUPJI, Ch. 10, Art. 30–3, p. 18).

In providing JI's members with the milestones towards establishing the Islamic state, *iman* (belief), *hijrah* (emigration in the way of God), *i'dad* (preparation for the struggle in the way of God) and *jihad* (struggle in the way of God), the stages the Prophet Muhammad was reported to have gone through in calling people to the fold of Islam were presented as the path along which JI treads. This path is also known as the path of *dakwah* (inviting or calling people to worship God by following the Messenger of God), *tarbiyah* (education), *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) and *jihad*.<sup>9</sup>

JI is a staunch supporter of Islamic rule and *jihad*. They constantly urge Muslims to go to war against the enemies of Islam who resist the application of Islamic law, by appealing to the doctrine of *jihad*, emphasizing the meaning of armed struggle. Initially, the need to resist the threat represented by secular, anti-Islamic regimes was aimed at the Indonesian government but in its later development included Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines. A key figure in promoting this ideology, Abu Jibril, alias Fikiruddin (Fihiruddin) Muqti, alias Mohamed Iqbal bin Abdurrahman, in his lectures went so far as to call for the setting up of a 'Nusantara Islamic State' (*Daulah Islamiyah Nusantara*), together with preaching *jihad* and the desirability of dying as a martyr (International Crisis Group 2002a).



### What motivated them?

Their motivation could be classified into three main categories: religious, political and socio-economic. Religion appears to be the main component, providing the much needed common platform in gelling Muslims of different nationalities and social backgrounds together for a common cause. More often than not, religious texts are quoted to explain, educate and motivate JI's members into commitment. Fear of divine retribution and hope for the rewards in the hereafter are instituted via lectures given by charismatic lecturers, causing JI's members to view JI's struggle as being synonymous to Islam's ('White Paper': 15–7).

The strong religious overtones in JI's ideology therefore eclipse all other types of motivation. The end result is a group driven by the belief that their actions are validated and legitimized by Islam, hence the need to support it with undivided loyalty. This was evident in Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's address during the Mujahidin II Congress, held in Surakarta, Jawa Tengah on 10–12 August 2003. In mentioning historical facts of the Indonesians' struggle for independence from the Dutch, he highlighted that the underlying intention of their struggle is to practise the Sharia so that the obligation to worship God is fully realized. He reasoned that the freedom to practise the Sharia in its totality was inhibited during the Dutch, English and Japanese rule (Anon 2003: 5–6). The same line of reasoning could also be traced to Egypt's *Gamaa Islamia* who ruled that it is a religious obligation to fight against political regimes that refuse to implement the Sharia. The vision of Syed Qutb in this respect is no different (Mosuli 1993: 202–15). Having different parties speaking about the same thing, all quoting from Islam's rich sources certainly gave JI the extra religious mileage and superficial correctness to fuel their struggle.

The *Ushulul Manhaj al Harakiy Li Iqomatid Dien* (PUPJI: 5–6), which are the methodological principles to establish the *Dien* which formed the primary foundation of JI's ideology, were evidently drawn and crystallized from religious sources. The extensive use of the Arabic words with religious connotations even when the PUPJI is written in the Indonesian language leaves little room for doubt of the presence of religious motivation at its core.

According to the White Paper, many JI members turned to leaders like Ibrahim Maidin as they wanted a 'no fuss' path to heaven. They wanted to be convinced that in JI they had found 'true Islam' and freed themselves from endless searching as they found it stressful to be critical, evaluative and rational. They believed they could not go wrong, as JI's leaders had quoted from holy texts. The psychological profile of JI's members (e.g. high compliance, low assertiveness, low in the questioning of religious values, and high level of guilt and loneliness) suggested that the group was psychologically predisposed to indoctrination and control by JI's leaders and needed a sense of belonging without close attachments. Some were altruistic and wanted to help the *ummah*. Others wanted to accumulate 'points' for a place in heaven ('White Paper': 17).

Seeking God's pleasure and the promise of martyrdom if they died in the cause of *jihad* in trying to establish the Islamic state with which JI's members believe

a better life in the hereafter is secured are powerful motivators. These ideas feature in the lectures Mohammad Iqbal Bin Abdul Rahman, alias Abu Jibril, an Indonesian who is a permanent resident of Malaysia, gave to the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), which according to the allegations against him could encourage them to overthrow the legitimate Malaysian government through armed struggle (Al-Anshari 2002: 7).

Politically and socio-economically, the establishment of the Islamic state is seen as a promise to a better government and system which are harmonious with the tenets of Islam. Under Islam-friendly conditions, justice and equality will prevail and an environment conducive towards the total submission to God in all of life's endeavours will be created. The experience of JI's leaders during Suharto's time bears testimony to this. They were arrested, tried and sentenced to jail for subversion. Suharto's government policy of *azas tunggal* or 'sole basis' was viewed as a violation of Islamic law, hence the need for a group committed to the strict implementation of Islamic law, to correct the government's wrongdoing.

The *jihad* against the Soviet Union in the Soviet–Afghan War (1979–89) was interpreted as a positive development of *jihad* that provided inspiration, experience, network and global mobility as well as increasing the military capability of the many groups that had participated in the war. JI group members, including those holding leadership appointments, were trained and involved in this war ('White Paper': 4–5, 10).

### **The strategies they adopted**

To ensure survivability, various strategies were adopted by JI to deal with every possible situation they might encounter at every stage of their struggle. PUPJI clearly spelt out in *Al Manhaj al Harakiy Li Iqomatid Dien* (The Progressive Methodology In Establishing The Religion) and *Al Manhaj al Amaliy Li Iqomatid Dien* (The General Operational Guide In Establishing The Religion), the broad guidelines for JI's members to follow.

*Al Manhaj al Harakiy Li Iqomatid Dien* reveals that JI have divided their struggle into three stages, namely preparation to establish the *Daulah* (Islamic state), the setting up of the *Daulah* itself and from there the establishment of the caliphate.

During the first stage, the formation of the group supersedes the formation of the group's various capabilities and its employment. The formation of the righteous leadership who supposedly are the core people is an integral part of this formation. They not only lay the groundwork but also construct and design the group. In ensuring that the group can continue their metamorphosis undisturbed, JI adopts secrecy, including operating on a need-to-know basis. The investigation by Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD) of JI members detained uncovered that they operate as a clandestine organization, complete with code names and 'JI-speak' ('White Paper': 15). To prove the point, most of the 2,000 arrests to date have been foot soldiers with no knowledge of operations or the organization (Abuza 2003a).

Discipline and obedience is ensured under the scope of developing the faith. Listening and obeying the leadership is also inculcated through *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) and *hisbah*, which serve as thermostats in controlling fluctuations in the members' commitment. Members are obligated to collectively ensure compliance with directives issued by the leadership.

With these firmly in place, JI began developing their strength in education which confers the ability to systematically instil, expand and change the world-view, emotion, desire and practice of those following their programmes towards becoming more Islamic, which in the JI sense means *jihad* to set up an Islamic state ('White Paper': 15). *Dakwah* or missionary work is an attempt by JI to reach out to the masses, to communicate their ideology and popularize *Islam Kaffah* that exposes the Muslim community's shortcomings, both in terms of understanding and practice of 'true Islam'.

*Tansiq bainal jama'at* is another strategy whereby JI collaborates with other Islamic groups that share their world-view. Various studies have shown that JI is willing to forge alliances domestically, regionally and globally, in order to achieve their aim. The link with al Qaeda, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and KMM are possible manifestations. Even the formation of Rabitat-ul-Mujahidin could be interpreted in this light.

*Tamwil*, which is mentioned in the PUPJI without details, could be translated as financing JI's activities. It is done by collecting *infaq*, a monthly contribution compulsory upon JI's members who are working. Additional funds are derived mostly from foreign donations, and some may have come from al Qaeda for specific operations (International Crisis Group 2002a).

*Jihad Musallah*, if translated as armed struggle, is the most dangerous strategy employed by JI. It indicates JI's willingness to develop military capabilities to wage war in order to establish the Islamic state. Some of JI's members were trained in Afghanistan and MILF military camps and after their graduation either planned or were involved in terrorist attacks. The disclosure no doubt provides clear indication of JI's final transformation no matter how mild and harmless it seemed at the start.

### JI–al Qaeda nexus

Gradually, JI's involvement in Afghanistan grew. The shared experience there not only provided the members with military training but also strengthened the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. They came into contact with Maktab-al-Khadimat (MAK) led by Abdullah Azzam, and after his assassination, al Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden and other Afghan groups that received foreign *mujahidin*. As a result their ideology became concretized, their motivation grew stronger and their strategies more refined. The *mujahidin*'s victory in Afghanistan over the Russians gave them confidence and a notion of similar victories in the future. Unlike the other southeast Asian Islamist groups, JI at this stage was an ideological hybrid. JI was influenced strongly by Egyptian Islamists known for their radicalism. JI

developed strong orientation towards the Middle East, notably Saudi Arabia. In particular, the ideology of *al Gamaa al Islamiyah al Masri* (The Islamic Group of Egypt) and to a lesser extent *al Islamiyah al Jihad al Masri* (Egyptian Islamic Jihad) influenced JI thinking and structure.<sup>10</sup> In the mid-1990s, at the time when JI ideology was taking shape, Dr Ayman al Zawahiri, the leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, visited and spent time engaging the JI leadership in Malaysia. In the second half of the 1990s, Sungkar and Ba'asyir visited Pakistan. Sungkar met bin Laden on three occasions.

JI became one of the most dangerous terrorist groups after it gradually developed close operational ties with al Qaeda. The relationship was forged by Hambali, an Indonesian cleric, who as a child aspired to be an astronaut. During the early 1980s, while living in Malaysia, Hambali became a follower of Sungkar. Through this contact Hambali was invited in 1986 to go to Afghanistan for training and to support the *mujahidin*. While Hambali spent the next two months in Karachi awaiting instructions, he met a number of individuals from Indonesia including Zulkarnaen who also became close to al Qaeda.<sup>11</sup> In early 1987, Hambali and his colleagues underwent two months of military training with Ak47s, MAC-1s, handguns, 60MM mortars and RPGs.<sup>12</sup> After Hambali returned to Malaysia in mid-1988, he travelled to the Philippines (Tawi-tawi) as a missionary and lived with a local Muslim family in 1991. During this time, he met Samsuddin, an Indonesian who brought him to the MILF Camp Abubakar. He also met the then MILF leader Salamat Hashim at the camp. After nine months in the Philippines, he returned to Malaysia via Sabah and proceeded to Selangor.

In 1994–5, Hambali came into contact with Khalid Sheikh Mohommed, who subsequently masterminded the 9/11 attack, and other important al Qaeda members, including Wali Amin Khan Shah, who worked with Ramzi Ahmed Yousef to destroy 12 US airliners over the Pacific. From 1995–7, Hambali's involvement with al Qaeda deepened and he was subsequently asked to head *Mantiqi I*, replacing Ba'asyir who then became the head of the Markaz, the governing body that oversaw all JI organizations, which were made up of regional groups or *mantiqis*. There were originally only two *Mantiqis* – *Mantiqi I* which covered Malaysia and Singapore; and *Mantiqi II* which covered Indonesia, Sabah and the Philippines. *Mantiqi III* later covered Kalimantan, Mindanao in the southern Philippines and Sulawesi. There was a *Mantiqi IV* which covered Australia; however, this consisted of only about 20 members, all of whom were Indonesian nationals residing in Australia.

In 1998, the Markaz consisted of Sungkar, Ba'asyir, Zulkarnaen, Rushdan and Mukhlas, who also served in the JI *Shura majlis* (consultative council), which influenced the JI activities from a Quranic perspective. *Mantiqi I* was headed by Hambali, Indonesian national Fati headed *Mantiqi II* and Nasir Abas headed *Mantiqi III*. There were four *wakalabs* (areas) under the control of *Mantiqi I* – Perak, headed by Murad; Singapore, headed by Ma Selamat Kastari; Johor, headed by Wan Min Bin Wan Mat; and Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. In 1997–8, JI primarily focused its activities on funnelling money to MILF in the Philippines. This changed in 1998 when the Markaz decided to start sending members and

military equipment to Southern Philippines. From *Mantiqi* I, groups of Malaysians were sent to MILF camps for training and to support their Muslim brothers. Indonesian JI operative al Ghozi was the JI's primary contact in the Philippines and Zulkarnaen was responsible for sending groups from Malaysia and Singapore to the Philippines. Almost all the leaders were Afghan trained – they were the key decision makers.

### **Post-Sungkar JI**

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, Sungkar and Ba'asyir returned to Indonesia. When the charismatic Sungkar died in 1999, Ba'asyir succeeded him as leader. This caused some unhappiness. The younger members of JI – Hambali, Abdul Aziz alias Imam Samudra, Ali Gufron alias Mukhlas – saw Ba'asyir as too weak, too accommodating, and too easily influenced by others. Ba'asyir believed in the militant and the political track. Together with Irfan Awwas Suryahardi, Ba'asyir founded the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) in August 2000.<sup>13</sup> Led by Suryahardi, it could be regarded as the political faction of JI. Suryahardi's brother, Abu Jibril, was one of the key ideologues of JI and KMM, then living in Malaysia. MMI was an umbrella group of Islamist groups campaigning for the enforcement of Sharia. The JI hardliners led by Hambali saw the formation of MMI as a betrayal of Sungkar's view that JI should remain underground. The Hambali-led group believed that accommodation with a non-Islamic political system could contaminate the faithful and was forbidden. Ba'asyir on the other hand saw it as an opportunity that must not be wasted. Ba'asyir, who had relocated to the village of Ngruki, where he headed the Pondok al Mukmin, led a third faction in Solo, Central Java. The Ba'asyir faction can be regarded as the radical faction of JI.

Despite the differences, the three JI factions – political (Yogyakarta-centric), radical (Solo-centric), and terrorist (Malaysia-centric) – cooperated and at times collaborated with each other. They all shared the common belief that an Islamic state must be established in Indonesia and in southeast Asia. They were divided on the methodology. The JI political faction believed in political struggle, JI radical believed in the political and the militant, and JI terrorist believed in the militant. The bulk of the JI terrorist faction were Afghan trained and were the closest to al Qaeda. As JI increasingly came under al Qaeda's influence, JI tactics included terrorism. Ba'asyir had no objection to terrorist operations but also saw the merits of investing in the political struggle. While meeting prominent leaders of the Indonesian government including its then Vice President Hamzah Haz, Ba'asyir continued to admire bin Laden, followed his ideals, repeated his rhetoric, and supported al Qaeda operations in southeast Asia. Despite the differences in opinion, JI functioned as a network of Islamic radicals extending across southeast Asia, led by Indonesian nationals. JI cells are still organized around *mantiqi* structures.

In 2000, JI created Rabbat-ul-Mujahidin (Legion of Mujahidin), an umbrella for southeast Asian Islamist and nationalist groups engaged in armed struggle. Its members included MILF, Free Aceh Movement (GAM), Rohingya Solidarity

Organization, Araken Rohingya Nationalist Organization, and Jemmah Salafiya (Thailand).

JI aspired to be the vanguard of the southeast Asian groups. Most JI leaders are protégés of Abdullah Sungkar. Many were alumni of the Pondok al Mukmin in the village of Ngruki, one of the most famous *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in central Java. They are mostly Indonesian nationals living in Malaysia. A trusted second tier are assigned as field coordinators, responsible for delivering money and explosives and for choosing a local subordinate who can effectively act as team leader of the foot soldiers. The bottom rung, the people who drive the cars, survey targets, deliver bombs, and most often risk arrest, physical injury or death, are selected shortly before the attack is scheduled. They are mostly young men from *pesantrens*. The schools that provide the recruits are often led by religious teachers with ties to DI rebellions of the 1950s or to the Pondok al Mukmin.

### *Al Qaeda influence deepens*

Before his death, Sungkar sent Hambali to Karachi to meet Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the mastermind of 9/11, to deepen established ties and arrange for JI members to travel to Afghanistan to receive training. Hambali made two trips to Pakistan in 1999 – the second accompanied by JI senior operative Faiz Bafana. From 1998–2001, Hambali funnelled some US\$12,000 to the MILF and some US\$18,000 to Muslim fighters in Ambon, Indonesia. JI operated a Malaysian government registered organization, Jamah al Ehsan, which raised money to be sent directly to Ambon. JI participated in the Christmas Eve Church bombings in Indonesia and the MILF Manila train bombing in 2000, and the attack against the Philippine Ambassador to Indonesia. JI provided US\$4,000 for the train bombing. Although coordinated by al Ghazi, the bombing was carried out by Philippine JI member Mukhlis, who later participated in the Bali bombing.

Because of ongoing investigations in Indonesia and Malaysia, Hambali travelled to Afghanistan, meeting Mohammed Atef, alias Abu Hafs, the military commander of al Qaeda (killed in November 2001) and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Increasingly al Qaeda relied on Hambali, who held both al Qaeda and JI appointments.

At al Qaeda's request, JI in Australia recruited and funded Jack Roche, an Australian Muslim convert, to bomb Jewish targets in Australia.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, to assist al Qaeda's anthrax programme, Hambali recruited Yazid Sufaat, a US trained biochemist and a former army captain from Malaysia, who came to Afghanistan in June 2001. When the US-led bombing campaign started in Afghanistan in October 2001, Hambali briefly met Yazid to discuss the continuing anthrax programme in Indonesia. Yazid was arrested by the Malaysian Special Branch upon his return to Malaysia; Hambali was arrested in Thailand by the Thai Special Branch.

JI has almost become an operational appendage of al Qaeda. For example, JI Singapore Chief Mas Selamat Kastari planned to hijack an Aeroflot plane from Bangkok and crash it on Changi International Airport, a clear al Qaeda tactic. He chose a Russian plane to express his anger at their treatment of

his Chechen brothers, a conflict steadfastly supported by al Qaeda. After the arrest of Hambali, the terrorist faction of JI is now led by Dr Azahari Hussein and Noordin Muhammed Top. They constantly refer to Iraq, including in the communiqué written after the Australian High Commission bombing in 2004. Southeast Asians influenced by JI and al Qaeda wish to participate in the campaign against the US in Iraq.<sup>15</sup>

Had the JI leadership remained in Indonesia, it might have remained a local *jihad* group. After they moved to Malaysia, support from Muslims in Southern Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Philippines made the JI leadership expand their mission to Muslim southeast Asia and beyond. JI fully shared al Qaeda's vision of a global *jihad* and heeded bin Laden's call to attack Jewish and Crusader targets, including US, British, Australian and Israeli targets, even before 9/11. JI hosted the al Qaeda members that planned the USS Cole attack and two 9/11 pilots, including deputy operational commander Nawaf al Hazmi in Kuala Lumpur in January 2000 (Sageman 2003) and Zacariya Moussaoui, an al Qaeda suicide pilot now in US custody. Al Qaeda's dominant ideology successfully 'hijacked' JI's parochial one.

### **The response**

JI ideology is not true to the principles and spirit of Islam. The complexity of the modern world requires Islam to have the potential to provide solutions to contemporary problems. Dialogue, research and cooperation in which Muslims are partners could contribute to a better world. The ability to articulate different and at times conflicting views must be a basis in finding a solution. Deliberations must be unbiased and place public interest above self-importance or narrow national interests.

There must be greater international and domestic cooperation within and between governments and agencies engaged in fighting terrorism and extremism.<sup>16</sup> The cyclical link between ideological extremism and terrorist action should be understood. Extremism breeds violence and fuels terrorism. In turn, terrorism fuels extremism. Each attack, successful or not, breeds support among extremists for greater violence. A robust ideological response must be developed.

Until now, the ideological or intellectual battle has been overlooked. There has been no effort to ideologically target al Qaeda, JI and other comparable groups that apply religious justification to legitimate their terrorist activities. No effort must be spared in bridging the gaps between different world-views. Programmes are needed which diminish the sources of mistrust and misunderstanding between Muslim and non-Muslim. This includes mobilizing moderate Muslims, to empower those who advocate cooperation and non-violent solutions to conflict. The aim is to marginalize the militants and extremists who advocate intolerance (United States Institute of Peace 2004).

The stress must always be on the prevention, management and resolution of conflict in the form of a conversation, not a monologue, where clear messages could be exchanged and examined with sincerity.

The renewed vigour shown by the Muslim community in seeking to deepen their understanding and practice of Islam must not be equated with extremism. It is an attempt to find answers in Islam to the many challenges they face in the rapidly changing world. Muslims need to contemporize their understanding of Islam, preserving the five essential values of religion, lives, intellect, progeny and property.

To have a united voice against terrorism, the moderate Muslim majority must remain well organized and single-minded. Divergent views on religious issues must be prevented from blooming into terrorism when a consensus cannot be reached. The challenge is to build and maintain institutions of authority for Muslims to refer to for enlightenment. Likewise, for those already in possession of Islamic knowledge, a platform for intellectual discourse must be prepared, to channel differing opinions constructively.

Educating the public must be done both formally and informally, to make them part of a collective force against terror, and to recognize that they have more to lose than gain if political and economic stability is upset.

### *Managing the threat*

The three approaches to combating terrorism in the immediate (one to two years), mid (five years) and long term (ten years) are to invest in (1) operational counter terrorism, (2) strategic counter terrorism and (3) conflict resolution, respectively.

#### *Operational counter terrorism*

The US-led model for fighting terrorism has largely been the Rumsfeld approach, named after the determined US Defense Secretary, to target terrorist operational cells as opposed to their ideological motivations and intentions. After 9/11, governments invested in developing their operational counter-terrorist capabilities, increased the budgets and expanded their intelligence communities and enforcement authorities. As a result, governments were able to monitor a larger number of suspected terrorists, collaborators, supporters and sympathizers and conduct timely arrests. By targeting terrorist cells planning and preparing attacks, governments have reduced the imminent threat to the immediate. Nonetheless, there was little or no investment in strategic counter terrorism as opposed to operational. Strategic counter terrorism advocates government actions that seek to reduce the political and operational space for terrorism to spawn and sustain.

#### *Strategic counter terrorism*

The strands of strategic counter terrorism are in ideological, educational, media, legislative and financial responses.<sup>17</sup> The key is to counter the extremist ideology that triggers, drives and justifies terrorism. Initiatives in education seek to make it difficult for terrorists and extremists to use the current Islamic school system



to politicize and radicalize Muslims by subverting the *madrassahs*. Similarly, it is essential to establish an ethic against terrorism and extremism in the wider society. Governments must work with the media to counter political extremism and violence. The media has played such an important role in formally and informally educating the public and raising their awareness about disease and famine.

### *Resolving regional conflicts*

Likewise, there has been limited investment by Western governments in understanding the value of resolving the regional conflict zones that spawn and sustain terrorism and virulent ideologies. To reduce the threat of political violence in the international system, the international community must develop the capability to end regional conflicts through political negotiation. Regional conflict zones – Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, Mindanao (Philippines), Maluku (Indonesia), Poso (Indonesia), Algeria, Afghanistan and Iraq – are the biggest producers of human rights violations, internal displacement, refugee flows and terrorists. International neglect, thinking that the warring parties will fight each other and exhaust themselves, a prevalent notion in the West, proved wrong when al Qaeda organized a strike against the post-modern US from pre-modern Afghanistan.

If the right opportunities are created many terrorist groups will negotiate, join mainstream politics and end the violence. By developing capabilities to facilitate negotiation and by actively mediating between warring factions, the space for ideological extremism and political terrorism can be significantly reduced. However, the relevant knowledge and tools for building peace processes must be developed and resources allocated.

As with economically motivated violence – crime – the citizens of the world are beginning to live with politically motivated violence – terrorism. By making certain investments, the threat of terrorism too can be managed. It is a resilient and intractable threat. Therefore, it must be dealt with broadly and strategically. The time is right for governments worldwide to assess the successes and failures in the fight. Operational counter terrorism has been successful to the point of keeping the number of attacks to a manageable level, but insufficient to counter the strategic threat posed by the *jihad* movement. Without preventing the ideological politicization and radicalization of the Muslim communities in the migrant diaspora of the West and the territorial communities of the South, the threat will persist. Building capabilities to fight the strategic campaign requires greater political will and public understanding. Investment in building capabilities to end catalyst conflicts is central to reducing the long-term threat.

### **Notes**

- 1 International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research 2004. ICPVTR was the first institution to recover, fully translate, and analyse the JI guide.
- 2 Debriefing of Hambali, Central Intelligence Agency, August 2003.

- 3 Debriefing of Hambali, Central Intelligence Agency, August 2003.
- 4 The meaning of the Quranic verse in Arabic, 'And (tell them that) I have not created the invisible beings (jinn) and men to any end other than that they may (know and) worship me', Q.S. 51: 56 in the PUPJI, Nidhom Asasi Muqaddimah, p. 13.
- 5 'And lo! Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it (khalifah)"', Q.S. 2: 30.
- 6 PUPJI, Muqaddimah, pp. 3–4 and Chapter 2, Article 4 of the Nidhom Asasi, p. 14.
- 7 The phrase, '*Jama'atun minal-Muslimin*', which appears in the PUPJI, Chapter 1, Article 2, p. 14, is a clear admission of this.
- 8 Ushulul Manhaj Al-Harakiy Li Iqomatid Dien's seventh principle, PUPJI, p. 5 and al Qahtani 1985; mentioned by Muhamad Nursalim in 'Faksi Abdullah Sungkar Dalam Gerakan NII Era Orde Baru', thesis to meet the requirements of S2 (Master's Degree) at Universitas Muhammadiyah Solo, 2001, p. 22 as one of the two books which shaped Abdullah Sungkar's Tauhid Paradigm.
- 9 PUPJI, Ch. 2, Art. 5, p. 14. These are further explained in the documents attached to the PUPJI under the titles, 'Pembinaan Al-Iman' pp. 8–10, 'Amar ma'ruf dan nahi munkar' pp. 15–17, 'At-Tarbiyah' pp. 20–1, 'Ad-Da'wah' pp. 22–3, 'Pembinaan Hijrah' pp. 24–6 and 'Pembinaan Jihad' pp. 26–9.
- 10 Interview, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, Central Prison, Jakarta, August 2005.
- 11 Debriefing of Hambali, Central Intelligence Agency, August 2003. Zulkarnaen is the current military commander of JI.
- 12 Debriefing of Hambali, Central Intelligence Agency, August 2003.
- 13 In his inaugural statement Amirul Mujahidin Ustadz Abu Bakar Ba'asyiry called for the application of Islamic Law.
- 14 Interview Jack Roche, Hakea Prison, Perth, August 2004.
- 15 At this point, there is only interest. The Asharq al Awsat reported that an Indonesian group recruited 300 volunteers to fight the Americans in Fallujah, Iraq (<http://www.asharqalawsat.com/> 30 November 2004). Interviews with different *jihad* groups in Indonesia throughout 2005 revealed that there were *jihadists* that wanted to go to Iraq but lacked funds and the organization to travel.
- 16 Most measures proposed to increase security are to contain terrorism such as access to high value detainees; an ASEAN extradition treaty; creating financial intelligence units; criminalizing terrorist financing; increased cooperation between intelligence services and law enforcement agencies; and provision of incentives for job creation (Abuza 2003a: 12–14).
- 17 These are the projects developed by Singapore's International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

## IT'S THE *STORY*, STUPID

### Neutralizing radical Islamism in the southeast Asia theatre

*Kumar Ramakrishna*

It is increasingly accepted that real progress in the current global war against radical Islamist terrorism requires more than the application of military and law enforcement measures against individual terrorist cells, their leaders, their funding and logistics pipelines, as well as their immediate support network. There is also a pressing need to neutralize the radical Islamist ideology that animates terrorist networks as well as the wider constituency of less active sympathizers who more or less buy into their ideology. Failure to neutralize this ideological 'Story' would mean that terrorist networks could suffer losses at the hands of security forces, but still replenish their ranks with ideologically committed fresh recruits from the wider 'constituency of hate'. The threat would therefore be self-sustaining. Implicit recognition of the need to develop counter-strategies for targeting the radical Islamist Story has been evidenced by the apparent shift in official US terminology for the current conflict. Instead of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), certain circles in Washington now prefer the Struggle Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) (Regan 2005). We may be tempted to suggest that US strategic planners finally seem to be shifting from a 'direct', operationally-focused counter-terrorist grand strategy against al Qaeda and associated radical Islamist terror networks, toward an 'indirect', broader-based counter-*terrorism* grand strategy seeking to drain the ideological wellsprings from which such networks sustain their movements.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter lauds this apparent shift and attempts to articulate how a SAVE campaign may be devised for the 'Second Front' in the war on terror: southeast Asia. Southeast Asia not merely straddles some of the world's most important waterways, but is home to more than 200 million Muslims, or 20 per cent of the global Muslim population. Southeast Asian Islam, impelled by history to be overwhelmingly progressive and tolerant, has long been seen as an excellent example of how twenty-first century Muslims may successfully mesh Islamic traditions with secular, pluralistic, capitalist modernity. Nevertheless, southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and the Philippines, has also been the site of radical

Islamist terrorist attacks, perpetrated by networks like the al Qaeda-associated al Jama'ah al Islamiyyah (JI). Bali, struck by JI on 12 October 2002 with the loss of 202 lives, mostly Australian, was struck again on 1 October 2005. At least 26 people, mainly Indonesians but including Australians, Japanese and other nationalities, were killed (Osman 2005). In addition, an ongoing Islamist insurgency in Buddhist Thailand's largely Muslim south, although thus far not apparently fomented by JI, nevertheless seems ripe for exploitation by external *jihadi* elements. This chapter argues that, as elsewhere, the key to counter-terrorism success in the southeast Asian theatre lies in targeting the JI/al Qaeda 'Story' of a global Islamic community under attack by a nefarious 'Jewish-Crusader Alliance' – a euphemism for the US, Israel and allied regional governments – both Muslim and secular. It essentially argues for the systematic articulation of a Counter-Story that both delegitimizes the al Qaeda/JI meta-narrative whilst simultaneously – over time – promoting the idea that Muslims in southeast Asia can practise their faith, authentically and unfettered, within secular, pluralistic political systems. An effective Counter-Story would need co-ordinated reinforcement from 'propaganda-minded' policy actions in other spheres as well.

### **It's the *Story*, Stupid**

To understand why broader, medium-to-longer term counter-*terrorism* approaches (as opposed to shorter-range, real-time counter-*terrorist* methodologies) require targeting terrorist Stories, it is necessary to look at the old topic of the 'root causes of terrorism'. The essence of terrorism is 'to terrorize': to create a climate, within a specific community, of paralyzing, extra-normal, extraordinary fear so great that it disrupts the normal functioning of society. Ultimately, terrorism is a form of political communication. It represents an attempt by a terrorist network, purporting to act on behalf of the wider community, to *compel* another community or target audience to change its behaviour in ways consistent with the interests and objectives of the network. Terrorist acts are in fact 'propaganda of the deed', as Kropotkin averred, more powerful than 'thousands of leaflets'.<sup>2</sup> Terrorist networks remain intrinsically political entities even today, despite the religious/ideological veneer that characterizes the likes of al Qaeda and JI.

Terrorism, in other words, is about *power*. There also exist two more tiers of root causes. The second-order root cause relates to what we have termed the 'Story'. The Story enables terrorist leaders to offer potential recruits an explanation for their grievances, as well as a programme of action to ameliorate them by restructuring society in accordance with a vision of what the 'just society' ought to be. To this end a Story-as-Political-Ideology ought to have three elements: first, a *diagnosis* of why society is suffering. The diagnosis may be *materialistic*, as in the case of communism, which emphasized class inequalities as the wellspring of societal injustices; or the diagnosis may be *nationalistic* (e.g. 'we are not in control of our own affairs and our destiny – this is bad'); or the diagnosis may be *religious* ('this society is in trouble because we have deviated from God's path'). Second, the Story must identify a *scapegoat*: the party on which one can blame society's ills

(Borum 2004: 25–8); for al Qaeda and JI it is the ‘Jewish–Crusader Alliance’. The scapegoat represents an ‘evil’ enemy against which drastic action, even terrorist action, is seen as both politically necessary and morally justifiable.

In this connection the study of religious cults is valuable. Cults are very effective in generating the ‘us-versus-them’ binary worldview that fuels radicalized ideologies and in extreme cases even terrorism. Religious cults foster a powerful Story of cosmic war in three ways. First, they are usually led by charismatic leaders who meet the need of many people for an idealized ‘superparent’ figure to offer guidance and meaning in life. It is telling in this regard that the Singapore government White Paper on JI (Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore 2003a) asserted that some JI detainees had found it ‘stressful’ to be critical, evaluative and rational and had relied on their JI *ustaz* to show them the path to be better Muslims. Second, religious cults insist on blind obedience to the leader’s interpretation of truth and suppress dissent. Dissenters are ostracized and because cults offer their followers psychic relief through the provision of structure, certainty and social bonding with other members, it is very unlikely that dissenting voices can gain ground; they are far more likely to be smothered by intense peer pressure and groupthink processes. Third, religious cults tend to devalue outsiders. Their members tend to isolate themselves from the religious mainstream. For instance, in the Singapore JI case, members tended to meet in homes rather than mainstream mosques and they exhibited a sense of exclusivity that they alone had knowledge of the true Islam. Physical isolation expedites the construction of an alternative reality – the Story (Galanter 1999; Deikman 2003).

If the desire to compel the other party to comply with one’s agenda is the first-order root cause and the existence of a Story justifying terrorist behaviour is a second-order root cause, it should be pointed out that there are several third-order root causes. These would be the familiar grievances that many analysts have identified as drivers of terrorism in various localized contexts: relative socioeconomic deprivation; political repression; perceived ethnic and religious marginalization; revenge; and US foreign and security policy. This list is by no means exhaustive. A multitude of factors can cause people to think that ‘Something is not right’, ‘I am not happy’, ‘Things just cannot go on like this’ or ‘Life is so unfair’ (Borum 2004: 26). These individuals could come from a wide cross-section of backgrounds, which makes profiling a real problem: unemployed or underemployed urban and rural workers as well as professionals, engineers, academics and other relatively well-heeled groups. What ties them together is that they tend to be in a state of profound soul-searching. What sparks this intense introspection is well nigh impossible to pin down.

Thus there are many possible factors that may render individuals vulnerable to the attractions of the Story. Ideology and psychology go together (Laqueur 2003: 95). Once these unhappy, unsettled individuals get sucked into the closed circle of the religious cult that has developed a political agenda and has religiously legitimated terrorist methods in pursuit of that agenda (one thinks of al Qaeda and JI), a line would have been crossed. The process of transforming individuals

from relatively ordinary members of society into religiously motivated terrorists capable of killing non-combatants, as well as engaging in suicide attacks would be underway. Central to this process would be the Story. The Story, in other words, remains the centre of gravity, which holds the entire system in place.<sup>3</sup> Once the Story is discredited, the terrorist system loses its internal coherence and disintegrates into its component parts. Paraphrasing Bill Clinton's old 1992 presidential campaign slogan, in counter-terrorism the most important thing to remember is that: 'It's the *Story*, Stupid'.

### **Southeast Asian Muslims**

It has to be reiterated at the outset that there is no such thing as a monolithic Islam and not all Muslims are terrorists. By the same token, while most southeast Asian Muslims are tolerant, there is a very small minority who may pose a security problem to regional states and Western interests, not so much because of the acts they may have committed but because of the Story they believe in. What follows is an attempt to make sense of the various categories of Muslims in southeast Asia, distinguished by the religious beliefs, or ideological Stories, they hold about Islam. In discussing each category, one has to keep in mind that these are Weberian ideal-type analytical constructs to aid analysis. In real life, a Liberal Muslim may well hold similar opinions to National Jihadis on, for instance, the US invasion of Iraq. This does not mean that the Liberal Muslim is at all to be equated to the National Jihadi and regarded as a security threat. In fact, as we shall see, the Liberal Muslim, among others, is probably part of the long-range solution to radical Islamism in southeast Asia.

The operating assumption here is that radical Islamist terrorism is rooted in Islamist ideology rather than Islam *per se*. While all Islamists are Muslims, not all Muslims are Islamists. Islam, like all great faiths, seeks to transform the individual. Islamism, like all political ideologies/Stories, seeks the capture of state power as the prelude to transforming entire societies (Metcalf 2002: 2).

This is a crucial distinction. Based on this analysis we can identify six more or less analytically distinct ideal-type categories of Muslims in southeast Asia, strung out along a continuum from non-conservative to ultra-conservative/extremist: Nominal Muslims, Liberal Muslims, Salafi Muslims, Islamists, National Jihadis and Global Jihadis. Nominal Muslims in southeast Asia refer to those whose religion does not really define who they are. They eat pork without any problem, smoke and drink, may or may not fast during Ramadan and mix very easily across ethnic and religious lines. A good example of Nominal Muslims would be the so-called *abangan* Muslims, the largest group in Indonesia. Nominal Muslims come from all classes and politically they tend to support secular parties such as Golkar and PDI-P in Indonesia and UMNO in Malaysia. Nominal Muslims have no problem living within a secular political framework, cheek by jowl with people of other faiths and backgrounds. Nominal Muslims may even consider religious Muslims with some bemusement and the relative narrow-mindedness of the *jihadis* with contempt.

Moving further to the right, we come across Liberal Muslims. They would consider Islam an important part of their identity. Accordingly they fast during Ramadan, avoid eating pork and drinking alcohol, and may dress conservatively. However, some Liberal Muslims would argue that religion is a private affair and should not be imposed on others. Moreover, they would argue that Islam should be contextualized and adapted to local conditions. In this vein, Abdurrahman Wahid, more popularly known as Gus Dur, former Indonesian president, Islamic scholar and one-time leader of the rural-based and largest Muslim mass organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), has called for an Indonesianized Islam, and dismissed the whole notion of an Islamic state as an alien concept originating in the Middle East. Gus Dur believes that Islam and liberal democracy are compatible, and co-existence with other faiths is entirely possible (Esposito and Voll 2001: 206–7).

In fact, NU's Central Leadership (PBNU) recently argued that interfaith prayer was perfectly permissible, and that a 'large section of NU followers and a section of its *ulamas*' have engaged in this activity with members of other faiths (Muzadi and Hasyim 2005). What is forbidden, in the PBNU estimation, is for Muslims, during interfaith prayer sessions, to 'pray in the name of a god of another religion' (ibid.). Liberal Muslim intellectuals, moreover, like Ulil Abshar Abdallah, lobby for an Islam that is dynamic, many-textured and adaptable to a variety of local contexts. Liberal Muslims would heavily criticize the Islamists and *jihadis* for their rigid, dogmatic approach to Islam (Dahlby 2005: 184).

Moving even further to the right we come across the Salafi Muslims, whose faith is the primary determinant of their identity. In contrast to Liberal Muslims, Salafis would argue that under the concept of *tawhid* or unity of God, there is no sacred and secular divide and God's sovereignty extends to all spheres of life. They would be conservative in diet and dress (generally but there can be exceptions) and observance of rituals. In subtle contrast to the Liberal Muslims, Salafis would be relatively more attentive to policing of identity boundaries. Thus while they interact socially with non-Muslims, there would be more of a social distance between them and non-Muslims than would be the case with Nominal and Liberal Muslims. A good example of this would be dining with non-Muslims. Salafis, more than Liberal Muslims and Nominal Muslims, would insist on using separate utensils and *halal*-only cuisine. Salafis, moreover, would take a sterner stance on interfaith worship than Liberal Muslims. The Salafi-oriented quasi-governmental Indonesian Islamic Council, MUI, for example, pointed out that in regard 'to faith and religious worship, the Muslim community is obliged to adopt exclusive attitude [sic] in the sense of being forbidden to mix the faith and religious worship of the Muslim community with the faith and religious worship of other religious followers' (Majelis Ulama Indoneisa 2005). However, while Salafis emphasize the preservation of identity purity in relation to other faiths, in contrast to Nominals, for example, this is not taken to extremes. Hence MUI did stress that:

in regard to social problems that is [sic] not connected to faith and religious worship, the Muslim community shall adopt [sic] inclusive

attitude, in the sense of engaging in social relations with the followers of other religions insofar as this does not incur mutual disadvantage.

(Ibid.)

Salafis, in a technical sense, would be considered neo-fundamentalists. On balance they would emphasize personal piety rather than articulate a political programme for restructuring society according to any normative vision (Metcalf 2002: 2). To Salafis, on balance, Islam would still largely be constructed as a personal faith rather than an ideological Story diagnosing society's ills, identifying a scapegoat and putting forth a political programme for remedial action. A good example of a Salafi Muslim leader is the late Indonesian Muslim intellectual Nurcholis Madjid. While he called for an Islamized Indonesia, his Islam-as-personal-faith-rather-than-political-ideology standpoint was well encapsulated in his slogan: 'Islam, Yes, Islamic Parties, No'.<sup>4</sup> The Salafi movement in Indonesia would be represented by the urban-based Muhammadiyah mass organization, the second-largest Muslim mass organization in Indonesia. Politically, Salafis would vote for parties like PAN (National Mandate Party), which is affiliated to Muhammadiyah. Salafi Muslims can also be found amongst the relatively more religious right wing elements of UMNO in Malaysia. A more controversial example of a Salafi-oriented political party would be the increasingly popular PKS (Justice and Prosperity Party), led by urban middle-class university-educated professionals who, instead of calling for an Islamic state, lobby instead for 'clean government' and a more morally pure society (Collins and Fauzi 2005).

It is to the right of the Salafis that we encounter arguably the first stirrings of concern. This is where we encounter Islamists: Muslims who articulate a political agenda for restructuring society according to a normative vision extracted from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Islamists, while endorsing the Salafi call for personal piety, differ from them in a subtle but crucial way: what marks the Islamist above all is the overriding desire for identity purity over what Charles Kimball calls the 'golden rule' that characterizes religious faith universally: the injunction to love God and one's neighbour as oneself (Kimball 2003: 128–43). This imperative to police identity boundaries is precisely what prompts the Islamist to lobby for an Islamic state, however defined, so as to Islamize society from the top down. Because Islamists exercise a far greater concern than Salafis for policing identity boundaries with other faiths their social distance from non-Muslims would be considerably more in evidence. Islamists, such as Abu Bakar Bashir (or Ba'asyir) of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) would hold that Muslims can only practise their faith authentically under Shariah Law, and this requires the existence of an Islamic state (Taylor 2003). Similarly, in Malaysia the Islamist political party PAS has declared that 'establishing an Islamic government is as important as establishing the daily rituals of Islam' (Parti Islam Semalaysia 2004: 11). This does not mean that Islamists are necessarily violent, though. For example, Islamist mass organizations such as the MMI in Java lobby for an Islamic state but through *dakwah* (proselytization) means such as rallies and publications. Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) is, like the PKS, growing very fast in urban centres



of Indonesia, and espouses radical ideas such as democracy and the nation-state as un-Islamic and the need to restore the global Islamic caliphate. HTI, however, remains non-violent (Ramakrishna 2003: 321–2).

While the Islamists may seem to be unproblematic because they are non-violent, the Stories they espouse raise concerns. What the Islamists possess, in far greater measure than Salafis, Liberal Muslims and Nominal Muslims, is a binary worldview dividing the world into the *Darul Islam* (House of Islam) and the *Darul Harb* (House of War). In this construction the Muslims (us) are always to be separate from non-Muslims (them). Worse, interfaith relations, though non-violent, would not necessarily be cordial. MMI and incidentally (and tellingly) alleged JI spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir once declared during a sermon:

God has divided humanity into two parts, namely the followers of God and those who follow Satan ... God's group are those who follow Islam, those who are prepared to follow his laws and struggle for the implementation of sharia [Islamic] law ... Meanwhile what is meant by Satan's group are those people who oppose God's law, who ... throw obstacles in the path of the implementation of God's law.

(Neighbour 2005: 1)

Bashir was emphatic in declaring that there was no hope of conciliation between true Muslims who believed in the complete implementation of the Shariah and those that opposed this:

We would rather die than follow that which you worship. We reject all of your beliefs, we reject all of your ideologies, we reject all of your teachings on social issues, economics or beliefs. *Between you and us there will forever be a ravine of hate and we will be enemies until you follow God's law.*

(Ibid.: 2) (emphasis added)

Rigid and binary worldviews are highly problematic. Such a Story may well help securitize the everyday, third-order grievances of young Indonesians, generating a visceral openness to JI recruiters. It is telling that keen observers of JI, such as the respected Jakarta-based International Crisis Group analyst Sidney Jones, point out that JI has been 'actively recruiting in the past few months' (Rekhi 2005).

This is why to the right of the Islamists in southeast Asia we naturally find the relatively small number, region-wide, of Jihadi Islamists. The latter can be divided into National Jihadis and Global Jihadis. National Jihadis have developed the Story that this process of Islamizing society and defending Islamic interests can only be attained through willingness to use force. Some National Jihadis, such as the Islamic Defender's Front (FPI) in Indonesia, therefore use force to 'morally cleanse' society from social ills such as gambling, alcohol and vice. Other National Jihadis employ force to defend Muslim constituencies who are being attacked by Christian militias, such as Laskar Jihad, Laskar Jundallah and Laskar Mujahidin

in the Maluku and Sulawesi conflicts in eastern Indonesia of 1999–2002. Yet other National Jihadis have sought to set up national Islamic regimes by force, such as the Darul Islam movement in Java, South Sulawesi and Aceh, Indonesia between 1949 and 1962 – and more recently the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Sumatra; the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO) in southern Thailand; and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the southern Philippines.<sup>5</sup>

To the right of the National Jihadis we find the Global Jihadis: *jihadi* Islamists who have developed the Story, through direct or indirect participation in the Afghan *jihad* against the Soviets in the 1980s, that local southeast Asian *jihads* should be part of the overall al Qaeda-led cosmic struggle against the ‘International Crusade conspiracy’, led by the US, Israel and their putative allies in southeast Asia and elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Global Jihadis, such as those within the *Mantiqi* (Region) I faction of JI, as well as the Mindanao-based and al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), target Christian and Western civilians in bars, shopping malls and other public places in relatively indiscriminate fashion. It was a Global Jihadi Story that motivated the al Qaeda attacks against America on 11 September 2001; a similar Story motivated the JI attacks in Bali (October 2002 and most likely October 2005) and Jakarta (August 2003 and September 2004) in which scores of civilians, Western and non-Western, were killed.

In sum, when one looks at southeast Asian Islam from a counter-terrorism standpoint, it is important to know which constituencies pose the threat. While some analysts may focus attention on the overtly violent National and Global Jihadi categories of the continuum, it is argued here that that would be too limiting. If one were to accept the premise that in counter-terrorism, the key task is to attack the Story, the centre of gravity of a radical Islamist terrorist ‘system’, then one has to enlarge the analytical focus to start with the non-violent but not less problematic Islamists. This is because the rigid, binary, us-versus-them worldview embedded in the Islamist Story represents the initial pathway from non-violent to violent extremism. Neutralizing radical Islamism in southeast Asia must thus start with a Counter-Story to attack the ideological meta-narratives emanating from not just National and Global Jihadi constituencies but the Islamist milieu as well.

## Developing a Counter-Story

### *Strategic information and psywar campaigns*

It is crucial to distinguish Islam the Faith from Islamism the political ideology (or Story). In the southeast Asian theatre, apart from Nominal Islam, Liberal Islam and Salafi Islam (which is, on balance, still more Faith than Story) offer forms of Islam that are worth cultivating and forging interfaith links with. It is important to recognize that not just violent *jihadi* Islamism, but rigid and exclusionary Islamism can also be problematic. Muslim communities should be encouraged to delegitimize politics-driven Islamist Stories in all their permutations. They should be encouraged by their community leaders to be better Muslims, not

better Islamists. To this end, energy and resources should be poured into helping Muslim communities develop a Counter-Story with two components: a strategic information aspect and a tactically-oriented, psywar aspect. The aim of the strategic information component would be to promote liberal interpretations of Islam and especially neo-fundamentalist, Salafi Islam as appropriate for life in twenty-first century communities.

While progressive Liberal and Salafi Muslim leaders and organizations should take the lead in putting their message across, they should be assisted to spread their message in ways that would be authentic to the urban centres and rural hinterlands. Technical and financial assistance could be channelled to friendly southeast Asian governments and/or Muslim organizations to set up websites and newspapers as well as inexpensive media containing attractively crafted messages and sermons that would strike a chord amongst audiences in urban and rural mosques, *madrasahs* (religious schools) and *pesantrens* (religious boarding schools) as well as secular university campuses in especially Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines. While this may not sound politically correct, the iron logic of the binary worldview compels us to the conclusion that long-term success in the Struggle Against Violent Extremism requires taking the ideological battle not just to the violent extremists but the *non-violent extremists* as well. It is imperative to discredit not merely *jihadi* Islamism, but Islamism *per se*.

A particularly important aspect of the strategic information campaign would be intra-faith dialogues between Islamists/*jihadi* Islamists and Liberal/Salafi Muslims, which is already occurring to an extent in Indonesia. Intra-faith dialogue can be very important in neutralizing the construction of binary worldviews that tend to be propagated in for instance *pesantrens* linked to JI, such as the Pondok *Pesantren* al Mukmin school, founded by JI spiritual leaders Abu Bakar Bashir and the late Abdullah Sungkar in the early 1970s. While the relatively cloistered al Mukmin teaches a curriculum that has both Islamic and secular subjects, it is the informal curriculum that, in combination with its students' aloofness from the wider community, breeds the us-versus-them worldview that lays the groundwork for future radicalization of some (if not all) graduates. Visiting journalist Tracy Dahlby, for instance, shed light on the highly xenophobic culture of the *pesantren* simply by glancing at students' sandals:

When we reached the front steps of the school and I bent down to remove my shoes as custom required, I couldn't help but notice that the dozen or so pairs of cheap plastic sandals scattered around the base of the stairs all had interesting little pictures or symbols of some kind etched in ballpoint pen on their insteps. When I took a closer look, however, my heart gave a thump – the little symbols were in fact crude renditions of the Holy Cross and the Star of David.

(Dahlby 2005: 229)

Dahlby's guide explained: 'So students can always step on them' (ibid.).

Hence what is needed, as al Mukmin alumnus journalist Noor Huda Ismail argues, is greater institutionalized exposure of the cloistered constituencies to difference. This translates into exposure to different interpretations of key concepts such as *jihad* through curricular reform, or by visiting *ustaz* (religious teachers) from other *aliran* (theological streams); dialogues with alumni who have become successful in the secular world; and greater contact with and more access to information about the outside world.<sup>7</sup> The vistas of physically isolated religious schools, especially boarding schools, should be opened up by humanizing the Other. When Christians and Jews are seen more as fellow human beings than 'disembodied' abstractions, the potential for radicalism and terrorism is decreased (Ellens 2004: 227–35). Charles Kimball correctly argues that at the heart of healthy religion is the willingness of teachers and followers to challenge dogma. Absolute truth claims and blind obedience are two signs of corrupted religion (Kimball 2003: 41–99). Corrupted religion can easily generate Stories that encourage the insular, parochial hatred that animates National and Global Jihadis.

Strategic information campaigns designed to promote Liberal/Salafi understandings of Islam as a personal faith rather than a political Story need supplementing by more tactical techniques. It would be useful to emphasize the contradictions between the words and deeds of *jihadi* Islamist leaders. An excellent opportunity in this connection was presented by the public trial in Jakarta of JI spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir in mid-2003. To aid the state prosecution, Singaporean authorities provided video testimony by JI militants that had been detained under internal security regulations. While the video testimonies themselves were later seen as not very useful in the case against Bashir, analysts missed the sense of betrayal on the part of the detainees. They responded with dismay at Bashir's refusal to acknowledge his ties with them, and some wept on tape, lamenting that they had been used and then discarded once they were captured (Zuraidah 2003).<sup>8</sup> Such material could and should be used by local Muslim community leaders to warn their flocks against the dangers of joining networks which have political rather than religious agendas. Nasir Abbas, a former senior JI leader now working for Indonesian authorities, has recently written a book about his time with JI, warning young Indonesians against falling for the Story articulated by JI ideologues (Abbas 2005).

Another potentially powerful weapon, again emphasizing the contradiction between *jihadi* Islamists' pious rhetoric and the horrifying reality of their operations, would be extensive publicity of the civilian, especially Muslim civilian, casualties of *jihadi* attacks. It is well known that the August 2003 Marriott and September 2004 Australian High Commission JI attacks in Jakarta killed more Indonesians than Westerners. The same is now true of the October 2005 Bali attacks. This, according to Indonesian police, has led to internal dissension within JI ranks.<sup>9</sup> It is possible to exploit psywar techniques to drive a wedge between JI leaders Azhari and Noordin, who are motivated by a Global Jihadi Story that tends to encourage wanton targeting of innocents, and many rank and file Indonesian JI militants, who hail from Darul Islam backgrounds and are motivated by National

Jihadi Stories that are comparatively more focused on government and security force targets.

### *Indirect domestic grand strategy*

A SAVE campaign in southeast Asia must be fashioned as an indirect grand strategy. As suggested by Andre Beaufre in the mid-1960s, while in a direct strategy military means would be the primary instrument of national policy, in indirect strategy non-military measures would be the primary instrument, with military measures playing an important but supporting role (Beaufre 1965). In other words, while GWOT represents a direct counter-terrorist grand strategy, SAVE, with its emphasis on countering *extremism* rather than *extremists*, would represent a more indirect counter-*terrorism* grand strategy. While articulating a systematic, well-conceived Counter-Story with its strategic and tactical information elements is key to neutralizing radical Islamism, the Counter-Story cannot be applied in a strategic vacuum. It needs reinforcement by orchestrated policy activity in other domains. Domestically, the credibility and authenticity of the Counter-Story in the eyes of local Muslim communities needs shoring up by appropriate ‘propaganda-minded’ activity in both narrowly focused counter-terrorist operations as well as broader domestic governance.

It is very important that within national jurisdictions, actual counter-terrorist operations involving law enforcement and military personnel are conducted with one eye on their potential political impact on the wider Muslim community. This is what is meant by ‘propaganda-minded’.<sup>10</sup> In countering radical Islamist terrorism, it would be wise to avoid a firepower-heavy military strategy that is likely to cause significant civilian casualties, despite the ‘smartness’ of high-technology weaponry. This is because radical Islamist ideology argues that one reason why terrorism against Western civilians is justified is because Western military powers consider the blood of Muslims as ‘cheap’. To quote from a radical imam’s sermon in a Sydney mosque, someone who apparently influenced the Australian JI militant Jack Roche:

Brothers and sisters – what are you living for? What are we doing here? What’s happening in the world? Go to Iraq today and see your brothers and sisters ... Their heads are being blown off, their legs are being amputated, their arms, their bodies, their meat is being thrown off their bodies ... We’re too scared to go to *jihad*. What are you living for?

(Neighbour 2005: 195)

Any inadvertent civilian casualties from counter-terrorist operations in the region would generate ‘political oxygen’ that can be exploited by eager radical Islamist ideologues to empower the Story of an Islam under siege and having no choice but to fight back using all available means. When felt experience seems to confirm the binary, zero-sum, National or Global Jihadi Story, it would not be surprising to see Nominal, Liberal and Salafi Muslims, as well as Islamists,

swing over to the extreme end of the continuum and fully embrace the 'logic' of *jihadi* Islamism, be it National or Global. There can thus be no purely military-operational solution to radical Islamist terrorism. The political dimension, in the sense of the impact of military operations on popular Muslim perceptions of national governments, must always be considered. It should not be surprising that part of the reason why the current radical Islamist insurgency in Thailand's south remains very serious, is precisely because it has been partially fuelled by military excesses during counter-terrorist operations. In particular the heavy-handed April 2004 attack on the historic Krusik mosque and the deaths in security force custody, six months later, of scores of detained Thai Muslim protestors who had been fasting during Ramadan, all constituted political oxygen that inadvertently empowered the insurgent Story of a hegemonic, Buddhist central government in Bangkok intent on keeping southern Thai Muslims marginalized economically, socially and politically. Little wonder that the insurgency seems to show no sign of abating, and worse, even seems 'ripe for foreign exploitation' by Global Jihadis.<sup>11</sup>

The credibility and authenticity of the Counter-Story rely not just on propaganda-minded counter-terrorist operations and security force behaviour in, especially, Indonesia, Thailand and the southern Philippines, but also imaginative, propaganda-minded governance as well. The question here is how seemingly unrelated activity in a range of public policy domains may provide the mindsets and grievances that can be securitized by skilful Islamist ideologues through integration into the Story, thereby transforming disaffected Muslims into National and/or Global Jihadis. Propaganda-minded governance is needed to forestall the onset of grievances and states of mind that serve as meat and drink to charismatic radical Islamist ideologues.

It would have to be pretty wide-ranging, ensuring, *inter alia*, the provision of broad-based universal education to foster not just the technical expertise to aid industrial development and economic growth but importantly, a liberal, critical-minded slant of mind, able to challenge absolute truth claims in any social sphere. It would also involve the provision of adequate social welfare nets to encourage strong families and *eo ipso* the well-adjusted, psychologically balanced children that grow up into relatively cult-resistant adults. It would require effective social redistribution programmes that maintain an equitable distribution of wealth and public goods amongst the various ethnic/religious groups in society. Well-conceived cultural policies are also crucial in safeguarding the language and customs of the various communities, thereby forestalling the possibility of ideological entrepreneurs exploiting and crystallizing widely held if inchoate community perceptions of Muslims being second-class citizens in their own country. It is worth reiterating that serious shortcomings, singly or in combination, in any number of these domains could be securitized by skilled *agents provocateurs*. It is at precisely this point that the journey of some disgruntled individuals toward becoming terrorists begins. Care must thus be taken to ensure that as far as possible, grievances and mindsets that empower the radical Islamist Stories are neutralized at source.

***Indirect international grand strategy and enhanced public diplomacy***

In a globalized world shrunken and rendered virtually real-time by satellite news television channels such as CNN and al Jazeera, it should not be surprising that the credibility and authenticity of a Counter-Story designed to neutralize radical Islamism in southeast Asia would be affected, sometimes seriously, by events outside the southeast Asian theatre. Thus the injunction to be propaganda-minded has to apply not merely to southeast Asian governments and their security forces, but also their allies, in particular the target of radical Islamist invective and terrorism: the US and Israel. This would imply, for example, the importance of propaganda-minded counter-terrorist operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. That the ‘collateral damage’ arising from US military strikes in these countries has deadly implications for southeast Asian security was clearly evinced by convicted Bali bomber Imam Samudra. Samudra, when asked for reasons why he had helped plan and execute the attack, which killed mainly Australians, replied that it had partly been in response to the thousands of Afghan civilian deaths that had been caused by Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001. Samudra, echoing the Global Jihadi Storyline that the ‘American terrorists and their allies’ must learn that the blood of Muslims is by no means cheap, pointed out in his memoirs, published at the end of 2004, that if the US military and allied forces kill Muslim civilians, then American and allied civilians in southeast Asia would be targeted and killed too – and very frequently, southeast Asian citizens themselves get killed as well.<sup>12</sup>

Propaganda-minded US foreign and security policy in the wider Muslim world would go a long way toward strengthening the Counter-Story campaign within southeast Asia. At the moment this does not seem to be happening. The Abu Ghraib prison scandal in 2004 is a case in point. The political fall-out from that terrible case of command failure was so global that Muslims even in embattled southern Thailand were talking about it.<sup>13</sup> In addition, soon after the 28 April 2004 Krusik mosque attack by Thai security forces, videos of *jihads* in Chechnya and Afghanistan were ‘selling like hot cakes’ in the Thai south.<sup>14</sup> It should be noted in this respect that JI often uses atrocity propaganda to empower its Global Jihadi Story and recruit new militants. It is thus vital that the extra-regional sources of political oxygen that can be used by southeast Asian Global Jihadi networks be choked off. Any effort by the international community, especially the US and Israel, to secure a just settlement of the Israel–Palestinian conflict, the political stabilization of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the settlement of open sores such as Chechnya, may well have salutary effects on the balance of influence between the progressive Muslim Counter-Story and the radical Islamist Story (Ramakrishna 2003: 320–9).

Finally, the Counter-Story in southeast Asia can also be strengthened by more sophisticated and nuanced public diplomacy efforts by Washington, designed to showcase how millions of Muslims have integrated well into secular, pluralistic political systems worldwide, especially in southeast Asia; as well as the myriad,

genuine ways in which the West has assisted Muslim peoples in the past, namely the Camp David accords of 1978 that paved the way for peace between Israel and Egypt; the 1995 Dayton accords that saved thousands of Bosnian Muslim lives; the NATO humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999 that saved thousands of Kosovar Albanian Muslims; and most recently, the liberation of Afghanistan from the oppressive Taliban regime.

### ***'SAVE-ing' southeast Asian Islam***

Devising a counter-strategy for neutralizing radical Islamism in southeast Asia requires four key steps: first, recognizing that of the southeast Asian Islams, the problem arises from those variants that represent more of a political ideology than a personal faith, which means that both non-violent Islamism as well as violent *jihadi* Islamism ought to be stigmatized and marginalized by wider Muslim communities in the region. Second, because the radical Islamist Story represents the centre of gravity of radical Islamist terrorist 'systems' in southeast Asia, what is needed above all is an indirect grand strategy that constructs a powerful Counter-Story emphasizing the relatively greater legitimacy of Liberal and Salafi understandings of Islam. In short, the Counter-Story should promote Islam-as-faith rather than Islam-as-political-ideology. Third, in order for this progressive Muslim Counter-Story to gradually gain credibility with regional Muslim audiences and take root over the medium to long term, 'propaganda-minded' real-time counter-terrorist operations, as well as more general governance within national domains in southeast Asia, are essential. Fourth, and finally, propaganda-minded counter-terrorist operations and foreign policy toward the wider Muslim world, particularly on the part of the US and Israel, would, along with enhanced and nuanced public diplomacy campaigns showcasing the ways in which America and the West have tried to be Islam's friend rather than the adversary caricatured by the Global Jihadis, have salutary effects. In sum, the success of the SAVE campaign against radical Islamism in southeast Asia will depend on the degree to which the progressive Muslim Counter-Story trumps the radical Islamist Story. Paraphrasing Sun Tzu, this campaign will be won by wisdom, not just force alone.

### **Notes**

- 1 For an explanation of the distinction between counter-*terrorist* and counter-*terrorism* approaches, see Ramakrishna 2003: 305–37.
- 2 Quoted in Thornton 1964: 83.
- 3 For a detailed interpretation of the centre of gravity concept as the focal point of an enemy system, see Echevarria 2002.
- 4 Esposito and Voll 2001: 204. See also Suratno 2005.
- 5 For deeper analysis of these various groups, see Ramakrishna and Tan 2003. See also Fealy 2004.
- 6 The phrase is by arrested and convicted senior JI terrorist Imam Samudra, in relation to the October 2002 Bali attacks. See Abuza 2003b: 166.



- 7 Noor Huda Ismail, Talk on Pondok Pesantren al Mukmin at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 8 April 2005.
- 8 Zuraidah, Ibrahim, 'Singapore JI Trio Accuse Bashir', *The Straits Times*, 27 June 2003.
- 9 A point made by a senior Indonesian police official during a closed-door counter-terrorism seminar held between 15–16 August 2005 in Wellington, New Zealand.
- 10 The term 'propaganda-minded' was coined by A.D.C. Peterson, the Director-General of Information Services, Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, in 1952, at the height of the insurrection of the Communist Party of Malaya against the British colonial government of the time. See Ramakrishna 2002.
- 11 A point made to the author by a veteran Thai opposition politician in Singapore, 20 August 2005.
- 12 Samudra 2004. The 'Terrorist' in Samudra's title refers to the US and its allies.
- 13 A point made by an IDSS researcher who had been undertaking fieldwork in southern Thailand in early 2005.
- 14 See Jihadwatch 2004.

# COUNTER-IDEOLOGICAL WORK

Singapore experience

*Muhammad Haniff Hassan*

## **Introduction**

Terrorism occurs when opportunity, motivation and capability meet. Prevention of terrorism requires the elimination of at least one of these three: motivation, which is often driven by an ideology. The role of ideology is especially significant for al Qaeda and its South East Asia associate, Jama'ah al Islamiyyah (JI). It plays

an important role in the public interface between the group and its target audience. Using propaganda, al Qaeda and JI can successfully indoctrinate the public into terrorist sympathisers, mobilise terrorist supporters, and recruit terrorist members.

(Hassan 2005a: 85)

A multi-pronged approach is required to counter al Qaeda and JI. It should not only target the groups' military and economic infrastructure but also their ideological foundation.

The radical worldview of al Qaeda and JI poses a particular challenge. The organisations' pervasiveness and their extremely violent approach – as demonstrated by the October 12, 2002 Bali attack and the August 5, 2003 Marriott bombing – have catapulted JI as the principal security threat to the region.

(Ibid.)

## Al Qaeda in Singapore

### *The people*

In Singapore, al Qaeda's interest was represented by elements of JI, a splinter group of the Indonesian Darul Islam movement, formed by former Darul Islam fugitives based in Malaysia. Its actual strength remained unknown, but it was estimated to have 60 to 80 members (Rahim 2002). It started when Ibrahim Maidin was inducted into JI in 1988, and was subsequently appointed as its first leader, the *Qoid Wakalah* ('White Paper': 10). Maidin led Singapore JI until 1999. He was succeeded by Mas Selamat Kastari (Ibid.).

JI's presence in Singapore was undetected until a member of the Muslim community in Singapore tipped off the Internal Security Department (ISD), a security agency overseeing the internal security of Singapore under the Ministry of Home Affairs, about a Singapore citizen who was believed to have links with al Qaeda. The suspect was identified as Mohd Aslam bin Yar Ali Khan who had gone to Afghanistan in November 2001 at the beginning of the American attack. Subsequent investigations traced Aslam's contacts and connections. Aslam was later arrested by the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan (Fernandez 2002; Ministry of Home Affairs 2002b).

In December 2001 and August 2002, two major operations were conducted against the JI elements in Singapore, resulting in 31 JI members being detained under the Internal Security Act. A few were later released with a Restriction Order.<sup>1</sup> Seven more Singaporeans were later arrested, with only one released on restriction order (Ministry of Home Affairs 2003b, c, d; 2004a, b; Baker 2003; Majid 2003; Malakunas 2003; 'Singapore JI Group Crushed But Regional Threat Remains – Minister', *AFP*, 26 December 2003). The restriction order was also placed on ten other individuals who were found to be JI members (Ministry of Home Affairs 2004a). The much sought-after Mas Selamat Kastari, who had threatened to crash an aircraft into Singapore's Changi airport, was arrested in Riau by the Indonesian authorities ('Jakarta arrests "Singapore JI head"', *CNN.com*, 4 February 2003).

Since the first arrest, only four JI members have been released under Restriction Orders. For two of them, the Orders were not extended by the ISD, as they were found to have cooperated with the authority and responded positively to the rehabilitation programme prescribed for them (Ministry of Home Affairs 2004a).

Singapore JI's operational capabilities had been tremendously weakened by the swift arrests of most of its leaders and key operatives. Nevertheless, the threat to Singapore remains, primarily from foreign operatives and fugitive members still at large.

### *The structure*

Singapore JI was established as a *wakalah* (representation) under JI's *Mantiqi* I structure<sup>2</sup> and was subordinated to the Malaysian JI leadership. Overseeing the

Singapore JI operation was a *Majlis Syura* (Consultative Council) consisting of a few senior Singapore JI members led by the *Qoid Wakalah*.

Singapore's JI was divided into five units: missionary, economic, operations, security and communications. A special women's unit was also established. The operations unit, which was responsible for conducting military operations, had four operational *fiah* (cells) known as *fiah* Ayub, *fiah* Musa, *fiah* Ismail and *fiah* Yakub ('White Paper': 10–11).

### *The ideology and its role*

JI's struggle was rooted in the belief that Islam and politics were inseparable (*din wa daulah*) and that the establishment of an Islamic state with full implementation of the *syariah* was an obligation on Muslims wherever they lived. The JI envisioned the establishment of an Islamic state of Indonesia, which was later to be extended to the Malay archipelago, Malaysia, Brunei, Mindanao and Singapore, so as to realise a regional caliphate (PUPJI: 3–16; 'White Paper': 4, 6). However, JI believed that armed *jihād* was the ultimate means of realising this vision (PUPJI: 7, 37).

In addition, JI adopted a fundamentally hostile view of the West and non-Muslims. It saw the world in binary Manichean perspective of 'us' versus 'them': the world was fundamentally in a constant battle between believers and all unbelievers. All unbelievers were perceived to be in some sort of conspiracy against the believers and their way of life. The existing dominant culture founded by the West was viewed as destructive to the practice of faith and true Islam. JI believed that to be a true and faithful servant of Allah, one had to totally reject and commit oneself to fighting against the West ('White Paper': 6–7).

The importance of this ideology as the basis of its struggle is clearly manifested in JI's PUPJI document. In every position that it took, JI has cited verses from the Quran, quotations from the Prophet's tradition (*hadits*) and the opinions of classical Muslim scholars, giving the impression that its ideas were founded on Islam and represented the true interpretation of Islam (PUPJI: *passim*). Similarly al Qaeda had used its ideology rather than individuals (Burke 2004a: 18–19; 2004b: xxv–xxvi) as a unifying call for its organisation. Hence it ensured that there would always be someone to continue its struggle. In many aspects, JI ideology was similar to al Qaeda's, which explained the extent and underlying reasons of al Qaeda's special relationship with JI (Al Quds Al Arabi 1996; 1998b; Middle East Media Research Institute 2003; Al Jazeera TV 2004; Blanchard 2005; Abegabriel 2004: 574–6, 583–93, 607–29; Burke 2004b: 34–7).

The role of ideology in securing the commitment of JI's members is strong. None of the detained Singapore JI members were involved in the organisation due to poverty or economic marginalisation, as all of them held respectable jobs and owned their own homes. All were educated in secular government schools, although one later obtained a degree in Islamic studies. Thirteen of the 31 detainees held National Trade Certificate 2 or 3, while at least seven detainees had diplomas or degrees. Apart from two, the JI detainees had average or above average intelligence. None were oblivious to the inevitable outcome of their

planned attacks. They had served in National Service and many were still serving their reservist duty ('White Paper': 15, 43–50).

Similar profiles were also seen in some of the famous al Qaeda leaders and operatives. Al Qaeda's deputy leader, Dr Ayman al Zawahiri, was a physician. The head of al Qaeda's operations Khalid Sheikh Mohammed reportedly attended Chowan College in North Carolina in the early 1980s before transferring to another American university, where he obtained an engineering degree.

Singapore's White Paper identified JI's ideology as important and this was confirmed by the local Muslim scholars involved in the detainees' rehabilitation programme.<sup>3</sup>

Ideology played an important role in JI's recruitment method. Many members were inducted into the organisation through religious classes and materials, which were used to feed JI's ideology. None of them were introduced to JI until they had displayed acceptance of the ideology. PUPJI required ideological compatibility as a prerequisite to be a member of JI (PUPJI: 18).

### *Dissemination and internalisation of ideology*

Members were inducted into the organisation after regularly attending JI's Islamic classes and being found to have an understanding of Islam as defined by JI. Their primary motivation in attending such classes was the desire to return to Islam, as all the Singapore JI members were educated in secular government schools which did not provide religious instruction. Many then felt handicapped in understanding Islam and were trying to compensate for their lack of knowledge.

The search for a true understanding of Islam had brought Ibrahim Maidin to Abdullah Sungkar through Mohd Iqbal (also known as Abu Jibril). Maidin frequented Sungkar's classes by travelling from Singapore to Malaysia. Before long, JI elements in Malaysia started to conduct classes in Singapore. The classes were organised for Ibrahim Maidin and the few individuals that he managed to recruit. It was through these regular classes that they were offered JI membership and subsequently formed the pioneers of Singapore JI.

After gaining sufficient knowledge and confidence, Ibrahim Maidin organised his own private classes for interested individuals. He also took over classes conducted by the Malaysian JI in Singapore, thus becoming its primary teacher in Singapore ('White Paper': 10). JI preachers continued to visit their counterpart, albeit with less frequency. Abu Jibril used to spend the last ten days of the Muslim fasting month<sup>4</sup> in Singapore, so as to maintain connections with JI members.

The classes primarily taught *aqidah* (Islamic beliefs) and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) with an objective of developing true *fikrah* (worldview) of Islam to the participants. The orientation was *Salafi*. Special classes were conducted for those who required assistance in reciting the Quran. Arabic classes were also organised for members and non-members so as to increase their understanding of the Quran and the *Sunnah* (Prophet's tradition). It also provided a platform for non-members to have contacts with JI elements, hence opening the door for their subsequent recruitment to JI.

JI members and their acquaintances also frequented classes conducted in Malaysia by JI key leaders such as Abdullah Sungkar, Abu Bakar Bashir and Abu Jibril.

The closest religious institution in Malaysia frequented by Singapore JI members was Madrasah Luqmanul Hakim located in Ulu Tiram, Johor, south Malaysia (Ministry of Home Affairs 2003d). Two Singapore JI members had studied full time at this school. After graduating, they furthered their studies at an Islamic university in Karachi.

Overseas training also played an important role in the ideological indoctrination of JI members. Singapore JI regularly sent its senior members to training camps in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Mindanao. These sessions were primarily for military related skills training such as weapons handling, bomb making, outdoor survival skills, combat and guerrilla tactics ('White Paper': 8–9, 22; *The New Paper* 2002). The experience of going through the training as well as listening first-hand to the injustices inflicted on their Muslim brothers and the opportunity to bond with like-minded Muslims strengthened the ideological indoctrination of the participants. Occasionally, short camps involving ideological indoctrination were organised for junior members in Malaysia (Ministry of Home Affairs 2002d).

JI members also enrolled themselves into other religious classes organised by Muslim organisations for the public so as to equip themselves with general knowledge about Islam. However, none of these organisations were aware of the presence of JI elements within their midst, much less supported its ideology. The JI members involved in Muslim organisations did not attempt to exert their ideology or take over the leadership (Ministry of Home Affairs 2004a; Singh 2002).

Singapore JI did not produce printed materials propagating their radical worldview. There was a short-lived attempt to produce magazines for distribution among members and acquaintances as a means to promote general understanding of Islam.<sup>5</sup> Audio cassettes were used to disseminate lessons and speeches delivered by JI leaders like Abdullah Sungkar and preachers like Abu Jibril (Al-Hafiz). Ibrahim Maidin published a book about the remembrance of Allah (bin Hj. Maidin) while Abu Jibril's book entitled *Lelaki Soleh* (Characteristics of a Pious Man) was sold in bookstores in Singapore. Abu Jibril's book, however, had nothing out of the ordinary, apart from including the topic on the love of *jihad* and martyrdom as one of the characteristics of a pious Muslim. The book's cover also showed a man reading the Quran with a rifle on his back as indications of his *jihadist* orientation (Rahman 1990: 187–262).

After gaining more members, Singapore JI started to organise missionary works such as religious classes and camps for the public with the general objective of improving the Muslim community's understanding of Islam and the specific aim of recruiting individuals for JI's closed and private classes. JI members who had gained positions in official platforms such as the neighbourhood Muslim committee started to use their positions and the organisation as legitimate platforms for some of their missionary work ('White Paper': 7; Ministry of Home Affairs 2004a).

JI's ideology was often attractive to a person who was new in the search for an understanding of Islam. It was always substantiated with verses from the Quran

and the *hadits*, even though the interpretations might not necessarily be accurate (PUPJI, *passim*).

To attract attention to *jihad* and incite hostility towards non-Muslims, especially the West, the plight of Muslims' sufferings worldwide such as in Maluku, Bosnia and Mindanao were highlighted. Videos and news from '*jihad*' lands were circulated among JI members. Once the attention to *jihad* and hostility towards non-Muslims were achieved in a person, the practice of secrecy towards what they learned, their involvement in the organisation or attendance in private classes was taught. At this stage, individuals were assigned an *usrah* group (study circle) where specific ideas held by JI were taught. Some *usrah* also functioned as *fiah* (operational cell).

Upholding secrecy became a form of control on members and created a strong sense of exclusiveness and in-group superiority since JI members were made to believe that their understanding of Islam was closer to the truth than other Muslims'. Failure to subscribe to the JI ideology could make a member a potential apostate. *Baiah* (oaths of allegiance) were required of all members before joining the organisation, hence ensuring obedience and compliance and in the long run, suspension of critical thinking among members (*ibid.*: 15–16, 22).

Unlike the JI in Indonesia, which was linked to a few *pesantrens* (Islamic boarding school), the JI in Singapore had no links with any local full time *madrasahs*. None of the JI members in Singapore graduated from the local *madrasah*. The only detainee with some Islamic education had graduated in Islamic studies from a university in Malaysia. And none of the religious teachers teaching in the local *madrasahs* was involved in JI.

### **Singapore government response**

From the beginning, the Singapore government recognised the importance of ideological response as an integral part of the counter-terrorism measures against the threats of al Qaeda and JI. However, the government was of the view that the primary responsibility of combating al Qaeda and JI's ideologies should fall squarely on the shoulders of the Singapore Muslim community. Leaders in the government called on the generally moderate Singapore Muslims to speak out against the ideology. They also called on local Muslim scholars and leaders to come forward and ensure that others would not be influenced by such ideology. Unlike government security personnel, Muslim scholars and leaders were able to reach the community through mosques and *madrasahs* and to inoculate them against perverse and dangerous religious teachings.

The Singapore government's response to al Qaeda and JI ideology can be divided into initiatives that directly counter the ideology and those that indirectly contribute in preventing its spread.

*Direct initiative*

An important initiative taken by the Singapore government was the formation of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), which was launched on 23 April 2003.

When the ISD realised from the first batch of detained Singapore JI members that the plots were hatched as a result of their religious ideology, two prominent local Muslim scholars were approached to assist with the ISD's assessment. They were Mohamed bin Ali, the chairman of a local mosque, and Mohamed Hasbi bin Hassan, the President of the Singapore Association of Muslim Scholars and Teachers (Pergas).<sup>6</sup> Both scholars served as a primary consultant and contact point with the ISD. This later on resulted in the formation of the group.

The aims of the group were to study the JI's ideology, offer expert opinion in understanding JI misinterpretation of Islam, produce necessary counter-ideological materials and conduct public education for the Muslim community on religious extremism.

The RRG consisted of the following:

- Secretariat group, six members, volunteers from various Islamic bodies. Its main function was to assist in the administrative aspect of the group and in preparing counter-ideological materials for the RRG's Resource Panel.
- Resource Panel, consisting of one Muslim scholar from the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, a judge from the Syariah Court of Singapore and three independent Muslim scholars. Its main function was to vet the counter-ideological materials and provide feedback and advice to the two principal consultants.
- Rehabilitation Counsellors Panel. The RRG has, to date, 20 religious counsellors who are local Muslim scholars working on a voluntary basis. Initially, the counselling programme covered JI detainees and supervisees (under Restriction Order). This was later extended, on a voluntary basis, to families, wives and children, as some of the wives were either members of JI or exposed to JI's ideology through their husbands. As of June 2005, 93 counselling sessions had been held for the detainees, 139 for the supervisees and 14 for family members.

To help members of the RRG perform their roles, regular briefing, training and dialogue sessions were held by the ISD. The members were briefed on developments on terrorism by lecturers and researchers from the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS). They were also given training on basic counselling techniques by professional counsellors.

Various Muslim and non-Muslim organisations were briefed on the RRG's efforts as part of the government update and assurance initiatives. Since June 2005, talks delivered by members of the RRG, as part of a public education programme to counter extremism in Islamic understanding, have been intensified. The RRG has written a manual as a guide to rehabilitation and produced presentation



materials related to JI's ideology for the counsellors with the help of materials from Pergas and the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, IDSS.

The response to the religious counselling programme varied from individual to individual. However, there have been positive signs. Three detainees were released and placed under Restriction Order while two others who were under the Restriction Order did not have their restriction extended due to their positive response to the counselling.<sup>7</sup>

### *Indirect initiative*

It is important to mention some counter-terrorism measures taken by the government which were indirectly related to counter-ideological work. As part of the soft approach, the Singapore government has been extremely concerned for the welfare of families of the JI detainees.

Most of the detainees were the sole breadwinners and their wives were homemakers. Their arrests meant that the families experienced financial difficulties. The ISD facilitated Muslim organisations in providing financial assistance to ensure that the education of the children was not disrupted or their future jeopardised. The money came from various funds managed by the Muslim organisations. The immediate family members were also offered psychological and emotional support by trained counsellors who visited them regularly to assess their conditions and offer assistance. They also functioned as communication channels between the families, the ISD and the detainees.<sup>8</sup>

These initiatives were significant in helping to win over the hearts and minds of the detainees and their families, and to integrate them back into society. It was particularly important to minimise the risk of the children being radicalised in the future by the detention of their fathers or by economic marginalisation that might result from disruption to their education and loss of financial security (Singh 2002).

The government acknowledged that the Muslim community would feel uneasy with the exposure of JI, and would fear prejudice, discrimination or hate crimes. Some saw it as a conspiracy to tarnish the image of Muslims and Islam and also to further marginalise a community which was a minority in the country. Instead of supporting the government to combat extremism, the community could become sympathetic to JI's cause. Grievances could potentially radicalise elements within the Muslim community who were not JI members. To avert this, the government had to reassure the community that it did not view JI's ideology as representative of true Islam and Muslims (Goh 2001/2).

To win over the hearts and minds of the community, the government had to show sensitivity in communicating the JI issue. The government ensured that Muslim community leaders were briefed on the arrests before details were disclosed to the media. Closed-door sessions were held where evidence was shown and questions answered (Singh and John 2002).<sup>9</sup> Special visits and sessions were held by the ISD upon request.<sup>10</sup> The ISD and members of the RRG

also toured various organisations to update the community on developments in their work.<sup>11</sup>

Realising also that JI's ideology sought to drive a wedge between the Muslim community and the Singapore community at large, the government called on Singaporeans not to place the blame on the Muslim community or Islam. It asserted that JI was a fringe group supported by a small minority among the Muslim community. The organisations that JI members were involved in also should not be discriminated against because they were not aware of the links nor did they support JI. Many of them had condemned terrorism and extremism.

The government also pointed out that it was a member of the Muslim community that had tipped off the ISD about JI, triggering the arrests. It called on all Singaporeans to stay united and maintain social harmony, an essential element for the survival of the country and all Singaporeans. The government held special briefing and dialogue sessions with non-Muslim communities to bring these points across (Rahman 2002; Ramesh 2005). An important initiative in this respect was the formation of Inter-Racial Confidence and Harmony Circles

at community levels, schools and work places to promote better inter-racial and inter-religious understanding between different communities and to provide a platform for confidence building among the different communities as a basis for developing, in time, deeper friendship and trust.

('White Paper': 23)

The underlying philosophy was: 'if Singaporeans of all races and religions build for themselves a more cohesive and tolerant society, groups such as JI would find it much harder to establish a foothold in Singapore' (ibid.).

### **Singapore Muslim community response**

Although the discovery of JI and the announcement of the arrests of its members came as a shock to the Muslim community in Singapore, they did not fall into long denial. Earlier, Muslim organisations had issued statements of condemnation against the 9/11 attacks and initiated public debates about moderate Islam. Hence, they were quick to condemn JI's plots in Singapore and expressed disapproval of its ideology and links with al Qaeda.

Condemnation and disapproval came in two waves. Initially, public statements were made by individual Muslim organisations and leaders. Realising the importance of showing unity due to the gravity of the issue, 122 Muslim organisations representing almost all the registered Muslim civil societies came together to issue a public statement condemning terrorism, rejecting ideological extremism and reinforcing their commitment to Singapore as their country (Arshad and Teo 2002; Fatonah 2002; Nazeer 2002). This was done long before the Muslims in Britain, America and Australia could rally together after the

London attack (Muslim Council of Britain 2005; Fiqh Council of North America 2005; IslamOnline 2005).

The statement offered assurances to the government and others that the community leaders were united in the battle against the extremism amidst them. It also sent strong signals to members of the Muslim community that extremism that promotes violence and causes security threats to the country would not be tolerated.

In early 2003, a book entitled *Muslim, Moderate, Singaporean* was jointly published by two Muslim bodies. The book proposed six principles of moderation as guidelines for Singapore Muslims in making their ideological stand on various issues: upholding peaceful means, upholding the principles of democracy, upholding the principles of rule of law, being contextual in thinking and practices, respecting the opinions and rights of others and upholding Islamic teachings (Hassan 2003: 6).

In September 2003, Pergas, the only registered association of Muslim scholars in Singapore, took personal and direct initiative in counter-ideological efforts against al Qaeda and JI ideology by organising the Convention of *Ulama* (Muslim scholars) with the objective of rallying scholars in defining and combating extremism. Pergas presented three position papers for consultation and adoption by the 130 participants who were mainly members of Pergas, which were subsequently published as a book entitled *Moderation in Islam in the Context of Muslim Community in Singapore* (Pergas 2004).

The book is particularly relevant in counter-ideological efforts in two respects. First it highlighted key extremist ideology and misinterpretation of Islam, and offered rebuttals using the approach adopted by al Qaeda and JI, i.e. using the Quran, the *hadits* and the opinions of Muslim scholars. Second, it offered a Charter of Moderation for the Muslim community in Singapore, which contained 27 points as a common basis. The charter has been useful in guiding the community to practise Islam in the context of Singapore, and for religious teachers in guiding the community towards moderation (ibid.: 185–324).

As a follow-up to the convention and to disseminate the ideas in the book, Pergas organised public talks and forums at mosques, and closed-door discussions with its members. Sessions were also held for Singaporean undergraduates studying at overseas Islamic institutions when they returned to Singapore during their term breaks. A special session was also held in Cairo for Singaporeans studying in Al-Azhar University.<sup>12</sup>

Findings from the process of producing the convention papers were also subsequently published and used by the RRG as well as the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, IDSS, in its counter-ideological research programme.

Another important initiative taken by Pergas was expediting the development of ‘a comprehensive, self regulatory system to monitor religious education’. The system laid down the prerequisites for the certification and registration of religious teachers who provide the public with guidance and lessons on Islam. Although this had been initiated several years earlier, the JI arrests, and subsequently,

the recognition in the White Paper that such measures were necessary, added urgency to its implementation. This is a self-regulatory system by the community, which cannot be enforced by law, but a person can be struck off the database of recommended religious teachers if found guilty of misconduct ('White Paper': 22–3).

Pergas was not alone in such efforts. Many mosques and civil societies initiated cultural and inter-faith exchanges between Muslim and non-Muslim communities and organised visits to places of worship to promote better understanding.

### **Lessons learned and policy recommendations**

Singapore's counter-ideological efforts have been instructive in identifying the objectives of counter-ideological work, target groups, the importance of collaboration between Muslim scholars and the security agency, and the approaches and pitfalls involved. From this experience, it could be summarised that some of the important objectives of counter ideology are to immunise Muslims in general from extremist ideology, persuade less fanatic members of terrorist groups to abandon the ideology, rehabilitate detained terrorists and minimise non-Muslims' anxiety and suspicion by presenting alternatives to terrorist ideology.

It is important for policymakers to note that the primary target group of the ideological response is not the terrorists themselves but the Muslim majority by providing them with a correct understanding of Islam so that they will not be easily influenced by the terrorists' propaganda. It could be almost impossible to persuade any hardcore members of terrorist groups to give up their ideology. However, the majority of Muslims can be convinced to reject such ideology and any efforts to support it. Terrorist groups can only persist through popular support.

Another important target group which is usually overlooked in counter-ideological work is the non-Muslims at large. They should be provided with alternative perspectives to terrorist ideas that hopefully will reduce their anxiety, concern and misunderstanding of Islam and Muslims. In a multi-racial and multi-religious country, this is an important aspect of social harmony, which counter-terrorism strategy needs to address. Often, terrorism also aims to destabilise a society or a country (Hassan 2005b: 12–14).

As al Qaeda and JI do not believe in Western philosophy and ideals, it should be recognised that the 'conventional lens' originating from the West would not be able to prescribe the best refutation to their theological and juristic arguments. Any meaningful approach should take into account the nature of their ideas, couched in juristic and jurisprudential pronouncements. It is proposed here that counter-ideological work adopts the theological and juristic approach in the ideological war against terrorism. This uses the classical Muslim scholars' methodology of *ijtihad* or deduction from the Quran and the *hadits*, and has been elucidated in Pergas's book. Such approaches to theological and juristic interpretations of religious questions are respected by all Muslims, as the opinions of Muslim scholars still carry more weight than those of other scholars.

To complement this approach, it is also necessary to consider ‘a third way’ which is neither separatist extremism nor imposed Westernism. The aim is not to approach the counter-ideological campaign as a war to convert Muslims to ‘our’ (American/Western) way of life but to prevent mainstream Muslims from being hijacked by a splinter group whose views are now rejected.

Al Qaeda is currently viewed as being far removed from the mainstream Muslims. But it is now realised that there are many opportunities for ‘enabling the legitimate religious yearnings of everyday Muslims to see political expression without creating a dualistic struggle with Western ideals’.<sup>13</sup> Such alternatives should be identified and promoted, especially those that can change the repressive and corrupt political regimes seen by many Muslims as inconsistent with their ideals.

Both the ‘theological and juristic approach’ and the ‘third way’ can be combined together in that the theological and juristic approach is used as a key mechanism in offering alternatives that the Muslim community considers neither extremism nor Westernism.

Scholars who are not trained in this field still have a role to play in counter-ideological work, but they may not have the know-how and religious legitimacy to respond to the theological and juristic arguments of the extremists (Hassan 2005b: 17).

The close collaboration between the ISD and Muslim scholars is a commendable development, and becomes more significant when viewed in the light of the relationship between Pergas and the government on various issues related to Islam and the local Muslim community. Both parties were able to put aside previous differences to overcome a shared problem. Therefore, it is important for policymakers to incorporate Muslim scholars to succeed in winning over the terrorists’ sympathisers and for the refutation to be widely accepted by the Muslim community.

It underscores the importance of Islamic educational institutions like *madrasahs* and Islamic universities because they provide the correct foundation for students to learn mainstream Islam traditions and theology, which are important ballasts in combating extremist ideology. A healthier relationship between the *madrasahs*, Muslim scholars and the government is crucial in the ideological struggle against extreme militancy. This is particularly significant in the context of Singapore in which none of the JI detainees were graduates from local *madrasahs*. There were also no reports of religious teachers in local *madrasahs* being involved in JI. Hence *madrasahs* should be made an important partner in this effort rather than treated generally as a threat.

Since the main responsibility of combating extreme ideology is on the shoulders of the Muslim community, it is important to ensure a good relationship with moderate Muslim leaders. Nevertheless, policymakers must note that while the broad moderate-radical categorisation is a useful means of essentialising differing tendencies within Muslim leaders and scholars, one should be aware of the difficulties in distinguishing between ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ because in reality such a neat dichotomy does not exist. Community and political leaders all

over the world behave in ways that defy such easy categorisation. Thus, a more subtle or nuanced approach is needed, one which assesses a leader or scholar by looking at his views, opinions and works on various issues, rather than judging him on a specific issue only.

Despite the hardline positions taken by some leaders and scholars on several issues, co-opting them into counter-ideological work provides opportunities for engagement which may facilitate understanding of each other's perspectives and also the views of the moderate scholars. Tolerating differences on political issues is a primary requirement in attaining the common goal of neutralising extremist ideas, which are at the root of terrorism. This was exemplified through the collaboration of the ISD and Pergas.

One can say that by co-opting Muslim community leaders and scholars, the government not only shows its trust and confidence, but will also gain trust and confidence in return. Such a relationship will be significant in uprooting extremism from the community, and will encourage others to report to the authority about potential threats. In the long run, it will prevent future generations from falling into the same traps as the Singapore JI members.

The ISD was prudent in avoiding generalisations in making assessments and in deciding the best way to deal with each different segment. It differentiated JI members who were involved in the operational unit from those who were involved in missionary work amongst the detainees and their family members. Due to the nature of the terrorism threat after the 9/11 attacks, many policymakers and security agencies preferred to adopt a 'better safe than sorry' approach, which contributed to over-generalisation in assessment. Examples of generalisation are that Wahhabis are extremists, Arabisation is not good, political Islamists are dangerous and that *madrasahs* are factories for terrorists.

Counter-terrorism work should not fall into the same mental mode as the extremists, which is often characterised by simplistic generalisation and reductionism that sees the world divided into two camps; the 'good' versus the 'evil', or 'if you are not with us, you are against us'. To be successful, counter-ideology should be specific in its response and not make sweeping statements or generalisations.

Stereotyped perceptions will build psychological barriers between counter-ideology efforts and potential partners. This will cause difficulty in any collaborative effort. Sweeping statements may also damage relations with the majority of the Muslim community.

Generalisations hamper counter-ideology work because they define the threat too widely. Counter-ideology workers will have to face a wider 'battlefront' and larger target audience or create many unnecessary 'battlefronts' for themselves by unnecessarily antagonising others, e.g. antagonising the whole Saudi population by associating all of them with terrorists.

Instead, counter-terrorism and counter-ideology works need to take into consideration different cultural and contextual realities. A policy that worked for one group or one area may not be successful for other groups or areas. Even within the same group, cultural and contextual differences will need to be addressed.

Political, historic and socio-economic considerations are all part of the contextual consideration in formulating policies at the national and international levels.

It is in the interest of counter-ideology to take into account the heterogeneity of Muslims and Muslim organisations around the world. They should be considered as partners and assets, and not as a malignant community that has to be distrusted.

Jl's close relationship with a few *pesantren* and the image of the Taliban being the product of *madrasahs* have raised concerns about the institution being the breeding ground of radicalism and extremism among policymakers and security agencies. However, the six full-time *madrasahs* in Singapore provide a different picture. They accommodate about 5,000 Muslim students from Primary 1 to Pre-University 2.<sup>14</sup> They make up 5 per cent of the total number of the Muslim student population. It is important to note that none of the Jl detainees in Singapore were graduates of these *madrasahs*.

Contrary to common perceptions, *madrasahs* in Singapore do not confine themselves to religious subjects. Nor do they employ outdated modes of teaching and learning. The local *madrasahs* had been teaching subjects such as English, Science and Mathematics for many years before the implementation of Compulsory Education, which required that such secular subjects were taught in schools (Hassan 2005b: 33–6). Although one cannot claim that *madrasahs* in Singapore are totally free of *jihadist* extremism, it should be recognised that the local *madrasahs* are not a source of threat. This is also an example of the importance of understanding different contexts in counter-terrorism. Even though the local *madrasahs* are given some level of autonomy, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, which oversees Islamic education in Singapore, supervises and governs these schools.<sup>15</sup> This is unlike *madrasahs* in Pakistan and some *pesantrens* in Indonesia, which operate without supervision (Blanchard 2005).

While ideology plays an important role, one cannot discount the effect Muslim grievances have in radicalising Jl members in Singapore. Indeed, Jl's recruitment strategy used the plight of Muslims to attract membership. In the beginning, Jl's pioneers were sympathetic to the fate of their fellow Darul Islam fugitives who had to escape the oppression of Suharto's authoritarian regime. A few Singapore Jl members were involved in the Christmas Eve bombing operation in Riau because of the perceived injustices on Muslims in Ambon. Similar grievance also motivated their involvement in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Therefore at a global level, counter-ideology must be supported with efforts to address the root causes of global Muslim grievances such as the inequitable foreign policies of major powers in the Middle East, especially *vis-à-vis* Israel and Palestine, the presence of foreign military forces in Muslim countries and the continued support for undemocratic regimes in Muslim countries.

Acts of terrorism cannot be stopped by simply defeating the terrorist forces. Neither can the problem be overcome just by attacking the underlying values of the act, the obsession with revenge and its ideological motivations. The problem lies in both the misinterpretation of the sacred text and the opportunity and context that provide for the text to be misinterpreted in that manner.

Policymakers must not only call on non-Muslim people not to discriminate against Muslims for acts that were committed by a minority among them, and emphasise that Islam is a peaceful religion, they must also make the effort not to allow extremist non-Muslims to dictate the agenda of Muslim and non-Muslim relations by continuously casting doubts on Islam and Muslims, suggesting that Islam is inherently problematic and incompatible with democracy and modernity, or anticipating an inevitable clash between Islam and the West.

Those who viewed Islam as a threat have gone to the extent of advising major powers to unequivocally support regimes threatened by Islamists such as those in Algeria and Egypt. They urged that major democratic countries should not insist that those states implement political liberalisation, because it will allow the participation of Islamists. These states were viewed as a lesser evil than Islamist ones. The proponents of this view even derided the notion of 'Islamic moderates'. They accused those who view Islam as being capable of reforms compatible with democracy and the West as 'apologists' or 'relativists'.

It takes two hands to clap. Thus, the war against terrorism cannot be won by countering extreme ideology in the Muslim community without countering prevailing prejudiced views among non-Muslims or Westerners that cast doubt on Muslims, antagonise them and do not promote optimism for peaceful coexistence between the West and Muslims.

The formation of the RRG and other indirect initiatives by the Singapore government are examples that policymakers should consider. They must not only call on moderate Muslims to speak out against extremism, highlighting that the primary responsibility of fighting it falls on the shoulders of the Muslim community, they must also ensure that such initiatives succeed. At a strategic level, policymakers must have a clear vision of how they can contribute. Facilitation can take the form of direct action or the provision of financial support and expertise.

In addition to close cooperation with Muslim scholars and leaders that helps the Singapore government implement a nuanced approach, is the presence of Malay and Muslim officers within the ISD and Singapore Police Force, which many Western countries do not enjoy. With the increasing number of Muslims in Western countries, this shortcoming needs to be overcome as part of the long-term solution, not only in counter-terrorism but also in law enforcement.

The trust and confidence between the Muslim community and the government is not a product of post-11 arrest initiatives. It has been developed since Singapore's independence from Britain. The ruling party has always shown political goodwill to Malay/Muslim Singaporeans by allocating parliamentary seats for the community, providing financial grants for the Mendaki Foundation and Association of Muslim Professionals to improve Malay/Muslim educational, social and economic achievement, and the enactment of the Administration of Muslim Law Act which facilitates the establishment of important institutions like the Islamic Religious Council, the Syariah Court, mosques and *madrasahs*. The community has reciprocated through continuous support for the government despite the presence of a Malay opposition political party.



Continuous efforts to develop good relationships with the minorities in times of crisis is an important asset that policymakers must recognise. A sense of discrimination that is not addressed during non-crisis times will affect the relationship with the community during a crisis.

### Closing remarks

Counter-terrorism is no different from counter-insurgency. It is a battle against an organised group motivated by a cause or ideology seeking to achieve its political aim. It seeks to win over the support of the people, thus weakening its enemy, which will eventually enable it to launch a final blow.

In counter-insurgency, the people are ‘the centre of gravity’ because the government and the army need their support, while the insurgents emerge from these people. By winning over the people, the flow of recruits and support would be cut off. This approach is popularly known as the ‘battle for the hearts and minds’. However, this does not mean that winning the hearts and minds of the insurgents themselves is not important. Such a campaign may be launched to defeat the insurgents’ ‘psychic forces’ or morale.

Counter-terrorism measures, which involve counter-ideology, need to take into consideration different cultural and contextual realities.

The efforts made by the Singapore government and the community are not without their shortcomings, but those aspects that need to be unlearned are a discussion for another chapter.

### Notes

- 1 A Restriction Order is provided by section 10 of the Internal Security Act which allows the minister to suspend a Detention Order with conditions that restrict a detainee’s activities and movement within and out of the country. See Ministry of Home Affairs 2002a and c.
- 2 JI divided its operational area into *Mantiqis* (region). There were 4 *Mantiqi*. *Mantiqi* I covered Malaysia and Singapore, *Mantiqi* II covered Indonesia except Kalimantan and Sulawesi, *Mantiqi* III covered Mindanao, Sabah, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, and *Mantiqi* IV covered Australia. Each *Mantiqi* was divided into *wakalahs* (sub-region/representation). Singapore is a *wakalah* under *Mantiqi* I. See ‘White Paper’, p. 10.
- 3 ‘White Paper’: 4, 15–17; interview with Mohamed bin Ali, Secretary of RRG, 26 August 2005.
- 4 Muslims are enjoined to increase their prayers during such a period and perform *iktikaf* (seclusion) in a mosque.
- 5 *As-Syifa*’ magazine. A copy of it was given by one JI member to the writer in 1997–8.
- 6 Both volunteered their services and acted in their personal capacity.
- 7 Information on the RRG was primarily based on an interview with Mohamed bin Ali, Secretary of the RRG, on 26 August 2005. See also Hussain 2005.
- 8 Interview with Mohamed bin Ali, Secretary of the RRG, 26 August 2005. See also Nirmala 2004.
- 9 A closed-door session with Muslim community leaders was held at the parliament building on 19 September 2002, at 8.30 pm. See Singh and John 2002.

- 10 The ISD held a visit and briefing especially for Pergas after the second major arrest on 6 October 2002.
- 11 Briefings were held for the Islamic Religious Council on Pergas on 17 July 2005 and the Fellowship of Muslim Students Association on 6 August 2005 in the Kampong Ubi Community Club. The Singapore Home Affairs Minister visited and had dinner with Pergas leadership on 1 December 2004 followed by a visit by the newly appointed Director of the ISD on 8 December 2004.
- 12 Interview with Mohd Jakfar bin Embek, Head of *Dakwah* Department, Pergas.
- 13 Biddle 2002: 11; see also Hajjar 2002: 17–19.
- 14 See <http://www.madrasah.edu.sg/about.html> (accessed 1 September 2005).
- 15 Hassan 2005b; also see <http://www.madrasah.edu.sg/about.html> (accessed 1 September 2005).



Part IV

LATIN AND SOUTH  
AMERICA



# TERRORISM IN THE SOUTHERN CONE

*Salvador Raza*

## **Subject and approach**

Terrorism in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay) cannot adequately be explained without situating it in its particular political, social and economic contexts and without a comprehensive understanding of the ideology/discourse of the terrorist groups that could guide analysis of the role of violence in them.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter addresses the dichotomy of terrorists' strategic goals and the threat they pose in the region expressed in two general patterns. The first pattern is primarily *oppositional* (or *conspiratorial*), aimed at the overthrow of dictatorial regimes, where terrorism presents itself as a tactic embedded in strategies for either change or continuity, and is practised by governments and revolutionaries alike. Lumped together as urban guerrilla, oppositional terrorism provoked massive government reactions in 'dirty wars' using repressive military strategies that resulted in thousands of deaths and disappearances. This first pattern of terrorism is associated with the (limited and incomplete) transition from pre-modern to modern regional socioeconomic structure and the inadequacy of mechanisms for political transition.

The second pattern of terrorism, ultimately *strategic*, lies in the current period of rapid and tumultuous change, challenging the legitimacy of the state on grounds of perceived fundamental structural injustices in an era that promised to herald the end of local ideologies and the beginning of global post-liberal democracies. Terrorism under this second pattern becomes a tactical tool – empowered by drug trafficking and organized crime – in a (pseudo) struggle for social and political justice, and the transformation of politics and society, in keeping with the legacy of radicalism (political, religious, etc.). Both oppositional and strategic terrorism become primarily an urban phenomenon, conceptually engendered and politically sustained by students and intellectuals, with logistical (including financial) support from illegal activities.

Both patterns are diffused in recurrent cycles of social turmoil associated with economic failures to sustain developmental and security needs, judged to be the

inevitable result of inequities inherent in global capitalism and liberalism. Faith in the efficacy of violence and the willingness to assume risks, rather than tactical differences in the use of force, converges the two patterns; however, the power of ideology in the latter pattern appears to be weaker than it was in the former.

The intent is to identify veins in an amalgam representative of the emerging environment (economic, political, military, and, perhaps most important, cognitive) in the Southern Cone; veins that only emerge under a broader perspective that ‘desensitizes’ national specificities, to the point of making them irrelevant for analytical purposes. In this sense, the analytical focus used opposes an impartial view of some conclusions repeatedly encountered on the subject in the region, which practically speaking form a ‘politically correct’ posture against the USA. The conclusions offered must therefore be considered from the standpoint of their usefulness in providing an alternative reference for the formulation of policies that prevent/contain the emergence of strategic terrorism in the region.<sup>2</sup>

### **Approaches, strategies and political developments**

For the extremist revolutionaries (chiefly Soviet-inspired) of Latin America, the Cuban Revolution called attention to the possibility of civilian ‘amateurs’ overthrowing professional soldiers in a short period of time using guerrilla techniques. Typically, rural guerrilla warfare was carried out by middle-class youths, mostly students, frustrated with their potential for social ascent, initially, and erratically, supported by Cuba through the then-named *Dirección General de Inteligencia* (General Intelligence Directorate) or DGI. In the mid-1960s, there were more than 40 guerrilla training camps in Cuba, graduating more than 5,000 ‘combatants’ per year.

The idea behind this movement was the transformation of the concept of guerrilla action from an instrument of attrition – a tactic within a strategy of action – to an instrument of decision, capable of overthrowing the enemy – a strategy in itself. Associated with this conceptual transformation was the change in the notion that this guerrilla strategy, unlike guerrilla tactics, no longer needed to await the right time to be used. It would create its own potential, thereby providing the opportunity for the revolutionary movement to gain critical mass (from the countryside, in the direction of the urban centres).

Note that our considering terrorism as a tactic of the guerrilla strategy practised during that historical period puts into perspective the instrumental function of terrorism in creating the conditions for the emergence of a revolution (political, socioeconomic and social) – whence the designation ‘conspiratorial terrorism’; different from what we observe in present-day global terrorism, which is moving away from the notion of a strategy of action aimed at another revolution, and approaching the notion of being a war in and of itself. In other words, while the manifestation of terrorism in the 1960s was a tactical action used to achieve a political objective, today’s global terrorism seeks to define the political environment, whence the designation ‘strategic terrorism’.

Note, however, that the USA in its global war<sup>3</sup> against terrorism is facing a policy of terror and not just a terrorist tactic, in a conflict polarized by ideologically determined interests. It should therefore be understood that al Qaeda is making a policy – a policy of violence.<sup>4</sup> The formulation of the USA's policies and strategies towards Latin America highlights the fundamental distinction that in the perspective of Latin America – and not that of the USA – the possibility of the re-emergence of terrorism in Latin America is still viewed as the possibility of the (re)emergence of a tactic of action as part of a revolutionary movement. Since, however, there is no longer a political space – or even intellectual environment – for such an emergence, the possibility of the emergence of terrorism in the perspective of Latin America simply does not exist. It is viewed as an American invention!

The decade of the 1970s was marked by the takeover of power by the military forces in Latin America, with the virtual suppression of any free and constitutionally established political opposition. The forces of opposition migrated towards a militant left, with extremist expressions sustained by terrorist acts supported by Cuba, while the military was supported by the United States (Schenina 2003). Meanwhile, while the leftist revolutionary movements left *foquismo* (referring to the term *foco*, meaning torch and signifying the manner in which Fidel Castro and Che Guevara reportedly conducted the Cuban Revolution) behind to engage in urban terrorism, the military forces initiated an intense war of repression based on counterinsurgency techniques.

In this process, the military forces were implicitly divided into two large groups. The first stayed on a professional trend associated with the countries' continuing participation in America's global Cold War strategy (and as appropriate structures of force, organization, equipment, and doctrine) in addition to concern with regional border disputes – the so-called regional war hypotheses, which, for example, had Argentina and Brazil in conflict until the mid-1980s.

Another group 'specialized' in the war against terror, state terrorism, that came to be called the 'dirty war'. The setup of the elements necessary to implement strategies of action against terror had the advantage of the same elements that created the conditions that made *coups d'état* effective, quickly leading to the establishment of a highly centralized (and efficient) command, control and intelligence structure that under coordinated command included police and military capabilities both for armed actions and for 'preventive' actions in the strategy to repress terror, in which prisons holding 'suspects' took the opportunity to commit enormous human rights violations under the aegis of the concept of national security.<sup>5</sup>

### **'Active' terrorism in the Southern Cone**

Before any analysis, it is important to contrast the manifestation of terrorism in Latin America, and more specifically in the Southern Cone, with the rest of the world. In the period from 1961 to 2003, 244 terrorist incidents of significant importance were counted (US Dept of State 2004); of these, only three occurred in



the Southern Cone: the attack by the Hizbullah Group against the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1994, the kidnapping of the US Ambassador in Brazil by the MR-8 Group in 1969, and the kidnapping and subsequent death of police officer Dan Mitriane in Uruguay in 1970. Figures 11.1 and 11.2 show these data.

Obviously, based on the criteria of inclusion and exclusion of events as terrorist manifestations (or the result of the non-convergence of the definitions used), we have changes in the listings in the databases. However, even with some minimal variations, either in absolute or relative terms (which is what this intends to show), the indexes of these manifestations are still low. It is important to keep this ratio in perspective throughout the analysis of the evolving trajectory in the Southern Cone.

Uruguay is considered the cradle of urban guerrilla warfare (in reality, the first to migrate from rural guerrilla, initially located near the northern border with Brazil, to urban guerrilla centred in Montevideo), with its roots in 1963 and Raul Sendic, founder of the National Liberation Movement (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional or MLN). Its members, intellectuals and leaders of operations and rural movements, were called the Tupamaros; an evocation of the symbolic image of

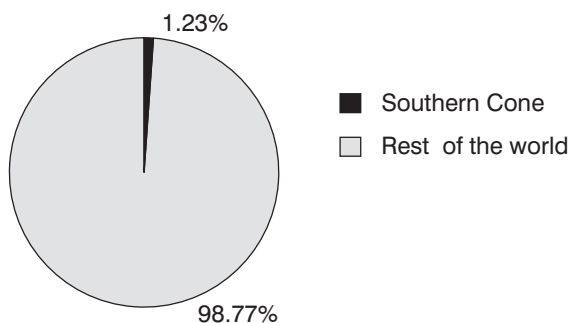


Figure 11.1 Global terrorism in the Southern Cone (terrorist attacks 1961–2003)

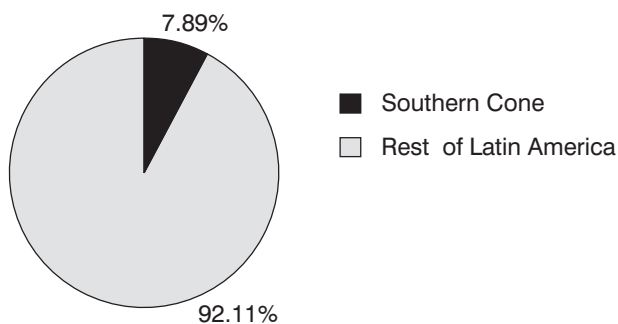


Figure 11.2 Terrorism in Latin America vs terrorism in the Southern Cone (terrorist attacks in Latin America 1961–2003)

the Incan leader Tupac Amaru II in his (unsuccessful) fight against the Spanish invaders, for their fight aimed at overthrowing the government.

The violence and intensity of the attacks routinely carried out by the Tupamaros against the police and armed forces led military and police personnel to dress in civilian clothing and attempt to 'hide out', like the terrorists, in the very society they were supposed to be protecting. This ended up mixing purposes (reaction of the targets of the terror) and environment, with the result that in 1971 the Tupamaros suffered two major defeats: one at the ballot box, when the population cast a small percentage of the votes for the Partido da Frente Ampla that was supporting them, and another in their own midst with the failure of the effort to expand their operations throughout the country. This second defeat, it is important to note, occurred due to the markedly urban style (mannerisms, language, culture) the terror assumed, with its members losing their identification with the rural population, who treated them like foreigners and refused to provide shelter.

Encouraged by this, the Uruguayan armed forces and police – supported and trained by Brazil and the United States – unleashed an offensive against the leadership of the Tupamaros and ended up destructuring their articulation capability, leading most of the few survivors to migrate to Argentina or Brazil, plunge into anonymity, or both.<sup>6</sup>

In retrospect, the decision not to use foreign forces in the fight against the Tupamaro terrorism was the right one. That alternative was considered as a sort of 'regional peacekeeping mission' since the Uruguayan armed forces and police were at one time practically hostages of the Tupamaros, who even had control of certain urban areas of Montevideo.

Among other reasons, that option was discarded in the face of the possibility that such a 'peacekeeping mission' could certainly provoke a terror integration movement in the Southern Cone, encouraging the spread of terrorist purposes among the countries of the region against a 'foreign' intervention. In that sense, compartmentalizing the manifestations of conspiratorial terrorism in their own national space, where they had their origin and their ideological and material support, ended up being a factor that contributed to their neutralization (the term defeat would be incorrect). This same analysis is valid for the other countries of the Southern Cone, since they present the same profile.

There is abundant evidence that conspiratorial terrorism in the Southern Cone is inactive. In Paraguay, the violence of counter-terrorist action and the immense force (operational and political) of the intelligence services practically eradicated the organized groups. Until 2002, the intelligence service of Paraguay had practically the same structure – and the same members – that fought the dirty war. Unlike the other countries of the Southern Cone, the military forces have considerable political force. The Tupamaros are practically neutralized, as are the members of Brazilian terrorist groups.<sup>7</sup>

Information gathered during the research showed that their cells are not dormant, they were simply broken up, with the members going into political militancy (weak, it is true) in legally recognized political parties. Their presence, mainly in the southeastern region of Brazil, still recurs in public universities.

However, they are engaged there more for lectures and seminars explaining the past than to present future proposals (although some openly maintain support for the communist revolution, with Leninist and Maoist characteristics).

The sole exception, but even so with very subtle manifestation, is in Peru, where the Shining Path's capabilities of articulation are still perceived as potentially dangerous, even without the charismatic Guzmán. The unequivocal fact is that conspiratorial terrorism as such does not represent a current threat. Its ideology has become out of touch with the political reality of the countries of the region, as its strategic objectives in fact ended up being achieved: the dominant ideology is leftist, although the government's practices are pragmatically subordinated to the need for integration in the free economy led by the USA.

The old guerrilla militants, actually former terrorists, are now in power. For example, look at Deputy José Genoíno, former chairman of the Workers' Party, the party in power in Brazil. The same thing is happening in Uruguay. So the tactical guerrilla action practised by the guerrilla movements is simply losing its relationship to reality. The proof is that the populations of the countries of the Southern Cone were apparently disillusioned with guerrilla groups as a revolutionary spearhead more than with the notion of revolution itself; in other words, disillusioned with violence as a method, not with the expectation of radical changes in a safe environment coupled with development processes.

The dormant risk is the rupture of the process of democratic transition, with the resulting imbalance of the tenuous forces inertializing the activation of the dormant conspiratorial terror structures in support of strategic terrorism and the recovery of power, but now based on an ideology associated with widespread longings for better social conditions and with an economic structure with a broader distribution of opportunities and advantages. It is only in this sense that there is a perception of a possible association with the manifestations present in other regions of the world, of active strategic terrorism under religious extremism based on very specific interpretations of doctrines of faith. And in a 'prosfictional' view, this association is potentially foreseeable due to the conditions offered in some areas of the region.

The geographic triangle of the Triple Border, defined by Ciudad del Este (Paraguay), Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil), and Porto Iguaçu (Argentina), is recognized as a refuge for Islamic extremists from two terrorist organizations: Hizbullah and the Islamic Resistance Movement known as Hamas. This situation reflects the relative ease with which terrorist organizations can infiltrate and remain reasonably out of sight for a long period of time.

In addition, there is evidence that a substantial proportion of the financial resources generated in the region is illegal, manipulated by the Chinese Mafia, which exacts US\$8,000 'insurance' for each container that enters the region and US\$30,000 for each transaction. Furthermore, there is a sophisticated 'industry' of counterfeiting paper money (from all over the world) and credit card 'cloning' in the Triple Border region, mainly dominated by Lebanese, Palestinians and Syrians, who foster money laundering and, more importantly, a new – and very ingenious – form of financing terrorist activities: cloned credit cards are used to

draw small amounts from various accounts and immediately destroyed, leaving no trace of the transaction. The funds are then transported by ‘messengers’,<sup>8</sup> along with other funds garnered from the religious financing circuit fuelled by draining donations made to the mosques and religious centres by the large population of Arab origin.

The circuit is fed by legal and legitimately donated funds from the region’s population of Arab origin to support humanitarian agencies, primarily in Iran and Lebanon. There is no evidence that some of the funds are diverted to finance terror along their route from the donors in Brazil to the users in the Middle East, or how, where, or by whom it is done. But there are strong indicators that the agencies receiving funds are associated with terrorist activities. For example, the ‘Prophet Mohammed’ Shiite Mosque is led by religious leader Mohamad Hussein Fadllah, who has links to Hizbullah, while the ‘House of Prayers’ Sunni Mosque is associated with the Hamas group through the Wahhabi sect led by Sheik Atik Al Din Al Athari.<sup>9</sup> The Benificent Islamic Cultural Centre in Foz do Iguacu, where the ‘Omar Ben Al Khattab’ Mosque operates, also has evidence of links with Hamas.

At this time, strategic terrorism has only an outpost for gathering finance and personnel in the Southern Cone. The fact is that although strategic terrorism represents a reasonably homogeneous whole throughout the world, it is not yet operationally manifest (with explicit acts of violence) in the Southern Cone.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, given the conditions stated above, if strategic terrorism emerges in the region, although the ‘theatres of operations’ may be in the urban centres, its logistical, social and ideological support will certainly not be there but on the borders, mainly those between Brazil and Paraguay, or Uruguay and Bolivia.

A geo-strategic analysis of the Southern Cone shows that in these regions – unlike the geographic environment of the borders of Chile and Peru – there is a highway development and integration structure that creates the conditions for the flow of low-cost products and services, an abundance of arable land nearby and accessible consumer centres, and a sophisticated banking structure – providing the cash flow to local businesses – linked to the global financial flow structure.

Throughout the past 40 years, these conditions, without – or rather, in spite of – state intervention, have developed in these border areas into a movement of transiency and social and economic amalgamation that presents the same profile as other regions of the globe where strategic terrorism has already taken root. These environments are marked by a dilution of ethnicities, nationalities and cultures in a restricted geographic space, normally associated with low development indexes, limited possibilities of social ascent, and deficient mechanisms for the accommodation of interests that end up driving the emergence of social dissatisfaction in populations practically living in a vacuum of effective political power. These populations in no way differ from the ‘brasiguaios’ (Brazil + Paraguay), ‘bolibrários’ (Brazil + Bolivia), and ‘urubrários’ (Brazil + Uruguay). In all, there is an estimated population of more than three million able-bodied people in these groups.

This situation, since it is certainly not an unknown factor, at least not in the region, should not be over-emphasized. But the existence of mechanisms to develop strategic terrorism in the region *is*, and the American policies for the region appear to explicitly disregard this explosive situation.

This criterion expands the problem of prevention/containment of strategic terrorism in the Triple Border region. In other words, the potential problem is more serious or bigger in the region as a whole, whilst in the Triple Border area it is less, and more specific, being an early aggravation of an anticipated problem.

In this case it would be more effective to seek broad-spectrum policies (not merely in the area of defence) aimed at helping the countries of the region to establish more efficient political-financial mechanisms for the control and supervision of investment programmes and projects, and direct trade. More importantly, the problem of strategic terrorism in the Southern Cone is being treated primarily as a police problem. Those involved in the illegal financial circuit (whether or not linked to terrorism) are treated as outlaws. The police solution excludes any ideological judgment and needs no definition of terrorism for the formulation of criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of those involved in common crime, depriving them of the possibility of treating it as political crime.

### **Ideological recruiting**

The study of the factors that lead to engaging in the practice of terrorist violence finds at least three explanatory trends.<sup>11</sup> The first is related to psycho-social factors, as described by Laqueur (1987) and Bion (1961), with two mutually complementary approaches: one viewing manifestations of violence as under the influence of psychotic conditioners; and the other viewing them as induced by the individual's social group dynamic (including the family environment and the closest circle of acquaintances).<sup>12</sup> Post does a good job of capturing the second approach in affirming that 'the internalization of a group logic in an individual occurs when he submerges his own identity in that of a group, subordinating individual morals to a group dynamic' (Post 1998: 31, 34).

The second trend is related to socio-political factors, as described by Crenshaw (1995). While Sprinzak calls this trend psycho-political (1998: 77), the distinction is more semantic than substantive because both see the entrance into terrorist militancy as the result of a rational calculation (whether or not by a mind with a propensity to violence) by a person who elects to practise terror because he perceives violence as the only possible alternative for the achievement of his political objectives.

The third trend, although highly controversial and lacking sufficient empirical corroboration, is associated with the emergence of a new cognitive-social revolution of a global nature. This revolution, immersed in the still-confused movement to accommodate new social patterns to globalization and in the emergence of new cognitive patterns under the pressures of the information age, would reconfigure the notion of terror, making it an ideology in itself (and no longer the instrument of an ideology). It would be a revolution of a magnitude similar to the Copernican,

the French, or the industrial revolution. According to this trend, the violence used by terror could only be judged by moral principles developed under the aegis of that revolution, allowing religious radicalism (extremism) to uphold its actions as politically correct according to this ethic. If this trend gains any sustenance, terrorism will cease to be a dysfunctional pattern manifest in the environment and become the principal defining force of its own environment, drastically altering not only the notion of terrorism but also making the forms now used to fight it ineffective.

The second trend is the one most widely professed at this time, incorporating the first as a factor to explain psychological patterns shaped in the environment that defines it. Although there are differences concerning the mechanisms of installation of the pathology (one professing a psychological source with social manifestation and the other a social source with psychological manifestation), the two versions explaining the first trend converge in viewing the propensity towards violence as a sort of 'relief valve' for a violent personality, with terrorism supplying the stimuli and the environment.

The adoption of the second trend (with the first incorporated into it) as the referential context for this chapter makes it possible to understand the motivations for engaging in terrorist acts as an ideological as well as an intellectual manifestation, since the terrorism phenomenon takes on a symbolic connotation based on subjective conditions.<sup>13</sup> In this trend, the group leaders gain relevance in the process of building the perception of the need (ideological justification) and validity (intellectual justification) of the use of violence as a political instrument, normally codified by the ideology the group professes.

While conspiratorial terrorism, in its tactical instrumental function associated with urban guerrillas, has at its core university students and professors (who were those with the best access to information – keeping in mind that at that time, without the internet, knowledge was normally spread locally by personal communications), the practitioners of strategic terrorism take on another, more 'specialized' profile, since they must handle much more sophisticated operational demands in order to contrive their actions through the enormous obstacle imposed by repressive mechanisms.

Around this intellectual militant core of conspiratorial terrorism are groups of militants from the poor working class and middle class, mainly university students. While this core is not monolithic, the convergence of the interests of its components barely makes it possible to recognize any differentiating aims. So the operational militant groups, unlike the intellectual core, have relatively differentiated characteristics (patterns of action); ranging from common banditry, far from the intellectual core, to the sophisticated practice of psychological warfare, with sophisticated exploration of the media, closer to the core.

This dispersion generates two mutually complementary effects. On the one hand, the dispersion of terrorist actions shows (as was their primary objective) the inadequacy of the forces combating them to ensure individual and collective security. On the other hand, the dispersion of the militant groups' purposes and operational actions increases the scope of responsibility of the armed forces,

with the corresponding need for those forces to specialize and increase their military actions against terrorism, creating a mechanism that strengthens the growing autonomy of the armed forces in defining their own tasks, making them increasingly more autonomous with respect to the political supervision of their actions.

In this environment, businessmen, since they were not the priority target of the psychological warfare unleashed by terrorism (the target was the masses who would come in to strengthen their contingents), saw it as easier, simpler and safer to accommodate banditry, giving in to the demands for logistical support for which they paid the price in order to be left in peace. Interviews with businessmen<sup>14</sup> revealed that it was not a question of fear of violence that led them to collaborate with terrorism, since they had (and still have) sophisticated and efficient protection by private security agents, but much more a cost-benefit calculation – with the situation of incapability of the armed forces, the cost of paying for terror was less than the cost of the potential property damage.

In spite of the obvious ‘specialization’ of strategic terrorism, it still finds its principal potential source of both intellectual capabilities and future militants in the university environment of Latin America. Therefore, acknowledging strategic terrorism’s limitations in mobilizing and organizing the masses, investigating how university people and the entrepreneurial class position themselves in the face of the demands of strategic terrorism is particularly relevant when one considers that conspiratorial terrorism in the Southern Cone prefers to recruit among specific groups (university students and business leaders) instead of recruiting in society in general, which would increase their exposure and vulnerability.

This appraisal gains relevance with the understanding that peace and violence have been fluctuating cyclically throughout the history of the countries of the Southern Cone, more affected by economic than ideological crises. When governments abuse their mandate, the population supports the guerrillas, and when they prove incapable of advancing the desires of the population the population supports the return to order by the armed forces. If these structural conditions are not changed, there are no convincing arguments against potential ‘ideological recruitment’ for strategic terrorism, regardless of the success or failure of strategies or tactics for combating terror. In the Southern Cone, the issue of preventing strategic terrorism is not military or ideological, it is economic, political and social.

It is very much as a result of this perception that in various intellectual forums in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Chile<sup>15</sup> the future of the American presence in Paraguay is seen in a negative light, although all acknowledge that not much can be done in the face of American power and determination. This concern is not completely groundless. It is not at all inconceivable that dormant conspiratorial terrorism capabilities might be incorporated in strategic terrorism, supported by organized crime in association with drug trafficking.

This would certainly be the worst possible scenario for the USA and for the region. Although the American presence makes sense – for the Americans – from the standpoint of defence against strategic terror, it is highly problematic,

if not wrong, from the political standpoint because it reveals an enormous misunderstanding of the regional characteristics (particularly cultural aspects and national strategic architectures) that simultaneously foster and neutralize the emergence of strategic terror in the region.

In the meantime, faced with the 'ideological lethargy' – either pro or con – of the traditional sources of ideological support – the universities – it is obvious that these movements have not been successful in 'selling their causes' and have been unable to achieve a recruitment that sensitizes (open or even secret) information systems, mainly because the strategic terrorism upheld by distorted religious fundamentalists finds no ideological referential except in small groups that they support in the capture and transfer of funds and temporary shelter for individuals linked with this type of terror. In other words, strategic terrorism is only finding an echo in social groups that have a cultural reference exogenous to the area of the Southern Cone, and are geographically concentrated. Terrorists from the various factions, when isolated from their communities located in geographic areas isolated from large urban centres, emerge and disappear in the multiplicity of societies and cultures of the Southern Cone. This is an important and little-studied phenomenon, but one that represents the potential for resolving many of the manifestations of strategic terrorism in other regions.

Although on the one hand the recruiting of new 'militants' for strategic terrorism has not been observed, on the other hand it is obvious that the flow of information on terror to the region is slowly shaping a perception of terror as being a distant fact, practically foreign to the regional reality, creating a mechanism that strengthens the alienation of the strategic terrorism sustained by religious distortions, depriving its manifestation of ideological legitimacy.

It is clearly perceived that the governments of the countries of the Southern Cone are exploring this perception in two movements: the first in the sense of isolating themselves as much as possible from the 'American' global war on terror, while attempting to avoid any political or financial cost.<sup>16</sup> This movement is reflected in the official political postures that do not acknowledge a potential transition to strategic terrorism in the region, emphasizing that there is no already-configured threat of violent acts of terror, just a potential danger, or 'an evil to be avoided'! The second movement is in the direction of establishing preventive strategies according to the following logic: (1) specializing the counter-terrorist intelligence services with the creation (or re-equipment) of special police units; (2) developing random actions of a political nature and repressive character. Note, however, that the strategies of the governments of the Southern Cone are aimed at the prevention/neutralization of strategic terrorism through police specialization and integrated intelligence, avoiding the engagement of the armed forces in operational actions.

### **Some exploratory conclusions**

The operational definitions of conspiratorial terrorism and strategic terrorism appear to adequately capture the dichotomy of the nature of the past and possible



future manifestations of the emergence of this phenomenon in the Southern Cone. They make it possible to differentiate their strategic objectives and see how terrorist groups saw (or see) themselves: the former as revolutionaries seeking state power with their current operational capabilities practically nonexistent, and the latter with the potential of developing in the region and seeking to define self-regulated spaces.

The principal terrorist activities in the Southern Cone are directly related not to the local societies, but to a deep-seated network of organized crime and international terrorism, and the region is being used as a centre of support and fundraising to finance these activities. Although in the past the revolutionary movements had the support of the national population of the countries where they were operating, were deeply linked with the lives of the people and with those countries' insertion in the world economy and politics, and were essentially a specific phenomenon but with important similarities to other groups from other areas, the terrorism now present in the region is not representative of that region. Although the old groups represented local society, or claimed to represent it, with its consent and support, the terrorism now present in the region is marginal and represents other communities, particularly the Chinese mafia and Islamic extremist groups operating worldwide.

This distinction is of fundamental importance in understanding these processes and combating these activities. In the same way as this region is used for these criminal purposes, other regions of the world could be – and probably have been for some time. Combating this type of financing is combating improper transfers of funds and the counterfeiting of paper money and credit cards, contraband goods, international drug and weapons trafficking, and corruption. But this means combating organized crime, involving efforts by local police, and not specifically counter-terrorist activities.

The links between the terrorist groups operating in the Southern Cone, when perceived, are of short duration, normally aimed at specific operational situations with no connotation of merging objectives or ideologies. On the other hand, the research for this chapter did not identify a coordinated regional strategy for combating terror (of the collective security/defence type) deliberately aimed at compartmentalizing – isolating – the terrorist manifestations of each country within its own space. In other words, no policy orchestration against terror at the regional level is evident; each country has been developing its own strategies in isolation in keeping with the particular characteristics of the violence they have faced.

This does not mean that there has not been intense intelligence sharing and exchanges of material support and instruction among the forces acting against terror (mainly informal). The USA has clearly played an instrumental role in the supply of intelligence, equipment and training (the now sadly-remembered School of the Americas, associated in the minds of many in the region with the training of Latin American military forces in the practice of torture).

Since strategic terrorism did not emerge operationally in the Southern Cone, it can be said that the following factors have been effective (without being able to say which or which combination of them is really predominant):

- efficacy of operational strategies (police repression and integrated intelligence),
- maintaining the expectation of the continuity of the rules of the political game,
- ideological and intellectual distancing from the notion of terror (university and middle-class isolation from and even indifference to the phenomenon),
- characterization of the problem as a phenomenon external to the region and dissociated from the local culture (implicitly stated by the media and strengthened by government agencies).

Meeting the demand for 'qualified' personnel to engage in the actions developed from the intentions of strategic terrorism is its principal vulnerability. This is the result of the disappearance of the conditions that contributed to the recruitment of conspiratorial terrorism, without the development of equally effective conditions in the environment. In other words, the second trend explaining the reasons that lead to engagement in terrorist actions no longer finds support among the major social groups that supply personnel for terrorism. On the other hand, from the standpoint of counter-terrorism strategies, their vulnerability resides in the limitations of rapid processing of large volumes of data, aimed at identifying associations and the construction of patterns indicating complex non-linear terrorist acts.

While the strategic actions of the USA against terror in the Southern Cone should be better articulated, mainly politically, they should not induce the notion of a defence or security alliance incorporating all the countries of the region. Although this statement seems counterintuitive, the analysis points to the continuity of the same conditions that (*post facto*) made it obvious that this option was inadequate. In other words, such an alliance would end up inducing the transfer of strategic terrorism from other regions to the Southern Cone and primarily, with the eventual emergence of this type of terror, would induce its rapid diffusion to other countries of the region.

On this same line of argument, it should be noted that potential conditions already exist in the region for the development of strategic terrorism centred in the Brazilian border areas, and currently the factors that act against the emergence of terrorism are strongly anchored in the lack of support these actions find in the region due to prohibitive factors generated by the formation of the political power structure and the terrorists' lack of cultural or political identity with the local population. This does not mean that preventive actions with the indispensable support of intelligence under an inter-agency culture (inter-agency and international cooperation) are not important. On the contrary, although such actions are fundamental in the short term, in the long term only the continued maintenance and strengthening of the democratic process can ensure the prohibition of the manifestation of terrorism, at least until the old, now-dormant militants and structures exhaust their capability of rekindling the ashes of the failure of conspiratorial terrorism under the aegis of strategic terrorism.

A corollary of this conclusion, extremely sensitive politically, but important for the USA and the perception of the countries of the region, is the obvious fact that this democratic stability requires the continuation of the representativity and prestige of the so-called leftist parties now in power. This does not mean the removal of the mechanisms of democratic alternation of power, but the preservation of the political (and moral) authority of the opposition parties. This casts light on the risks of the current political crisis in Brazil, primarily due to the possibility of spin-off effects in other countries of the region, which does not yet appear to have been well understood in the region or in the USA.

In this same vein, it is highly advisable that the actions taken to neutralize the source of terrorist financing and protection for terrorist militants offered by the Triple Border area be understood in the context of this region's importance to the local economy. If these recommendations are implemented – in the sense of building more effective mechanisms of planning, scheduling and budgeting starting with the modernization of the armed forces – it is extremely pertinent to understand that the problem is much larger than the Triple Border area, since the conditions for the emergence of strategic terrorism in the Southern Cone already exist all along the southern border of Brazil.

Neutralizing this potential threat – which would be explosive and have harmful effects for the region and for the world – requires the integrated economic development of the region, making the Mercosur play a fundamental role in the global war against terrorism. The NAFTA-Mercosur negotiators on both sides appear not to have understood this.

### Notes

- 1 The author wishes to express his appreciation of the dedication and commitment of Thiago Fernandes Franco who provided a remarkable effort in researching and discussing subjects in support of this chapter.
- 2 The research for this chapter was carried out between October 2004 and July 2005, with field research in various countries, interviews and documentation gathering. It should be noted, for purposes of academic rigor, that the interviews were only possible through a promise of confidentiality to the sources. It is therefore acknowledged that the results are not source-verifiable. On the other hand, after completion of the first draft, the conclusions were submitted to other people (most of them experts on the subject) and it appears that they are in keeping with their own observations and conclusions.
- 3 A summary of American political actions in the global war against terror with a focus on Latin America can be found at <http://terrorismo.embaixada-americana.org.br/?action=artigo&idartigo=1144>.
- 4 The term 'strategic terrorism' has gained increasing strength in its ability to summarize the manifestations of terrorism as practised by radical groups such as al Qaeda. One of its best interpreters is Picco 2005.
- 5 In all the countries of the Southern Cone, the term 'national security' is associated with military strategies against terror. This situation – a sort of collective national unawareness – provokes a reaction, practically a political repudiation of a necessary and important concept in the construction of policies that take account of the resurgence/fight against strategic terrorism. Note, for example, that Brazil's defence policy is in

- fact a document embodying a policy of national security. The same is seen in Paraguay and Uruguay, where the demarcation of the limits of civilian-military jurisdictions in security and defence is still indistinct and tense. The situation is different in Argentina, and more so in Chile, where the effort to discuss the preparation of their defence White Books forced the explanation and definition of civilian-military jurisdictions.
- 6 Some interviews that guided the next section of this paper were conducted with people who were intimately acquainted with some of these terrorists who had plunged into anonymity for many years and who recently, with the region's democratization movement, allowed their identities to be revealed, by themselves, in restricted circles. The author is enormously grateful to FFP (university professor and former terrorist group militant), EPM (stage actor and former terrorist group militant), and JLT (retired general and member of the intelligence service engaged in the repression of terrorism) for their trust in revealing, in confidence, facts, dates, names and relationships, as well as permitting access to personal correspondence, which made this work possible.
  - 7 It is worth remembering that intelligence actions alone did not neutralize the terrorist groups, but that the guarantee of a democratic environment and economic and social prosperity are necessary conditions for keeping these groups inactive. In addition to intelligence actions, those who aim at maintaining peace and security must put a value on maintaining the region's fragile equilibrium.
  - 8 This *modus operandi* was revealed after hundreds of cloned credit cards were discovered in an intelligence-supported operational action of the Federal Police of Brazil in the Triple Border area.
  - 9 This information was kindly supplied by a former officer of the Paraguayan Army. Extensive documentation accessed further included data on various relationships between members of the Arab community living in the Triple Border area, the affiliations of Sunni and Shiite radical groups with the Abdallah, Barakat and Huazi clans, and the relationships of those clans with Arab and Palestinian movements involved in terrorist attacks, as well as the association between individuals suspected of involvement in financing strategic terrorism and foreign banks in Paso de los Libres.
  - 10 Except the event in the Israeli embassy in Argentina.
  - 11 For other classifications and analyses, see, for example, Daniele 2005.
  - 12 According to Sebastian Vigliero (in Stanganelli 2004: 48), studies conducted in Europe agree in indicating that many terrorists do not exhibit serious pathologies, but a pattern can be perceived of aggressive personality associated with personal frustrations and professional failures, permeated by dysfunctional social behaviour.
  - 13 Palmer (1995) gains particular relevance, principally because he makes it possible to identify the fundamental role of the leadership of Abimael Guzmán in maintaining the internal cohesion of the Shining Path.
  - 14 In June 2005, the author interviewed three businessmen with ventures in Southern Cone areas subject to the possible emergence of terrorism, who revealed this situation. According to one, many local businessmen, primarily small businessmen, ended up opting for this practice for two reasons. First, the difficulty of access and risks of making formal contacts with the government to act against the extortion to which they are subjected. Second, even when such contacts are made, the responses are inadequate, slow, and for the most part absolutely disastrous. It was obvious during the interview with MM that the armed forces/police are absolutely unprepared to handle the demands of combating strategic terrorism, and that this inadequacy is not merely material, but procedural and, primarily, conceptual.
  - 15 The results of these debates are recorded in regional periodicals, and can be followed on internet sites. For example, see <http://www.estadao.com.br/internacional/noticias/2005/jul/29/111.htm> and [http://www.vermelho.org.br/diario/2005/0730/0730\\_base-para\\_guai.asp](http://www.vermelho.org.br/diario/2005/0730/0730_base-para_guai.asp).

- 16 One curious aspect was the 'revolt' of Uruguayan public officials against the requirement to establish certain port and airport security procedures that increased their operating costs in response to an American request. In other words, the perception of costs is dissociated from the expectation of benefits.

# CONFRONTING TERRORISM IN LATIN AMERICA

## Building cooperation in the Andean Ridge

*Boris Saavedra*

### **Introduction**

One would expect to see a high level of cooperation among the countries of Latin America. Diplomatic speeches and leaders' declarations after regional summits express the magnificent common cultural heritage, the mutually supportive struggle against overseas rule, a shared history of relative peace, similar concerns and perceptions of threat, a similar colonial past, and a number of other elements that are held in common. To some extent all this is true.

Latin America in recent decades has been relatively free of interstate conflicts, even though internally most countries were hardly immune to armed struggle. However this has not meant that confidence among the neighbours is a hallmark of regional relationships. The atmosphere is traditionally one of considerable distrust and the fact that this does not break out into open conflict more often should not lead us to the conclusion that this is a zone of peace.

Rather we should realize that many factors contribute to the lack of full-scale war, including a remarkable degree of US dominance in the region that began in the nineteenth century but was effective at the beginning of the twentieth century in central and south America, as in the case of the embargo of 1902–7 by Great Britain, Germany and several other powers which blockaded Venezuelan ports because of the government's failure to meet its debts. On two occasions, European warships bombarded the ports. The US successfully threatened the Europeans with the Great White Fleet and in the aftermath dominated Venezuela economically. By 1907, Venezuela had met the obligations to those powers. The Inter American Defence System, with all its limitations, provides a legal framework that allows peaceful settlement of conflicts. But peace is really more due to topographical and geographical restraint on warfare, deep logistical weaknesses in all Latin American militaries, and many other economic and social limitations to effective power projection.

Even if today's Western Hemispheric strategic environment is fragile, it is peaceful, in stark contrast to many other countries. There are no real military threats between neighbours. Democracy is the goal and the accepted model for government in the region. This is important because democracies tend to look out for the welfare of their people, seek positive relations with their neighbours, and most importantly usually do not make war against each other. However, democracy by itself is not enough, legitimate governance or responsible democracy is necessary to generate the capability to manage, coordinate, and sustain security and development effectively.

There are two major threats facing the world and particularly the Western Hemisphere: first, the lack of control of national territory and the people in it fairly and justly; second, internal factions or non-state actors seeking violent change within state borders.

Today security and stability require a coordinated and cooperative multilateral application of national civilian and military instruments of power. The bottom line is that a unifying and realistic common agenda for Western Hemisphere security is needed. The main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate that the use of institutional confidence and security-building measures (CSBM) is a fundamental tool in an asymmetric environment characterized by transnational security crime. The current interest in CSBM is a manifestation of the growing concern for peace and security among the nations' leaders, particularly in the Andean Ridge.

There are CSBM of first, second, and third generations based on changes in the strategic environment, goals achieved in execution, mechanisms used, and, the most important aspect, continuity in implementation. CSBM represent the basic mechanism and the starting point of the logic that will allow cooperation in combating non-traditional threats. There are some goals to be accomplished in parallel, such as: stable political–military relations; educating civilians and military in CSBM to create a critical mass of experts to educate society at large; educating and training the armed forces in joint and combined operations; creating the culture of inter-agency coordination, etc.

There is a chain of causality that needs to be followed in achieving security cooperation. The starting point should be CSBM within the nation. Second, inter-agency coordination needs to be introduced within the state and also at international level; this introduces another element: programmes to exchange expertise, intelligence and other resources to fight non-traditional threats, particularly illegal drug trafficking and terrorism.

There is a tendency in the region to develop Defence White Papers, which is a good step to reinforce mutual trust and confidence among the countries. However, these good written intentions need to be materialized with the application of institutional CSBM at national and international level.

Defence establishments in Latin America, particularly in the Andean Ridge, have been impacted among other things by four major elements: democracy, market economy, technology, and the strategic environment in the middle of a global system characterized by speed and connectivity. In recent months, the historically troubled but chronically neglected nations of the southern crescent

of the Andes – Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia – have made international headlines because of the clear signs of political instability due to the lack of sound political management combined with corruption, faltering economic reforms and deepening social distress, as well as inflamed opposition demagogues who have unseated a president in each of the three nations.

On the other hand, insurgency and terrorist groups have a drug-fuelled armed conflict raging in Colombia. A political crisis plaguing oil-rich Venezuela represents another challenge. These developments fall under the radar of most US policymakers and outside observers. However, we should remember the turbulent past with the warning of a possible return to violence, instability, and a fertile ground for transnational crime. Indeed these circumstances demand a new cooperative security architecture, for which CSBM are fundamental instruments.

### **Hemispheric security environment**

In October 2003 in Mexico, the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a new concept of hemispheric security through the passage of the Declaration on Security in the Americas, according to which, ‘the security threats, concerns, and other challenges in the hemispheric context are of diverse nature and multidimensional scope, and the traditional threats ... include political, economic, social, health, and environmental aspects’ (Organization of American States 2003: Section II, Para. 4). This broadens the traditional concept of security by including new and non-traditional threats. It incorporates democracy, the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law, and multilateralism as shared values of the hemisphere’s states. In addition, it recognizes the concept of human security to reaffirm the importance of the protection of human life.

The traditional military threat of external aggression retains credibility, but not the urgency it once had. Today’s foe is the terrorist, the drug trafficker, the arms trafficker, the document forger, the international crime boss, the money launderer and environmental degradation. These new threats are planted, grown and nurtured in the fertile ground of ungoverned territories, particularly in rural areas. The argument in general is that these territories are common in failing and failed states, which become the breeding ground for instability, criminality, insurgency, regional conflict and terrorism.

The tendency persists in most military academies and centres of strategic defence studies in the region to educate leaders under the traditional approach of national and regional security. Now that the unconventional threat is so closely linked to national defence, civilian and military leaders in the defence sector must be trained to recognize the problem. Military organizations must be able to work across a much broader field of activities than those of the conventional and traditional military setting. Civilian and military leaders today must understand the real nature of the threat in order to rethink the ways and means to confront these new threats with scarce resources in a multidimensional approach. However, there is a risk of remilitarization of internal security in the last few years, beginning with the involvement of the armed forces in roles that do not correspond to the



defence of the state. This could derail efforts by governments to subordinate the armed forces to civilian democratic institutions.

The lessons from more than 50 years of bitter experience show that struggles against all forms of asymmetric warfare often fail. According to Max Manwaring, responsible governance requires four things. First, state failure is a process, not an outcome: the state loses the capacity and/or the will to perform its essential governance and security functions. Second, if we focus only on the capacity to govern, we may lose sight of the fact that the state and its institutions may lack legitimacy. Third, a tendency resulting from the focus on state failure has been to concentrate attention on complete state collapse; the so-called failed state. Fourth, perhaps most important, responsible governance concerns the manner of governing rather than the fact of governing or the legal international recognition that a given regime represents a sovereign state (Manwaring 2004).

Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that provides fruitful ground for criminal and terrorist activities. By illegally diverting state funds, corruption undercuts services such as health, education, public transport, and state security and defence capability that are required to combat terrorism. The diversion of scarce resources by corrupt parties affects a government's ability to provide basic security to its citizens. Moreover, it can jeopardize the state's ability to encourage inter-agency coordination and international cooperation against terrorism.

### **Narco-traffickers and terrorist groups in the Andean Ridge**

Terrorists and drug trafficking organizations have shown within the global system a considerable flexibility in adjusting their operations, tactics and locations in reaction to government efforts. The linkage between terrorists and drug trafficking is sufficiently clear. According to Thomas Friedman,

Around the year 2000 we entered a whole new era: Globalization 3.0 where the world is shrinking from size small to size tiny and flattening the playing field at the same time. And while the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0 – the thing that gives it its unique character – is the newfound power for individuals to collaborate and compete globally and the lever that is enabling individuals and groups to go global so easily and so seamlessly is not the horsepower, and not hardware, but software – all sorts of new applications – in conjunction with the creation of a global fiber-optic network that has made us all next-door neighbours. Even worse, Globalization 3.0, different than previous ones, is driven not only by individuals but also by much more diverse non-Western, non-white groups of individuals. Therefore, the institutions combating each of these two illicit activities need to work together in close coordination

and cooperation to reduce the opportunities of drug traffickers to finance terrorists and other illegal organizations in their criminal activities.

(Friedman 2005: 10)

### *History and background*

In the 1960s, after a long period of political confrontation and dictatorship, with governments, students, left-wing intellectuals and Catholic radicals hoping to emulate Mao in China and Fidel Castro's communist revolution in Cuba, ELN (Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional) and FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) were founded in Colombia. A third Colombian terrorist group is the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), operational since the late 1970s and supported by both landowners and drug traffickers. During the 1990s, AUC expanded its reach and now operates throughout central and western Colombia. The Shining Path (*Sendero Luminoso*, SL) terrorist group originated in 1969 in Peru but 17 May 1980 (the date of the first Peruvian national election after 12 years of military rule) commemorates the start of the group's armed struggle, and some of the most violent attacks have been timed to mark this date; SL operated until 1999, when its main leaders were arrested, but it emerged again in 2001. The other terrorist group that operated in Peru is *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA), founded in 1984 by two university students who had left SL for political ideology reasons.

### *Political ideology*

While still professing political doctrine based on the communist ideologies of Marx, Mao and Lenin, analysis of insurgents who use terrorism in Latin America and particularly in the Andean Ridge shows that some of the groups' political ideas are hazy at best, makeshift at worst. It is likely that ideology is used mainly as a glue to hold the organization together and to indoctrinate new recruits. Although the ideology does not play a significant part in their formation, organization and policy, it would be completely inaccurate to portray these groups as nothing more than drugs cartels as some governments and many in Washington have tried to do. The leaders of these organizations do not live in luxury and are not motivated by the desire to amass a huge personal fortune. For them it is all about power.

Most insurgent and terrorist groups that operate in the Andean Ridge say that they represent the rural poor against the wealthy classes and oppose American influence in their countries through the privatization of natural resources, multinational corporations and justified violence. However, the AUC in Colombia provides the landowners who finance it with some social services and with defence against leftist insurgents. The group has also entered Colombian politics, and it is involved in and profits from the drug trade. The aim of MRTA is to rid Peru of imperialist influences, replacing the central government with a Marxist structure and removing all symbols of foreign influence. In particular, the group

has voiced anger about the US and Japanese presence in the country. In contrast with SL, MRTA does not aim to liberate or hold territory, but to instigate a popular revolution through establishing local power bases.

### *Foreign bases/supply lines*

Since the breakdown of peace talks and the launch of the war on terrorism, FARC has found itself on the US State Department's international terrorism list, and its official foreign emissaries have had to go underground following years of overt international diplomacy in Europe and Mexico. The US also issued indictments as well as extradition requests on charges of drugs trafficking against several FARC commanders, such as military chief Jorge Briceño.

This crackdown appears largely symbolic, however, and has not interrupted supply lines from all neighbouring countries, Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, Peru and Ecuador, since the borders are extremely porous. With the funds available to FARC it has had little difficulty in obtaining supplies of any kind. There is also increasing evidence that FARC is developing networks and sister rebel groups in other countries, particularly Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia and Peru.

FARC's feeling of security abroad must have been threatened with the arrest in Ecuador in January 2004 of Ricardo Palmera (alias Simon Trinidad), the highest ranking member of the organization to be captured. There is also an ongoing controversy over the arrest of Rodrigo Granda, a member of FARC's international front. While Colombian authorities said he was arrested on 14 December 2004 in Colombia, evidence is emerging that he was kidnapped in Venezuela and smuggled across the border.

ELN has experienced huge growth during its history. Many villagers who do not actively support the group often cooperate with the guerrillas as they distrust the military and fear reprisals from the guerrillas. In addition, ELN has cooperated with other left-wing groups in Colombia. There has also been heightened speculation over a possible ELN relationship with President Chavez in Venezuela. It has been long suspected that Chavez has supported the left-wing objectives of the ELN. Nevertheless, there has been no concrete proof that Chavez ever offered financial or military aid to the guerrillas.

The majority of ELN funding is derived from extortion or from kidnapping and ransom. In 1998 alone, the ELN obtained USD84 million in ransom and USD255 million through extortion, much of it paid by foreign oil companies through 'revolutionary taxes'. The ELN is also believed to have accrued substantial funds from the gold and coal industries using similar methods.

Since the 1990s the AUC has grown substantially. Its base is in northern Colombia, where the drug traffickers and landowners who support the group hold sway. But today they have extended its reach and now operate throughout central and western Colombia, and also in cities.

Since 2001 SL has re-emerged, with an active recruitment drive in universities and poor rural communities (where drug funds rather than brutality have seen the group's popularity rise). SL's attempt to regroup has been aided by popular

dissatisfaction with Toledo's government, particularly among coca growers, who fear an erosion of their livelihood through coca eradication schemes.

Although some funding of MRTA is provided by European and US support networks, it has typically been self-sufficient. Funding has come through robberies and associated crime, kidnapping, ransom, extortion (including the collection of revolutionary taxes) and drug trafficking. In recent years, MRTA has been forced back to rural Peru and the country's poppy fields. The group has therefore strengthened its ties to the narcotics trade, although this is limited by the small number of MRTA operatives.

### *Communications and internet*

One of the major characteristics of today's communications is the idea of making the entire world's knowledge available to anyone and everyone, anytime, anywhere. In Friedman's terms, Globalization 3.0, characterized by the power of individuals and groups to collaborate, is very important because it is the ability to build and deploy one's own personal or group supply of information, knowledge and entertainment. Drug traffickers and terrorist groups in the Andean Ridge are self-empowered with very sophisticated websites that allow them to reach a global audience without any restriction or control. It is very different from anything that preceded it. Radio was one-to-many and TV was one-to-many. The telephone was one-to-one. But the computer has empowered the formation of global communities of ideologies and interests across international and cultural boundaries.

### **Analysis of the strategic security environment**

Contemporary security and stability in the Western Hemisphere are fragile. Structural problems have been compounded with the evolution of globalization. For this analysis we will begin with the explanation of two major tools used by terrorists today, asymmetry and idiosyncrasy, and most important, what happened in the last decade of the twentieth century, keeping in mind the social, political and economic characteristics of historical evolution. In this manner, we will be able to understand the current regional security environment and at the same time present a perspective through the analysis of the recent past and its implications in today's security environment.

Asymmetry and idiosyncrasy are the combination of tools used by terrorists to achieve their political goals. According to Montgomery C. Meigs, asymmetry means the absence of a common basis of comparison with respect to a quality or in an operational context, a capability. Idiosyncrasy has a different connotation, possessing a peculiar or eccentric pattern. In a military sense, the term idiosyncrasy connotes an unorthodox approach or means of applying a capability, one that does not follow the rules and at times in a sinister sense (Meigs 2003). Today, international terrorist organizations apply the same methodology as terrorists since the early days; what have changed are the mechanism of attack and the levels of violence and brutality. Terrorists use asymmetric means to cleverly

develop idiosyncratic attacks on their targets; in so doing they are changing the operational and strategic environment.

This is the new strategic environment, where non-conventional threats represent the most important challenge to our societies. Terrorism, drug trafficking, vigilantism and refugee flows are interconnected, but the most important aspect here is that each time a person buys illicit drugs he is supporting those other criminal activities. In the Western Hemisphere, drug producers and traffickers hire thugs, gangs and even terrorists to protect their interests.

Another major problem is the idiosyncratic attack using both military and non-military capabilities. By attacking at a point he selects in an attempt to avoid government response and operational advantages, the enemy also exploits the freedom of movement, the general laxness in public security and the state's weaknesses or blind spots operating in open democratic societies; the terrorist is capable of inflicting harm at will. The enemy also has the ability to continuously evolve new tactics, and due to the cellular and compartmental nature of his support structure, that structure may be eliminated completely once the mission is accomplished.

Hemispheric security cooperation among Latin American countries is complex due to the tension between the political and military elites. Today's security and stability require a coordinated and cooperative multilateral application of national civilian and military instruments of power. However, a broadened and realistic definition of national security will require a major revision of the military role to include a controversial protection of the citizen and their government. This is a serious civil-military relations issue because there could be a reversion to past practices in which some military acted as a parallel and autonomous political power superior to that of the civilians.

The 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States represent an important point of inflexion. The change in security strategy and the focus on the global war on terrorism increased the gap between US and Latin American perceptions about fighting terrorism. In Latin America, even if all countries have suffered terrorist attacks, it is not priority number one. However, political support was given to the US through an OAS declaration right after 9/11.

In the post-9/11 context, it is clear that the region has been influenced by the new security paradigm and the definition of terrorism as promoted by US policy. The US-led campaign against terrorism has, unfortunately, become a cover for some governments who want to deflect attention away from other more important security problems such as urban criminality, drug consumption, corruption in law enforcement agencies, etc.

Another sticking point is that no consensus on the 'threat' has emerged. There is strong consensus on a strategic vision of peace, stability, security, prosperity and civil society in the region. But with no agreement on the threat, there can be no agreement on a unified ends-ways-means policy and strategy that could contribute directly to achieving that cooperation required to combat terrorism and its associated criminal activities.

The lack of political leaders with experience in defence and security issues has been a matter that has taken on more importance in recent years; therefore, today universities and strategic studies centres have implemented new courses in order to prepare civilians in defence and security issues. The Center for Hemispheric Defence Studies at the US's National Defense University has been one of the leading institutions for fostering education on civil–military relations in democratic societies.

Failing and failed states are characterized by the lack of solid institutions, corruption and illegitimate governance, which all become the breeding ground for instability, criminality, insurgency, regional conflict and terrorism. They can host 'evil' networks of all kinds, whether they involve criminal business enterprises, drug-trafficking or some form of ideological crusade. The Andean Ridge is on the road to this condition.

The bottom line is that a unifying and realistic common agenda for Western Hemisphere security is needed. But before the United States unilaterally initiates 'building blocks' based on the Rio Treaty to implement a common agenda, before any proposals for standing military and naval forces for the hemisphere are initiated by countries such as Argentina and Chile, and before the OAS is embarrassed into producing some sort of *ad hoc* security architecture to confront the current and future security environment, a real national strategy should be developed for each of the countries.

### **Building security cooperation**

The first effort to create unification in Latin America was by Simon Bolivar in his famous Jamaica Letter of 6 September 1815 where he outlined many of his beliefs. He expressed his belief in a union of Spanish American countries in order to achieve full freedom. The Jamaica Letter is one of his first public statements about his vision for the future of Spanish America. The second important step in integration and security cooperation in the Americas was the creation of the Inter American Defence System more than a half century ago, in March 1942, as a response to World War II. This organization transformed itself into a Cold War organization to counter communism.

From the old Pan-American System Union there emerged in 1947 the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty), which oriented hemispheric security in terms of the Cold War. Later, on 30 April 1948, 21 countries of the Western Hemisphere met in Bogotá, Colombia, to adopt the OAS Charter to confirm their support of common goals and respect for all countries' sovereignty.

Even if confidence and security-building measures were mentioned in Helsinki in 1975, the real benefit and success of this mechanism began in the 1980s during the Stockholm conference where the CSBM were more oriented toward conventional security, with clear definitions of military operations, implementation of mechanisms of inspection, verification, evaluation and follow-up. At the end of

the Cold War the United Nations paid more attention to this mechanism in order to achieve peace and stability around the world.

In Latin America, CSBM were not accepted at the beginning because there was a general belief that the region had counted on mechanisms allowing for regional peace and stability since the early days of independence. One good example of this was the Ayacucho Declaration in 1974.

On December 9, 1974, eight Latin American nations stated their intention to consider arms limitations. These nations jointly declared the need to create conditions which permit effective limitation of armaments and put an end to their acquisition for offensive military purposes, in order to dedicate all possible resources to economic development.

(US Dept of State 2003a)

That represents clear evidence of the overwhelming effort to keep the region in peace and stability. However, most countries by that time were under military regimes, keeping a military focus with respect to defence and security issues.

In more than 20 years of implementing CSBM in Latin America, there are two crucial points of inflection in security policy. The first, which is conceptual, is the Santiago declaration on CSBM and the second, which is organizational, is the creation of the Security and Defence Commission at the OAS. Today, we have CSBM of the first, second, and third generations based on changes in the strategic environment, goals achieved in their execution, mechanisms used and, the most important aspect, continuity in implementation.

Since the mid-1990s a growing global political violence is clashing with global economic integration and is affecting democratic consolidation in the region. New, non-state actors that conduct terrorist and other asymmetric warfare demand coordination and cooperation at national and international levels in order to be effective against these new, non-conventional threats that affect our societies at large. There are three levels of coordination and cooperation.

The first is at the national level among government institutions, particularly within the armed forces, expressed as joint operations between each of the branches of the military within each country. Joint capability entails information-sharing, planning and training within the services; this represents the most important and fundamental cooperation and coordination.

The second is between the armed forces and security forces such as the police and customs. Armed forces must, within their constitutional and legal constraints, support and cooperate with the law enforcement agencies in combating these new transnational threats.

The third is cooperation among sovereign states at the global level, at the sub-regional level and finally at the hemispheric level. This final level is starting to take hold in our hemisphere. The fifth Defence Ministerial Conference of the Americas held in Santiago in November 2002 emphasized the 'desire to strengthen inter-institutional and intergovernmental coordination, which permits the preservation and stability of peace'. Cooperation and coordination among nations are much

more complex than just internal communication. They must be built on a foundation of mutual respect and trust and they must be mutually beneficial. Without these precepts, there is no cooperation (V Conference 2002).

Based on the increasing problem of illegal drug trafficking and terrorism in the Andean region, and on the necessity of mutual respect and trust among countries, the first Andean presidential council on 23 May 1990 decided to create a system of group coordination on the issues of combating illegal drugs and terrorism (Comunidad Andina Secretaría General 2004). Later, in 2001, an Andean Plan of Cooperation was established to combat illegal drugs and associated criminal activities. In its agenda, the use of CSBM was contemplated as a small mechanism to achieve security cooperation (*ibid.*).

Working together in multilateral exercises and forming trust through transparency are just a few of the confidence and security-building measures that have formed a structure for multilateral security cooperation in the Americas. However, this mutual trust requires the foundation of solid institutional CSBM that could assure continuity in order to avoid its disappearance when a critical situation arose. In other words, confidence and security-building measures need to be built bottom-up within the national level, to be able to establish it later on at the international level.

### **Confidence and security-building measures in the Andean Ridge**

According to Gaston Chillier and Laurie Freeman, the Declaration on Security in the Americas, adopted by the OAS in October 2003, created such a broad concept of security that almost any problem can now be considered a security threat (Chillier and Freeman 2005). Nevertheless, given the current security environment in the Andean Ridge and the concept of terrorism as understood by the United States, the gap between their two security visions increases and the implementation of this new multidimensional concept of security constitutes a risk that major regional problems may cause a military response. In addition, Chillier and Freeman conclude that,

The Sixth Conference of Defence Ministers is a good example of how the OAS's new multidimensional concept conforms to the US security agenda for the region. The conference's declaration, known as the Quito Declaration, refers to the new concept of multidimensional security, but emphasizes the threat of terrorism above all else. Terrorism occupies a disproportionately large place in the declaration compared to other threats or concerns, in a hemisphere where, aside from Colombia, there is not significant terrorist activity.

(*Ibid.*)

Fragility, political instability, economic stagnation, a growing gap between poor and rich, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, organized crime and terrorism all



characterize the security environment in the Andean Ridge. However, one of the most important problems is personal security, due to political and socioeconomic movements such as the Shining Path in Peru, the indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador, and fighting economic marginalization born of years of severe poverty, discrimination, violence and the lack of governance (Van Cott 1996: 1–5). There is a lack of state control over the border areas in the entire hemisphere, but particularly in the Andean region; this represents a breeding ground for illegal drug trafficking, arms and human smuggling, and all kinds of criminal activities. The creation of a national strategy in order to fortify public institutions, eradicate corruption and educate public servants in inter-agency coordination is a major priority.

The year 1989 represents the beginning of the road to a common security policy for the Andean region, in fighting illegal drugs and terrorism. Discussions of elements in this policy comprise integration, prevention, and security. However, it was 23 May 1990 when the Andean Presidential Council created a coordination group to fight illegal drugs and terrorism in the region. In August 1997, the Andean Community of Nations created a secretariat to take control of security issues, but it was not until June 2002 that an Andean Plan of Cooperation against Drug Trafficking and Criminal Activities (APCADTCA) was approved.

This plan in its integral concept established, among other things, a social agenda, with specific actions in security issues such as the creation, encouragement and use of CSBM in the Andean region. However, the implementation of this mechanism has been very slow. The Ecuador–Peru conflict represented the most serious situation, leaving clear among the member countries the lack of a common security and defence policy.

The lessons learned at the OAS, particularly in the Hemispheric Security Commission from the Ecuador–Peru conflict, the Ushuaia Declaration in July 1999, creation of MERCOSUR and the Bolivian and Chilean peace zone, as well as the acceleration and deepening of free trade between Ecuador and Peru in May 1999, are some of the elements that disclose the common mechanisms that could help to create a common security policy in the region.

For more than 20 years, CSBM in the Andean Ridge have been focused on conventional security between neighbouring countries and in border operations, while achieving a lack of general confidence that could have improved a better mutual understanding among the countries. There is a need to improve the education of civilians and military as a CSBM, in order to create a critical mass of experts who will communicate and educate society at large.

## **Conclusions**

In the last 16 years after the end of the Cold War, the world, the Western Hemisphere, and particularly the Andean region have gone quickly through conditions that brought an early change in strategic behaviour. However, the developments since 11 September 2001 have created a watershed in the security strategy that demands

a new way of thinking. It is clear that the region has been influenced by the new security paradigm and the definition of the war on terrorism as promoted by US policy.

There is a strong consensus on a strategic vision of peace, stability, security, prosperity and civil society in the region. But with no agreement on the threat, there can be no agreement on a unified ends-ways-means policy and strategy that could contribute directly to achieving the cooperation required to combat terrorism and its associated criminal activities.

Most insurgent groups that use terrorism have a clear link with drug dealers and have prioritized safeguarding the organizational structure in order to engage in a military struggle. In other words, insurgent groups sacrifice political goals in order to preserve military strength, which would mean that the ultimate political aim (the social revolution) has been subordinated to safeguarding the existence of the group. Today, insurgent groups in the Andean Ridge have lost credibility because a large gap exists between political rhetoric and results. In particular, the claim to be fighting for the poor and social justice while engaging in criminal activities with drug traffickers and committing atrocities on the population is one of the major complaints.

The use of CSBM is a fundamental tool that inherently requires cooperation. The interest in the application of CSBM is a manifestation of the growing concern among the nations' leaders for peace and security and a tendency toward a cooperative security and defence. Even if it has not been officially accepted, it looks like the most appropriate mechanism to face the threats and challenges in our hemisphere.

From the creation of the Inter American Defence Board in 1942 until the present, the majority of security and defence initiatives have been supported by the US. In other words nothing important happens in these matters without US leadership. However, today there is a general tendency to believe that countries must go beyond the restricted and unilateral vision of the US and its fight against illegal drug trafficking and terrorism. CSBM represent basic elements to fortify the potential initiatives in security and defence that could emerge from the region, particularly in the Andean Ridge, fighting illegal drug trafficking, arms and human smuggling and terrorism. According to Col USA Joseph R. Nuñez,

security cooperation in the 21st century requires a greater sense of partnership that provides major benefits to all states that participate in international partnerships for security. Therefore, the United States must change its traditional attitude of directing, and be more willing to listen to others. On the other hand, Latin American countries must be prepared to honour responsibilities that arise from these cooperative agreements. The way to achieve cooperation requires facing the threats and challenges of today's security environment by building institutional mutual trust and confidence among the countries.

(Nuñez 2002)

The movement toward a mutual beneficial economic community, a commitment to democracy, and a willingness to face the new, non-traditional threats require integration that could be achieved through security cooperation. It is the most responsive way to act collectively but in order to achieve cooperation among the nations, one must start with institutional CSBM.

Seeking a joint operation capability requires some fundamental steps such as stable political–military relations; in other words, political and military leaders need to establish clear policy guidance in the defence sector to create a clear joint and combined operations doctrine that they need to introduce in the formal military education and training system. They should create legislation that will support the joint and combined doctrine in the use of the military when it is needed, particularly in order to combat the new threats and challenges.

Second, CSBM at government agencies’ level are a basic requirement for effective and efficient inter-agency coordination. This is a new culture that needs to be introduced within the state and also at international level. Different agencies in government have a very narrow view of their scope of responsibilities and their relationship. In other words they lack the capabilities to coordinate with each other, for example, the armed forces coordinating with law enforcement.

Once security cooperation has been achieved at the national level, and the foundational elements for security cooperation at the bilateral, regional and hemispheric levels have been established, everything would depend on the international agreements, legislation and verification mechanisms (see Figure 12.1).

International inter-agency coordination introduces other elements in the game: international organizations such as the United Nations, the OAS, the Andean Community of Nations and MERCOSUR. Non-governmental organizations represent still more elements. These organizations play a major role by addressing

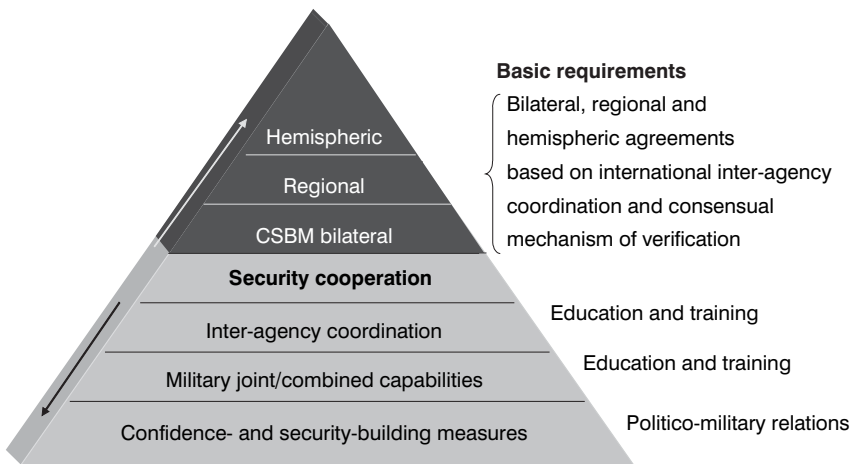


Figure 12.1 Security cooperation triangle

the current security needs for the entire hemisphere, as well as all other economic, social and political projects; therefore, based on the connectivity among these agencies, they should work in security cooperation projects with the following criteria:

- The cooperative security architecture should have a flexible organization in order to be able to quickly respond to problems.
- It should be able to coordinate the assembly and deployment of a multinational force when it is needed for missions such as humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, combined operations against illicit drug trafficking, counter-terrorism, etc.
- It must be empowered to act decisively and competently, but with complete respect for state sovereignty and avoiding one state dominating the agenda and controlling the mission.
- It should be able to protect the major hemispheric projects without interrupting the dynamic flow of activities.

Defence establishments in Latin America, particularly in the Andean Ridge, have been impacted, among other things, by four major elements: democracy, market economy, technology, and a global system characterized by speed and connectivity. Insurgency in combination with drug trafficking is one of the major threats to security and stability in the region. These circumstances demand a new cooperative security architecture.

Particular attention should be given to the indigenous movements in the western part of Latin America, from Mexico to Chile. Since the Conquest, indigenous communities throughout Latin America, but particularly in the Andean Ridge, have endured with astonishing restraint a multitude of impositions, exclusions and indignities. Sometimes that restraint has been punctuated by cycles of rebellion and repression. The violent confrontation between the Indian organizations and the state in recent years indicates a growing frustration. However, in some countries of the Andean Ridge, leftist political groups in combination with retired military officers have exploited this frustration for political ambitions. Special attention should be given to the potential nexus of these Indian groups led by leftists, and disaffected military or opportunistic international Islamist insurgent organizations for the commonality of interests, particularly in the environment of the current anti-Americanism in Latin America.

## COUNTERING IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM IN THE CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN

*John T. Fishel and Mary Grizzard*

### **The Americas and terrorism: an introduction**

Although it is an obvious cliché to say that on September 11, 2001 the world changed for Americans, it remains, nonetheless, an accurate statement. From the moment of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and the aborted third attack aimed at Washington, DC, international terrorism became the principal threat to the United States. All other threats came to be viewed in light of their relationship to the war against al Qaeda and other violent Islamist *jihadi* extremists.

From a perspective south of the Rio Grande, however, international terrorism did not rise to anything like the level of the premier threat. For the Latin Americans many other problems have significantly higher priorities than international terrorism. Even Colombia, the only state in the Western Hemisphere that is directly threatened by a terrorist insurgency, perceives the threat in generally local terms. Neither Colombia nor other incipient cases have any apparent links to the Islamist *ihadists*.

What we see, therefore, is a sharp discrepancy in threat perception between the United States and the other states of the Americas. This chapter will focus on one sub-region of the Western Hemisphere – the Circum-Caribbean. We will argue that it is anti-Americanism that complicates our efforts to get the governments and people of the region to raise their perception of the priority of the terrorist threat and therefore limits their cooperation with the United States. At the same time, we will argue that there is significant potential for the perceived threats to the sub-region to act as international terrorist enablers. It is this coincidence of interest, we suggest, that may be used to enhance cooperation between the US and the governments of the region.

The Circum-Caribbean region is defined as the area encompassed by Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. In the region as a whole, as documented by a recent State Department report, the 2004 analysis of international terrorism,

the international terrorist threat remained low, compared to other regions of the world, but ‘terrorists may seek safe-haven, financing, recruiting, illegal travel documentation, or access to the United States from the area and pose serious threats’ (US Dept of State 2005). It is the very closeness of this region to the US, as well as the lack of effective immigration and border control, and particularly the serious nature of criminal gangs that have spread from there into the US that give us concern.

*The nature of the threat: gangs and what they can do*

The seriousness of the US gang problem and its connections with Latin America were emphasized in remarks on 1 August 2005 by Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff at a Joint Press Conference on Community Shield (a national law enforcement programme against gangs):

Gang violence and gang criminal behavior is the kind of threat to our vulnerabilities that all of us – federal, state and local officials – are very, very concerned about. Indeed, our threat assessments indicate that many gang members come to this country from overseas, or from other parts of the North and South American continent, which means that they are subject to our immigration laws and that when they violate those laws, we can take action against them. We are deeply committed to enforcing these immigration laws and restoring integrity to our immigration system.<sup>1</sup>

The most well-known and violent gang is the Mara Salvatrucha gang (MS-13), which formed in Los Angeles when people began fleeing El Salvador because of civil war. Since the 1980s, the gang has spread across the United States and now has members from many Central American countries and Mexico. MS-13 violence encompasses robbery, car-jacking, murder, trafficking of people, drugs and arms, migrant smuggling, as well as murder for hire.

As a result of US legislation in 1996, many Central American gang members in the US who were convicted of crimes were deported to their countries of origin. Upon returning to El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala, the deported criminals re-formed gangs, and recruited locals to expand their numbers. At first, the recipient countries were not notified of the criminal status of these deportees, but US reforms in recent years include notification of criminal records at the time of deportation (Arana 2005).

While Central American governments have adopted hard as well as soft measures in an effort to contain these violent gangs, the problem has expanded alarmingly. The estimates of numbers of gang members in Central America vary widely, but the US Southern Command has given the figure of 70–100,000. The Justice Department estimates there are approximately 30,000 gangs, with 800,000 members, in 2,500 communities in the US. MS-13 alone is estimated to have from 8,000 to 10,000 members, in 33 states and the District of Colombia.<sup>2</sup>

In general, Californian gangs, particularly from the Los Angeles area, continue to have a major influence on Mexican American and Central American gangs in the US and in Latin America. The main rival of MS-13 in the US is M-18 (Barrio 18), formed by Mexican immigrants on '18<sup>th</sup> Street', in the Rampart section of Los Angeles, as early as the 1960s. M-18 was the first gang to accept recruits from all races and states.

While there were concerns that al Qaeda may have been in Central America in 2004, making contacts with gang members, US officials maintained that there was no hard evidence for these concerns (Sullivan 2005).

### **Country and regional response to gangs**

Many analysts believe that gang violence in the Circum-Caribbean region threatens social stability, inhibits economic and social development, discourages foreign investment, and may accelerate illegal immigration to the US, as well as drug smuggling and trafficking in arms and persons. Most gangs are in the US, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico, with some activity also in Nicaragua, Panama, Costa Rica and many areas in the Caribbean.

#### ***The US, Central America and Mexico***

In the US, as a result of MS-13's high profile and violence, the FBI is focusing its gang crackdown on this group by creating a National Gang Intelligence Center and establishing the MS-13 National Gang Task Force. In Central America, governments introduced tough, repressive anti-gang laws (described as *super mano dura* or very hard hand), which caused an immediate drop in gang violence. Nonetheless, even as gang members were jailed, new leaders took their place, and new territory was scouted, leading to further spread of gangs. Subsequently, as a complement to the crackdown, several governments tried other strategies, such as prevention and rehabilitation, termed *mano amiga* or friendly hand. Also, in 2005, governments began to cooperate on the issue, as for instance with the organized, joint security forces in Guatemala and El Salvador, to patrol for gang activity along their shared borders.

From Central America, gangs spread with their objectives of territoriality, crime and dominance over others through seven Mexican states, and along the border with the US. While law enforcement authorities in Mexico have expressed concern that these gangs may be associated with al Qaeda and other terrorist groups, there has been no verifiable evidence to support the association.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, their presence near the US, their sociopathic, carelessly violent nature, as well as their capability of smuggling persons and arms are of great concern.

#### ***Gangs in the Caribbean***

A number of Caribbean countries are now coming to terms with the reality of gangs that engage in criminal acts, resulting in significantly higher crime levels in

the region. One Caribbean Prime Minister has blamed the trend of forming gangs on the hundreds of deportees who have been sent back to the Caribbean from the US and Canada.<sup>4</sup> That high numbers of deportees may have had a big impact on crime bears some credibility when one considers that an estimated 13,000 Caribbean criminals have been deported from the United States since 1999. While Jamaica has the highest level of violence, accounting for 60 per cent of the crime in the region, and some 85 gangs,<sup>5</sup> violence is also on the rise in other countries across the English-speaking Caribbean. Although the Virgin Islands, St Kitts, and Trinidad-Tobago have a murder rate only 40 per cent that of Jamaica, they continue to see an increasing presence of drug-dealing gangs.<sup>6</sup>

### *Organized crime*

It may be said that the transnational nature of gangs, and drugs, arms and people trafficking certainly overlaps the broader category of transnational organized crime, with its ability to exist in the ‘ungoverned spaces’ wherever government is weakest, such as in the sparsely guarded border areas between states.<sup>7</sup> In recognition of the security threat to the Hemisphere that transnational organized crime represents, the United Nations and the Organization of American States have addressed this with several measures, including UN Resolution 2116, ‘Fighting Transnational Organized Crime in the Hemisphere’, on 7 June 2005. This Resolution proposes several courses of action, including urging members to adopt or strengthen legislation and cooperation in order to combat the various manifestations of transnational organized crime in the hemisphere, such as ‘illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, illicit arms trafficking, trafficking in persons, smuggling of migrants, cyber crime, criminal youth gangs, kidnapping, and corruption, as well as connections between terrorism and these manifestations’ (Organization of American States 2005).

### **The ambience of anti-Americanism**

With our blood we are blocking the path leading to the annexation of the peoples of our America to that chaotic and brutal north which so despises them.

I lived in the monster and I know its entrails ...

José Martí, 7 April 1895 (Quoted in Dopico 2004: 47)

Anti-Americanism has a long and respected history in Latin America, as seen in the above quotation from Cuba’s poet hero of its war for independence. According to Greg Grandin:

Two broad arcs of antagonism define US-Latin American relations. The first began in the early nineteenth century and paralleled the initial phase of US territorial and economic expansion. Latin American intellectuals,



politicians, and nationalists reacted with increasing hostility not only toward the growing influence of US capital ... but also toward the ever more frequent and threatening military interventions. By the beginning of the twentieth century, such actions inflamed a generation of political and literary critics of US power ...

(Grandin 2004: 19)

Among these critics were Martí, Rubén Darío of Nicaragua, and Isidro Fabela of Mexico, all well known political and literary figures of the time. Their critique drew on specific policy disagreement but also ‘from a more diffuse Spanish antipathy toward Anglo-Protestant “individualism” and “materialism”’ (ibid.: 20). Subsequently, opposition to the US grew in the period of the Cold War based on policies such as the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954, support for Latin American dictators from the 1950s through the 1970s, and the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua 20 years later.

Nevertheless, the attitudes of Latin Americans toward the United States were deeply ambivalent. ‘A number of post-World War II polls carried out by UNESCO, the USIA, and other groups ... provid[ed] statistical confirmation that US values held great appeal for much of the world’s population’ (ibid.: 25). A 1958 National Intelligence Estimate supported this conclusion. Latin American attitudes ‘expressed “envy by disparaging US materialism,” yet wanted our consumer goods and capital; they espoused pan-Americanism but engaged in petty nationalism; they chafed at our military power but wanted our protection’ (ibid.). Nothing in the ensuing half century would change that conclusion.

Survey research data since 9/11, however, has shown a disturbing worldwide trend in attitudes toward the United States. This has been a significant rise in anti-Americanism – well over what had been seen in the previous eight years of the Clinton Administration. Nevertheless, it is not a new trend but rather the acceleration of one.

In a survey published in December 2001 by the Pew Trust (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2001) opinion leaders in many countries stated that US policies were a principal cause of the 9/11 attacks. This was true of 58 per cent of the Latin American respondents. In addition, 71 per cent felt that it was good for the US to feel vulnerable. A mere 37 per cent of the Latin American respondents felt that the US was acting multilaterally at that time. In the same survey 58 per cent of the respondents expressed resentment of US power; 51 per cent said that the US causes the gap between rich and poor nations while 44 per cent saw the power of multinational corporations as a reason for disliking the US. Unlike other areas of the world, only 7 per cent of Latin Americans saw US support of Israel as a major problem (compared with 17 per cent for the next highest area of the world).

As this survey data demonstrates, elite attitudes toward the US are largely negative for, apparently, the same reasons as they have been throughout the history of inter-American interaction. George Yudice cites evidence from an informal

survey of Latin American intellectuals that he took along with public statements by other intellectuals and political activists. The reactions to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, were like a release of pent-up rage at the long history of US interventions in the region's affairs. Some prominent Latin American intellectuals felt vindicated, as if the attacks were a retaliatory strike on their behalf (Yudice 2004).

Although these statements are filled with hyperbole, these views are widely accepted in Latin America by both opinion leaders and by the population at large. Negative views of the US are confirmed by a BBC World Service poll conducted between November 2004 and January 2005 that asked respondents in 21 countries their views regarding President Bush's re-election.<sup>8</sup> On average and across all 21 countries, 58 per cent said that President Bush's re-election was negative for global security while only 26 per cent said it was positive. Among the most negative countries were the Latin Americans. Only 6 per cent of Argentines, 17 per cent of Brazilians, 19 per cent of Chileans and 4 per cent of Mexicans saw the President's re-election as positive for global security. By contrast, 79 per cent of Argentines, 78 per cent of Brazilians, 62 per cent of Chileans and 58 per cent of Mexicans saw it as negative. The most disturbing aspect of the data is that these views translated directly into how the respondents saw the American people. Only 13 per cent of Argentines, 28 per cent of Brazilians, 16 per cent of Chileans and 14 per cent of Mexicans felt better about the American people in the wake of Bush's re-election while 54 per cent of Argentines, 59 per cent of Brazilians, 40 per cent of Chileans, and 49 per cent of Mexicans saw Americans in a worse light.

The perception of the United States by Latin Americans is similar to that of many other countries. According to a report in the *Financial Times* based on the Nation Brands Index (NBI) survey by GMI, 'The US is increasingly viewed as a "culture free zone" inhabited by arrogant and unfriendly people ...' (Allison 2005). Yet, the US remains among a select group of nations at the top of the NBI. According to Simon Arnholt, developer of the NBI, 'It seems that to be a top nation brand, the country needs to be stable, liberal, democratic and Western, with a tendency toward neutrality' ([http://www.gmi-mr.com/gmipoll/press\\_room\\_wppk\\_pr.phtml](http://www.gmi-mr.com/gmipoll/press_room_wppk_pr.phtml). 16 August 2005). The US ranks number 11 on the survey among 13 Western democracies and ahead of all non-Western states in the list of 25. The major problem was the perception that the US government could not be trusted to make reasonable decisions on peace and security.

Although there is a clear ambience of anti-Americanism in Latin America, it is based more on perceived policy disagreement than on value conflict. Granted that there is an element of the latter, however, there is strong support for the democratic values that are central to what the United States is and does. As Table 13.1 shows, Latin Americans in general and Central Americans and Mexicans in particular strongly support democracy as the best form of government in spite of its problems.

In this survey the eight countries identified from our sub-region do not deviate significantly from the Latin American norm.<sup>9</sup> The survey data also clearly indicates that Latin American support for democracy is aspirational. Citizens believe that

Table 13.11 Latin American attitudes toward democratic values

	<i>In spite of problems democracy is the best form of government</i>	<i>In some cases authoritarian government could be preferable</i>	<i>Powerful interests govern in their own interests</i>	<i>Democracy is the only system that can achieve development</i>	<i>Type of government doesn't matter if it solves economic problems</i>	<i>A little government repression is OK</i>	<i>Private enterprise in charge of the country is OK if it solves economic problems</i>
Costa Rica	82%	7%	68%	79%	42%	78%	39%
Panama	77%	8%	67%	80%	56%	71%	52%
Dominican Republic	76%	11%	85%	76%	62%	67%	63%
Nicaragua	74%	10%	74%	76%	70%	59%	68%
Mexico	79%	14%	75%	75%	67%	54%	48%
Guatemala	54%	11%	64%	60%	57%	78%	45%
El Salvador	66%	10%	63%	67%	56%	78%	44%
Honduras	69%	11%	66%	75%	70%	78%	54%
Latin America	71%	15%	71%	72%	55%	64%	47%

Source: Latino-barometro 2004 <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>

democracy is the system that can achieve the development they hope for. This belief, in turn, makes their support for democracy contingent on its success in attaining economic goals. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that a majority of all Latin Americans, as well as in seven of the eight countries surveyed in the sub-region, agreed with the statement that the type of government does not matter so long as it solves their economic problems. Only in Costa Rica did a majority support democracy in an unqualified manner.

One set of attitudes is particularly disturbing, and that is the high level of agreement that powerful economic interests govern the country to their own benefit. This statement is supported by 71 per cent of all Latin Americans and between 63 per cent (El Salvador) and 85 per cent (Dominican Republic) of the eight countries surveyed in the sub-region. In other words, most Latin Americans do not see ‘democracy’ as governing in their interest. Thus, their assessment of democracy in instrumental terms is that it has been less than successful. Moreover, there is a high degree of ambivalence toward the free market economy. Concomitantly, the data shows significant residual support for statist economic solutions.

Despite the perception of the researchers that the overwhelming response of significant majorities that ‘a little government repression is OK’ signifies an authoritarian streak in Latin American political culture,<sup>10</sup> it is, rather, a recognition that certain very real threats must be met with a certain amount of repressive force. These are precisely the threats identified in the previous section. Discussion indicates that Latin Americans view a degree of repression as necessary but only if carried out in a framework under the rule of law.<sup>11</sup>

To complete the picture of Latin American attitudes toward the US – especially those from the sub-region – comes a picture of Mexican views toward migration to their northern neighbour. According to a poll taken in Mexico by the Pew Hispanic Center, 46 per cent of adult respondents ‘would come to the United States if they had the means and opportunity. And about half of those people said they’d be willing to move to and work in the United States illegally’ (<http://npr.org/templated/story/story.php> 9 June 2005). So despite an ambience of anti-Americanism and ambivalence about democratic performance, if not democratic values, a very significant number of Latin Americans would vote with their feet if they could.

### **Radical Islamists may be recruiting prison inmates in the US**

The discovery of domestic terrorism should be no surprise, based on recent reports that a militant Islamist group, thought to be operating in Californian prisons, was suspected of planning to attack targets in Los Angeles. The suspects in this California Folsom Prison case included US citizens and a Pakistani immigrant. The Islamist militant group in this prison case is the *Jamiyyat Ul Islam Is Saheeh* (JIS, the Assembly of Authentic Islam), which has had a presence at Folsom for about five years, with followers including both inmates and former inmates. The

FBI is investigating possible Islamist groups in other US prisons (Krikorian and Warren 2005).

The Folsom case recalls that of José Padilla, a US citizen from Puerto Rico, who had been in and out of prison several times for crimes connected with gang activities in Chicago. Padilla had converted to a radical form of Islam, possibly as a result of prison contacts, and was arrested in Chicago airport under suspicion of plotting a terrorist attack with a dirty bomb. However, other Islamist converts among US citizens have no prison association, such as the Ohio-born Mahmud Faruq Brent, who admitted attending a terrorist training camp in Pakistan in 2002. He had been living in Baltimore for five years, while working in nearby Washington DC as a cab and ambulance driver. Brent was arrested in August 2005, accused of association with *Lakshar-e-Taiba*, a militant Islamist group active in the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir (Rich 2005).

Given the Padilla case, it is, therefore, necessary to consider the probability that radical Islamist groups will attempt to recruit Latin gang members as well as members of Jamaican posses and other gangs in the English-speaking Caribbean. Such successful recruitment of people with strategic criminal capabilities and a predisposition toward anti-Americanism would signify a major increase in the nature of the terrorist threat.

### **Tying the problem together**

The problem in Latin America, and especially in the Circum-Caribbean sub-region, is twofold. First, it is a problem of capabilities; second, it is a problem of attitudes. Compounding its complexity is the fact that the capabilities and the attitudes may be linked only very loosely, if at all. Indeed, there is no hard evidence at all that the terrorism enabling capabilities identified and discussed here are in any way linked to the anti-American attitudes found throughout the region.

Nevertheless, the gangs, organized criminals and insurgents have the capability to enable terrorists to inflict harm on the US. For either ideological or mundane reasons they have an incentive to undertake such enabling activities. Therefore, the first order of business in dealing with the threat must be to reduce and, if possible, neutralize the capabilities. But herein lies the rub: without a reduction of anti-Americanism there can be no long-term assurance that terrorists<sup>12</sup> will not be enabled by kindred ideological spirits in this hemisphere. Consequently, the second order of business must be to wage the 'information war' with the goal of turning many or most of the adherents of anti-Americanism into at least friends of the US who fully share its values. As is suggested by the survey data, this is not 'mission impossible'; how to achieve it will be addressed below.

## What is to be done?

### *Exemplary measures to date*

An example of efforts that deserve US support are the rapid-response special forces units to confront gangs, as proposed by Central American and Mexican leaders at a summit in Chiapas in June 2005. Officials made it clear at that meeting that they expect Washington to help finance the unit, because both US drug consumption and increased US deportation of gang members have aggravated the security problem. Parenthetically, there is more reason to pay attention to fluid gang movements because of another new feature which will complicate the regional security problem – CAFTA, the recent trade agreement with the region. CAFTA likely will help alleviate poverty in the long term, but in the short term it will not remove gang warfare or crime but will actually provide more open borders which will facilitate transnational criminal activities.

Other security measures also deserve US support, for they are agreements and organizations that already exist to mutual benefit. The OAS-sponsored Inter-American Committee on Terrorism (CICTE) was revitalized after 9/11, as it endeavoured to identify actions that would strengthen inter-American cooperation in order to eliminate terrorism in the hemisphere. In June 2002, OAS members signed a new agreement, the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism.<sup>13</sup> In January 2003, CICTE met in El Salvador, and issued the Declaration of San Salvador, which condemned terrorism and pledged to strengthen cooperation through customs and financial security measures.

Another organization that receives key US support under the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) and deals with gang violence, as well as drug use, is CICAD, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission. Since 2000, CICAD has held regional seminars to raise awareness about drug use and gang violence in the Western Hemisphere, especially in Central America and the Caribbean Basin. For instance, in 2003–4, CICAD cooperated with El Salvador on several projects to counter gang activity, including an innovative programme to help ex-gang members stay clear of gangs and engage in rehabilitative, environmental clean-up work.

Among the programmes created by the US Justice Department is the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Programme (ICITAP) initiative to train community policing in hundreds of Salvadoran towns. In addition, the FBI has its earlier mentioned special task force focusing on MS-13, and has also created a liaison office in San Salvador which will share information with central American authorities.

Other US government agencies are making new, substantial contributions to solving the international gang problem, in a manner that seeks to collaborate with foreign governments. In the Department of Homeland Security, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) created the new national anti-gang initiative called ‘Operation Community Shield’, which not only arrests suspected gang members in the US, but also coordinates with governments in the Circum-

Caribbean region; United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has worked with ICITAP on the preventive side, and also has proposed a crime prevention programme; in Guatemala, to create a 'model youth home' for at-risk youth and former gang members, while providing education and vocational training to secure their futures.

Indeed, the seriousness of the situation was emphasized in the 15 March 2005 testimony by General Bantz Craddock, Commander of the US Southern Command, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, when he stated that 'the level of sophistication and brutality of these gangs is without precedent', so that regional solutions to the gang problem are absolutely essential (Craddock 2005).

### *Addressing terrorism's enabling capabilities*

It is clear from the foregoing that, although the people and governments of the Circum-Caribbean sub-region and Latin America as a whole recognize it, they do not place nearly so high a priority on international terrorism as does the United States. Rather, it is somewhere down their priority lists, well below (in approximate order) criminal gangs, narco-trafficking, organized crime and insurgency. There is, of course, some variation in these priorities from sub-region to sub-region as well as from country to country. However, it is interesting to note that narco-trafficking has moved higher on the regional priority lists over the last decade, whether in response to solid US arguments or as a result of its becoming a significant crime, health and security problem in its own right. Be that as it may, the US also sees criminal gangs, narco-trafficking, organized crime and insurgencies as threats. More importantly, the US perceives these threats as capabilities that can be used to enable international terrorists in their efforts to target the American homeland and/or its interests. The result is a coincidence of interest among the US and its regional and sub-regional partners in addressing the highest priority threats as perceived by those partners.

The first step is to address the threat posed by criminal gangs. This requires agreement between the US and its partners as to exactly what the threat is as well as the causes of the threat. Many, but not all, of the criminal gangs in the region originated in the US. Both MS-13 and M-18 began as Los Angeles street gangs. Dominican and Jamaican gangs were either born on the streets of New York City or invigorated there. In all cases, US immigration law changes in 1996 and the processes of its enforcement resulted in the transfer of these and other gangs and their cultures to their members' home countries as those members were deported. Often the deportations took place without the US informing the recipient country of the criminal background of the deportees. By the time this communication failure was rectified the gangs were well established on Central American, Caribbean, and Mexican turf.

Max Manwaring argues that:

Central American gangs' seeming immunity from effective law enforcement efforts and the resultant lack of personal and collective

security in that region have created a dangerous synergy between organized criminality and terror that is blurring the traditional line between criminal and political violence. In that context, the greatest fear haunting many Central American officials and citizens is that criminal violence is about to spiral out of control and acquire a political agenda. This fear is exacerbated because second and third generation gangs and their mercenary allies are controlling larger and larger portions of cities, the interior, and the traditionally inviolate national frontiers – and have achieved complete freedom of movement and action within and between national territories. As a consequence, the effective sovereignty of all Central American countries is being impinged every day and the gangs' commercial motives are, in fact, becoming a political agenda for control of state governing and security institutions and for control of people and territory.

(Manwaring 2005: 14)

He clearly demonstrates the full ramifications of the threat in a way that is meaningful to both the US and the several host countries. Moreover, what he argues with respect to Central America applies equally to Mexico and the Caribbean.

To deal with the threat posed by criminal gangs requires a holistic approach that leverages the capabilities of the US, host governments and the private sector (writ large) to achieve effective unity of effort in neutralizing the threat. Neutralizing the threat, in turn, means attaining and maintaining the perceived legitimacy of the host government on the part of the nation's citizens. This means that the government must be able to provide security everywhere on its territory. To do this, it must govern that territory – areas of the country without effective state presence are no longer acceptable.

The principal actions taken by host governments in Central America that have shown promise are those like El Salvador's *super mano dura* policy coupled with its recently announced *mano amiga*. The former establishes long prison terms for gang members and longer ones for gang leaders. The latter combines actions targeted on prevention with rehabilitation, particularly of younger gang members. Preventive actions are those that seek to raise the standard of living in the sectors of the country most prone to gang activity and include education and job training. Both education and job training form major parts of the rehabilitative effort.

In a similar fashion the Jamaica Defence Force, in coordination with the Jamaica Constabulary, has developed a programme of actions targeted on prevention based on the development and rehabilitation of areas of the island that are heavily gang infected and influenced. Initial indications were that this approach was having some success; however, the proof would be in the ability of the Jamaican government to sustain the effort.<sup>14</sup>

The second capability that must be addressed is that of organized crime, in all its aspects, but especially with respect to narco-trafficking. Throughout the region there is clear evidence that the profits from narco-trafficking fund all sorts of criminal as well as legitimate economic activities. Not remarkably, this



includes gang activity. Equally unremarkable is the role that narco-dollars play in corruption of government officials. All of this results in the delegitimization of the governments of the region along with a decrease in their capacity to govern effectively. The result is space created for other players to exercise authority in the absence of an effective legitimate state presence. With the exception of Mexico in our sub-region (where the Zapatista insurgents exist but are contained in a single area of the country), there is no active insurgency to make common cause with the organized criminals.<sup>15</sup>

In no case have the governments of the region nor of the US raised the level of the threat from organized crime per se to that of a threat to national security. The partial exceptions to this are narco-trafficking and gangs but the larger linkage simply has not been made. Therefore, organized crime is viewed simply as a problem for law enforcement and the judicial system. To a lesser extent this is also the prevailing perception of both gangs and narco-trafficking, mirroring the long held view of terrorism. But like terrorism, these are all threats to the security of the state and require a more holistic approach to deal with them.

Countering each of these threats requires the integration of the activities of multiple government agencies at all levels of government. In many cases, the best approach is the creation of an integrated task force under a single director with the authority to direct the member agencies as well as the authority to hire and fire his subordinates. The director of the task force may be a civilian, a police officer, or a military officer – there are numerous examples of this kind of unity of command.<sup>16</sup> Failing to attain unity of command for the full integration of activities is, unfortunately, the norm rather than the exception. Hence, other solutions to the problem of unity of effort need to be considered.

The necessary but insufficient condition for unity of effort is agreement among all participants on the objective. Without such agreement success will be unachievable; the gangs will not be neutralized; organized crime will continue to operate with impunity; narco-trafficking will continue to fund all sorts of criminal activities and to corrupt governments; and insurgents will be tempted to resource their operations from the profits of the drugs trade. In addition to agreed upon objectives, there is a requirement for common procedures to coordinate the activities of the various entities engaged in the fight. Thus, it is critical for there to be common communications among the agencies, as well as planning and rehearsal of operations, etc.

Where one could hope for a fully integrated operation under a single director with command authority within a single state, such an operation involving two or more states becomes ‘a bridge too far’. Even the world’s most successful military alliance – NATO – does not cede full command to its Supreme Allied Commander. Rather, each national contingent retains the right to appeal a decision to the North Atlantic Council (as the British did in Kosovo where their appeal was upheld). Thus, the best that can be achieved in the multinational arena is unity of effort. In turn, that requires effective politics in the most diplomatic sense of the word.

*Dealing with anti-Americanism*

If the potential for long-term danger to American interests and the US homeland of Latin American anti-Americanism were not so great, addressing this issue would not be particularly urgent. After all, not much has changed in the last half century. Latin American intellectuals still rail against the US, considering it crass, crude and imperialistic. Latin American governments have significant policy disagreements but also share common interests. Latin American publics tend to blame the US for the impact of bad policy on the part of their own governments but would gladly emigrate to the US if they had the opportunity. However, the environment has changed significantly and the terrorism *enabling* capabilities of gangs, organized criminals, narco-traffickers and insurgents, if they were fed by an ambient anti-Americanism, would boil up a veritable witches' brew threatening the US homeland.

Because of this potential, there is an urgency in addressing the problem of Latin American anti-Americanism that did not exist even a decade ago. Anti-Americanism is, however, a subtle problem that calls for subtle and, necessarily, partial solutions. These include:

- Seeking true collaboration with Latin American governments on issues of common concern (such as gangs).
- Listening to our partners and seeking their advice in addition to giving our advice.
- Recognizing that there will be areas of disagreement but that other nations will act in their own interests. Some disagreements can be resolved by persuasion and mutual respect; others simply require an agreement to disagree without being disagreeable.
- Recognizing that the countries of the region share with the US a common heritage of Western democratic values and building on that common ground.
- Recognizing, at the same time, that there is more than one Western tradition and that these different democratic traditions – particularly in law – make for basically different and, at times, irreconcilable assumptions.

In summary, based on an assessment of what has proved to be effective already, the recommendations are for community-based programmes, as well as for innovative regional cooperation, given the fluid, international nature of gangs and organized crime. Regional cooperation should offer shared databases and intelligence, and experience-based police training and preventive programmes, all of which need to be supported by pooled financial resources and expertise. Some other examples of good regional programmes are those supported by the US Justice Department, USAID, and others supported by the Inter-American Development Bank.<sup>17</sup>

### Recommendations for US policy

- The United States should identify those terrorism *enabling* capabilities that the states of the region identify as threats and commit resources to assist those states in dealing with those threats.
  - Regarding gangs, the US should build inter-agency task forces that include police, military, intelligence, finance, development specialists, etc., under a director with the authority to work for the American ambassador to coordinate US actions with the host country. The host country should be encouraged to build a similar task force to address the problem. Regional and sub-regional multinational task forces should also be encouraged and assisted.
  - With regard to narco-trafficking, the US should provide all necessary assistance to the countries of the Circum-Caribbean and Latin America. The inter-agency task force concept is appropriate and, for the US, builds on the success of Joint Interagency Task Force South.
  - For both gangs and narco-trafficking, combined inter-agency exercises can be used to train the forces in working together and in the kinds of skills needed. In addition, such exercises should have a developmental component to them similar to US Southern Command's *New Horizons* (*Nuevos Horizontes*) series which involves building roads, schools, medical posts, etc. in rural areas of Central America. If these were conducted in conjunction with programmes like El Salvador's *Mano Amiga* they would have the primary effect of reducing the internal breeding grounds for gang activity. A secondary but equally important effect would be the improved perception by ordinary citizens of the US role in the region.
  - To deal with organized crime the US should expand its cooperative inter-agency efforts among the Department of Justice (ICITAP, LEGATT), USAID (Administration of Justice Programme) and the Department of Homeland Security (ICE), among others. To the extent necessary and possible the integrated inter-agency task force concept under a director with full authority should be adopted.
  - All of these must take account of the host country's needs and interests and not seek to impose US solutions on them. Rather, they need to be truly collaborative and responsive to the input and interests of the regional and sub-regional partners.
  - One additional area of essential collaboration is that of intelligence and intelligence sharing. Much that is required here is traditionally police intelligence, but some falls within the purview of traditional intelligence agencies. The US must have the will to develop mechanisms for effective intelligence sharing with its partners in the police, military, and national intelligence agencies.
  - With respect to all of these areas of collaboration, workshops and conferences that include both academics and practitioners would be

useful to develop new and improved approaches as well as to project an attitude of a US government willing to listen to its partners and respond to their concerns.

- Addressing anti-Americanism is more subtle than dealing with terrorism enabling capabilities but is very closely related. Central to any effort to counter this ideological current that so clearly aids and abets terrorism is the need to keep clearly in mind the message the US is actually communicating when it carries out its programmes. *The essential message must be that we want to help you address the problems and threats you have identified; it is in our interest as much as it is in yours.* Other components are addressed below, but it must be recognized that they are designed specifically to support attitudinal change based on the perception that US behaviour supports Latin American and Caribbean values and interests.
  - The first step in directly countering anti-Americanism in the region would be to invest again in a strong programme of bi-national cultural centres in the region. This would make US culture and its values more accessible to the people of the region as they were in the not so distant past.
  - A second step would be to expand US scholarship and fellowship programmes to American universities along with shorter programmes for local leaders to study in the US. The other side of the coin would be to expand and strengthen the opportunities to send US lecturers to foreign universities in the region.
  - To address Latin American intellectuals, US government leaders should engage in international conferences (such as the Latin American Studies Association), and other regional fora. The Department of Defense should make every effort to be well represented at these conferences.
  - Programmes such as those of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation clearly provide venues in which issues can be frankly addressed under conditions of academic freedom and non-attribution. Greater resources need to be devoted to them. In addition there is a need to create similar US institutions in other departments and/or on an inter-agency basis. These institutions need to be fully accredited academically as is the National Defense University and other war and staff colleges.
  - Not only should there be venues for publication by regional scholars in English, Spanish, and Portuguese – but there is a need for a multilingual non-defence venue supported by the US government where views critical of US policy can be heard.

In short, every effort must be made to fight effectively and win what is properly called the information war. Otherwise, the potential linkage between terrorism enabling capabilities in the region and anti-American ideology will become real and a significant multiplier of the threat.

## Notes

- 1 [www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/). See the 1 August speech by Secretary Chertoff. Also see the US Department of Justice definition of a gang, which is not simply a ‘street family’: ‘a group must be involved in a pattern of criminal acts to be considered a youth gang’, in Howell 1998: 7.
- 2 US Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, no date, no author given. For a recent report with useful references, see <http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/tst042105a.cfm>.
- 3 Secretaría de Seguridad Pública de Chiapas, Escenarios de la mara Salvatrucha y Barrio Diciocho en México, May 2005. Athanasios Hristoulas, a researcher in security issues at the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo in Mexico City was quoted as saying: ‘There have already been some cases of people suspected of having links to Al Qaeda caught in Mexico’, in Becerra 2004: 5.
- 4 The Prime Minister is not named, but he is quoted as saying ‘Most of these rogues left the region at a very early age. Many of them have no families in the region and when they run afoul of the law ... they are thrown back to the Caribbean’ (Thomas 2005).
- 5 Personal interviews with a Caribbean military officer, 2005. See also *The Economist* 2004 and [www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/inter-reg/art-crimeviolence.htm](http://www.unesco.org/csi/smis/siv/inter-reg/art-crimeviolence.htm).
- 6 Personal interviews with Caribbean security officials, 2005.
- 7 See the link between street gangs and insurgency in Manwaring 2005.
- 8 <http://www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/BBCworldpoll>. The margin of error in the poll ranged from 2.5 per cent to 4 per cent.
- 9 One such exception is Guatemala’s meagre 54 per cent support of democracy which is significantly lower than both the Latin American average and that of its peers. It is still a clear majority, however.
- 10 See, for example, [www.latinobarometro.org](http://www.latinobarometro.org), *Informe – Resumen*, 13 Agosto 2004.
- 11 These observations come from discussions with numerous Latin American civilian and military officials, police officers, journalists and academics held in Washington DC and in the region over the past eight years. All of these discussions were held under non-attribution rules.
- 12 It is critical to point out here that we are not just talking about any terrorist, or any user of the terrorist tactic, but an enemy made up of types of radical Islamist *jihadist* groups, especially those associated with al Qaeda. These groups share only one ideological component with radicals in Latin America and that is a deep and profound anti-Americanism. That negative shared element is enough to form tactical alliances.
- 13 While the US is a signatory to the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism, two years later the treaty was in the Senate for advice and consent, and was sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Among other things, the treaty would seek to improve regional cooperation against terrorism by committing parties to support UN anti-terrorism instruments, and deny safe haven to terrorists.
- 14 Interview with anonymous Caribbean military officer, 2005.
- 15 By contrast, see the case of the Andean Ridge (Chapter 12).
- 16 See for example Fishel and Manwaring 2006, especially Chapters 9 and 10.
- 17 In June 2005, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) held in Panama City a regional seminar on strategies to prevent youth violence and crime, with delegates from governments and police forces from Central America, the Dominican Republic and Mexico. The IDB supports efforts by national and local authorities, civil society groups and the private sector to reduce violence in the region, through programmes to design youth policies, strengthening human development agencies, NGOs, communities, and modernizing police forces.

Part V

EUROPE AND AFRICA



# COUNTERING ISLAMIST RADICALS IN EASTERN EUROPE

*György Lederer*

## **The problem**

Although Islamist radicalism differs considerably from terrorism, their pattern of cause and effect should be the guiding principle. Europe, including its eastern portion, is becoming a breeding ground of a virulent strain of extremists and a frontline in countering them. It is often argued that these are not representative of Islam, the religion of peace, brotherhood, modesty, morality and self-discipline, which they hijacked, instrumentalized and reduced to a political agenda. These arguments are justified, particularly in a propaganda war aiming at hearts and minds, but the deep dogmatic roots of animosity, even holy violence, against infidels and the binary vision of the world should not be ignored.

By *Islamism* I mean principled Muslim conceptualizations on the role of the individual and the religious community in public life, which cannot be criminalized of course. Despite the overlap, *Islamist radicalism* is a different, mostly intolerant and aggressive phenomenon, which may unfortunately be justified from a theological viewpoint. The Islamist mindset conditioning works on a worldwide scale because of its authentic Muslim references and formidable resources. However, the dividing line is thin between hate propaganda, inflammatory mosque sermons, threats to Salafism's critics on the one hand, and on the other, logistical support to terrorist cells, recruiting, hiding, training and cash conduit. This study's geographical scope is limited to Europe's post-socialist portion excluding the Caucasus (Novruzoglu 2002) and Russia<sup>1</sup> where the magnitude and, to some extent, the character of the problem are different.

### *'Ethnic Islam' and post-socialism*

For eastern Europeans terror and radicalism are difficult to comprehend. For almost half a century, the only few terrorists temporarily residing in their region (Carlos, leftist or nationalist Arab warriors) were invited there by the ruling Communist



leaderships. Moreover, the latter were the ones who terrorized their subjects and cynically labelled as terrorists those regimes' few armed opponents, as in the case of Hungary's anti-Communist revolutionaries in 1956. In the socialist era terrorism was perceived as a feature of faraway lands, and so was political Islam. The region's ethnic minorities of Islamic tradition were forcibly and successfully de-Islamized, even in Yugoslavia. Most drank alcohol, ate pork, did not pray or fast and ignored Islamic law and tradition. Many 'Muslim' women married, or cohabited with, non-Muslim men. Tito's Muslim nationality option at the 1971 census was practically unrelated to religion (Canapa 1986). Harsh prison sentences were pronounced in Sarajevo when, exceptionally, a few Bosniaks (Bosnians of Muslim extraction) had dared to raise pan-Islamic ideas with the leadership of Alija Izetbegovic.

The post-socialist religious revival fell far behind expectations. Without Islam, Muslim identity is hard to keep for generations. Fewer Bosniaks would have become interested in their roots if their families had not been massacred and raped *as Muslims*, while post-Christian Europe and the United Nations stood aside and watched idly. Some even encouraged the Serbs.

Ethnic intolerance has been widespread in the whole region. Apparently only the Serbs of the 1990s had the weapons and the determination to cleanse those whom they identified as Muslims, regardless of the latter's limited Islamic awareness. This and the Bosniaks' betrayal by Europe made a part of them revisit, or reinvent, the historical religious dimensions of their identity as proposed by a few pan-Islamic ideologists like Izetbegovic himself. Bosnia-Herzegovina's precarious 1992–5 predicament explained this almost artificial nation-(re?)building and the loud but not very effective 'anti-crusade' protests throughout the Islamic world. No similar international Muslim solidarity was later offered to, let alone accepted by, the pro-Western Kosovars and other Albanians who, unlike the Bosniak nationalists, did not need Islam to generate nationhood.

Both peoples, as well as other eastern Europeans of Muslim tradition, have no other realistic choice than their region joining the realm of European democracy. Post-socialist authoritarianism, not Islam, was to be blamed for some of their leaders' arrogance and corruption even if in Sarajevo they used Islamic phraseology and symbols in the bloody early 1990s. These were exploited and grossly exaggerated by their adversaries. Most war-time pan-Islamic sympathies vanished gradually after the Dayton Agreements, and particularly following 9/11, although the Saudi-paid mosques proudly stand there and a lot of women wear headscarves. Radicals do operate in Bosnia, as elsewhere in eastern Europe, but the Bosniak nationalists' responsibility for this should not be overstated.

What else could Izetbegovic have done in 1992–5 than let the *Mujahidin* fighters in? Some of those bearded, mostly Arab, holy warriors may have been preparing terrorist acts, but militant Islamism in eastern Europe should not be restricted to the *Mujahidin* at all. Most left at the end of the war. The direct influence of those who settled in Bosnia was limited to a number of local youngsters as the *Aktivna Islamska Omladina* (Active Islamic Youth – AIY) or the Furqan Association. Intelligence attention is justified because of the

Middle Eastern backing these have enjoyed through transnational Islamist 'humanitarian' organizations.

### *The charities*

From the early 1990s on, many foreign Muslim, mostly Arab, charities and proselytizing agencies set up shop in the post-socialist world to spread Allah's word. Most of their representatives happened to be Saudi-paid Arabs. Both Islamist and Diyanet (secular government) Turkish missionaries assisted their ethnic brothers in the ex-Soviet and east European lands in reconstructing their mosques and rediscovering their roots. The Iranian embassies also helped eastern European Muslims, not only those of Azerbaijan and the few other Shi'i. Most Middle Eastern proselytizers were out of touch with post-socialist reality. Their financial resources impressed the impoverished communities they targeted. They built and restored houses of worship and ritual slaughter-houses, provided for the Mecca pilgrimages of a few, distributed copies of the Koran and Islamist propaganda literature in local languages, often awarded small amounts of cash, organized summer camps and religious courses for youngsters, offered them scholarships in Muslim educational institutions in the Arab world and popularized anti-Western ideas. With the relative exception of Bosnia this Salafi 're-Islamization' failed, in most cases, due to the secular and hostile environment, women's freedom and social responsibilities, Western influence and the missionaries' incompetence. Young Arab immigrants have proved more responsive to their uncompromising anti-American and Judeophobic sermons. As elsewhere in the West, well-off and determined militants took over many mosque pulpits.

In the early 1990s the ubiquitous Arab preachers may have looked fanatical but not dangerous. Their knowledge of, and commitment to, Islam appeared persuasive, and so did their criticism of Western Europe regarding the Bosnian tragedy. The latter justified both international Muslim humanitarian action and (illegal) weapon shipments to the beleaguered Sarajevo government. The breaking of the immoral UN arms embargo and the eastern European re-Islamization project were inter-related for a while, as the Austrian representative of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) happened to be Izetbegovic's old Sudanese friend Elfatih Ali Hassanein. He also acted as Director of the controversial Third World Relief Agency, which purchased arms and delivered them to Bosnia in 1992-3. His personal role was probably exaggerated by *The Washington Post* article (Pomfret 1996) that followed the police search of his Vienna office. Nonetheless, Riyadh-based WAMY operated an impressive network of Arab proselytizers virtually everywhere in eastern Europe. Its Vienna logistical centre served as the main source of funds, inspiration and propaganda material in various local languages. Elfatih travelled widely in the region to encourage and pay his Arab associates and a number of deserving indigenous Muslim dignitaries. He did not hide his firm Islamist convictions which, in the early 1990s, did not sound as embarrassing as they would today. The same applies to the Arab immigrants who worked for him.

Most still live in the region, more or less discreetly since 9/11. Their Judeophobia was repulsive even at that time.

In addition to WAMY, the Islamic International Relief Organization ('Igasā') of Jeddah, the al Haramain Humanitarian Foundation (Riyadh), the Bin Mahfouz family's al Muwaffaq Foundation and the Saudi High Committee for Bosnia presided over by Prince Salman were the main Saudi-sponsored agencies that operated in eastern Europe (Bellion-Jourdain 2000). The Sudanese Da'wa Islamiya, the British Islamic Relief, Yusuf Islam's Muslim Aid, the American ICNA Relief and Mercy International, the German (Milli Görüs, immigrant Turkish Islamist) Internationale Humanitäre Hilfe, the Global Relief Foundation, the Benevolence International Foundation (BIF, Chicago) and the Taiba Foundation also provided considerable support to the region's Muslim institutions, including local charities such as Merhamet (Bosnia, Sandzak), El-Hilal (Macedonia, Kosovo) and Irshad (Bulgaria), and immigrant Arab student organizations in almost every country. In Albania alone, more than 20 'international Islamic NGOs' (non-government organizations) have been active. For the last ten years the impact of Turkish populist preacher Fethüllah Gülen (Zaman) has been noticeable in the whole region.

Particularly after 9/11, the Bosnian and the international press focused on the Arab charities' personnel. Many of these received Bosnian citizenship for fighting in the Bosnian army's 'Mudzahed' Unit, marrying local women, or otherwise. Certain former *Mujahidin* terrorized the population, engaged in car bombing, hostage taking and armed robbery, as did the Franco-Algerian Roubaix gang of Lionel Dumont and Mouloud Boughelane, Sudanese bomber Ahmed Zuhair Handala and Saudi kidnapper Abd al-Hadi Qahtani, the first Director of the Saudi High Committee for Bosnia, who is said to have been killed in Afghanistan in 2001. Saudi 'humanitarians' Wael Julaidan, Yasin Kadi, the Tunisian Shafiq Ayadi (the latter two worked for al Muwaffaq), and BIF Director Enaam Arnaout were all involved with Bosnian business, banks and investment, besides their missionary work. Most of them personally benefited from the Saudi donations.

Linking charity and proselytism with private finances started earlier, with Elfatih Hassanein's Orient Bank. These radicals eventually returned home to Saudi Arabia or Sudan, or disappeared, as did the Mudzahed Unit's legendary Commander (*Emir*), the Algerian Abdelkader Mokhtarldji alias Abu Maali. He ran al Kifah, 'al Qaeda's branch in the Balkans'. Only Imad al-Misri, the popular financier of Bosnian re-Islamization, is in prison in Egypt, where he was extradited in October 2001. The six Algerians deported from Sarajevo to Guantanamo in January 2002 were smaller fish. Nonetheless, Bosniak Salafis (the AIY, *Ensarije Seriata*) protested against their extradition.<sup>2</sup>

These revelations shocked Bosnians and raised questions as to the number of further, unidentified militant Islamists residing in the EU protectorate, their local sympathizers, and the role of the Islamic Spiritual Community (ISC – *Islamska Vjerska Zajednica*) and the extent of its cooperation with the Saudi High Committee and other charities which employed these ex-*Mujahidin* as librarians, lecturers, organizers and missionaries. Most Bosniaks feel embarrassed now and would denounce Salafism if they were encouraged to do so.

Many wonder how Izetbegovic's nationalistic ruling SDA Party (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije*) and intelligence service (AID, Agency for Investigation and Documentation) protected Salafis in the 1990s. The trial of AID agent and BIF employee Munib Zahiragic, the interrogation of former interior minister Bakir Alispahic and other investigations shed light on Mafiocracy, the involvement of several corrupt or ideologically committed Bosnian officials, bankers and police. False identities and passports were issued to those 'humanitarian' Arabs. Their now well documented cases are symptomatic examples of a new type of unscrupulous militant Islamist, who is able and determined to adapt to, and recruit in, a European environment.

The reportedly 2,000 member strong Zenica-headquartered AIY is a significant organization by Bosnian standards although this figure probably also includes sympathizers. Arab funding, the refugee problem, war reminiscences, high unemployment and the lack of prospects contribute to the AIY's popularity, particularly among students and in the country's central regions, but the organization managed to establish cells everywhere. The AIY's overtly pro-Salafi stance contrasts sharply with the liberal Hanafi tradition of Islam in Bosnia. Even if the nationalistic SDA Party's elite used its concept of Islam as a mobilizing force and identity separator, Bosniaks remained Western-oriented. With very few exceptions, they did not even consider a non-secular state or legislation in the bloody 1990s.

Sympathies for Salafism, the AIY and similar groups can, nevertheless, be detected within the religious leadership. Arab money is appreciated, to run the war-torn country's many religious institutions and to build new ones. Moreover, Salafi ideology and an anti-American worldview have influenced several hundred Bosniak graduates of foreign Islamic universities, particularly those of Saudi Arabia. Unlike many Muslims worldwide, those of eastern Europe do not normally regard Islam as an all-pervasive system of norms that should transform and regulate society.

A number of young Bosniaks venerate the Arab *Mujahidin* for their war services to the country at a time when few Europeans sided with it. The AIY also refers to Islamist puritanism's role in strengthening the youth's sense of social responsibility and family values, and combating delinquency, criminality, drug and alcohol abuse as well as extra-marital sexuality and women's vestimentary and other 'indecencies', which are always a major Salafi preoccupation. Ideological guidance is provided by the AIY's periodical (*Saff*) and preachers. These are not unambiguously rejected by the ISC.

The ISC's own 'Youth Circle' (*Omladinski Krug*) is less influential than 'Young Muslims' (*Mladi Muslimani*), the SDA Party's political juniors. Muslim student association *Sahwa*, and female organizations *Horizont* and *Nahla* are much less political although they also promote what they regard as Islamic traditions, values and principles, which imply clear preferences in public life. Besides the AIY, *Nedwa* and *Selam* are youth organizations that also receive Arab funding. *Nedwa* is, in fact, WAMY's Bosnian branch. (*Nedwa* means 'assembly' in Arabic.) It builds mosques, holds seminars on Islam, publishes religious books, Islamist

reviews and videotapes, encourages learning the Koran by heart, sponsors deserving Bosniak students and sends a number of them to two-week training seminars in Saudi Arabia.

Wahhabi hate speech in Bosnia can be delegitimized only by the Bosniaks themselves, preferably by theologians and the leading personalities of public life, who should be incited to do that. Only Bosniak intellectuals can effectively discredit the homegrown Salafis whose motivations reflect, partly, the crisis of Bosnian society. Young Bosniaks should not be exposed to anti-Western, misogynous, intolerant instigation.

Arab and Bosnian radical networks may represent a potential for terror by providing human capital, financial and institutional background, logistical support, and free passage opportunities in a country with notoriously poor immigration control. Even if the AIY has not physically harmed anyone, more should be known about its activities and Middle Eastern contacts. Radical recruiting should be uncovered, preferably with the cooperation of the ISC but even without it. In this respect the contribution of secular Bosniaks should also be expected. For the security threat's decisive religious connotations however, the radicals' anachronistic (markedly Arab) message must be well understood. It is, in fact, incompatible with Bosniak nationalism. Terrorism investigations that disregard the religious dimension can only result in press-based listings and superficial descriptions of Islamist groups, at best.<sup>3</sup>

### *By countries*

The dichotomy and the interaction of Islam-based Bosniak nationalism and imported anti-Western Muslim radicalism are not restricted to Bosnia itself as the overwhelming majority of Croatia's, Slovenia's and the Serbian Sandzak's (the Raska *Oblast's*) ethnic Muslims also identify themselves as Bosniaks. (Those of the Montenegro Sandzak do not.) In Croatia and Slovenia, Muslim religious institutions are probably not strong enough to effectively cover up for immigrant Salafi activities although Imam Sevko Omerbasic's Zagreb mosque was a well known centre of Arab humanitarian and ideological aid during and after the war (Hecimovic 2002).

The majority of the Sandzak's population are ethnic Muslim. Their religiosity has traditionally been more pronounced than Bosnia's. Radical Sarajevo Imams Sulejman Bugari's and Nezim Halilovic Muderis' sermons are popular in Novipazar, where local leaders (Mufti Muamer Zukorlic, his cousin Federal Minority Minister Rasim Ljajic and even their Bosniak party-leader opponent Sulejman Ugljanin) often refer to Muslim national identity. Funding and instructors from Gulf countries are obviously welcome at Novipazar, its impressive private Islamic University and the Muslim countryside. Hundreds of bearded local youth listen to the Wahhabi message. Biased Serbian reports often describe the Sandzak as the 'missing link' in the Islamist Green Transversal stretching from Kabul to Velika Kladusha. Similarly to Bosnia, the Sandzak's religious and political leaders are certainly not Salafis. The attraction of pelf is, nevertheless, rather strong in

the poor province. Smuggling, corruption and the lack of genuine police control facilitate the Islamist radicals' task. The Police Chief is the third cousin (Tarlac 2005; Derens 2004; Didanovic 2005).

In the Albanian lands pro-American sentiment is palpable among both population and politicians. Kosovo Sunni Muslim religious leader Rexhep Boja, similarly to his Montenegro counterpart Rifat Fejzic, strongly condemned Wahhabi indoctrination. Ironically, Wahhabi charities have been encouraged to operate in Kosovo by the unpopular United Nations Interim Administration (UNMIK) to satisfy what it believed to be the traditionally Muslim Kosovars' spiritual needs. Besides undeniable humanitarian relief and mosque constructions, the Saudi Joint Committee for Kosovo and similar Arab organizations have striven to uproot Hanafi and Sufi customs and brainwash young Kosovars, more in the countryside than in the secular cities (Blumi 2002: 9; Peyrille 2001).

Salafi Jihad should not be confused with Albanian distrust toward Kosovo Serbs and Slav Macedonians. The Albanian dignitaries' cooperation in reliably identifying radicalism in their midst will be much more difficult to obtain if Western terrorism analysts ostensibly label them, for instance Skopje Mufti Zenun Berisha, as al Qaeda allies (Moniquet 2004). The misinterpretation of the real threat obstructs its detection and comprehension. Salafis do pay eastern European youth to attend their courses and to distribute promotional literature and videotapes. This happens everywhere, not only in the Skopje neighbourhood of Kondovo and Gazi Baba or Kosovo's Prizren and Djakovica, where Serbian sources indignantly reported such practices. Local community leaders are needed to isolate and discredit these and other troublesome activities (Icevska 2001, Clayer 2001).

The situation is more alarming in impoverished Albania. After 1997 Salafis could expect no sympathy from the pro-US leftist authorities, which extradited several Arab militants. Wahhabi presence is, nevertheless, still represented by the numerous Arab charities and certain newly built mosques. Tensions divide the country's Sunni spiritual leadership, the Islamic Community (IC) headed by Selim Muca. The events following the unsolved 2003 murder of markedly pro-Western IC Secretary-General Sali Tivari reflect the Middle-Eastern-trained young Albanian clerics' vehement criticism of their Western-minded colleagues. The latter appear to be on the defensive, while the Arab charities back the former. This does not affect Albanian society at large, which is mostly secular and not 70 per cent Muslim as it is usually portrayed. The threatening potential of even small radical groups does justify attention to the ways Salafis operate in the country.<sup>4</sup>

In Bulgaria too, the more than one million ethnic Muslims, mostly Turks, pose little threat. Grand Mufti Selim Mehmed often declares that 'We do not want Islam to have an alien shape' (Badran 2001), although Middle-Eastern funding contributes to his institutions' budgets. However, the estimated 20,000 Arabs living in the country and their proselytizing charities which target particularly Slav (Pomak) and Roma Muslims, but also Turks, are food for concern. In autumn 2003 the police dismantled Islamist centres in the south, around Velingrad and Pazardzhik. From time to time, former Grand Mufti Nedeem Gendzhev sounds

the alarm bells over the danger of fundamentalism, recruitment and the return of hundreds of Bulgarian students from Arab universities.<sup>5</sup>

Bulgaria's geo-strategic situation and the prospects of US military bases there call for vigilance. For sending troops to Iraq the country was threatened several times by al Qaeda, the Tawhid group. Reports on the Netherlands-based al Waqf al Islami's involvement in Bulgaria provoked nervousness despite the official denial of any danger.<sup>6</sup> Saudi-funded and US-terror-listed al Waqf built mosques and encouraged missionary work (*da'wa*) in other Balkan countries too, particularly in Albania. Only superficial information has been available on these pan-European Salafi networks.

The number of Arabs residing, legally or illegally, in Romania is much higher. They run Islamic centres mostly in university cities such as Constanta, Iasi, Bucharest and Cluj. As in Bulgaria, it is often unclear what the numerous Middle Eastern businessmen of Romania do there. The October 2004 arrest of Craiova wheeler-dealer Genica Boerica's Arab associates or the February 2005 detention of the Terom company of Iasi's Arab employees, for money laundering and financing Western Islamist terrorists, most probably represent the tip of the iceberg. WAMY supports several Islamist charities in the country as the Islamic Cultural League (LICR), the Semiluna Humanitarian Society, the As-Salam Association and the Taiba Foundation. They claim to popularize Islam and to aid Romania's 70,000 Dobrogea Turks and Tatars who are irrelevant as far as radicalism is concerned (Ronay 2004; Condrea 2005; Lederer 1996).

In Moldova the Calauza Association led by Rustam Ahsamov and Sudanese immigrant Haisan Abdel Rasul is the main *da'wa* organization of Arab students, Tatars, Chechen and Afghan refugees and other Muslim residents. It became famous in July 2002 when the police arrested and beat their leaders for their 'fundamentalist' summer camp which Muslim scholars from Saudi Arabia and Moscow also attended. Moldova's authorities refused to register, for several years, the Muslim Spiritual Council headed by Talgat Masaev and the other Tatar community led by Alber Babaev, also in Chisinau. A third group in breakaway Tiraspol is harassed by the local KGB (Corley 2002).

If compared with Ukraine's 400,000 ethnic Muslims, immigrant Arab residents represent a tiny minority of 30,000. Due to their foreign financial resources, they nonetheless run a network of 12 regional branches called 'Association of Social Organizations Ar-Raid', which is expanding in neighbouring Moldova too. Its proselytizing and media activities are more significant than those of two other, Saudi-led Wahhabi groups (Birlik and Sunna), which have targeted Crimean Tatars with limited success. The (mainland) Spiritual Department of Ukrainian Muslims (DUMU) of Kazan Tatars headed by Lebanese immigrant Ahmad Tamim also rejects Wahhabism. (The Crimea has its separate leadership: Medjlis and Muftiyat.) For Tatars and other post-Soviet Muslims Islam means little more than the preservation of their ethnic culture, while Ar-Raid articulates an Islamist agenda. Little attention has been paid to it and even less to the unidentified westward migrants from Asia transiting by Ukraine, where they may spend longer periods of time (Bogomolov and Danilov 2003; Lederer 2000).

The same applies to Belarus which is also on the way of those Muslim migrants. President Lukashenko's readiness to sell weapons appears to be the main international disquietude as far as Belarus' links to terrorism are concerned. The country's estimated 50,000 ethnic Muslims (Azeris, Tatars, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks) are rarely radicals. Its few thousand Arab students deserve more attention, and so do those in the three Baltic republics where Islamic presence has been traditionally modest. However, foreign Arab funding recently enabled several small local communities to restore old prayer houses and erect or rent new ones. The majority population's distrust of Middle Easterners increased after 9/11.<sup>7</sup>

In pro-American and markedly Catholic Poland anti-Islamist sentiments may also have some religious connotation despite the historical acceptance of the country's 4,000 innocuous Tatars. The 25,000 Arab residents are much more committed to proselytism and better organized. The effect of Salafi literature published in Polish by the Muslim Students' Society cannot be great. Judging by its internal newsletter in Arabic (*al Hadhara*), this organization unambiguously rejects Western values.<sup>8</sup>

In several Central European countries young females represent a high proportion, if not the majority, of local converts. Most are married to Arab immigrants. Introducing Islam by indigenous women is, in a mildly racist environment, much more convincing than having this done by dubious aliens. These remain in the background of course. The choice of persuasive non-Arab national Muslim leaders can prove crucial in the media and the xenophobic public sphere. Western-minded Islamic Centre Director Vladimir Sanka of Prague is obviously more accepted by the Czech audience than a foreigner would be in this position. Only 500 are ethnic Czech among the country's 10,000 Muslims. Moreover, they are divided: Sudanese architect Muhammad Abbas Mu'tasima's pro-Salafi General Union of Muslim Students and Moneeb Hassan El-Rawy's Islamic Waqf Association of Moravia distance themselves from Sanka's moderates (Mares 2002; Zaki 2002; Mikule 2004; Gray 2003; IslamOnline 2004).

Tensions are even sharper between Zoltan Bolek's Hungarian Islamic Community (mostly converts) on the one hand and Zoltan Sulok's much less pro-Western Church of the Muslims of Hungary (with a majority of immigrants) and particularly the overtly anti-Western and Judeophobic Tayseer Saleh's Dar as-Salam mosque community on the other. In March 2004 Palestinian-born Tayseer was arrested and accused of plotting to bomb a Budapest Jewish museum but he was later released. His funds of Middle-Eastern origin remain frozen in a Hungarian bank (Lederer 2002, 1992; *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* 2004). Little that is reassuring is known of the country's several thousand Arab immigrants and those visiting imams, scholars and instructors who may preach intolerance in their prayer houses. As elsewhere, no one protects the moderates from intimidation. Middle-Eastern and Western international Muslim institutions side with the radicals.

The not very well documented Slovak Islamic Community of Syrian-born Mohammed Safwan Hasna was denied legal recognition and permission to build a mosque in old Bratislava. Only 150 of the alleged 5,000 members are



Slovak (*Slovak Spectator* 2003; Fila 2004). Eastern European authorities may be even less friendly to Islam than their Western counterparts are. Slovenian Mufti Osman Djogic also complained of not being allowed to erect an Islamic centre in downtown Ljubljana despite the availability of Arab funds for this purpose (Corley 2002; Bervar 2003; Ocvirk 1995).

Information on eastern European Muslim institutions and prayer houses may prove relevant even if potential terrorists do not necessarily attend them. Other mosque-goers may provide a lead to violent Islamists as the ones known from post-war Bosnia. Uncovering these requires a comprehensive understanding of Salafi reasoning and the post-socialist environment which is, nevertheless, secondary to the markedly Arab ideological roots.

So far the Salafis have tended to avoid confrontation in the region. One can only speculate as to the consequences of radical Islamist violence in it. Given their different modern history, eastern Europeans are less resilient and self-reliant than Westerners are, so terrorism in their countries would probably elicit panic and backlash against Arab immigrants, but not against ethnic Muslims. Such terror attacks would, nevertheless, provoke less international attention; and this has been, so far, one of the Western al Qaeda franchise groups' objectives. Coercing governments into sacrificing human rights for security has been another one, but in eastern Europe there are fewer liberties to sacrifice.

Generalized fear can certainly do a great deal of damage to social cohesion. The divide-and-conquer game, public stress or even hysteria in the post-socialist world would benefit the terrorist cause less than these potentially do in the West. Moreover, blaming poor eastern Europeans for marginalizing and humiliating the world's Muslims would not sound convincing. Turning these populations against the United States is not a realistic goal either. Eastern Europe's not necessarily accountable governments, rather than the ordinary people, are usually pro-American. Vengeance for sending troops to Iraq may explain terrorists' retaliation against Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Creating chaos and carnage in the region just because of its shopping centres', transportation hubs' and energy plants' vulnerability is, nevertheless, a more likely motivation.

Besides the assumed training camps, Western intelligence attention to eastern Europe has focused on the possibility of smuggling explosives, chemical poison or radioactive material from there to the West. This can occur relatively easily. Preventing or disrupting such attempts requires, among other things, more knowledge of, and contacts with, corrupt eastern Europe's Islamists. Even if they themselves are not violent, they are often well-informed and well-connected. Transnational terrorists will bomb their way to the negotiating table. They can hardly be thwarted worldwide. They must be engaged.

### **The chances**

Even if many eastern European Muslims failed to understand the war on Saddam's Iraq, most of them responded favourably to the American anti-terror strategy. They expressed compassion and solidarity after 9/11 and condemned

the attacks without ifs and buts. (The Bosnian authorities fully cooperated with the CIA investigators and extradited the Algerian suspects.) Most post-socialist 'Muslims' do not really care about the interpretation of Islam. They may even be too moderate (inauthentic) by Middle Eastern standards. However, some of their intellectuals and (Hanafi and Sufi) religious leaders can be involved in anti-Salafi campaigns. Strong pro-American feelings can be explained by the Cold War in the cases of Albania, Bulgaria's Turks and the former Soviet peoples of Islamic ancestry, while Bosniaks and Kosovars gratefully remember the courageous interventions of 1995 and 1999.

As far as potentially violent Islamism in eastern Europe is concerned, except for Russia, only the Bosnian Arab camps of the 1990s are documented because well-known *Mujahidin* were trained in them. Very few of the holy warriors were of eastern European origin. Those camps have been closed for years now, but preparation for urban guerrilla warfare and the concocting of home-made explosives or poison do not require easily noticeable facilities. Simple apartments suffice for this purpose, not necessarily in Bosnia where Arab residents tend to be watched. Preparation includes psychological and ideological training which may, in principle, justify the criminalization of support for schools, courses and holiday camps that indoctrinate youth or even children to grow up into bombers, accomplices and sympathizers.

In the United States similar charges were raised against the Holy Land Foundation for financing Hamas. In many countries in Europe it is, nevertheless, perfectly legal to instigate hate for Jews, Americans, democracy and secularism or praise terror. The main chance to avert the ensuing violence is to keep an eye, usually by agent penetration, on those perfectly legal activities, even though any Muslim informant of non-Muslim intelligence agencies is regarded by the Salafis as an apostate worthy of death. In the West vigilance appears to yield results. In the post-socialist East investigation has focused, due to American pressure, on bank transactions and immigration control. This cannot be very effective for the Salafis now transferring money mostly by informal ways and for the region's porous borders and generalized corruption, which affects the police themselves. They would be reluctant to inspect mosques even if they were professionally able to do so, which they are not given their unfamiliarity with Arab language and culture. Moreover, many are Islamophobic, which does not facilitate cooperation with the distrustful and Salafi-intimidated, but usually still pro-Western, indigenous Muslim dignitaries. Visas, residence permits, and even government officials can often be bought at modest prices.

Tracking the money trail can be more effective in developed countries as in the US with rich traditions of financial investigation. Freezing accounts, stemming the flow of funds, denying potential terrorists the means to travel, communicate and procure equipment may actually constrict the space in which they operate, even in eastern Europe. The 2001 crackdown on Arab charities in Bosnia was certainly salutary. Fewer similar actions took place in the region's other countries.

In addition to corruption and widespread organized crime, a number of post-socialist authoritarianism's further features also facilitate the Islamist radicals' task.

Trust in law enforcement and government administration is limited because of the lack of civic, democratic and human rights traditions and independent judiciary, despite the hypocritical official rhetoric about these for Western consumption. The region's other woes such as existential instability, the lack of prospects and security, social and ethnic tensions, the authorities' unaccountability and contempt for civil society may also hamper the investigation of those who hate and snarl in the dark. Misery is not expected to be eradicated soon. Despite the high number of disenchanted eastern Europeans and the spiritual void following the collapse of socialism, the immigrant Salafi missionaries persuaded only a few. However, the destructive role of these few can be disproportionately significant.

The immigrant Islamists of eastern Europe are not guest workers or rundown-suburb marginals. Many are students or graduates of low-tuition universities, professionals or, often shady, businessmen. They are ideologically similar to their Western counterparts and often connected to organizations such as Takfir, the European branches of the Egyptian Gamaa Islamiyah, the Muslim Brotherhood or the Algerian GIA. The flow of cadres, funds and information between East, West and Middle East is obvious.

Terror-related costs in the future will probably be much higher than those of today's preventive measures which should follow, discreetly, the paths of Middle-Eastern-funded religious indoctrination: proselytism, foreign preachers, weekend courses on Islam, charities, humanitarians, immigrant associations, and their links to each other and to their counterparts abroad. This kind of attention requires international vision and much more professionalism than the monitoring of bank accounts does. It may shed light on many new Islamists or on old ones who avoided the intelligence services' vigilance, which is not difficult in eastern Europe. I do not only mean the fewer Afghan, Chechen and Bosnian war veterans, but an increasing number of recently-immigrated *jihadis* about whom little is known.

### *A project to identify the radicals*

Printed sources on radicalism in the region are scarce. Distinction should be made between Islam in eastern Europe (ethnic and minority studies)<sup>9</sup> and radical Islamist activities in the region. Little has been printed on the latter other than the immigrant Arab organizations' newsletters, more or less sensational press articles and the indigenous Muslim institutions' publications. These can certainly be more instructive than eastern Europe's official intelligence surveys are. However, comprehensive field research should become the primary source of information.

In principle, eastern Europe's radicals ought to be monitored by the authorities of their countries which may become able to do this efficiently in the future. Until then, the European Union should provide guidance and advice in this respect, also to those post-socialist countries that are not yet members of the Union.

Following the 11 March 2004 Madrid bombing I launched an initiative to identify the radical Islamist networks in post-socialist eastern Europe. I am not an intelligence specialist, only an Arabist with several years of experience in Arab countries. As a NATO Fellow<sup>10</sup> I have published on Islam in eastern Europe

for the last 15 years. In the course of this research I encountered many Middle Eastern radical proselytizers, and so did several other native eastern European scholars of Arabic and Islam. My project consisted of the latter's involvement in observing and documenting, in English, in each of their respective countries, the radical organizations which operate overwhelmingly in Arabic.<sup>11</sup> The proposal also envisioned engaging in dialogue with indigenous Muslims and non-violent Islamists, which my Foundation<sup>12</sup> has been engaged in already, as well as the creation of an office of coordination for the envisaged workshops and publications.

Senior European Union officials rejected my proposal. Its starting budget was obviously modest by Western standards so bureaucracy may not be the only reason for this. The EU's position on the anti-terror war was brutally summarized by High Representative Javier Solana: 'Europe is not at war' (Agence France Presse 2004). Many Europeans prefer to appease the radicals and tend to dismiss as Islamophobia, paranoia or prejudice, any criticism of the continent's Muslim movements. This attitude may be explained by fear, opportunism, irresponsibility, ignorance or the influential French elite's anti-Americanism. The Council of Europe held a big Islamophobia seminar in this spirit in June 2004 in Budapest (Ramberg 2004). This capitulatory attitude of official, and a considerable part of civil, Europe is disappointing. Islamists will not reward it in the long run.

Further terrorist attacks in Europe may be related to radicals who reside in its eastern portion. Many ethnic Muslims there realize that 'condemning terror' is not sufficient: active contribution to the identification of its proponents is required. Eastern Europeans of Muslim extraction will not mind the close scrutiny of Islamist radicals. This and the association of *jihad* with Islamism will not be viewed here as 'culturalism', racism or offences against political correctness or civil liberties. It is often and rightly argued that interacting with Muslims in the West requires cultural sensitivity. Less so in the post-socialist world.

A data bank on the region's Islamist organizations should be created. National borders hardly matter since the radicals themselves ignore them. Some infringement of individual rights will be inevitable. The probable cooperation of most indigenous Islamic institutions, or at least their tacit approval, will neutralize any human rights criticism. It remains to be seen who will coordinate this task.

In addition to their incompetence, the national authorities of eastern Europe are often reluctant to cooperate with each other on account of their anachronistic ethnic bias. If the West tells them what to do, they usually listen. Without financial backing not much can be expected from private professional organizations such as ours. They are resourceless and ineffective in an authoritarian environment. I am not aware, in actual fact, of any similar independent civil initiative.

The United Nations and the European Union appear unlikely to contribute to the exploration of radicalism. Since 9/11 these institutions have debated at length over the definitions of terrorism and the harmonization of legal approaches to it. These are probably not useless, but far from sufficient. In this context the UN and the EU practically did not dare to mention Islamist radicalism, let alone Islam, even to combat the alleged Islamophobia of those who did. It is frustrating to debate with

influential international bureaucrats whose knowledge of Islam is rather limited. Seeking allies in this debate raises America's controversial relationship with the Islamic world and the various expressions of anti-Americanism worldwide. Both have far-reaching repercussions on eastern Europe and Islamism within it.

### *European anti-Americanism and transatlantic solidarity*

The surveillance and financially punitive measures that were taken in the United States against a number of its Islamist charities have been, so far, unimaginable in Europe. Transatlantic disunity is particularly harmful. *Jihadis* will always strive to drive wedges between democracies. Despite US public diplomacy and image improvement campaigns, the leftist, third-worldist, anti-globalist, secularist, environmentalist, pacifist, French patriotic forms of anti-Americanism have been on the rise. Criticism is everybody's right. It may even be justified. Many in the US may share it. Common interests, priorities and objectives are to be found, not further points of contention. The voices of eastern European pro-Americanism should also be listened to. Europe's abdication before Islamism in pursuit of short-sighted benefits involves entry into treacherous terrain. This impacts greatly on its eastern countries, which are supposed to follow the West's example. They should remember: it was not *détente* that brought down the Soviet Union.

Most eastern Europeans, including Muslims, were influenced by the anti-clerical French Revolution and secular *république*. It did and does symbolize Europe's progressive heritage. Despite the shock of many over the EU's lack of vision or pusillanimity towards the sworn Islamist enemies of that very heritage, it is still difficult for most Europeans to reach out to the American conservatives as prospective allies. There is no alternative. Europe should not mind any more if these are convinced that non-secular America is the best place on earth, with a sacred mission to make it happier in their own way. They will probably act more responsibly than the EU bureaucracy and particularly the UN personnel did, which had a poor record in the Balkans in the 1990s and no apparent capability of genuine self-criticism.

Huge material resources are at the disposal of these organizations. Some of their officials have become alienated from the real world. They tend to be particularly ignorant of Islamism in eastern Europe, where Islam is basically not a racial issue as they learned it to be. Ignorant people are not necessarily persuadable, but cooperation with them cannot be avoided. There is little hope other than that the American officials are much better.

### Notes

- 1 In Russia, Islamist radicalism is better documented by Vladimir Bobrovnikov, Alexei Malashenko, Alexei Kudriavtsev, Akhmet Yarlykapov, Rafyq Mohammattshin and others at the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies and the Moscow Carnegie Centre.
- 2 I particularly refer to Esad Hecimovic's numerous articles in Sarajevo weekly *Dani BH*, [www.bhdani.com/arhiva](http://www.bhdani.com/arhiva): 11 May 1998 (Handala at Large), 25 September 2001 (Bosnia: A Safe Haven for Terrorists), 21 December 2001 (Al Qaeda in Humanitarian

- Aid), and 22 November and 12 December 2002 (Misuse of Humanitarian Funds to Support Terrorism). English translations from the original Bosnian are also available: Attanassov 2005.
- 3 Lugert 2002; Woehrel 2005; *Tuzla Night Owl*, 21 April 2004, published the English translation of an 18 April 2004 *Saff* article listing Bosniak youth organizations and their then leaders. In Arabic *Saff* means 'line', not 'sword': [www.tfeagle.army.mil/tfeno/Feature\\_Story.asp?Article=82374](http://www.tfeagle.army.mil/tfeno/Feature_Story.asp?Article=82374).
  - 4 Dervishi 2003; *Klan* 2003; *Associated Press* 2002; Lederer 1994; Jazexhi 2005 (himself a Malaysia-trained young Albanian Islamist).
  - 5 Alexandrova 2003 – although Gendzhev has been known as the former Communist regime's informant, later Elfatih Hassanein's collaborator, he may not be wrong on everything.
  - 6 *Daily Times* 2004; Petrov 2004; Mehmed 2003; and particularly Yana Yordanova's series in the 32–4: 2004 issues of *Kapital* of Sofia, in Bulgarian.
  - 7 Huang 2001; Ahmed 2004b (the number of the country's Muslims is not '110 thousand' of course, only a few thousand); Baltic News Service 2001; Ahmed 2004a; Lederer 1995.
  - 8 Internet links on today's Islam, including Arab organizations, in Poland: <http://islam-in-poland.org/main/index.php/links/linki>.
  - 9 Bougarel and Clayer 2001 has probably the most complete bibliography of this field of study; Lederer 2001.
  - 10 [www.nato.int/acad/fellow/97-99/lederer.pdf](http://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/97-99/lederer.pdf).
  - 11 Most sources on radicalism in the region are not in English. Many are not even printed. This chapter's notes and the bibliography outline only a few references for the English speaking reader understanding some French.
  - 12 The Budapest-based Alice Lederer Foundation is committed to democratic and secular principles, despite its particular attention to the world of Islam. The Foundation regards it as a civic duty to contribute to the fight against terror and those who recruit supporters for Islamist extremism, in Europe or elsewhere.

# COUNTERING IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM

## A South African case study

*David Africa*

### **Introduction**

This study looks at efforts to counter the political and ideological support for terrorist organizations and terrorism as a method in post-apartheid South Africa. In attempting to do this, particular focus is placed on Muslim extremism in South Africa, and the particular organizational expressions of this tendency in the country. While South Africa has its fair share of extremist movements of all political persuasions, Muslim extremism has constituted the most significant threat to governmental authority faced by the newly democratized South Africa. In an era where Islamist terrorism continues to assume international centre-stage, it is essential to consider the South African example as one offering possible strategies to successfully combat Muslim extremism.

The South African experience with counter-terrorism is strongly influenced by the recent history of the country, chiefly the nature of the anti-apartheid struggle and the consequent efforts to build a united South Africa where all communities could feel at home. This applies not only to ethnic minorities but religious and cultural communities as well. In this regard, the efforts at undermining ideological support for Muslim extremism in South Africa are part of and reinforced by the national project to build a South African nation.

### **The Muslim extremist threat in South Africa**

For descriptive purposes the term Muslim extremism as used in this chapter refers to those extremist organizations whose membership is almost exclusively Muslim and who organize around an Islamic political programme. In the South African case this membership and programme has not always been publicly expressed by these organizations, but can be clearly inferred from their statements and actions.

The primary organizational expression of Muslim extremism in South Africa is an organization known as *QIBLA*, which literally means the direction in

which Muslims pray. QIBLA is an extremist organization established in 1980 by a number of young South African Muslims, most of whom were active in the Pan Africanist Congress, one of the two main liberation movements fighting the apartheid regime at the time. The primary personalities behind the formation of QIBLA were Achmat Cassiem and Yusuf Patel, activists from South Africa's Western Cape province. The individuals who founded QIBLA were influenced by the example of the Iranian revolution in 1979, and the establishment of an Islamic Republic in that country. In particular they were impressed with the manner in which the Iranian Islamists mobilized the entire civil society against the regime of the Shah. They therefore called their organization the 'QIBLA Mass Movement'. However, the organization never developed a mass following inside South Africa. QIBLA has always remained a relatively small, closely-knit organization.

QIBLA seeks to establish an Islamic State in South Africa, despite the fact that the Muslim community constitutes approximately 2 per cent of the national population. While this community is concentrated in some provinces, it does not constitute a majority in any of South Africa's nine provinces.

The QIBLA strategy to achieve this objective of an Islamic State in South Africa can be broken into a six-staged strategy.<sup>1</sup> The stages of this strategy are:

- Creating an *awareness* amongst the Muslim community of a certain social or political issue of concern;
- *Mobilization* of the community around either domestic or international issues;
- *Conscientizing* the Muslim community about the relationship between these specific issues and the more general, global struggle for an Islamic State;
- *Challenging the authority* of the state. This is done by means of mass mobilization, protest actions and the gradual introduction of armed violence;
- An *armed revolution* against the existing order. QIBLA regards the existing social order in South Africa as inherently and structurally violent, and sees its violence against this system as a defensive means. This armed revolution is aimed at overthrowing the current social order and replacing it with an Islamic State;
- The *armed defence* of the Islamic revolution follows the success of the revolution.

Given its relative obscurity and unpopularity amongst the Muslim community in the country, QIBLA has historically chosen to act under the cover of *ad hoc* committees or front organizations. The strategy of establishing front organizations is a long-standing and successful strategy deployed by QIBLA. These included a number of *ad hoc* international solidarity committees such as the Bosnia Support Group and Muslims Against Global Oppression (MAGO) as well as more established fronts such as the IQRAA Foundation and the Islamic Unity Convention (IUC). In a sense QIBLA operates much in the mould of the classical Leninist parties, as a numerically small vanguard organization of ideologically



conscious individuals. In this case it would be Muslims with a high level of political understanding of a particular militant interpretation of Islam.

QIBLA does not divulge details of its membership, and intentionally does not declare membership figures. It is generally believed that the core membership of the organization numbers less than 50, with a wider circle of active supporters and sympathizers.

The primary aim in refusing to make its membership public is to create the impression that it is not an organization in the strict sense of the meaning, but rather a broad social movement. According to its leader, Achmat Cassiem, this strategy 'of course provides you maximum flexibility in whatever particular activities you get involved in'.<sup>2</sup> The value of QIBLA's covert *modus operandi*, and the use of front organizations become evident when looked at from this perspective. This method of organization allows the organization to maintain distance and claim plausible deniability when its members or front organizations commit acts of violence or intimidation. It not only provides QIBLA with legal cover but at the same time maintains its legitimacy as an organization in the Muslim community. Despite this cover the leadership of the organization knows that its supporters and target audience are aware that, despite public denials, QIBLA plays a role in certain illegal activities. They are thus able to protect the organization from legal sanctions while at the same time mobilizing support for their causes and actions.

Since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994 QIBLA has expanded its political and organizational activities considerably. This is partly due to the opportunities offered by an open society and the concomitant ability to freely organize, raise funds and network. At the same time the new political dispensation in South Africa provided a range of political and socio-economic causes that the organization could use to mobilize support. As in any transitional society, the new government inherits socio-political issues from the past that are not easily solved, as well as new issues that arise as a result of the transition. In South Africa under apartheid many issues such as high levels of crime were regarded as less important than the political struggle between the two primary protagonists. In the new dispensation this and other issues were brought to the public attention by a free press and social organizations.

The main effort of QIBLA's work in the post-apartheid era has been in establishing and manipulating front organizations.

The first QIBLA front organization with a significant public profile was established shortly before the first democratic election in 1994. The Islamic Unity Convention (IUC) is a broad front of Muslim political, welfare, religious and educational organizations. It was established to mobilize Muslim support for the QIBLA campaign to boycott the first democratic election in 1994. At the same time the establishment of the IUC is an attempt by QIBLA to claim legitimacy as the leading representative of the Muslim community in South Africa. The IUC, and its leader, Achmat Cassiem, have regularly exaggerated the popularity and size of the organization. Shortly after its launch in March 1994, the organization claimed that it had more than 300 affiliates at its founding conference. Many of these supposed 'affiliates' were only observers or individuals attending the IUC's

launch conference without joining the IUC. What is clear is that the IUC and other fronts established by QIBLA are attempts to contest hegemony for political leadership in the Muslim community in South Africa, and the Western Cape in particular.

Despite its best efforts QIBLA's initiatives to establish popular front organizations were usually unsuccessful, or very short-lived. Because of its hostility to the recognized Muslim clergy, and the fact that many Muslims regard it as an organization of Shi'as – a consequence partly of its fascination with Iran – QIBLA has never been a popular organization amongst South Africa's predominantly Sunni Muslims. Even when it established front organizations it did not maintain a sufficient distance from these organizations so that they could operate with at least a semblance of independence from QIBLA.

The first QIBLA initiative to gain widespread popular support amongst Muslims, and even many non-Muslims, was People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD). PAGAD's main declared objective at its initiation was to 'serve as a broad front against gangs and drugs and to act as a pressure group to force the government and its agencies to deal with the problem of drugs and gangsters' (PAGAD 1997).<sup>3</sup> In the initial stages the organization united a wide spectrum of organizations and individuals of diverse political persuasions, although it had a predominantly Muslim character. This was expressed in the mosque meetings, recital of Islamic phrases, and the slogans of the organization.

Initially the organization declared a non-antagonistic stance towards the government, and its leadership also reflected a wide range of political perspectives, including pro-government elements. Some of its senior members were also members of the ruling African National Congress (ANC). The initial leadership also included a Roman Catholic priest from Cape Town, Father Christopher Cleohessy (Gottschalk 2005).

Despite the public appearance of a broad-based organization with various elements in its ranks, the key positions within PAGAD were dominated by QIBLA members. Even as the organization was promoting 'cooperation with government, QIBLA members such as Abdus Salaam Ebrahim were actively involved in the acquisition of illegal firearms and explosives, as well as the training of PAGAD members in the use of these materials'.<sup>4</sup>

The initial popularity of the PAGAD front stems from two key factors.

First, PAGAD addressed the issue of gangsterism and drug abuse that affected almost every household on Cape Town's poverty-ridden Cape Flats. By 1995 the new government had not done anything significant to combat gangsterism in the Western Cape. The South African Police Service (SAPS) was at the beginning of a painful organizational transformation, and its capabilities were logically impeded by this process. The communities of the Western Cape were tired of gang violence and drug abuse, and vulnerable to the vigilante approach promoted by PAGAD. At this stage PAGAD did not declare itself in open opposition to government, but only to government policy as it related to combating gangsterism.

The second reason for the initial success achieved by PAGAD was the impression of distance between themselves and QIBLA they were able to create.

The QIBLA members who established PAGAD took the formal establishment of the organization through a process similar to money laundering. They introduced the idea to some QIBLA and non-QIBLA members in the IUC. From there the IUC took up the campaign and invited other Muslim communities in various coloured townships to participate therein. Some of the organizations invited had local links to non-Muslim community organizations and invited these to join the campaign. Before long it was a campaign with a wide base of organizational support. The concept of PAGAD was now 'washed', and clean enough to present to the public. PAGAD came into the public spotlight in February 1996 when its members marched on the residence of the then Minister of Justice Dullah Omar. Omar was targeted because he was a Muslim serving in what PAGAD and QIBLA regarded as an illegitimate ANC government. This set the tone for an intensive and increasingly violent campaign by QIBLA elements within PAGAD against their targets, which were initially mainly gang leaders and drug dealers. PAGAD attracted wide community support including the support of both the Muslim and Christian communities who were disillusioned with the high levels of crime. The organization also secured the support of the influential Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), a Cape Town based Muslim clergy organization.<sup>5</sup> The MJC is the biggest representative body of Muslims in South Africa and is considered the official representative of Muslims in the Western Cape by government as well as international organizations and foreign governments. It controls the majority of mosques in the province and is actively involved in promoting the interests of Muslims at all levels of government.

The MJC has had a historically antagonistic relationship with QIBLA, including a period during the mid-1980s when the conflict descended into violent clashes between supporters of the two organizations. Despite this history the MJC expressed its support for PAGAD, ignorant of the real role played by QIBLA in the formation and activities of the organization. In order to gain the public approval of the MJC PAGAD even appointed a number of MJC-approved members to its executive committee. This group was lead by Aslam Toeffy, a businessman with close links to the then president of the MJC Sheikh Nazeem Mohammed.

PAGAD also received unqualified coverage from the IUC radio station, Radio 786 (Gottschalk 2005). This radio station provided a continuous stream of PAGAD propaganda to the Muslim community in the Western Cape, and also inflamed tensions in this community by broadcasting statements that mosques are under attack.

This broad organizational support for PAGAD allowed the organization to develop a high level of credibility amongst Muslims in the Western Cape. By 1996 the organization enjoyed the support of 64 per cent of Muslims in the province as well as 18 per cent of Christians (Gottschalk 2005). Its mass marches and public rallies attracted thousands of supporters. For the first time at a PAGAD public rally in August 1996 attended by approximately 15,000 people, the QIBLA leader Achmat Cassiem addressed members and supporters of the organization. From this point onwards the links between the two organizations became more exposed. This ultimately led to a split within PAGAD, with an anti-QIBLA faction breaking

away in September 1996. It was at this point that PAGAD shifted its focus from mass mobilization to a campaign of armed terror against a wide range of targets.

By this time PAGAD had a well-established paramilitary wing called the G-Force. The ostensible purpose of this structure was primarily defensive. It had the responsibility to protect the participants at PAGAD protest meetings and marches. In reality the G-Force was a cell-based structure responsible for attacks on suspected drug dealers, gang leaders, their properties and other opponents of PAGAD.<sup>6</sup> The G-Force cells consisted of small numbers of PAGAD members that operated within their geographic areas of residence. Some cells were function-specific and concentrated on vehicle theft, extortion and other specialized functions such as bomb manufacture.

### **From mass mobilization to violence**

The first recorded violent acts by PAGAD took place during July 1996. These included an explosion of a homemade pipe bomb, as well as the involvement of PAGAD members in three shooting incidents. Their propensity for and frequency of attacks on alleged gangsters and drug dealers, in which innocent people including children were killed,<sup>7</sup> brought about a division in the community that had hitherto expressed open and unqualified support for PAGAD. There was an increasing criticism of PAGAD strategy by religious leaders and organizations as well as government.<sup>8</sup> QIBLA and the Islamic Unity Convention were the only significant community organizations to continue their support for PAGAD. The continuing violence, and the increasingly Islamist rhetoric of PAGAD led to the development of a Muslim–Christian schism in the province. Drug lords used the opportunity to play the two religious groupings against each other. The schism between PAGAD and the Community Outreach Programme (CORE), established by Christian pastors aligned to gangs, symbolized the ‘conflict’ between Muslims and Christians.<sup>9</sup>

Government and its functionaries became targets of marches, inflammatory speeches and attacks. This included the bombing of several police stations, an attack on the unit investigating PAGAD-related offences, targeting and killings,<sup>10</sup> the intimidation of prosecuting personnel and attacks on members of the judiciary involved in PAGAD cases such as the assassination of regional court magistrate Piet Theron (Dixon and Johns 2001).

After the 1996 split, the content of PAGAD’s rhetoric changed to become more militant and overtly political with a Muslim extremist tendency becoming more prominent. An example of this shift was the ideological connection they made between their struggle ‘against gangsterism’ and the struggles of Muslims elsewhere in the world against ‘the West’ (Dixon and Johns 2001).<sup>11</sup>

Between August 1996 and January 2001 the covert structures of PAGAD were allegedly responsible for more than 400 incidents of terror, including bombings, shooting incidents and intimidation of political opponents. The targeting developed an increasingly political character, and can be broken into three interrelated phases (Botha 2005). These are:

- The initial phase from July 1996 to December 1997, where the targets of PAGAD attacks were mostly gang leaders. The attacks typically took the form of an assassination or the detonation of a homemade explosive device at the residence of an alleged gang leader;
- Attacks on clergy critical of PAGAD and QIBLA, as well as businessmen who refused to contribute funds to the organization. During this phase PAGAD engaged in a massive extortion programme, forcing Muslim businessmen to pay tens of thousands of dollars to the organization. Those who refused to pay had their houses bombed or were assassinated.
- Public venues became the primary target of attacks from 1998 to 2001. These included tourist venues frequented by Westerners, shopping malls and places of entertainment. There was also an intense campaign of terror against government officials and state facilities.

By 1999 PAGAD had lost almost all of its public support and functioned almost exclusively as a terrorist organization. The majority of its funds were spent on its violent actions or legal funds to defend PAGAD members prosecuted for terrorist activities. The ideological link between QIBLA and PAGAD became more pronounced, with PAGAD members undergoing intensive ideological training. This included indoctrination in the reasons for attacking, and justification for killing women and children during their terrorist actions.

A limited number of PAGAD members were also selected for recruitment directly into the QIBLA structures. However, this was an exception to the rule, as QIBLA wanted to remain a small organization with significant influence, instead of a mass organization.

### **Methods of spreading extremist influence**

The communication of its policies, popularization of its actions and demonization of its opposition was a key element in QIBLA's efforts to develop its support base and enhance its standing amongst Muslims in the Western Cape. The ultimate objective of this communication strategy was to establish QIBLA as the hegemonic force amongst Muslims in the province and marginalize the moderate element amongst the Muslim leadership. The communication strategy used a combination of new technology and traditional institutions.

QIBLA and PAGAD made effective use of Radio 786 as its primary broadcast medium. Although the radio station was only on the air every alternate day, they succeeded in setting the agenda for the other community radio stations as well, including the opposition Voice of the Cape radio station.<sup>12</sup> Radio 786 broadcast live coverage of PAGAD marches and public meetings, and hosted scores of PAGAD and QIBLA leaders to comment on PAGAD's activities, and the state's responses thereto. They rarely provided government or those Muslims critical of these organizations with the opportunity to counter their arguments. In this sense the radio station was truly a propaganda mouthpiece for PAGAD. It is worth noting that, while Radio 786 claims to be independent, its broadcasting

licence is held by the IUC, whose president is Achmat Cassiem the leader of QIBLA.

PAGAD made extensive use of mosques to spread its message. It sent its leaders to address Muslims at mosques throughout the province. This is the natural gathering place for Muslims in any community, and the weight of a message is exponentially increased when it is stated in a mosque. The mosque provided PAGAD and QIBLA with a legitimacy amongst Muslims that they had not had before. PAGAD had natural access to mosques affiliated to the IUC but also gained access to mosques affiliated to the MJC or other religious councils. While much of this access was initially voluntary, it became increasingly coerced after 1997. When the MJC distanced itself from PAGAD, and the organization started attacking Muslim businessmen and clergy, the majority of mosques refused PAGAD the opportunity to address their congregations. In certain instances PAGAD and QIBLA members forced the Imams to allow them to speak, especially during the Friday *Juma'a* prayers.

PAGAD made good use of the internet and chat groups to gather information, publicize its policies and communicate with other local and international organizations and activists. They established a website with updated information on organizational activities and links to other organizations with similar aims. The PAGAD website was disrupted when the security services seized all the computers of the webmaster and other PAGAD members in 2000 as part of a criminal investigation into PAGAD-related violence. However, PAGAD members continue to participate in internet chat groups where they interact with militants from across the globe. Apart from the propaganda value that this holds, it creates the possibility of interaction between local extremists from QIBLA and PAGAD and international extremists. In a case that demonstrates the danger of this type of communication, two South Africans who made contact with al Qaeda were arrested in Pakistan in July 2004.<sup>13</sup> The men were arrested in the company of Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, an al Qaeda member wanted in connection with the 1998 bombing of the US embassies in East Africa.

### **State responses to counter extremist ideology**

The initial government response to the developing threat of terrorism by QIBLA and PAGAD was one of denial and inertia. On the one hand there was a reluctance to assign the label terrorism to any organization or movement in the South African context, especially one such as QIBLA that played an active role in the anti-apartheid struggle. This was also a time when the United States first started to seriously consider the threat posed by Muslim extremists organized under the al Qaeda banner. The South African government did not want to be seen as part of what many South Africans regard as a US-inspired global programme against Muslims. Even though the South African security services developed credible intelligence on the threat posed by Muslim extremists in South Africa, this was largely ignored in the initial stages of PAGAD's campaign of terror. The threat was regarded as a law-enforcement issue to be dealt with as part of normal policing

activities. The South African government placed a high value on its independent political positioning *vis-à-vis* the United States, and believed that its historically positive relations with the Arab world and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) guaranteed it safety from Muslim extremist terrorism. In fact this author was accused of spreading US fantasies of Muslim extremism in South Africa by fellow security service officers when he raised the terrorist threat posed by QIBLA and PAGAD in early 1996.

A further obstacle in the development of a serious response to terrorism in South Africa was the history of the security services themselves. By the time QIBLA and PAGAD started their campaign of terrorism in South Africa the security services were all in the initial phase of a major transformation process. The government did not have the faith in the security services to trust their information, analysis or judgments. This was largely due to the fact that the majority of security service officers was recruited prior to the transformation and had served the apartheid regime against the current ANC government. There was a real concern amongst government that these officers could manipulate intelligence to mislead the government into taking erroneous policy and security positions.<sup>14</sup>

The local media spotlight fell onto the threat posed by PAGAD and QIBLA with the public lynching of a notorious gang leader, Rashaad Staggie, on 4 August 1996. Staggie was murdered by a mob of PAGAD members in full view of the media and South African police.<sup>15</sup> The resultant public attention forced the government to seriously consider the nature and danger of the Muslim extremist threat in South Africa. Government response evolved over time, but by 1998 there was a commitment at all levels of government to address the threat posed by QIBLA and PAGAD at the political, security and legislative levels. It was accepted that the terrorist threat in South Africa could not be dealt with at only one of these levels, or even at all these levels without integrating them. It was essential to implement all these activities simultaneously and in coordination with each other.

By 1998 the South African government had embarked on a campaign to isolate QIBLA and PAGAD and reduce the material and ideological support for their actions. By now it was accepted that a programme of counter political support for QIBLA and PAGAD was a critical part of any successful counter-terrorism strategy. The objectives of this campaign were to:<sup>16</sup>

- reduce the political space provided to QIBLA and PAGAD by the media, especially community radio and newspapers;
- alienate them from the legitimate instruments of authority in the Muslim community, primarily the mosques;
- minimize their support amongst potential sources of funding, especially wealthy Muslim businessmen;
- expose their public agenda, such as campaigning against gangsterism, as a front for their real agenda which is the overthrow of the constitutional order;
- magnify conflict within their ranks, especially on matters of strategy.

### **The nature of the South African CIST strategy**

The efforts to marginalize QIBLA and PAGAD were seen as an essential element of governance, and led to the mainstreaming of CIST efforts in government policy and action. This meant that CIST was not regarded as a separate ‘propaganda’ function, but as a way of conducting a daily interaction with a particular community, in this case South African Muslims. The various levels of government actively engaged the leadership of the Muslim community on issues of concern to the community. These included controversial issues such as the legalization of abortion, gambling, and the extension of certain rights to same-sex couples. Government also engaged the Muslim community around those issues that gave rise to PAGAD’s popularity, gangsterism and drug abuse in the Western Cape.

Government engagement with the Muslim community took place at the highest levels. This included regular exchanges between the Muslim leadership, especially the Muslim Judicial Council, and cabinet ministers. The MJC has been actively engaged as part of the National Religious Forum, set up by Nelson Mandela in 1997. He identified the role of the forum to

work together towards changing the moral climate of the South African society. He said: ‘Our Constitution rightly ensures the separation of Religion and State within the secular state. Religions must not control the government, and the government must not run the religions. But this does not imply antagonism between religion and state. It does not separate political integrity from spiritual integrity. Morals and truth are indivisible. Politicians have spiritual responsibilities, and religions have political responsibilities – but each is concerned with our society and all who belong to it.

The transformation of our country requires the greatest possible cooperation between religions and political parties, critically and wisely serving our people together. Neither political nor religious objectives can be achieved in isolation. We are partners in the building of our society.<sup>17</sup>

Further engagement between government and the MJC included efforts to involve the organization in poverty alleviation projects. This included government funding of an agricultural project run by the MJC in Philippi, one of Cape Town’s poorest communities.<sup>18</sup>

The CIST strategy was supported by the organization of government policy and programmes into clusters. This strategy, adopted in 1999, means that government policy on security, social development, education and justice operate in a coordinated fashion. These departmental structures operate on all levels of government, and co-determine policy and prioritization, and even cooperate on implementation. In this sense it was easier to integrate the efforts to influence the Muslim community into broader government policy and efforts, instead of isolating it in one government department. This allowed the government to address some of the root causes of popular support for PAGAD such as the high levels of



crime and drug abuse by combining the efforts of the educational, security and justice departments. In the Western Cape this policy was implemented through the establishment of the Multi-Agency Delivery Mechanism (MADAM). MADAM is 'a partnership of the Education, Health and Social Services departments as well as departments involved in the criminal justice system, especially the Department of Community Safety'.<sup>19</sup>

The various government working groups were provided with regular strategic analyses by the intelligence services. The joint efforts of the intelligence services in respect of counter-terrorism are organized by the National Intelligence Coordinating Committee (NICOC), which briefs policy-makers on the terrorist threat in South Africa. This capability was also available to MADAM at the provincial level, where a local Intelligence Production Unit developed strategic analysis of the threat. Reliable and current intelligence played a key role in the government's efforts to undermine support for QIBLA and PAGAD. Given the dynamics of the Muslim community at the time, and the ever-changing allegiances within the terrorist organizations, and between them and the larger community, it was essential that policy-makers were provided with information that allowed them to implement their policies or programmes with maximum effect.

In order to assure Muslims of their place in a democratic South Africa the government went to great lengths to interact with the community and the issues they faced. This included visits to mosques by government leaders and making a special effort to speak on issues such as the Palestinian conflict that is central to the feelings of Muslims everywhere, including South Africa. There was also a visible attempt to underline the role that Muslims have historically played in the South African liberation movement, and the prominence they continued to occupy in the new dispensation. Apart from the high number of Muslims serving in the national cabinet, some prominent Muslims were appointed to senior positions in the public services. This included the Chief Justice and a member of the national Gender Equality Commission.<sup>20</sup>

The ruling African National Congress also became the first major political party to elect a Muslim as its provincial leader. Ebrahim Rasool, a former leader of the Muslim organization Call of Islam, was elected as provincial leader of the ANC in 1998. Rasool subsequently became the ANC candidate for premier in the province and was elected to that position. He had a longstanding relationship with the Muslim leadership of the MJC and played a key role in bringing them closer to government, thereby increasing the marginalization of QIBLA and PAGAD. He was seen as a respected activist in the Muslim community and could galvanize significant support for government's efforts against QIBLA from the traditional clergy, the Muslim business community and a wide range of other Muslim social and community organizations. In addition Rasool was part of a network of progressive Muslims who occupied key positions in academia and the media. These connections were critical in developing an alternative message to the one portrayed by QIBLA and PAGAD.

### **Effectiveness of the CIST strategy**

Between 1998 and 2001 the government engaged in a successful strategy to undermine any political support for QIBLA and PAGAD. The strategy marginalized these organizations until they were forced to rely only on terrorism to remain in the public focus, raise funds and gain access to public facilities. From a high of having tens of thousands attending their meetings, they were now reduced to a regular support base of a few hundred members.

Businessmen who were a regular and significant source of funding for QIBLA and PAGAD refused to fund the activities of the organization. Initially many of them continued to finance these organizations under pressure of threats to their lives. However, as QIBLA and PAGAD became more marginalized, they felt more inclined to resist this pressure. Many of them publicly exposed the extortion to which they were subjected, which led to the further isolation of PAGAD. Without the funds obtained by extortion, QIBLA and PAGAD faced tremendous operational difficulties. They were unable to meet the costs of legal defence for their members and could no longer provide sufficient support to the families of arrested members. This led to infighting in the organization and the loss of significant public support as many of these families were key organizers for PAGAD in their respective communities. The lack of funding also impacted directly on PAGAD's attempts to spread their message as they had no means to fund their propaganda efforts.

Radio 786 was forced to adopt a more neutral approach to PAGAD and QIBLA and had to tone down its rhetoric in support of these organizations, as advertisers threatened to withdraw their business from the radio station. The loss of this mouthpiece as an outright tool of inflammatory propaganda was a significant dent in QIBLA and PAGAD's efforts to gain a hegemonic position in the Muslim community.

QIBLA and PAGAD became marginalized from the mosques to the point where they could no longer hold any meetings in mosques, and had to resort to using their own facilities as meeting venues. This is significant in two senses. First, the mosque provides a cover of legitimacy for any activity taking place within its confines. The community attending that mosque assumes that what happens there, and what is said in the mosque, is at least permissible, if not directly supported by the religious leadership. Second it offered QIBLA and PAGAD a captive audience in that many people attending mosque would not come to listen to their specific messages, but would find themselves at mosque when a PAGAD meeting was taking place. The denial of this legitimate space and captive audience was a major success in undermining the legitimacy of and support for PAGAD and QIBLA. Once they were forced to meet at their own venue, they had no automatic claim to legitimacy. This resulted in the continued decline of their support base.

Their increasing isolation forced the extremists into the open. They could no longer hide behind the legitimacy of the mosque, the support of the community or the authority of the religious leadership. By 2001 QIBLA and PAGAD members engaged in terrorism were more easily betrayed by members of the community or even fellow terrorists who became uneasy at the activities of the organization.

The political efforts to marginalize them produced concrete security results with the arrest and conviction of significant numbers of PAGAD and QIBLA members, including senior elements of their leadership echelon. This included the conviction of the PAGAD National Coordinator and longstanding QIBLA member Abdus Salaam Ebrahim.

### **What have we learned?**

The first, and most important lesson of South Africa's struggle against Muslim extremism is that any political programme to isolate extremists should be part of an integrated strategy involving not only the traditional security sectors of government. Terrorists organize around real issues and it is critical for governments to address those issues in a concrete way, as far as it is reasonably possible. In the South African case there were real concerns with high levels of crime and drug abuse that had to be dealt with through the joint efforts of several government departments. In addition to this, a CIST strategy should be coordinated with legislative and security measures to undermine the terrorists' ability to operate.

CIST should not be equated with propaganda. It is not only a case of 'getting our message through' but requires that we deal with real policy issues, and adopt a real partnership with the Muslim community. The South African government did not choose its partners in the Muslim community but engaged those leadership structures that existed on the ground, and that had the support of ordinary Muslims. We cannot tailor the Muslim community to our needs and 'create leadership' for them, but need to interact with them as they exist in reality. Too often we attempt to impose a leadership on the community that thinks the way we do. This is not only unhelpful, but quite unlikely to work in a community where leadership develops over time and is not elected in four-year election cycles.

'Governments, in both state and party dimensions, should give high priority to inclusivity, with its reassuring symbolism' (Gottschalk 2005: 11). In the South African instance the case of Ebrahim Rasool is instructive. Although he was not appointed to his position only because he is a Muslim, it was certainly a key consideration, and one that produced significant and positive results for the government's campaign against Muslim Extremism.

A successful CIST strategy relies on accurate intelligence. The intelligence services have to be geared towards more than the collection of tactical and target intelligence. They need to become more attuned to the political and cultural dynamics of the communities in which extremists operate. This will enable them to provide policy-makers with a reliable map of the community, with all its fault lines, shifting allegiances and interpersonal dynamics. Only then can policy-makers develop appropriate counter measures to undermine political support for extremism.

The continued alienation of QIBLA and PAGAD five years after their terrorist campaign was brought to a halt is evidence of the success of the government's campaign to undermine political support for their policies, strategy and tactics. However, CIST is not a package to be taken off the shelf when terrorism rears

its ugly head, but rather a means of dialogue between government and specific communities. Unless this dialogue continues, is strengthened and institutionalized, terrorists will always find gaps to exploit and issues around which they can mobilize. Successful CIST strategies are nothing more than a continuous ‘dialogue of civilizations’ at the local or global level.

### Notes

- 1 Author interview with QIBLA member, June 2005.
- 2 Corinna Arndt, unpublished interview with Achmat Cassiem, 2005.
- 3 People Against Gangsterism And Drugs 1997 Interim Constitution – <http://www.PAGAD.co.za/> (accessed August 2005).
- 4 Author interview with former PAGAD member, 2005.
- 5 *Independent Newspapers*, 12 August 1996; Cape Times, press release by Muslim Intellectuals, 15 November 1996; [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=arch56233be6559df201b](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=arch56233be6559df201b) (accessed August 2005).
- 6 Steve Tshwete (2000) Minister for Safety and Security of South Africa, ‘Media briefing at the GCIS parliamentary briefing week’, 11 September, <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2000/000911110p1001.htm> (accessed 7 March 2006).
- 7 *Independent Newspapers*, ‘Silence as baby victim is buried’, 24 September 1997, [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=arch82303be7e5a6c3329](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=arch82303be7e5a6c3329) (article not accessible).
- 8 *Cape Times*, press release by Muslim Intellectuals, 15 November 1996, [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=arch56233be6559df201b](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=arch56233be6559df201b) (accessed August 2005).
- 9 *The Citizen*, ‘War between PAGAD and Core’, 24 September 1997, <http://www.citizen.co.za/index/home.aspx?pDesc=2,1,27> (accessed August 2005).
- 10 *Independent Newspapers*, 15 January 1999; *The Cape Argus*, ‘Cops intimidated by PAGAD’, 29 July 1997, [http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set\\_id=1&click\\_id=13&art\\_id=arch84513be7dd4abb520](http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=arch84513be7dd4abb520) (accessed August 2005). See also *Daily News*, 8 December 1996, *Pretoria News*, 18 December 1996, and *The Star*, 18 December 1996.
- 11 See also: *Daily News*, ‘Holy war on drug lords’, 12 August 1996.
- 12 The opposition Voice of the Cape, mouthpiece of the MJC, broadcasted on alternate days.
- 13 BBC News, ‘Key al-Qaeda suspect arrested’, 30 July 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3938133.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3938133.stm) (accessed 7 March 2006).
- 14 An example of this is the ‘briefing’ provided to President Mandela by the then chief of the defence force General Meiring. According to the briefing, members of Mandela’s own party were planning a coup against him. The allegations were proven to be fabrications, and Meiring, who served as the head of the army under the old regime, was forced to resign.
- 15 *Cape Times*, 5 August 1996, article by Friedman, Roger and photos by Gool, Benny. See also: [www.hsrapress.ac.za/download.asp?filename=2092\\_12\\_Changing\\_the\\_Fourth\\_Estate-02082005122747PM.pdf](http://www.hsrapress.ac.za/download.asp?filename=2092_12_Changing_the_Fourth_Estate-02082005122747PM.pdf) and <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/files/Desai%20Pagad%20Research%20Report.pdf> (both accessed 7 March 2006).
- 16 Author’s own analysis, based on his active involvement in some of these efforts. No official government policy on countering political support for QIBLA has ever been published.
- 17 Nelson Mandela, quoted in Peter G. Just (2005) ‘NRLF (National Religious Leaders Forum)’, Nanhua Buddhist Temple website column, 20 June, <http://www.nanhua>.

- co.za/nanhua/Column/Peter%20Just/NRLF%20(National%20Religious%20Leaders'  
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- 18 Almuth Schellpeper (2004) 'Islam in South Africa. Coming out of the shadows', Qantara.de Internet Portal, 15–16 April, [http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-478/\\_nr-98/i.html](http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-478/_nr-98/i.html) (accessed 7 March 2006).
  - 19 Provincial Government, Western Cape, 'Contacting your Community Safety Forum', <http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/directories/services/11459/9495> (accessed 7 March 2006). MADAM Newsletters available at <http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/pubs/mags/54761> (accessed 7 March 2006).
  - 20 Justice Ismail Mohammed was appointed as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Appeals and Professor Faried Esack as one of only two male members of the Gender Equality Commission.

## Part VI

# CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



# SYNTHESIZING WORLDWIDE EXPERIENCES IN COUNTERING IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM (CIST)

*Graeme P. Herd and Anne Aldis*

## **Introduction**

This study concludes by discussing the relationship between ideology, CIST policies and CIST metrics. We need to understand the role of ideology before being able to measure the strength and depth of ideological support, before we might determine the effectiveness of CIST policies. The preceding chapters have examined CIST activities and efforts on every continent. Clearly different chapters highlight different lessons to be learned: the al Manar case study focuses on the failures of a media strategy, and that on South Africa reminds readers of the importance of intelligence and information at the heart of CIST, amongst other issues. But rather than summarizing the key conclusions of each of the chapters, are we able to discern commonalities between the case studies, trends and evidence of good practice that may allow us to draw some universal lessons? Might these lessons in turn point towards the foundations of a more effective CIST strategy?

In drawing together and synthesizing the key findings of the case studies, we can argue that an effective CIST strategy needs to be based on two simple propositions. First, CIST policies need to be put in place that confront and undercut the integrity of extremists' ideologies, as well as extremist cultures that support the ideologies. Second, the implementation of CIST policies is at least as important as other counter-terrorist actions. In this concluding chapter, we focus on both propositions, developing eight policy considerations and identifying case studies that support them. We first examine the role of ideologies, then outline CIST activities that have proved useful before turning to the question of metrics.



### **Ideologies: uses and abuses**

Ideologies are patterned forms of thinking about politics intended to be disseminated and consumed by large groups of people. They are characterized by clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values and attitudes that provide shared understandings of directives and plans of action to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or other political community. Such patterned thinking, claiming to be systematic, all-embracing and universal political doctrine, can range from the sophisticated and articulate to the clumsy, fuzzy and banal, from local, through national to international – but is always the product of groups (Miller 1997: 235–7). Ideologies compete to control political language in order to wield the necessary power to fulfil a programme of political action (Scruton, 1983: 213). Ideologies can represent the politicization of religious faith or secular beliefs (fascism, communism, Maoism, liberalism, conservatism, socialism, feminism), and differ from each other by the different weight, priority and meaning they allocate to key political concepts and how the inter-relationships of concepts are understood.

Therefore ideologies are intertwined with politics, they are locked into the process of choosing amongst alternative paths of action, and they offer clear answers as they operate within incontestable frameworks. Power and control are central features of ideologies in that ideologies order, decide and regulate a group. They identify problems and issues around which to mobilize support. They provide an explanation of the causes of our problems, which may be a scapegoat (i.e. individuals, groups or states and their policies), or equally, a wholly legitimate and accurate explanation for the problem. Ideology suggests a programme of action to address and overcome the problem – and how individuals can contribute to that solution.

Polling and surveys of populations can indicate the nature and strength of support for the terrorists' ideological message, whether the message is believed or not. It is the story that matters, as it is the centre of gravity for terrorists, and the message shapes the attitudes of the target audience to violence. It is the interpretative framework that gives legitimacy to actions of extreme violence. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies can be used in gauging the strength of an ideology, and a continuous assessment of the target audience's attitudes towards terrorist organizations, their actions and their message is required. Since ideological wars are rarely, if ever, won outright, the comparative progress of one side's arguments against the other's is one of the few meaningful yardsticks of success.

This involves a review of primary and secondary sources on statements of violent extremists, and analytical assessments of their activities and expressed ideology: documents, speeches and strategic signalling. A review of published and grey literature as well as speeches that endorse violent extremism and the actions themselves (timing, context, target, etc.) will allow insights into the perceived and/or constructed nature of the problem, the responsibilities attributed to 'scapegoats', and suggested programmes of action to address and overcome demonstrated problems.

### **Towards a CIST strategy: eight policy considerations**

Since this volume has largely concerned itself with violent Islamist extremism, we can take that as our exemplar. Two things cannot be stressed too highly, however: first, that violent extremism is not synonymous with Islam, and second, that the suggestions herein are applicable to dealing with all terrorist ideologies. Our case studies from Africa and Latin America are important reminders of this.

In terms of actionable areas, *the first CIST policy consideration involves the need to accentuate ideological alternatives to extremist ideologies*. At a conceptual level Islam does not separate religion from politics. Practically speaking, we should rely on moderate Islamic thinkers and doers to undertake much of the counter-extremist work in their own faith. In fact, however, those Muslims that preach a non-political Islam might not be able to shift an audience captive to al Qaeda, JI or IMU away from extremism. The people who are prepared to give al Qaeda a hearing are already past the point where they regard the realm of politics as outside Islam.

This ideology poses the greatest danger when a tipping point is reached and traditionalists drift into adopting a fundamentalist worldview that is characterized by rigid, exclusionist binary thinking. ‘Us *versus* them’/‘For us or against us’ thinking is in evidence when the so-called golden rule of religion – love God and love your neighbour – is sacrificed on the altar of a narrower exclusive religious identity that allows the justification of extreme violence for the greater good. While extremists may be beyond easy reach, the bulk of the population that do not support terrorism actively should be immunized from the appeal of their extremist ideology. An end goal, therefore, should be to promote liberal Muslims and traditional Muslim stories, to support and promote the credibility of their worldview.

This is not an appropriate task for governments to undertake, but on the evidence of our case studies appears best carried out by indigenous religious or other civil society organizations. Too obvious governmental efforts in this field, too close cooperation with moderate religious associations within a region or state, will only serve to delegitimize them in the eyes of the population.

*A second policy consideration involves focussing not just on the ideology but on the cultural aspects of the relationship between the actions of political extremists and the ways in which they use ideology to justify their efforts*. There is a cultural aspect to a terrorist group – particularly those from countries in transition from tribal societies in the greater Middle East. Culturalist factors and codes of behaviour – honour, respect, pride, trust, dignity, reciprocity and revenge – are embedded within the religious context and are a hidden appeal that mobilizes support, leading Ronfeldt to argue, as we noted in Chapter 1, that the ‘war they are waging is more about virulent tribalism than religion’ (Ronfeldt 2005). We must therefore understand and integrate the cultural aspect of violent extremism into CIST strategy. This then allows the fostering of a counter-culture alternative moving away from tribal or cult type organizations into the mainstream by promoting alternative ideologies, institutions and confidence-building measures.

The policy end goal here is to encourage transformations of insurgent groups that make widespread use of terrorist actions into legitimate political parties, as appears to be happening in the case of Hizbullah. To help achieve this, states should expand all current efforts to comprehend the cultures and grievances that produce terrorists and draw their discourse into the mainstream of political debate. Governments should identify, clarify and encourage the rationales for co-existence and plurality. In regions outside the Greater Middle East, such as Latin America, governments can stress that the character of the terrorist problem is external to the state, the region and its indigenous culture.

*A third policy consideration* involves actions taken to *undercut the integrity of the extremist message*. Attempts should be made to undermine the credibility of the terrorist message by exploiting the gaps between the rhetoric of the terrorists and the reality of their actions. Inconsistencies, errors and mistakes in the terrorist message can be highlighted and used to undercut the personal credibility of terrorist leaders so as to drive a wedge between leaders and followers. This is not to suggest that the terrorists' aims should be debated by governments on an equal and legitimate basis, but rather by drawing attention to the suffering of the ordinary victims of terrorism in Egypt, Indonesia and Jordan, for example, potential sympathizers and actual supporters can be encouraged to question the legitimacy of terrorist actions.

The policy end goal here is to delegitimize the message in its own terms and a means to that end may include highlighting the violent extremists' legitimation shifts – how they change the basis upon which their prognosis, scapegoat and proposed solution rest. Such shifts weaken the coherence of the narrative and undercut the credibility of the message; highlighting them has been successfully employed in southeast Asia. In this case, terrorists responded by increasing their own ideological and religious indoctrination to prevent vacillation amongst their own members. The need for a response by the terrorists shows that such a strategy can be very successful at causing dissent amongst them and alienating at least a significant portion of their support base.

*A fourth policy consideration* is for governments to *eliminate the worst excesses of negative government, corruption, abuses and ill-advised policies which only serve to generate grievances, strengthen extremist critiques of government behaviour, polarize attitudes and enhance terrorists' legitimacy amongst a given population*. National governments must take pains to reduce the political oxygen that allows the securitization of issues that become grievances which have the power to mobilize. Cognitive openings for religious- or secular-based ideologies that legitimize extremism should be closed. In other words, governments need to address the grievances (discrimination, unemployment and other enabling conditions) that can feed into the terrorist narrative. This demands a focus on good governance and appears to be particularly relevant in the Central Asian case studies, as well as the Latin American and Saudi contexts.

We can identify a further four policy considerations that are relevant to the way in which CIST policies are implemented and integrated into state efforts to conduct counter-terrorist operations. The decision over which message to send

– which story to convey to target populations – and the delivery (presentation/packaging) of the story are two distinct tasks that demand particular skills. In an effective CIST strategy the process and content are equally important and mutually reinforcing. In this regard, *a fifth policy consideration is to focus on packaging and presentation matters associated with CIST activities*. The way in which a story is delivered or marketed should promote the message. This recognizes that CIST is at heart a contest for ideological credibility.

Governments should be sensitive to cultural contexts and facilitate the message dissemination by indigenous ‘gatekeepers’ within societies. Engagement should not entail co-option. However, a means to this end that has proved effective in southeast Asia has been to publicize the testimony and support of rehabilitated terrorists as a powerful antidote to the credibility of the terrorist message.

If how injustice is perceived is understood, that perception can be removed or altered (redress of grievances); this decreases the pool of recruits and creates divisions in terrorists’ ranks. An across the board CIST effort, in contexts appropriate to the culture, should be undertaken by the many authentic actors and interlocutors that can shape the psychological environment amongst the population and who are able to engage, critique, temper or reject the extreme ideological narrative. These interlocutors include: progressive Muslim leaders; intellectuals, particularly those that are university-based; non-government organizations; journalists and the media; police; rehabilitated terrorists; community leaders, as well as governments (local, provincial and national).

*A sixth policy consideration is to place CIST activities at the heart of a broader counter-terrorism strategy*. CIST activities need to be mainstreamed into the government policy process, integrated into the way in which government makes policy, rather than considered a side show or add-on. This means that counter-terrorism legislation, security and intelligence service efforts need to be understood by the government and supported by the population. Executive action is needed to undertake such reform and to redirect government agencies to that end.

*A seventh and related policy consideration is to place intelligence and information at the heart of the CIST strategy*. An effective CIST strategy is intelligence driven and engages institutions of governance (national and regional organizations) in intelligence and policy analysis through the use of policy institutes. A careful monitoring of the target audience allows intelligence services to respond to the changing moods of that audience and utilize opportunities to intervene that may be fleeting. Timely interventions are necessary if they are to be effective. Again, executive action is necessary to implement this consideration.

*An eighth and last policy consideration is to increase international CIST cooperation by stressing that cooperation between governments is based on shared interests*. This has an important ideological aspect – the basis for cooperation is rooted in shared threat assessment rather than supposed neo-imperial ambitions, or a predilection to uphold authoritarian regimes. This entails being clear about policy priorities and their rationality in order to safeguard against the accusation that cooperation is instrumental and a hidden agenda is in play – accusations that only serve to weaken counter-terrorism and CIST efforts and strengthen

ideological support for terrorists. Otherwise resentments and latent grievances are fed, undercutting the effectiveness of such cooperation. Case studies in the Circum-Caribbean, South Africa and Lebanon support this consideration.

### **CIST metrics**

Metrics define concrete, quantifiable attributes of a given entity. For tangible, three-dimensional objects we have traditional and well-known metrics. To the question of ‘How big is it?’ we can answer five feet tall, or 300 pounds, or 1.5 litres, etc. But for something as abstract as ideological support, research is needed to define both what to measure and how to measure it. What is the nature of the data to be collected? What are the units of measurement, or the measurement interval? How do you describe ideological support in ways that are meaningful to researchers, policy-makers and practitioners?

According to a recent Congressional Report (Perl 2005), attempts to measure the effectiveness of CT policies have met a common pitfall – the over-reliance on quantitative metrics (incidents of bombings, terrorists killed or captured, etc.). Quantitative approaches fail to appreciate the non-linear changes in the state of terrorist groups. We should rather focus on incidents, attitudes and trends. Constraints and biases are embedded in every methodology, but the measure of CIST effectiveness does not need to be exact (nor indeed can it ever be).

First we need to develop a sophisticated understanding of groups within the population that we would like to survey. For the Arab and Muslim world this should go beyond the Hudson Institute categorization of four key groups, which we noted in Chapter 1: secular, modernist, traditionalist and fundamentalist (Fradkin *et al.* 2005). These categories are too broad and on some key issues there is no differentiation in attitude between these groups. With regard to the Iraq invasion or occupation of the West Bank, for example, a terrorist group and each of these four groups may share the same attitude.

Different levels of influence of different groups within society need to be determined. In particular it would be useful to survey the attitudes of opinion formers towards terrorist activities and ideological justifications, as their attitudes help shape those of the wider population. In carrying out the surveys it is also interesting to note not just levels of support, neutrality or antipathy, but the reasons behind them. The various chapters suggest a number of areas that could be considered for metrics, and although some have only localized implications, others apply more broadly to various forms of ideological support. While these metrics are subject to continued refinement as they are more fully examined, the following examples are selected from individual chapters in this work to suggest the concepts which could be measured with various tools to gain understanding of relative success in efforts to counter ideological support for violent extremism.

*The first metric would be to measure the ideological support for extremist ideologies and moderate alternative ideologies amongst the population. Again taking the Islamic world as an exemplar, to determine the strength of the ideology*

amongst the population the following questions can be asked both of the wider population and the opinion formers:

- Are the main lines of *jihad* stories believed and how is *jihad* understood?
- Is Islam under worldwide attack?
- How important is *jihad*?
- Does Islam sanction the killing of innocent civilians?
- Do you believe you are a second-class citizen in your own state?
- Is radical cleric X a good representative of his faith?
- Can Muslims practise faith in a secular political framework or do they need an Islamic state to do so authentically?
- How do Muslims deal with religious pluralism? How far do you allow coexistence even if you do not recognize all religions as of equal standing or status?
- How do Muslims relate and respond to Muslim suffering overseas?

To measure the levels of ideological support for alternative ideologies, to determine the strength of opposing viewpoints, similar questions could then be asked to assess the extent to which the liberal Muslim stories are believed and accepted by the wider population, as well as levels of support for alternative secular ideologies, such as democracy, and levels of anti-Americanism.

*A second metric* would be to *measure the radical nature of the terrorist message* – is it becoming more or less radical? Alongside this, the frequency with which the message is disseminated can be counted (pamphlets, public announcements, etc.). The assumption here is that the less frequent the less effective, and the less purchase the message has in the marketplace of ideas.

*A third metric would be to measure government performance.* As both genuine and perceived grievances can radicalize, politicize and reinforce any given extremist ideology, good governance still matters and the better the governance the more likely that grievances will be perceived as political, and therefore be redressed by peaceful means rather than a call to arms. Government performance – its ability to address structural and environmental vulnerabilities – should thus also be measured, in particular popular satisfaction in attitude surveys, levels of religious freedom and economic pluralism, and public support for government responses to terrorist activity.

*A fourth metric would be to track the nature of terrorist targets and how targets are tied to the way in which action is legitimized.* The number of attacks, who is being attacked and the nature of the targeting can also be measured. As attacks diminish or increase so the popularity of the terrorist organization and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the CIST campaign wax and wane. This can be counter-intuitive – the darkest hour is just before dawn – because increases in attacks could be a response to the increasing effectiveness of the CIST campaign. So here one should track the nature of the targets and the impact of these targets on the ideological message of the terrorists – do the targets suggest a growth or reduction in the perceived legitimacy of the actions, in public support?

*A fifth and final metric is to measure the complexity of the extremist message.*

As ideologies strive to create a shared understanding – to communicate and influence at a mass level – to be effective they cannot be phrased in terms that are conceptually and argumentatively too complex: the more demotic the message the greater the influence of that message. The language and the complexity of the message could be measured – is it becoming more or less complex over time? In examining complexity, we do not measure the coherence of the message but the effectiveness of its consumption by a mass public.

Apart from perhaps in southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia) and South Africa, most states have not prioritized CIST activities at the forefront of their counter-terrorist strategies against violent Islamist extremism. Indeed, CIST is rather an afterthought, understudied, poorly understood and rarely the subject of conscious implementation in the Western world. Yet as our case studies from South Africa and Latin America show, undermining the ideological basis of the terrorists and simultaneously decoupling them from local support can reduce the incidence of terrorism to minor, sporadic, isolated incidents that have more in common with criminal violence than with global terrorism.

The challenge is therefore to generate discussions and policies that focus on CIST rather than counter-terrorism in general, and to do so in such a way that we can understand how political extremists use ideology to further their ends, how CIST policies can counter such support and how appropriate metrics might allow an assessment of the effectiveness of such CIST policies. The matching of metric or combination of metrics to CIST policy consideration(s) is still underdeveloped: alternative metrics to those suggested here may prove equally valid.

Similarly, the policy considerations we have outlined are supported by the selected case studies, but other case studies might suggest additional considerations. History could suggest a plethora of other parallels to those few we have had space to include; counter-insurgency operations in particular would offer a fertile field sown with experience. The case studies here are just the tip of a large iceberg that remains largely unexploited.

By singling out terrorist actions for special policy efforts rather than treating them as criminal acts, we are fighting the terrorists using their own methodological rules: a message must be fought by a counter-message. And yet we are remarkably slow at bringing this kind of weapon to bear. CIST efforts are part of an iterative process – they demand feedback and constant updating. Terrorists adapt their use of ideology to any given effective CIST policy to circumvent it – hence the process should be iterative, with CIST activities always being modified in light of terrorist action. As an information-hungry, media-obsessed, politically aware society, the Western world can and should be doing it much better.

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