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U.S./NATO-Russia and Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism: Toward Building a Comprehensive Strategy

Sharyl N. Cross *

Introduction

The United States policy community has defined countering ideological support for terrorism (CIST) as a vital priority in the overall effort to combat terrorism worldwide.¹ In the aftermath of the tragic bombings in London and Madrid and the school hostage incident in Beslan, policymakers and scholars in Europe/Eurasia are also beginning to devote greater attention to examining the significance of the “battle of ideas” for responding to challenges posed by radical religious extremist movements within their respective nations.² Any successful CIST effort will demand unprecedented levels of agreement regarding major objectives, communication, and coordination among nations committed to protecting the world community from the devastation and loss incurred as a result of terrorist acts inspired by religious extremism.

While countering ideological support for terrorism cannot provide the ultimate “silver bullet” solution for defeating terrorism worldwide, there is no question that addressing the “hearts and minds” of those to whom terrorist ideologies direct their appeal is one critical dimension necessary to undercut the influence of radical terrorist movements over the long term. Yet, although the United States and other nations are devoting increasing attention and resources to developing means to discredit the ideology of Al Qaeda, Salafist jihadists, or other affiliated Islamist groups, no single country can claim to have found a blueprint for the best method to counter militant religious extremism or to de-legitimize the ideological foundations of terrorism. In fact, former

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¹ See *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, March 2006), 9–11, available at www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 1 February 2006), 24–25; and author’s briefing/interviews, United States Department of State, November 2006.

² See *The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism* (Brussels: Council of the European Union, 25 November 2005); see also Olivier Roy, “Europe’s Response to Radical Islam,” *Current History* 104 (November 2005): 360-64.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld recently assessed America's performance in "the battle of ideas taking place," giving a near failing grade of a "D or D+."³

An effective strategy to de-legitimize the messages or myths used by terrorist groups must be based on a deep understanding of the unique circumstances in each context. No two regions of the world are necessarily alike with respect to vulnerability to the appeal of the ideology/myths purveyed by terrorists. Contemporary Islamist extremist groups (including Sunni radicals, Salafist Islamists, Shia radicals, and others) can share certain core beliefs, perceived enemies, or objectives, but there are also obviously significant ideological, theological, and tactical differences among these groups that must be recognized. We should approach the complex issue of developing strategy aimed at dissuading populations from turning to radical violent ideologies by seeking the involvement of those familiar with local conditions, social traditions, and values.

This paper explores the potential for building cooperation between the United States/NATO and Russia in countering ideological support for terrorism. Since 9/11, the U.S./NATO and Russia have made significant progress in forging cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, primarily through the mechanisms of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) and the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism (CTWG). The confluence of interests shared between the United States and NATO member countries, Russia, and other nations throughout the world community make the issue of countering the ideological impulses that fuel terrorism a common security priority that will only become more important in coming decades. A strong international anti-terror alliance can help to deter threats, but any fracture or perceived division should only be expected to encourage terrorists to exploit these weaknesses. Forging greater unity among nations of the transatlantic community in their efforts to reach out to partner nations in the Muslim world with respect to the most fundamental elements in countering the appeal of religious extremism can begin to establish the unprecedented level of global cooperation needed to diminish terrorist threats to open, vulnerable societies throughout the world.

Foundation for U.S./NATO-Russia Cooperation in Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism

Russia's central concern with the terrorist challenge has tended to focus on the threat emanating from Chechnya and surrounding regions of the North Caucasus. Prior to 9/11, Russian President Vladimir Putin had attempted to focus international public attention on terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and the penetration of radical violent

³ "Rumsfeld: We're Losing Battle of Ideas," *Carlisle Sentinel* (28 March 2006).

Islamist groups in Eurasia and the Balkans.⁴ Immediately following the 9/11 attacks, Putin was the first among world leaders to offer his support to the Bush Administration. Putin described the Chechen situation and the attacks of 9/11 as constituting a “threat to the entire civilized world.”⁵ In fact, Dr. Ayman Al-Zawahiri offers a vision in his book, *Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner*, that would unite the Chechens and Caucasian mujahideen in what he calls a “mujahid Islamic belt to the South of Russia” enlisting sympathetic Muslims in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, and extending to the east in Pakistan, linking with mujahideen movements in Kashmir.⁶

There are no official statistics on the number of Muslims in Russia. Figures range from three million to thirty million, with most sources estimating between eighteen and twenty million, geographically concentrated in the large cities and the Volga-Ural and North Caucasus regions.⁷ Demographic trends indicating declining birth rates among Orthodox ethnic Russians compared with relative growth among Russia’s Muslim population suggests the potential for shifting political and social influence in the future. While the bulk of Russia’s Muslims—who are primarily of the Sunni, Hanafist, and Sufi traditions—simply seek to practice their faith in peace, adherents of the anti-Sufi New Islamic Movement and radical Shahidists and Salafists share the objective of re-constituting the “pious Caliphate” or imposing a fundamentalist Islamic state.⁸

While there has been no single assault in Russia resulting in loss of thousands of lives, such as the September 11 attacks in the United States, the nation has suffered a series of terrorist incidents over the past several years. These include apartment bombings in Moscow and Volgodonsk in 1999; Shamil Basayev’s invasion of Dagestan in 1999, proclaiming Islamic jihad against Russia; the Dubrovka theater hostage incident in October 2002; a series of subway bombings; and the downing of two passen-

⁴ For additional discussion of Vladimir Putin’s response to Russia’s terrorist challenge, see Sharyl Cross, “Putin’s Turn Toward the West: Russia, US/NATO and the War on Terrorism Post-September 11,” in *Post-Communist Countries in the Globalizing World*, ed. Konstantin Khudoley (St. Petersburg, Russia: St. Petersburg State University Press, 2004); and Sharyl Cross, “Russia’s Relationship with the United States/NATO in the U.S.-led Global War on Terrorism,” *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 19 (2006). Also see Rouben Azizian, “Russian-American Strategic Relationship in the Aftermath of September 11,” paper presented at the 35th National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Toronto (20–23 November 2003).

⁵ For further analysis of Putin’s motives in responding to 9/11, see Cross, “Putin’s Turn Toward the West.”

⁶ See Ayman Al-Zawahiri, *Knights Under the Prophet’s Banner* (London, Al-Sharq al-Awsat, in Arabic); excerpts translated in English in *FBIS Translated Text*, Document # GMP200201080000197 (2 December 2001).

⁷ For discussion and documentation on Russia’s Muslim population estimates, see Shireen T. Hunter, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 42–45.

⁸ For discussions of various trends within Islam and radical Islamists within Russia, see Hunter, *Islam in Russia*, 46–93; and Dmitry Gorenburg, “Russia Confronts Radical Islam,” *Current History* (October 2006).

ger airlines by Chechen women suicide bombers in August 2004. These attacks culminated in the tragic school siege in Beslan in September 2004, an incident that carries similar cultural resonance in Russia to that of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S.

The Chechens possess a distinct identity spanning centuries and a history of defiant resistance against the Russians, a legacy that is glorified in a mountain warrior tradition honoring death in battle against an enemy of overwhelming advantage. With the dismantling of the Soviet state in 1991, the Chechens recognized the opportunity to join the wave of previously forcibly subjugated people in the Baltics, Central Asia, and the Caucasus who were seeking recognition as autonomous nations. Though not initially prompted by external instigation, over time the Chechen conflict took on greater international dimensions. The two wars in Chechnya and the conflicts in the South Caucasus and Central Asia provided targets for the penetration of international extremist Wahhabist networks, who provided funding for weapons and military training as well as jihadist fighters. It is well documented that Al Qaeda sent forces to train in Chechnya.⁹

The Chechen situation is likely to continue to present difficulties for the Russian leadership. As a result of migration from Chechnya following Russia's military incursions in 1996 and 1999, the Chechen population has been dispersed throughout Russia, creating a community base within major cities that can be used to support the orchestration of terrorist campaigns. Beyond seeking greater autonomy from Moscow, Chechens hold territorial claims that include portions of the Stavropol Krai and Dagestan.

Russia's *National Security Concept* of January 2000 identifies terrorism as a "serious threat to national security," and states that "international terrorism is waging an open campaign to destabilize the Russian Federation..."¹⁰ Moscow officials have instituted the legal means for addressing domestic terrorist threats and have begun regularizing relations among the anti-terrorist organizations established in various regions of the country.¹¹ Russia's response to the terrorist threat places a priority on foreign cooperation, as revealed in the *National Security Concept*: "to fight [terrorism] requires unification of efforts by the entire international community. ... There must be effective collaboration with foreign states and their law enforcement agencies, and also with the international organizations tasked with fighting terrorism. ... Broad use must

⁹ For a discussion of Al Qaeda's involvement in the Caucasus, see Igor Plugatarev, "Local Conflicts 2005/A Sluggish War on the Caliphate," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* 49 (December 2005); "Al Qaeda Among the Chechens," *Christian Science Monitor* (7 September 2004); "European Terror Suspect Got Al Qaeda Training," *CNN.com* (6 February 2003), available at www.cnn.com/2003/US/02/06/sprj.irq.alqaeda.links; and Ariel Cohen, "After Maskahdov: Islamist Terrorism Threaten North Caucasus and Russia," *Background Report* No. 1838 (published by the Heritage Foundation) (1 April 2005), at www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/upload/76370_1.pdf.

¹⁰ *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation*, *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (18 January 2000).

¹¹ "Russia: Terrorism Provokes Flurry of New Legislation," *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* (8 April 2005); and V.I. Moltenskiy, Yu.A. Martsenyuk, and S.G. Chekinov, "Ob Organizatsii Antiterroristicheskoi Deyatel'noyi Gosydarstva," *Voennia Mysl* 1 (2005).

be made of international experience in dealing with this phenomenon, and there must be a well coordinated mechanism for countering international terrorism.”¹² Russia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, has affirmed that “the global nature of the terrorist threat testifies that security in today’s world is indivisible.... We must bear collective responsibility for making the world secure. ... The fight against terrorism should unite states rather than oppose them to each other.”¹³

In the aftermath of 9/11, some major accomplishments in U.S.-Russian bilateral cooperation in counterterrorism include: Russia’s support in permitting basing access in the first phase of the global war on terrorism; FBI-FSB cooperation in intercepting weapons transfers between terrorists; and collaboration in disrupting terrorist financing.

The U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism (CTWG) has been the primary mechanism for facilitating bilateral counterterrorism cooperation. The Working Group includes both regional (Afghanistan, Balkans, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, etc.) and functional (intelligence, law enforcement, WMD, terrorist financing, counter narcotics) sub-groups.¹⁴ Participants from both Washington and Moscow describe the group as it developed from pursuing a more “general” and “theoretical” agenda prior to 9/11, into a much more task-oriented body with clear schedules and deadlines in specific functional areas following the attacks of September 2001.¹⁵ Participants have noted that the official sessions tended to avoid raising controversial issues, such as the intervention in Iraq and human rights in Chechnya.¹⁶ However, participants in Washington and Moscow report that there were opportunities to discuss these difficult issues and others in the less formal sessions and in private conversations.¹⁷

¹² *National Security Concept of the Russian Federation, Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (18 January 2000).

¹³ Sergei Lavrov, “Statement at the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly,” 23 September 2004, published in *International Affairs* (Moscow) 6 (2004).

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State/Office of the Spokesman, “Joint Press Statement by U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism,” 1 April 2004.

¹⁵ Author’s interviews with Andrei A. Chupin, Former Head of the Section of North America, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, March 2004; Nerissa J. Cook, Director, Office of Policy and Global Issues, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. State Department, April 2004 and November 2004; and Vladimir Andreyev, Deputy Director of the Department of New Challenges and Threats, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, June 2005.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ For example, Undersecretary for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns and Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak noted in a press briefing following the December 2005 meeting of the Working Group that, while the proposed controversial legislation that would regulate the activity of NGOs in Russia was not part of the formal dialogue, it was suggested that there were opportunities to discuss this and other issues in private diplomatic exchanges taking place in conjunction with the Working Group gathering. Remarks to the press by Undersecretary for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak, *Osobnyak* (Moscow) (2 December 2005).

Both U.S. and Russian participants emphasize that one should not overstate the Working Group's potential for success, but those involved conclude that it did help in reaching greater consensus on certain issues, building confidence, and accomplishing important concrete tasks to enhance security. Both sides state that the periodic sessions have provided a valuable forum for exchanging information that contributes to enhancing the capacity to respond to the terrorist challenge on multiple fronts.

In terms of NATO-Russia cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, consultations in the first NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC) had collapsed during the Kosovo war in 1999 because Russian officials believed that the Council failed to provide a meaningful channel for Russian input into NATO decision making. Putin brought a pragmatic approach to Russia's foreign policy, recognizing the importance of ties with Western nations for Russia's future security and economic quality of life. In spite of Russia's strong and consistent objection to NATO enlargement throughout the 1990s, Putin sought to cooperate with NATO nations in the area of counterterrorism. The primary mechanism for cooperation is the NATO-Russia Council (NRC), established to replace the PJC at the NATO-Russia Summit in Rome in May 2002. The NRC provided for Russia's direct participation in the decision-making meetings among member nations, rather than including provisions for consultation with Russia only after NATO members had reached decisions, as in the previous PJC arrangement.

NATO and Russia have taken concrete steps to enhance counterterrorism cooperation, including making pronouncements condemning terrorist acts; issuing statements agreeing to collectively fight terrorism; and outlining specific areas of cooperation.¹⁸ In 2002, the NRC sponsored joint conferences devoted to the role of the military in combating terrorism. Col. Gen. Yu.N. Baluyevskiy, writing in *Voennaiia Mysl*, commented quite favorably on these sessions and the level of "mutual understanding" between Russia and NATO concerning the need to both "preempt" terrorist attacks and the means necessary for countering terrorism.¹⁹ NATO and Russia convened periodic working groups devoted to enhancing counterterrorism security measures, and they have engaged in scenario briefings examining lessons learned from instances such as the London and Moscow mass transit attacks. The *NATO-Russia Action Plan on Terrorism* called for a "pragmatic" and "goal oriented" effort that would deepen cooperation in intelligence sharing related to WMD, destruction of excess munitions, control

¹⁸ "NRC United in Condemnation of Recent Terrorist Attacks in Russia," 7 September 2004; available at www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/09-september/e0907a.htm.

¹⁹ Yu.N. Baluyevskiy, "Rossiya i NATO: Printsipy vzaimootnoshyeniya problemy i perspektivy sotrydnichestva," *Voennaiia Mysl* 6 (2003): 12-17; "Russia to Join Partnership with Status of Forces Agreement," 21 April 2005, available at www.nato.int/docu/update/2005/04-april/e0421a.htm.

over transfers of man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), and other provisions.²⁰

Most recently, NATO-Russia cooperation in counterterrorism moved to a new level with Operation Active Endeavor, which includes provisions for the first use of secure communication between NATO and Russian warships and the first ever deployment of a team of NATO trainers aboard a Russian warship. NATO's Operation Active Endeavor evolved from the Article V response to the 9/11 attacks. In February 2006, NATO-Russia Council Defense Ministers gathered informally in Taormina, Italy to exchange views on priorities for the remainder of 2006 and beyond. Emphasis was placed on continuing cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, including supporting intelligence exchanges and joint threat assessment.

The U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism (CTWG) has created a basis for ongoing and routine task-oriented consultation and cooperation. Shared interests of the United States and Russia in the area of counterterrorism have led to cooperation, in spite of other strains in the bilateral relationship. The recent initiatives in counterterrorism forged under the framework of the NRC have helped to assuage concerns in Moscow that the previous PJC was "too vague" or "undefined."²¹ For NATO, leading initiatives to develop cooperation in counterterrorism serves the objective of defining clear purposes for a tried and tested alliance in the post-Cold War era. Thus, in the aftermath of 9/11, a foundation has been established to advance U.S./NATO-Russia cooperation in counterterrorism. Addressing the "hearts and minds" of vulnerable audiences, and countering the ideological impulses that motivate contemporary, violent, extremist groups can take the U.S./NATO-Russia relationship in counterterrorism to the next level. Developing common approaches among the U.S., NATO, and Russia promises to contribute to building the broadest possible worldwide support aimed toward unraveling the sources that fuel the ideological support for contemporary terrorist networks.

The Transatlantic Community and the Question of Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism

In the aftermath of 9/11, the United States took a comprehensive global approach to combating terrorism, while Russia and other European nations tended to place greater

²⁰ "NATO-Russia Action Plan on Terrorism," 9 December 2004, available at www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b041209a-e.htm; see also "NATO-Russia Council Agrees on Plan to Fight Terrorism," 8 December 2004, available at www.nato.int/docu/update/2004/12-december/e1209b.htm.

²¹ Among many illustrations of assessments that might be cited, Dr. Andrei Kelin, Deputy Director, Department of European Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, concludes that the NRC has "already shown its viability and efficacy." He notes favorably that the tasks of the 2002 Rome Summit were fulfilled by exploring means for cooperation between Russia and NATO in the areas of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and drug trafficking. See Andrei Kelin, "Russia-NATO: Toward a New Stage of Interaction," *International Affairs* (Moscow) 51:1 (2005): 34-42.

priority on utilizing resources to address domestic terrorist threats. Nevertheless, international collaboration among the transatlantic community in counterterrorism efforts continues to advance on multiple levels, including intelligence sharing, intercepting terrorist financial networks, and homeland defense. In the aftermath of recent terrorist assaults in Europe and Russia, there has emerged an ever-greater realization that effective strategy can no longer address domestic and international aspects of the threat separately.²² Recent NATO documents and programs include cooperation in counterterrorism among the major defining missions for the Alliance.

In 2005, the European Union issued *The EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*, which specifically addressed the issue of extremism:

Radicalisation of certain Muslim individuals in Europe is a relatively recent phenomenon. Even those areas of Europe where radicalization is not a major issue at present, or where large Muslim communities do not exist, could become targets for extremists. The EU will continue to develop its collective understanding of the issues, listening to Muslims, and others, comparing national situations and establishing a European picture. ... The key to our success will be the degree to which non-governmental groups—communities, religious authorities and other organizations—across Europe play an active part in countering the rhetoric of the extremists and highlighting their criminal acts.²³

The *White Paper on Domestic Security Against Terrorism* issued in 2005 outlines France's doctrine for dealing with terrorism, and includes an entire section devoted to the "Battle of Ideas."²⁴ While the French reject references to a "war" on terrorism, the "fight" or "battle" of ideas includes a strategy focused on promoting the basic values of the democratic tradition as a foundation for countering religious extremism.²⁵ James Wither observes that the U.K. strategy concentrates on addressing the inequalities and lack of opportunity that contribute to Muslim radicalization, legislation to combat radicalism, and engaging the Muslim community.²⁶

Russian officials have emphasized the importance of avoiding a real or perceived "clash of civilizations" with the Muslim world. The perspective from Moscow tends to

²² Author's interviews conducted with officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation, 27 October 2006. See James Wither, "A Work in Progress: The United Kingdom's Campaign Against Radicalization," paper delivered at the conference entitled "Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism/Lessons Learned and Future Policy: Interdisciplinary, Theological, and International/Regional Perspectives," Marshall Center, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, 25 September 2006 (published in this volume).

²³ *The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism* (Brussels: Council of the European Union, 25 November 2005).

²⁴ "Winning the Battle of Ideas," *White Paper on Domestic Security Against Terrorism* (Paris, 2005), 113–23.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom's Strategy*, Cm. 6888 (July 2006); see also Wither, "A Work in Progress," 12.

identify the unique cultural contribution that Russia can make to “bridge” the conflict between Western and Islamic nations. For example, Dr. Mikhail Titarenko, Director of the Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences, offered the following statement:

... culture and traditions are as important as economy ... for mutual understanding and cooperation. ... This is also important for identifying Russia’s specific role as a bridge and a factor in the West-East dialogue. There is a rich Muslim culture in Russia, the culture of twenty million Russians living in Russia. This fact can be used to demonstrate our respect to the contributions of world culture made by Muslims and Arab culture. ... The leaders of Muslim countries developed an inferiority complex because their self-esteem was impaired. They will positively respond to any representation of a great power and great culture talking to them on equal terms.²⁷

Russian officials and policy analysts recognize that it is important to engage Muslim communities in shaping perceptions and countering the appeal of radical violent Islamists. V.I. Moltenskoy, Yu.A. Martsenyuk, and S.G. Chekinov argued in a 2005 article published in *Voennaia Mysl* that the “main efforts” of anti-terrorist government activity should include “in the ideological and religious sphere ... active cooperation with religious and spiritual leaders who stand for aiding the state in the war on terrorism and on spreading with their assistance the idea that no religion in its pure form accepts the methods of struggle used by the terrorists....”²⁸ In 2004, the office of the Russian President held a major conference in Moscow, involving the participation of foreign policy officials with Islamic religious clerics and leaders of other faiths, representatives of cultural organizations, and international participation of ambassadors from several Muslim nations.²⁹ The purpose of the forum was to draft a “consistent strategy for relations between Russia and the Islamic world.”³⁰

Anatoly Saffonov, who holds the position (created in 2004) of special envoy of the Russian Federation’s president on issues of international cooperation in the struggle against terrorism and international crime, has advocated preventing the misuse of religion by terrorists and countering the appeal of terrorist ideology as major topics for international collaboration.³¹ Addressing the ideological foundations of terrorism is

²⁷ Mikhail Titarenko, “The Islamic World and Russian Foreign Policy,” *International Affairs* (Moscow) 4 (2005).

²⁸ Moltenskoy, et al., “Ob organizatsii,” 22–27.

²⁹ ITAR-TASS News Agency, “Moscow to Host Conference ‘Islam Against Terrorism,’” 3 June 2004.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Author’s interviews with Dr. Vladimir Andreev, Deputy Director, Department of New Threats and Challenges, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and Dr. Igor Neverov, Director, North America Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 27 October 2006; and discussions with officials of the U.S. State Department, November 2006. This position was created following the Beslan tragedy in 2004, and Anatoly Saffonov was the first appointment to the position.

consistent with the focus of the Russian counterterrorism policy community on the importance of addressing the “root causes” of terrorism.³²

Although there are certainly differences between the United States, European nations, and Russia with regard to appropriate areas of emphasis, terminology, and strategies in addressing the ideological foundations of terrorist movements, there is a growing consensus that this is a critical dimension of the overall global counterterror effort. Through greater collaboration and discussion of issues and actual cooperation in the coming years, these nations should be able to improve their levels of coordination and effectiveness in countering violent religious extremism.

Comparing the Ideological Factor in the Cold War and the Contemporary Struggle Against Terrorism

The Cold War was won and lost by the power of ideology and values. More important than the widening gap in the strategic nuclear balance or the outcomes of regional conflicts was the fact that peoples of the nations of the former Soviet empire ultimately embraced the values of the West, including democracy, capitalism, and freedom. The central significance of the ideological struggle between communism and democracy has led the policy community to compare the importance of ideas in the Cold War with the contemporary struggle against terrorism. The great ideological struggle of the beginning of the twenty-first century comes down to the question of whether the vast bulk of the Muslim world would prefer democracy, capitalism, and freedom or the way of life offered by Al Qaeda and its affiliates that would reconstitute an Islamic imperial caliphate under the movement’s version of absolute *sharia* rule.³³

There are several major differences that distinguish the ideological dimension in the contemporary struggle with Islamist extremism from that involved in defeating communist ideology. The United States unquestionably held the moral high ground in the Cold War, which contributed to undermining the legitimacy of communism. Democratic ideals and values and the appeal of the Western standard of living inspired transformation of the communist order. In today’s world, the sad truth is that the credibility of the United States is constantly called into question, and even traditional allies resent America’s power and what is widely viewed as an arrogance of American presence throughout the world. General Carlton W. Fulford, USMC (Ret.) observes that “disclosure—no matter how real or sensationalized—of U.S. torture, atrocities, lack of

³² Author’s interview with Dr. Igor Neverov, Director, North America Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 27 October 2006.

³³ An important distinction within Islam is that, while Sunni/Salafist radicals seek to institute a totalitarian caliphate, for the future Shia Muslims believe that they can only passively await the inevitable return of the Twelfth Imam (*al Mahdi*) to bring about a perfect spiritual state of peace and justice. However, among Shia Muslims there is a small but influential radical strain, represented by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and within Hezbollah and others that holds that, by accepting the duty to take action (including instigating violence or war in preparation for apocalyptic confrontation), the conditions for the return of *al Mahdi* can be accelerated.

due process, renditions to ‘black site’ prisons, etc., have seriously damaged our image as the ‘city on a hill....’³⁴ While embarrassing atrocities such as Abu Ghraib are hardly consistent with American values or intentions, the United States cannot afford such mistakes in an environment where perceptions are so critical. In the long-term struggle to defeat the ideology of the extremists, American policy makers and society must consider carefully how national values, intentions, and aspirations are projected throughout the world. Given the complex challenges presented by an increasingly transnational international environment, it will be important to find better and more efficient ways to work cooperatively with diverse cultures. Maintaining moral credibility, consistency, and being perceived as well-intentioned will be critical for building the basic trust necessary to dissuade those who look to terrorists to provide what seems to many to be the only alternative to an international order that is viewed as unjust or illegitimate.

The problems of U.S. credibility notwithstanding, it must be recognized that the current ideological struggle may be more challenging only because Islamist ideology is not being imposed by force, as was the case in the Soviet experience, but rather emerges organically from within Muslim societies. The ideological/philosophical foundations of contemporary Islamist extremism were cultivated over centuries, and most recently in the writings of scholars and religious leaders from within the Muslim world, such as Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), Sayyid Abul ala Mawdudi (1903–79), Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), and others.³⁵ Salafist/Wahhabist theology provides the spiritual and ideological underpinnings for Al Qaeda and affiliated militant Islamist groups. Arguably these writings and views rooted in references to religious tradition and culture could hold far more inspirational appeal than did the imposition of the alien philosophical/ideological belief system of communism.

The growth of information technologies, particularly the Internet, also makes the current ideological threat far more difficult to manage. Islamist extremist terrorists have been nothing less than masterful manipulators of the cyber arena. Terrorist groups have skillfully harnessed Internet technology to recruit followers, disseminate literature, and instantaneously broadcast beheadings and other outrageous acts of violence. Effective management of the information medium is critical to shaping the impressions and judgments that viewers form, and to influencing the ultimate consequences of these

³⁴ General Carlton W. Fulford, Jr., USMC (Ret.), for the conference “Countering Ideological Support for Extremism: Challenges and Implications,” *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 5:3 (Winter 2006): 3-6.

³⁵ Sayyid Qutb, “Jihad in the Cause of God,” reprinted in *Voices of Terror: Manifestos, Writings and Manuals of Al Qaeda, Hamas, and other Terrorists From Around the World and Throughout the Ages*, ed. Walter Laqueur (New York: Reed Press, 2004). For an excellent summary of the contributions of the influence of these writings in the development of Islamist radicalism see Mark A. Gabriel, *Journey Into the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2006), 20–26.

viewers' actions. Every effort must be made to ensure credible, consistent, reliable, honest, and efficient management of information.³⁶

A Containment-Like Strategy

The containment strategy introduced by career foreign service officer and diplomat George F. Kennan in 1947 provided an overarching direction for countering the Soviet threat on a global scale. The containment doctrine formed the essence of U.S. strategy for the Truman Administration and for every succeeding administration during the decades of the Cold War. The notion of countering Soviet expansionism ultimately to contain the influence of communism focused strategic planning, executive attention, and resource allocations toward a single threat objective. Kennan's approach called for integrating military, political, socio-economic, and psychological instruments to achieve the aim of opposing expansion "whenever or wherever" the Soviets attempted to advance. The distinguishing features of the strategy identified in Kennan's seminal "Mr. X" article published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1947 included a "long-term," "patient," "firm," and "vigilant" commitment directed to counter a clearly defined threat.³⁷

While the policy communities on both sides of the Atlantic recognize that combating terrorism and countering ideological support for terrorism may present the most significant and daunting strategic challenge of our time, what is lacking is a unified and integrated approach to "contain"—or, more ambitiously, to "roll back"—the appeal of Islamist extremists. The strategy should be "containment-like" in that it must include careful coordination of multiple instruments aimed at supporting an overarching comprehensive strategy, and in that it requires sustained commitment over a period of not just a few years or a single administration, but for the next several decades. This approach must be broadly orchestrated to include information, political, economic, social, religious, moral/ethical, and policy dimensions. Such a strategy will have to be well integrated and coordinated not only within the U.S. government's various agencies (State, OSD, etc.), but also internationally among nations that share the strategic assessment that assigns priority to countering religious extremist ideologies that serve to legitimize terrorism.

It must be recognized that countering ideological support for terrorism will involve much more than simply responses in the realm of public diplomacy. An adequately funded and skillfully orchestrated public diplomacy effort can offer one means of an overall strategy, but it is only one component. As we develop a CIST strategy, we should begin with the fundamental assumption that perception—or even every element

³⁶ This point was made by Lt. Col. Fred T. Krawchuk in "Strategic Communication: An Integral Component of Counterinsurgency Operations," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 5:3 (Winter 2006): 35-50.

³⁷ See George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950); and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

that might influence perceptions—must be considered. We must constantly evaluate and re-evaluate how our actions, behavior, messages, and policies are interpreted.

Compared with the era of the Cold War, in the increasingly transnational security environment of the twenty-first century, dialogue within the U.S. government and especially in international forums may become even more necessary to build consensus on terminology, objectives, and execution of policy. No single nation working alone will be able to confront and defeat the worldwide threat of Islamist extremism. Strategy must be developed and coordinated among multiple international partners. Maintaining excellent communication will be integral to forming and refining strategy and sustaining the robust network necessary to deal with this complex challenge.

International gatherings of nations focusing on developing cooperation in counterterrorism efforts, such as the NATO-Russia Council and the bilateral U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism (CTWG), provide promising venues for addressing this issue. Any “hearts and minds” strategy coordinated among multilateral or bilateral international groups must involve reaching out to Muslim nations and communities. Working through the development of CIST programs, engaging partners familiar with local cultures and traditions will be critical to achieving progress. We should promote greater appreciation for the potential contributions of NGOs, clerics and religious leaders, educators, and the private sector to challenging the ideology perpetrated by extremists. As collaboration develops at the traditional state-to-state level and among communities, there should be an accompanying momentum toward addressing this issue on the basis of shared strategic objectives.

Building an Actionable Agenda in Countering the Ideological Appeal of Religious Extremism

In attempting to build a comprehensive “hearts and minds” strategy, every effort should be made to clearly communicate that we reject any notion of a “clash of cultures” or “clash of civilizations” between the West and the Muslim world that would ultimately lead to violent confrontation. There are fundamental differences between non-Muslim and Muslim cultures, values, and traditions. However, the consequences of allowing these distinctive features to once again descend into a large-scale religio-civilizational based war as in the past would likely result in unthinkable losses, given the greater availability of tools of mass destruction in the contemporary international security environment. It is imperative to work to foster consensus among non-Muslim and Muslim nations committed to protecting civilian populations from harm by those who distort the religious teachings of Islam for political purposes.

There have been some reported successes in reforming young recruits to terrorist movements through interventions of religious authorities, but for the most part there is little hope for negotiating or altering the fundamental objectives or convictions of the committed Islamist militant extremist. The fanatic core adherents are driven by a vision of a glorious past and rage against an international order that they deem unjust, immoral, and fundamentally divorced from God and all that is sacred. An author of several fundamental texts of Islamist radicalism, Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, set the foun-

dation for transforming the international order decades ago: “the objective of Islamic jihad is to eliminate the rule of a non-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. Islam does not intend to confine this revolution to a single state or a few countries; the aim of Islam is to bring about universal revolution.”³⁸ Because justification for violence can be found among radical clerics and in differing interpretations of references in the Koran, both secular communities and devout Muslims face difficulties in challenging the extremist agenda.³⁹

This should not suggest that secular open societies are locked in an irreconcilable clash with the vast bulk of Muslims throughout the world. “Sacred terrorists” have emerged throughout history to distort the teaching of religious traditions in many faiths and cultural contexts. Influential representatives of the world’s Muslim communities openly reject the tactics and vision offered by the Islamist extremists. Jordan’s King Abdullah II has called for the “quiet majority of Muslims” to “take back our religion from the vocal, violent, and ignorant extremists....”⁴⁰ The Grand Sheik of the al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Sheik Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, has consistently spoken out against acts of terrorism. Representing the highest spiritual authority for Sunni Muslims, he has condemned suicide bombings against Israelis and characterized “extremism” as “the enemy of Islam.”⁴¹ Public opinion data from polls conducted by the Pew Research Center indicate substantial declines in the percentages of Muslims supporting suicide bombing and other forms of violence, with the percentage change in Jordan particularly significant in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Amman in 2005.⁴² The fact is that the militant radical message is largely rejected within the Muslim world as being inconsistent with the most fundamental teachings and values of Islam and as lacking relevance to the realities of modern life.

³⁸ Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi, “Jihad in Islam,” lecture delivered in Lahore on Iqbal Day (13 April 1939), reprinted in *Voices of Terror*, ed. Laqueur, 398.

³⁹ Osama Bin Laden was reported to have obtained approval from a Saudi cleric for the use of a nuclear weapon against the United States. Mark A. Gabriel has observed that Al-Zawahiri offers the rationale for killing innocent bystanders in his book entitled *Healing the Breast of the Believers*, referencing the following Quranic verse: “Fight against them so that Allah will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of the believing people, and remove the anger of their believers’ hearts....” Surah 9: 13-15; translated by Mark A. Gabriel, *Journey Into the Mind*, 56–57; also see Osama Bin Laden, “Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders,” *World Islamic Front Statement* (23 February 1998).

⁴⁰ “Jordan’s King Abdullah Pushes for Moderation,” *Washington Post* (14 September 2005).

⁴¹ See “Grand Sheikh Condemns Suicide Bombings,” *BBC News* (4 December 2001); and “Cleric Condemns Suicide Attacks,” *BBC News* (11 July 2003).

⁴² Prior to the terrorist attack in Amman in 2005, 57 percent of Jordanians viewed suicide attacks as “often” or “sometimes” justified, with the figure declining to 27 percent in the aftermath of the attack. See *Europe’s Muslims More Moderate: The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other* (Washington D.C.: The Pew Global Attitudes Project, 22 June 2006); available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/253.pdf>.

Islamist extremists constitute only a small portion of the some 1.4 billion Muslims worldwide. A strategy to counter ideological support for terrorism should entertain no illusions of seeking to influence the hard-core, radically inspired terrorist, but rather should identify and then discredit and isolate Islamist extremists. Partnering with the Muslim world in a joint struggle against an ideology that has and will continue to bring harm to open societies and ensuring that the Islamists are thwarted in their attempts to attract additional recruits holds the most promise for long-term success. Osama bin Laden attempts to characterize this conflict as a religious war, referring to “a new crusade led by America against Islamic nations,” and calling for the *umma* to “unite to defend Islam.”⁴³ The enemy should be clearly defined; the threat comes from the small extremist core, not from Islam or most of the Muslim world. Failure to precisely distinguish the source of the threat will make it easier for extremists to manipulate greater numbers within the Muslim world to advance their political aspirations by depicting the nature of this conflict as a war against Islam.

The importance of appropriate terminology cannot be underestimated. Language or terminology must be carefully calibrated, with the intention of advancing cooperation and consensus in executing policy. References to the “war on terror” or “Islamofascists” may have a certain resonance or political utility on the domestic front, but such references have surely been misunderstood by our traditional allies and potential partners, and will not help to win “hearts and minds” in the Muslim world. Even in instances in which the U.S. shares a high degree of substantive compatibility with respect to efforts to address the ideological agenda of terrorists, the use of such references can be polarizing and hinder cooperation.

In 2006, both the NATO-Russia Council and the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Counterterrorism (CTWG) introduced the issue of ideological support for terrorism as a priority for advancing collaboration in countering terrorism.⁴⁴ In conjunction with the anniversary celebration of the establishment of the NRC, a major international conference will be held in Ankara, Turkey, in May 2007 to explore options for developing cooperation in combating religious extremism that fuels terrorist activity.

There are several specific areas where the United States, NATO, and Russia—working with Muslim nations—might begin to build a comprehensive approach for combating militant religious extremism. While certainly not an exhaustive list of options, several factors for consideration and recommendations have emerged from re-

⁴³ “Correspondent Meets with Opposition Leader Bin Laden,” *Channel 4* (London) (20 February 1997); and “Pakistan Interviews Usama Bin Ladin,” Islamabad, Pakistan (18 March 1997), cited in Christopher M. Blanchard, “Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology,” *CRS Report for Congress* (26 January 2006; updated 24 January 2007), available at <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/80743.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Author’s interviews with Igor A. Neverov, Director, North America Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation, October 2006; Nerissa J. Cook, Director, Office of Policy and Global Issues, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. State Department, November 2006; and periodic discussions with Kerem Alp, NATO-Russia Council, NATO, November-December 2006.

cent discussions (enlisting wide international participation) devoted to this topic at the Marshall Center. These suggestions define practical areas for cooperation, and might provide some of the essential elements of a long-term, comprehensive strategy to combat ideological support for terrorism.

Dialogue and Domestic and International Institutional Coordination

No nation has the resources to support “talk shops” for endless discussion that fail to yield measurable outcomes. However, developing an effective strategy for countering ideological support for terrorism will not be achieved without a commitment to ongoing international discussion and consultation. The progress made by the international community in moving toward a common definition of terrorism has resulted from honest and open discussion of assumptions and perspectives in the United Nations and other international forums. Russia’s Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, recently reinforced the need to “fight terrorism with a single standard....”⁴⁵ Arriving at a “single standard,” or a well coordinated strategy, can only be achieved through encouraging routine and sustained dialogue.

For the United States, devoting time and resources to promoting such discussions demonstrates a respect for the potential contributions of partner nations and helps to facilitate the development of a shared understanding of perspectives and professional associations that will be so valuable in dealing with this challenge in the years to come. Such exchanges can contribute to overcoming the lack of trust and suspicion of U.S. intentions that is so prevalent today, especially in the Muslim world.

U.S. government efforts in Public Diplomacy/Public Affairs (State Department) and Strategic Communication/PSYOP (Department of Defense) must be coordinated and directed toward developing a common and coherent information strategy. Mechanisms have been established for the periodic discussion of approaches, themes, and messages between various agencies sharing responsibility for countering ideological support for terrorism (State, Defense, Intelligence, etc.). Joint seminars and routine consultations between the Pentagon, State Department, and other U.S. government agencies have and will continue to facilitate better coordination and understanding of issues. Implementing an effective strategy for countering ideological support for terrorism will require not only optimal domestic agency coordination, but also should lead to the next step: inviting greater international involvement in U.S. government intra-agency forums. The NRC, CTWG, and other groups that are working to unite nations to counter terrorism provide promising mechanisms for directing resources toward developing common approaches to deal with this challenge.

⁴⁵ “States Harboring Terrorists Should Comply with UN Acts,” *Novosti* (10 December 2005). For an excellent discussion concerning the need for an internationally accepted definition of terrorism, see Boaz Ganor, *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 1–24.

Discrediting the Islamist Extremist Agenda

A global “hearts and minds” strategy must offer acceptable alternatives to the totalitarian vision and jihad-driven violence promoted by Islamist extremists. Democracy, justice, rule of law, and economic opportunity may have wide appeal, even in the cases of societies that are divided by ethno-religious loyalties and suffer from relative economic disadvantage. The channels for participating in the political process or resolving grievances available in established democratic systems can provide appropriate and effective alternatives to violence and terrorism for those seeking to achieve political objectives. Nevertheless, building democratic nations in cultural contexts that lack such traditions will involve a long-term, patient commitment, and requires much more than simply holding elections. The primary impetus for democratic transition must come from within the society; the creation of democratic institutions and a civic society will mature over a period of decades, not a few months or even years.

One of the major challenges is that, in many respects, secular societies are fundamentally inconsistent with Islam. As Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr of Tehran University observes,

If Muslims were to accept in principle the separation of religion from the domain of public life (which would then become secularized, as it has in the West to an ever greater degree since the Renaissance), they would have to abandon the doctrine of Unity that lies at the heart of the Islamic message. They would have to act against the Sunnah of the Prophet and fourteen centuries of the unfolding of the Islamic tradition.⁴⁶

Secularist and modernist forces within the Muslim world face the challenge of balancing adherence to Islamic values, traditions, and institutions with introducing concepts of democratic governance.

Rather than adopting a rigid checklist to measure progress in democratic development based on the Western experience, it seems more realistic and potentially productive to recognize that democratization must advance in a manner that will be consistent with the unique circumstances of any society. Attempting to impose democratic practices or standards on reluctant societies is likely to only engender greater resistance. Specialists from Muslim societies often refer to the overwhelming sense of “humiliation” or “resentment” that exists in these societies’ “encounter with the West.”⁴⁷ Democracy should be encouraged, but it is critical not to further aggravate these sentiments by attempting to impose a system of governance before the society is prepared to accept change.

The United States and other democratic societies will also encounter difficulties in enlisting the support of semi-authoritarian nations that would have a great deal to contribute to the combating terrorist groups and methods, but may not be willing to lend

⁴⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam, Religion, History and Civilization* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003), 113.

⁴⁷ Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, “Terror, Islam, and Democracy,” *Journal of Democracy* 13:2 (April 2002): 16.

legitimacy to promoting ideas and values to counter the ideological message of terrorists. We will have to work together with partners throughout the world in finding the proper balance between protecting civil liberties and securing free and open nations against the terrorist threat. At what point do nations undermine the basis for a democratic society in attempting to manage religious extremism?⁴⁸ How far can nations go in regulating Web sites, for example, when those sites are used to recruit terrorists and organize violent attacks? The cyber sphere will continue to present new challenges for democratic societies in weighing the appropriate levels of control when the technology is manipulated for purposes of fostering destruction and violence.

In an effort to de-legitimize the ideological underpinnings of radical Islamism, it is critical to expose the vision offered by Al Qaeda and other Islamist militants for the future of the international order. The ideological mind-set for Islamist extremism includes a worldview characterized by a sense of crisis seeking redemption by violence. The imposition of a fanatic totalitarian theocratic order hardly seems like a realistic or appealing prospect for today's international community, or for most of the world's Muslim population.

Women in Muslim communities offer a great potential contribution to democratization and countering support for terrorism. Muslim women are increasingly represented in the professions, and are critical in fostering the values of society through their influence in the family. Bin Laden repeatedly argued that Afghanistan had become a model Islamic state under the Taliban.⁴⁹ Despite differing Western and Muslim mutual perceptions regarding the issue of "respect for women," there is no debating the fact that women suffered tremendous injustice, deprivation, and humiliation under the Taliban order.⁵⁰ The experience of women under the Taliban is fortunately not illustrative of the conditions under which women live throughout the entire Muslim world, and it is important to appreciate that realization of the core aspirations and objectives of the Islamist jihadist would be unacceptable to most women of the international community of the twenty-first century. Muslim women should be encouraged to become involved in discrediting the oppressive Islamist agenda and the tactics of violence and suicidal destruction.

⁴⁸ A French political scientist, Dr. Sebastien Peyrouse, argues that vestiges of authoritarianism remain in certain Central Asian nations with respect to religious freedom and tolerance of extremist tendencies in Islam. Sebastian Peyrouse, lecture delivered on "Islam and Politics in Central Asia: A Response to Globalization," Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 21 November 2006.

⁴⁹ "Al Jazeera Program on Bin Laden," *Al Jazeera Television* (Doha, Qatar) (10 June 1999); cited in Blanchard, "Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology," 3.

⁵⁰ In response to the question "Are Muslims Respectful of Women?" non-Muslims in Great Britain replied 26 percent Yes and 59 percent No; United States, 19 percent Yes and 69 percent No; France, 23 percent Yes and 77 percent No; Germany, 17 percent Yes and 80 percent No. In response to the question "Are Westerners Respectful of Women?" Muslims in Jordan replied 38 percent Yes and 53 percent No; Pakistan, 22 percent Yes and 52 percent No; Indonesia, 38 percent Yes and 50 percent No; and Turkey, 42 percent Yes and 39 percent No. "Europe's Muslims More Moderate/The Great Divide."

Nations committed to combating terrorism must continue to devote attention and resources to addressing the underlying societal forces that create the environments that fuel terrorism. Much of the appeal of Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon results from their ability to meet the desperate social service needs in war-ravaged societies. The United States, Russia, and other nations are tapping the support of their private sectors to contribute to the counterterrorism effort. Socially responsible private industry can create the economic opportunities, training programs, and career alternatives for those in despair. We must provide potential recruits with an alternative to membership in terrorist movements.

Disseminating messages emphasizing the common positive values (family, dignity, justice) shared by both Western or non-Muslim and Muslim societies can contribute to building common ground and improving impressions. Messages should also promote an appreciation of shared respect for the accomplishments and contributions of diverse societies and practices. Television, media, and information technologies should be fully utilized to focus public attention on the atrocities suffered by the victims of terrorism. Revealing the plight of the victims can help to develop global norms that stigmatize terrorist acts. The efforts of international diplomatic and security organizations toward publicly exposing the vision and behavior of Islamists should gradually contribute to unifying world opinion, thus eroding the potential of extremists for gaining greater influence.

Engaging Muslim Communities: Limitations and Responsibilities

It seems obvious that leaders within Muslim societies have a critical contribution to make in discrediting the ideology of terrorists. The responsibility for scriptural interpretation and managing teaching in educational and religious institutions must rest with the designated leadership and religious authorities in Muslim communities. Success in the competition of ideas will depend on the discernment, guidance, and response of current and future generations of Muslim communities.

Leading specialists on politics and Islam share the assessment that the spiritual foundations and traditions of Islam provide the best solution to counter the ideology of Islamist terrorism. Dr. Mustapha Benchenane, Professor of Political Science at Université Rene Descartes in Paris, contends that Islam should be used to discredit Islamism. He argues that the scriptural teachings of Islam are inconsistent with the violence and hate that characterize the message and behavior of the Islamists.⁵¹ Similarly, Dr. Abdslam Maghraoui, Director of the Muslim World Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace, argues that “the problem of ‘religious extremism’ in the Muslim world is an ideological challenge best confronted by drawing on Islam’s humanist and progressive

⁵¹ Presentation by Professor Mustapha Benchenane (and discussion with author) delivered at the conference entitled “Counteracting Ideological Support for Terrorism/Lessons Learned and Future Policy: Interdisciplinary, Theological, and International/Regional Perspectives, Marshall Center, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, 15 September 2006.

traditions.”⁵² Iranian scholars Ladan Boroumand and Roya Boroumand, writing in the *Journal of Democracy*, argue that there is “in the history of Islam no precedent for the utterly unrestrained violence of Al Qaeda or the Hezbollah.” They assert: “To kill oneself while wantonly murdering women, children, and people of all religions and descriptions—let us not forget that Muslims too worked at the Trade Center—has nothing to do with Islam...”⁵³ Recent public discussions held in London and other cities between Muslim clerics and leading figures among the Islamist extremists expose the sharp divide within Islam regarding the interpretation and teachings of the Koran.

Again, in order to avoid creating further divisions or misunderstandings, any counterterrorism initiatives on the part of the transatlantic community (NRC, CTWG, and others) designed to address ideological support for terrorism must include collaboration with the Muslim world. Secular nations with large Muslim populations may have a particularly important contribution to make in bridging ties with Muslim nations. There are certainly limitations in engaging Muslim communities. It is often difficult to discern the legitimate source of authority in Islam. Islam has no equivalent to a single religious authority, such as the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church. The diffuse nature of authority in Islam leaves the faith vulnerable to exploitation by self-appointed extremist clerics and complicates the work for legitimate and responsible religious authorities in discounting distortions or misinterpretations of sacred teachings. In addition, many Muslim religious leaders have an understandable reluctance to cooperate with Western or secular nations, because such an association can compromise their credibility or even security. A highly visible U.S./transatlantic campaign promoting moderation over extremism in the Muslim world is likely to be counterproductive. The challenge is to strike the appropriate balance in supporting Muslim communities committed to countering extremism without in any way assuming an excessively intrusive role.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Convening gatherings of counterterrorism professionals drawn from military and security communities around the world to exchange experiences in countering ideological support for terrorism promises to be among the most effective methods in preparing a coherent effort to combat the ideological underpinnings of Islamist extremism. These discussions tend to be quite concrete, offering specific recommendations based on actual experience in dealing with terrorists motivated by religious extremism in different nations. Discussions cover a wide spectrum of issues, including monitoring the activities of radical terrorists, distribution of literature, techniques for thwarting recruitment

⁵² Presentation by Dr. Abdeslam Maghraoui delivered at the conference entitled “Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism/Lessons Learned and Future Policy: Interdisciplinary, Theological, and International/Regional Perspectives,” Marshall Center, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, 15 September 2006; and Abdeslam M. Maghraoui, “American Foreign Policy and Islamic Renewal,” United States Institute of Peace, Special Report No. 164 (July 2006) (reprinted from the original in this volume, pp. 26-40).

⁵³ Boroumand and Boroumand, “Terror, Islam, and Democracy,” 6.

efforts, working with imams to intervene by counseling young recruits, and attempting to address underlying causes, such as implementing efforts to combat poverty.

Such collaborative exchange can contribute to building “best practices,” providing guidance to military/security counterterrorism professionals in techniques for countering ideological support for terrorism. Also, fostering channels of communication among counterterrorism professionals will enhance intelligence sharing, which will in turn bolster efforts to combat radicalism. Again, these military/security counterterrorism networks establish the foundation for managing the day-to-day business of successfully countering terrorism worldwide.

The periodic professional exchanges that occur between nations in promoting the counterterrorism initiatives of the NRC and CTWG also contribute to building best practices. It is important to provide opportunities not only for task oriented collaboration, but also time for reflection and exchange of perspectives on methods and techniques for combating militant radicalism.

Traditional Religions and Interreligious Dialogue

The potential positive contributions of the world’s major religions to resolving conflicts have been underestimated in the state-centric diplomatic community.⁵⁴ The complexity and potential consequences of failing to manage the terrorist threat makes it even more important to enlist the support of clerics and religious authorities, from a wide range of confessional traditions.

Political officials throughout the world are increasingly acknowledging that traditional religions, through interreligious dialogue, could play an important role in addressing the terrorist challenge. In conjunction with the G-8 Summit held in St. Petersburg, Russia in July 2006, Russia’s President Vladimir Putin called for “broad dialogue between religions to ward off extremists.”⁵⁵ Similarly, in January 2006, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, citing recent progress in reducing the terror-

⁵⁴ In a major edited volume entitled *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, contributors argue that traditional religions have an important contribution to make in resolving the identity-based conflicts of the post-Cold War period. One of the editors, Douglas Johnson, concludes that: “As one looks at the end of the century and beyond, the challenges of preventing or resolving conflict are likely to prove even more formidable than they have in the past. The problems posed by today’s ethnic and nationalistic hostilities, whether inter- or intrastate, have shown themselves to be peculiarly resistant to diplomatic compromise. If the goal of achieving peace in meaningful terms is to prove any less elusive, different approaches will be required—approaches that key to deep-rooted human relationships rather than state-centered philosophies. Far greater insight into the human dimension of conflict and its resolution will be required on the part of foreign policy and religious practitioners than has been demonstrated to date.” See Douglas Johnston, “Introduction: Beyond Power Politics” in *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, eds. Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7.

⁵⁵ “Russia’s Putin Calls for Interfaith Dialogue to Oppose Extremism,” *RIA Novosti* (3 July 2006). Putin noted that “ignorance of the fundamentals of religious history makes a man, particularly a young one, vulnerable to dangerous extremist movements.”

ist threat and negotiating peace in Mindanao, stated that interfaith dialogue was the best “antidote to terrorism.”⁵⁶ Karen Hughes, the U.S. Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue in a recent interview in Prague:

... the world’s major faiths have many things in common. The world’s major faiths all believe that we should try to live in peace and love for each other, that we should love God and love our neighbor. All believe and teach that life is precious and that the taking of innocent life is wrong. It’s important that we talk about these things. Sure, we have differences. We have important theological differences. But we also have much in common. And I think it is very important that we foster that kind of dialogue.⁵⁷

The credibility of terrorists can be undercut by higher authorities challenging the misuse of religion for political purposes. While the recent G-8 meeting was in session, the leaders of the major world religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and others) signed a joint statement that included the following reference to terrorism and extremism:

We condemn terrorism and extremism of any form, as well as attempts to justify them by religion. We consider it our duty to oppose enmity on political, ethnic, or religious grounds. We deplore the activities of pseudo-religious groups and movements destroying freedom and health of people as well as the ethical climate in societies. Using religion as a means for rousing hatred or an excuse for crimes against individuals, morality, and humanity present a major challenge today. This can be addressed only through education and moral foundation. School, mass media, and preaching by religious leaders should return to our contemporaries the full knowledge of their religious tradition which call them to peace and love.⁵⁸

Pope John Paul II also acknowledged the potential contribution of interreligious dialogue in overcoming terrorism: “I am convinced that humanity’s great religions should cooperate among themselves to help eliminate the social and cultural causes of terrorism, by teaching the grandeur and dignity of the human being and by favoring an increasing awareness of the unity of the human race.”⁵⁹ His successor Pope Benedict XVI’s first visit to Istanbul in November 2006 was an important step toward improving the relationship between the Christian and Muslim communities, and toward creating a basis for cooperation in meeting the most pressing security challenges facing the international community in the twenty-first century.

The ideological foundations of contemporary violent religious extremist groups must be de-legitimized by theological refutation. Interreligious dialogue can focus the

⁵⁶ “Philippine President Promotes Interfaith Dialogue to Fight Terror,” *Manila Times* (28 January 2006).

⁵⁷ “U.S. Undersecretary of State Pushes for More Interfaith Dialogue,” *RFE/RL* (11 June 2006).

⁵⁸ “Moscow Summit Statement Read at G-8 Meeting,” *Catholic World News* (18 July 2006).

⁵⁹ “Interreligious Dialogue Can Help Counter Terrorism, Pope Says,” *Catholic World News* (12 December 2003).

attention of the communities of the world on the distortions of scriptures relied upon by these groups, and the inconsistencies of their heinous terrorist acts with the shared peaceful teachings of the world's major religions. The responsible leadership of religious authorities working together can help in preventing the escalation of a major twenty-first-century conflict based on religious-ethnic/cultural distinctions.

At the international level, it would be important to include representation from religious communities in forums that are tasked with seeking solutions for how best to counter the "hearts and minds" appeal of terrorism. In local communities, there have been many instances when imams have contributed to efforts to counter radicalism and extremism. Perhaps no single security issue is more suited for government-religious cooperation than countering extremism-motivated terrorism.

Intercultural Research/Educational Cooperation

Terrorism has not been a major area for focus in academic security studies in the United States. During the years of the U.S.-Soviet confrontation, tremendous resources were invested in cultivating academic centers for studying the Soviet Union. There were a number of leading academic specialists that could be tapped for directing research and offering support in the development of policy and strategy. Terrorism was subsumed within other academic disciplines, and there were few programs or centers in the United States or in other nations devoted to terrorism (the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland is among the few). The dedication of limited resources to the study of terrorism has resulted in a scarcity of experts and research in the area.

In formulating an ideological campaign, we need greater clarity on the motives of Islamist terrorists. The current academic and policy literature offers a range of explanations for why people would choose to join a terrorist movement: rational actor; group cohesion; low self-esteem or compensation; religious inspiration; educational background and training.⁶⁰ While there may in fact be multiple profiles for terrorists, it is still necessary to understand what motivates terrorists to act or to voluntarily engage in acts of suicidal martyrdom when we attempt to formulate responses to counter terrorist ideology.

Additional objective and rigorous case study research across different national and cultural contexts will provide a basis for assessing the success of various measures implemented to counter extremism. For example, investigations on the impact of govern-

⁶⁰ Jerrold M. Post, "Psychological Operations and Counterterrorism," *Joint Force Quarterly* 37 (2005): 105-10; Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005); and Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide of Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

ment-initiated multicultural campaigns in the U.K. and Singapore contained in this volume illustrate the type of case study research that can over time provide a basis for evaluating effectiveness in implementing strategies to counter extremism. New institutes, such as the Combating Terrorism Center, established in 2003 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, will improve our understanding of the sources of terrorist motivation and can help support policy formulation.⁶¹ The U.S. military community has acknowledged the importance of enhancing educational efforts to strengthen its understanding of differing cultures and traditions and to better prepare the military leadership for working constructively in diverse societies.⁶² Lt. Col. Fred T. Krawchuk, Director of Strategic Communication for U.S. Pacific Command, emphasizes the importance of enhancing cultural adeptness in forming an effective strategic information campaign.⁶³ In the aftermath of September 11, the Fulbright Council for the International Exchange of Scholars established the Visiting Specialist Program and the Understanding Contemporary Islam Program to facilitate the hosting of scholars from nations with significant Muslim populations in U.S.-based universities. These programs seek to improve the understanding of Islam in American educational institutions and communities and promote ongoing collaborative research with Muslim scholars.

NATO's Science for Peace and Security Program provides an excellent model for facilitating international collaborative research. The NRC might consider sponsoring joint collaborative research projects involving both academic and security/policy analysts from both NRC and Muslim nations engaged in work on terrorism and countering ideological support for terrorism. Investments in strengthening such academic collaboration will improve knowledge and intercultural understanding on the sources of violent extremism, and may perhaps yield significant policy contributions.

Importance of Consistency of Intentions in Messages and Policy

It is critical that the effort to win the hearts and minds of the potential audience for Islamist extremist movements not be perceived as an attempt to manipulate societies or practice ideological "spin." The importance of trusting the messenger cannot be overestimated for any successful strategic communication effort. To be effective, public diplomacy efforts and the messages delivered must be consistent with substantive policy and behavior. Otherwise, any public diplomacy or communication effort is likely to be

⁶¹ The Center recently released a major study, for example, which "identifies *who* the most influential people are among the Jihadi thinking class, *what* they are thinking, and *where* the movement is most vulnerable ideologically." See Jarret Brachman, ed., *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, November 2006).

⁶² Lt.Col. Andrew W. Stewart of the U.S. Army War College argued in a recent article that, "Success in promoting the U.S. worldview, and winning the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) specifically, rests in Americans recognizing their own cultural uniqueness and developing a high level of cultural savvy in dealing with more traditional cultures." See Lt. Col. Andrew W. Stewart, "Friction in U.S. Foreign Policy: Cultural Difficulties in the World," *Carlisle Papers in Security Studies* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, June 2006).

⁶³ Krawchuk, "Strategic Communication."

dismissed as simply propaganda or attempts to manipulate perceptions. Implementing a comprehensive strategy for countering ideological support for terrorism must include constant assessment of the impact of policy priorities and choices. The legacy of U.S. policy that assigned greater priority to regional stability over democracy in the Middle East during the years of the Cold War and beyond has left many in the region skeptical regarding U.S. intentions.⁶⁴ Striving for consistency between our stated intentions and our actions will weaken charges that the U.S. is hypocritical or pursuing double standards, and may contribute to favorably influencing the hearts and minds of the next generation in the Muslim world.

Discussions devoted to countering ideological support for terrorism with colleagues from the Middle East will invariably turn to seeking a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There may be some truth to the claim that reaching a settlement for this issue would not bring an end to terrorism, but it is also true that progress on the Israeli-Palestinian problem could help to improve the psychological climate in the region and eliminate a major source of the outrage that supports terrorist recruitment. Renewed international attention to addressing some of the relevant critical policy issues—such as the Israeli-Palestinian settlement and the integration of Muslims in European and other communities—will demonstrate the sincerity of intention that exists behind efforts to counter the sources of militant religious extremism that threaten the security of free societies throughout the world community.

⁶⁴ Stephen A. Cook, writing recently in *Foreign Affairs*, observes that ranking democratization beneath the interests of preserving security and stability has led to pervasive skepticism throughout the Arab world. See Stephen A. Cook, “The Right Way to Promote Arab Reform,” *Foreign Affairs* 84:2 (March–April 2005): 91-102.

American Foreign Policy and Islamic Renewal

Abdeslam M. Maghraoui *

About the Report

This report is part of the “Islamic Renewal Project: Translating Islamic Reformist Ideas into Concrete Policies,” conducted by the Muslim World Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace. The project’s main objective is to mobilize moderate voices in the Muslim world by broadening societal support for modernist Islam around a coherent vision and translating that vision into enduring pacts, viable institutions, and concrete policies. It includes the collection of a database on Islamic modernist networks across the globe and the organization of a series of regional workshops held in predominantly Muslim countries as well as countries where Muslims constitute significant minorities. The major argument of this report is that the problem of “religious extremism” in the Muslim world is an ideological challenge best confronted by drawing on Islam’s humanist and progressive traditions.

Summary

- The United States still lacks an integrated and sustainable strategy to confront religious extremism in the Muslim world. Policymakers have failed to recognize that the challenge is not only a conflict between parts of the Muslim world and the West, but also involves ideological shifts within the Muslim world. These shifts have precipitated a major battle for the future of Islam as a faith and a civilization.
- The single most important initiative the United States can take to combat Islamist extremism is to support “Islamic renewal,” a diffuse but growing social, political, and intellectual movement whose goal is profound reform of Muslim societies and polities. The United States must engage moderate Islam because core aspects

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of the religion have an enormous moderating and modernizing potential that policymakers have overlooked.

- Previous efforts to address the challenges of the Muslim world have often contradicted one another and worked at cross-purposes. There is a visible misunderstanding of the region's political culture, particularly regarding the questions of terrorism, extremism, and political reform. Security cooperation with authoritarian regimes to deal with the terrorist threat has reinforced negative attitudes about the United States and its policies.
- Efforts to promote democracy are likely to empower fundamentalists in many Muslim states. Free elections, while desirable in principle, may not be the best mechanisms to negotiate substantive political issues, and deep suspicion toward formal state authority structures persists in Muslim societies.
- Islamic renewal seeks to reclaim the religion's heritage from extremist, traditionalist, and fundamentalist groups. Today's reformers have a long history and cultural tradition to draw upon. From the early period of Islam, when the Prophet Muhammad saw himself as a religious reformer, to the adoption of modern public and international law, Islam has shown great potential to adapt and modernize. Today the movement exists on the ground and has the capacity to make coherent a scattered cluster of reformist ideas on social and political issues.
- U.S. policy could tip the balance between extremist and modernist interpretations of Islam and seize a great opportunity for constructive engagement. The U.S. strategy should be to support the renewal movement, which could reform Islam and mobilize Muslim constituencies against religious extremism.
- Policy priorities should be to promote Muslim modernist works and ideas, engage the rising moderate Islamist parties on normative grounds, and put more emphasis on substantive social, educational, and religious reforms. As fault lines become apparent, U.S. agencies already are taking sides by supporting moderate Islamic leaders over others.

Introduction

Over five years after 9/11, the United States still lacks an integrated and sustainable strategy to confront religious extremism in the Muslim world. The challenges in Iraq and uncertainties in Afghanistan are raising doubts about the current thrust of the "Global War on Terrorism." The prospect of electoral victories by hard-line Islamists is dimming the hope that efforts directed at promoting democracy will produce moderate regimes that desire good relations with the United States. Nor have attempts to win "hearts and minds" through public diplomacy yielded significant results. A June 2006 Pew Global Attitudes survey shows that unfavorable opinions of the United States are still widespread in five traditionally moderate Muslim countries (Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey).

Missing from U.S. policies is the recognition that the challenge comes not only from extremist Islam's conflict with Western modernity but also from ideological con-

flicts inside the Muslim world. A simmering, historically rooted battle *within Islam* pits modernists against radical Islamists. Following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, conservative Sunni regimes unleashed their own brand of puritanical Islam to counter the growing ideological influence and political dynamism of the Shiite revolution. Saudi financial largesse and Wahhabist ideology, a doctrine that advocates a literal, legalistic, and purist interpretation of the Koran, have influenced the Sunni response to the Shiite challenge.

Sunni extremists have gained ground during the past three decades as a result of the poor social and economic performance and repressive nature of many Muslim political regimes. The three Arab Human Development Reports published by the United Nations between 2002 and 2004 show the Arab part of the Muslim world lagging behind other regions in social opportunity, knowledge, and good governance.¹ Fragmentation of religious authority in Sunni Islam and official religious scholars' reluctance or failure to reinterpret Islamic laws are also serious problems. With no institutionalized authority comparable to the Catholic papacy and the Shiite *velayat-e faqih* (rule of the jurist), in Sunni Islam an independent legal scholar, a respected preacher, or even a fanatic can issue a *fatwa* (a religious edict or opinion). Although the vast majority of *fatwas* issued on any given day are about mundane matters and have nothing to do with politics or violence, they undermine the authority of official religious institutions, who in turn use the prevailing "anarchy of *fatwas*" to monopolize and limit the scope of *ijtihad*, or reasoned interpretation.

Standard economic and political reform policies, often touted as the solution to the Muslim world's problems, are necessary but no longer sufficient to address a crisis of this magnitude. Perhaps a freer political environment and social and economic incentives could have reinforced ideological moderation if they had been implemented decades ago.

Today, however, the major battle is for the soul of Islam, and will require substantive, normative, and institutional reforms. The outcome of this religious and ideological contest will be determined by the balance of power and influence between radical Islamists, bent on imposing a puritanical form of Islam through intimidation and violence, and moderate Muslims who aim to renew Islam from within.

The single most important step the United States can take to combat Islamist extremism is to support "Islamic renewal," a recent, diffuse but growing social, political, and intellectual movement that aims to cultivate modern norms and address modern needs by drawing on Islamic traditions. Its objective is the profound reform of Muslim societies and polities. Although they do not constitute an ideologically homogenous and uniformly committed movement, various actors with similar agendas and significant social backing are involved. The movement may include women's groups, such as the Sisters in Islam networks in Indonesia and Malaysia, AISHA Arab Women Forum, Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights, or the anonymous group of

¹ Arab Human Development Report 2002, *Creating Opportunities for Future Generations*; 2003, *Building a Knowledge Society*; 2004, *Freedom and Good Governance* (New York: United Nations Development Program).

progressive Muslim women that published “Claiming our Rights: A Manual for Women’s Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies.” It includes moderate Islamist parties—such as Egypt and Jordan’s *wasat* parties—that call for “self-reform,” and Turkey and Morocco’s Justice and Development parties, which define themselves as modern political actors taking progressive Islamic positions. And it includes hundreds of active democracy networks (such as the Philippine Council for Islam Democracy, the U.S.-based Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, or the International Center for Islam and Pluralism in Jakarta), and lively Web sites that foster international communication and transmission of progressive Islamic ideas (such as Liberal Islam Network, LiberalIslam.net, IslamOnline.net, ProgressiveIslam.org).

In general, the Islamic renewal movement comprises four broad groups. Proponents of “civic Islam” include civil society organizations that advocate gender equality, human rights, social responsibility, the protection of the environment, and similar social issues but make no overt claim to political power. Referring to the progressive teachings of Islam, they call on regimes to enact reforms and respect basic rights. Proponents of “Islam and democracy” include parties and movements that see no incompatibility between Islamic values and teachings and modern democratic principles. This group advocates participation in the political process, with the goal of achieving power and applying political reforms on the basis of Islamic principles. Proponents of “reforms within Islam” include leading religious figures, scholars, and academic institutions that call for the reinterpretation of Islamic laws, a historical reading of Islam and the Koran, and the modernization of Islamic knowledge. “Culturally modern Islam” developed mainly among Muslim communities living in the West. These diaspora groups and organizations, which try to articulate a “Western Islamic identity,” see no tension between being a Muslim and a citizen of a Western democracy. Tying these diverse actors together is their commitment to modernize Islamic institutions, traditions, and practices.

In some instances the Islamic renewal movement also includes governments. In Malaysia, for example, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi uses his country’s broad and entrenched tradition of democratic Islam as a model to call for religious moderation throughout the Muslim world. In Morocco, the monarchy applied progressive interpretations of specific clauses in Islamic law to reform the family code and grant women equal civil rights in 2004. In a parallel effort, the government opened one of Morocco’s most prestigious seminaries to women, and some fifty women imams and preachers (*murshidat*) graduated in 2006; sixty more enrolled that year. This is a first in Islamic history, and a major breakthrough for a conservative society in which women have been excluded from the public sphere. Thanks to the education ministry’s revision of school curricula and textbooks, Moroccan children learn about religious freedom and tolerance, universal principles of human rights, minority rights, and gender equality. The revisions draw on both international agreements and Islamic principles. To carry out these reforms, the monarchy carefully chose the language to explain the changes and involved institutions from civil society, religious scholars, political parties, the government, and the parliament.

The United States is well positioned to support this movement and engage “moderate” Islam. Contrary to common perceptions in the West, the word “moderate” accurately describes the vast majority of Muslims, who reject violence, yearn for justice and accountable governance, and value Muslim traditions of family, knowledge, and prosperity. An oft-cited saying of the Prophet Muhammad honors any Muslim who bequeaths “good offspring, useful knowledge, or honestly earned wealth.” Emphasizing these aspects of Islam will discredit the extremists’ message of hate, despair, and destruction. Moreover, these aspects of Islam have an enormous potential for religious moderation that the United States is better placed to understand and appreciate than secular Europe, communist China, nationalist Russia, or the region’s repressive governments. Among all liberal democracies, the United States shows the broadest social and political support for religious compassion, religious figures and institutions, religiously-based charities, and even virtuous politics. Yet, many U.S. policymakers and strategists have overlooked Islam’s ethical appeal.²

The United States can support reforms in the Muslim world by refocusing its already existing programs under the rubric of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), its democratization projects, and its public diplomacy initiatives to pay more attention to ongoing ideological conflicts. These reforms are more likely than forced regime change, democratic elections, or skilled marketing of U.S. foreign policies to build open and peaceful Muslim societies and good U.S.-Muslim relations.

This report discusses the inadequacy of current U.S. policies toward the Muslim world in light of the internal ideological conflicts within Islam that are currently under way. We then develop the idea of “Islamic renewal.” The third section outlines specific recommendations for the U.S. government and other international actors.

A definitional note: “Islamist” political parties and movements seek to legitimate or overturn a political order on the basis of their interpretation of Islamic principles. “Extremist” groups eschew nonviolence in the name of the principles of the pious ancestors (*al-salaf al-salih*) and literal interpretation of the Koran. “Moderate” parties and movements accept and apply human reason to Islamic principles, law or precedents. They see no incompatibility between participation in the modern political process and Islamic values. Within both camps, theological variations and differing degrees of “extremism” and “moderation” are the products of local power relations.

Current U.S. Policies

Since 11 September 2001, there has been no lack of ideas and initiatives present in the United States to confront challenges from the Muslim world. Three efforts have received special attention from the Bush Administration and in public discourse: the “Global War on Terrorism” (GWOT), the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) to promote democratic reform, and the public diplomacy campaign to improve America’s image in the Muslim world.

² Roxanne Euben, *The Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Western Rationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

The components and declared objectives of these three efforts often conflict with one another. For example, the global war on terrorism requires the cooperation of security services that form the backbone of authoritarian regimes in Muslim countries. Such cooperation undermines both democratic ambitions within those nations and the effort to change negative attitudes about the United States in the Muslim world. This effort conflicts with one of MEPI's major objectives: to push for political reforms and free elections. But free elections in some states are likely to bring Islamic fundamentalists to power. Such an outcome seems to conflict with the anti-terrorism strategy that conflates various Islamist groups into a monolithic threat, regardless of their political, ideological, or strategic motivations. Furthermore, one of the major tasks of public diplomacy is to discredit the extremists' message by promoting credible moderate voices. Yet these come from moderate Islamist parties or organizations that are often under the scrutiny of local governments, and may never be granted a U.S. visa or entry into the United States.

The U.S. strategy toward the Muslim world also reflects a misunderstanding of its political cultures. The war on terrorism is a primary example. Because the ideological and political differences among Islamic groups are still misunderstood or too subtle to warrant attention, the tendency has been to use terms such as *jihadists*, *Salafists*, or *extremists*, regardless of context. Yet, empirical evidence from various countries points to a discernable pattern of ideological radicalization and a parallel shift to violence every time Islamist parties with a reformist agenda are weakened. Being aware of these patterns and shifts is important to understanding ideological extremism and combating terrorism.

For example, the first violent radical group in the twentieth-century Muslim world emerged as the result of a split among Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (or *Ikhwan*) in the 1970s. Members of *Al-Takfir wal-Hijra* (Excommunication and Exodus) broke with the Muslim Brotherhood after successive Egyptian governments rejected its reformist agenda and killed its leaders or sent them to jail. In addition to fighting the regime, the group's objective was to "cleanse" Egyptian society through *takfir*, or excommunication, a violent doctrine that targets alleged Muslim apostates. This major ideological break with traditional Islamist reformist movements paved the way for a potent alliance with the Salafists and their global agenda. The Egyptians Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al Qaeda's second-in-command, and Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind cleric convicted of planning the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, emerged from this ideological rupture. They led *al-Jihad al-Islami* and *Jama'at al-Jihad*, which also split from the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1970s.

The pattern of political exclusion, ideological radicalization, and the ensuing emergence of links between groups fighting local "infidels" and Salafists fighting external "infidels" can be seen in other situations. The banning of the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria after it won local and national elections in 1990 and 1991 led to the emergence of two violent organizations, the Armed Islamic Groups and the Salafist Group for Call and Combat. Both embraced a *takfiri* ideology that was behind many of the killings of civilians during the 1990s. At least one of these groups has been linked to international terrorist networks.

The same split explains the emergence of and links between two Moroccan groups, the Straight Path and the Salafist Group for Call and Combat, to global terrorism; their members were convicted in the Madrid and Casablanca terrorist attacks. When the reformist movement *al-Adl wal-Ihssan* and the Justice and Development Party made no headway during the monarchy's guided political opening of the 1990s, various *takfiri* groups emerged in Fez, Sale, Tangiers, and Casablanca. In 2002, for example, extremists assassinated more than 166 civilians during illegally organized "apostasy trials" in Morocco. These examples show that, in order to understand religious extremism in the Muslim world, it is critical to take ideological shifts and conflicts into account. However, because the global war on terrorism is not sharply focused, analysts could reinforce the dominance of the Salafi jihadist camp by lumping together diverse groups under the same rubric.

Democracy promotion policies in the region also reflect a lack of understanding. The equation of democratic reforms with free parliamentary elections assumes the intrinsic legitimacy of formal political institutions as an arena in which national actors can negotiate interests and resolve conflicts facing the community. Yet every survey conducted in Muslim societies, including Arab, non-Arab, African, and Asian countries, suggests that they harbor deep and widespread suspicion of formal political authority.³ This suspicion is unlikely to disappear with the democratization of the political process. Throughout Islamic history, political leaders have not enjoyed the esteem granted to religious scholars, tribal chiefs, or mystics who kept a distance from state power.

One lesson to be drawn from Iraq, for example, is that the formal political process, which privileges majority rule over traditional consensus, might not be the best mechanism for negotiating divisive substantive issues. Religious councils, tribal chiefs, charismatic leaders, local assemblies, and similar informal bodies can be more effective in reinforcing political legitimacy through popular consultation, negotiation, and concessions.

Finally, efforts to improve the United States' image in the Muslim world must go beyond influencing Muslim public opinion through better communication. We cannot assume that Muslims would change their attitudes if the United States simply changed the packaging of its policies and values.

There is a need for a new vision and a grand strategy to serve the mutual interests of the United States and the Muslim world. At the core of that vision and strategy should be the idea of *tajdid*, or renewal of Islam by modernist Muslim scholars and thinkers for the benefit of Muslim societies. This is not a zero-sum game; the United States *can* help itself by helping the Muslim world.

³ Ronald Inglehart, "The World Views of Islamic Publics in Global Perspective," *World Values Survey Research Papers* 06-02 (Irvine, CA: Center for the Study of Democracy, 20 May 2006).

What is *Tajdid*, or Islamic Renewal?

The term *Islamic renewal* describes the systematic reconsideration and rationalization of Islamic doctrines, institutions, beliefs, and practices. Many individuals and institutions are involved in the movement. Although not formally connected, their efforts coalesce around research centers, individual scholars, modernist religious figures, moderate religious organizations, political parties, and activist Web sites scattered throughout the Muslim world and the Muslim diaspora in the West. While geographically diffuse and lacking a coherent agenda, these efforts have two overarching purposes. The first is to reclaim the Islamic heritage from traditional clerics (associated with autocratic states), extremist Islamist groups (bent on waging holy war against the West and their own “adulterated” societies), and fundamentalist movements (whose goal is to apply strict *sharia* law once they gain power through democratic elections or through informal *da'wa*—a religious call to fellow Muslims to abide by Islamic principles). The major fault lines between modernist Muslim reformers and radical Islamists include the sources of law in the country, the role of religion in public life, gender equality, the foundations of government, the balance between individual and collective rights, and relations with other religions. The reformists’ second goal is to adapt Islamic principles, values, and institutions to the modern world while recognizing the importance of Islam as a cultural frame of reference.

In the Western context, the idea of “Islamic renewal” recalls the Christian Reformation. This frequently used analogy requires a word of caution, however. First, Islam does not have a church to be reformed and separated from the state, and it does not have a single religious leader, such as the pope, from whom religious scholars can dissent. Furthermore, the history of the Christian Reformation is not linear and coherent, as is conventionally assumed. Any analogy would have to specify the geographical location, historical context, and sociological strand of various Christian Reformations at different times and places. Finally, while the Christian Reformation analogy might render intelligible what the Muslim world is going through, it could create false political expectations and posit an erroneous evolutionary model.⁴

At the same time, the idea of “Islamic renewal” may evoke in Western popular understanding the specter of Islamic fundamentalism wrapped in legal garb. So we must distinguish the renewal movement from both the conservative Islamist parties that seek to establish *sharia* through democratic elections and the more moderate Islamist parties that advocate a modern social and political agenda. Conservative Islamist parties use the modern political process as a peaceful means to establish and legitimate a traditionalist Islamic state, economy, and society. Although moderate Islamic parties are forward-looking and do not advocate strict application of *sharia*, their main objective is still to achieve political power. That objective may involve building alliances with religious conservatives and curtailing basic democratic rights if necessary. Hence,

⁴ The example of Reform Judaism is particularly relevant to Muslim diasporas in Europe and America. See, for example, Dana Evan Kaplan, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to American Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

without a broad modernist worldview, even moderates may fall back on conservative, populist ideologies to secure votes during severe domestic or external crises (such as Bangladesh in 1991, Indonesia in 2004, Malaysia in 1999, Pakistan in 1990 and 1993, and Turkey in 1995 and 1999).

As a strategy, “Islamic renewal” can bring coherence to a significant but scattered cluster of Muslim reformist ideas and tie them to a social and political agenda that includes reform of family codes to give women equal rights; revisions of textbooks to teach human rights and religious pluralism; and modernization of Islamic charities, schools, and consultative traditions. The movement is already a fact on the ground. Various influential Arab and Muslim reformists, including secular human rights and women’s groups, consider modernist Islamic values as a means to advocate broad-based social and political change.⁵ This is a promising development that also holds great potential for U.S. engagement in the region.

A Culturally Viable Movement

Reformers in the Muslim world always have drawn on Islamic traditions. The concepts of renewal (*tajdid*), reform (*islah*), and renaissance (*nahda*) are firmly rooted in Islamic history. Efforts to renew and reform Islam thus continue a long tradition. The modernizing movement can draw on many historical precedents.

In the early period of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad saw himself primarily as a religious reformer with an egalitarian social agenda. Muhammad’s attention to the need for reform and renewal is recorded in a prophetic saying (*hadith*) that explicitly calls upon Muslims to renew their faith at the beginning of each century.

During the medieval period, the expansion of Islam from seventh-century Arabia to twelfth-century Asia, Europe, and Africa brought Muslims into contact with diverse peoples and cultures. The Islamic expansions unleashed a profound, and in many ways continuing, debate about the capacity of Islam to adapt to changing needs, cultures, and societies. An important legacy of this process is *ijtihad*, or reinterpretation of the Koran and the Sunna (the two main canons of Islam). The existence of four Sunni schools of jurisprudence—*Hanafī*, *Hanbali*, *Maliki* and *Shafi’i*, alongside the *Shi’i Jafari* school and various mystical orders—attests to the fluidity of Islam and its historic adaptability to worldly considerations and diverse spiritual needs.

In the modern period, Muslims have had to revise or bypass Islamic law to adapt their states and societies to changing realities. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of modern nation-states following European colonization forced Muslim religious scholars and jurists to rethink the classical Islamic theory of international relations (*siyar*) and adapt it to secular international law.⁶ Although many states in the Muslim world still considered themselves part of the *umma* (Muslim community) and

⁵ See Mona Yacoubian, *Promoting Middle East Democracy II: Arab Initiatives*, USIP Special Report (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, May 2005).

⁶ See, for example, Abd al-Hamid Abu Sulayman, *The Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Islamic Methodology and Thought* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1987).

formed various Islamic intergovernmental organizations, they fully embraced the notion of national sovereignty and interacted with one another on the basis of international law and norms, even when these contradicted international Islamic legal agreements.⁷

Another significant precedent is the adaptation of Muslim legal traditions to modern public law. With the exception of Saudi Arabia, most Muslim states borrow from modern European penal codes. The aspect of Islamic law that has resisted change is the body of laws regulating personal issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and custody of children. But even here, significant departures from *sharia* have taken place in countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, and Indonesia.⁸

A third area where Islamic law and institutions have adapted to international standards is human rights. Numerous studies have shown that lack of tangible progress in this area has more to do with politics than theology.⁹ In the end, for the Islamic renewal project to succeed, Muslim modernist thinkers from different countries need to share their experiences and strategies. Equally important is “cross-topical” fertilization, through which methods to accommodate secular international law and national sovereignty can be applied to women’s rights, freedom of belief, and human rights.

A Strong Philosophical Legacy

The Islamic renewal movement can also draw on a progressive Muslim political philosophy. Many important social concepts in Islam—such as *maslaha ‘amma* (common good), *masali’h al-’ibad* (the welfare of the people), *’adl* (social justice), *rahma* (compassion in social interactions), *ahl al-dhima* (religious minority rights), and *fard ‘ayn* (human beings’ capacity to act responsibly)—are clearly applicable to modern society. Notions of *ijma’* (consensus), *shura* (consultation), *’aqd* (contract), *haqq* (right), *naskh* (change or abrogation of existing laws or Koranic injunctions), *talfiq* (invention), *kiyas* (reasoning by analogy beyond scriptural evidence), and *ijtihad* provide a formidable politico-conceptual apparatus that can be used to revise anachronistic rulings and legitimize modern, accountable governance. Last, religiously prescribed values such as the protection of human life, personal property, moral and intellectual integrity, and the natural environment provide ample means for molding a modern ethical outlook.

Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy

The importance of supporting “Islamic renewal” to counter religious extremism and enhance relations between the Muslim world and the West cannot be overstated. The fundamental question is whether the U.S. government can play a role without compromising the nascent renewal movement. Skeptics point to two major problems. First,

⁷ Abdeslam Maghraoui, “Ambiguities of Sovereignty: Morocco, The Hague and the Western Sahara Dispute,” *Mediterranean Politics* 8:1 (Spring 2003): 113–26.

⁸ Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl, *Muslim Women and the Politics of Participation: Implementing the Beijing Platform* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

⁹ Abdullahi An-Naim, *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

faith-based initiatives are unlikely to garner significant American political support because they raise thorny constitutional issues. Second, and far more challenging, is the fact that the U.S. government is not trusted in the region. Any overt U.S. role could undermine the modernists' agenda and position. These are valid concerns.

However, the United States is already implicitly involved in reform movements with religious connotations. USAID and State Department programs that aim to revise textbooks, upgrade primary and secondary education, empower women, engage with moderate Islamists, modernize legal systems, or encourage interfaith dialogue already involve normative issues, and implicitly reflect a taking of sides in religious conflicts.

As for the issue of U.S. standing in the region, Islamic renewal provides a great healing opportunity, perhaps the only realistic one. Calling on Muslims to reform their societies on the basis of their own humanistic traditions and cultural heritage is surely less controversial for the United States than supporting regime change, cooperating with local security agencies, or pushing for reforms in the name of an abstract, secular notion of Western democracy.

Current efforts by various government programs involving implicit religious reforms are insufficient and do not have a major impact because they lack clarity of purpose and coordination. They do not adequately involve independent U.S. institutions, international agencies, and transnational civil society. They lack an explicit commitment and a concerted effort to engage with broad Muslim constituencies through trusted local charities, civic groups, and moderate religious movements. The involvement of the Islamic renewal movement would reinforce U.S. engagement, international backing, and Muslim support for meaningful, forward-looking reforms in the Muslim world. There is no real chance for substantive, progressive, and sustainable reform in the Muslim world outside the framework of Islam.

Democratic reforms in the Muslim world during the coming decade are likely to bring to power Islamist political parties. "Islamic politics" has emerged as the most likely choice among a constituency of hundreds of millions of people stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to Southeast Asia. Religious values and beliefs continue to inform social interactions at the community level; influential social groups throughout the Muslim world, including social, political, and economic elites, adhere to such a vision; and the formal political process has been shifting to accommodate "Islamic politics." Religion in politics is a reality in the Muslim world.

But what brand of "Islamic politics" will triumph? The radical, extremist version certainly has gained ground during the past decade, but a modernist, humanistic form of Islam should not be dismissed. U.S. policies could help tip the balance.

Before us is a historic opportunity for positive change in the Muslim world and for constructive American engagement. The most realistic and sustainable strategy for the United States today is to support a broad-based Islamic renewal movement by modernist Muslim thinkers for the explicit benefit of Muslim societies. Only a modern, reformed Islam can provide sufficient normative appeal to mobilize broad Muslim constituencies against religious extremism, for modern accountable governance, and for better understanding with the West. The development of such movements in the Muslim world is the terrorists' biggest fear and vulnerability. A renewal movement that ad-

dresses the Muslim world's major problems—using familiar language, historical references, and religious values, and providing a hopeful alternative to Al Qaeda's message of violence and self-destruction—will discredit not only Osama bin Laden and his associates but the Salafi jihadist ideology as a whole.

The United States' most obvious allies in this effort are independent, moderate Muslim thinkers, scholars, and community leaders who may question the moral superiority of "secular reason" but are willing to confront violence, oppression, and intolerance in the name of Islam. Moderate Islamist parties throughout the Muslim world; charitable groups with a social agenda in Morocco, Egypt, or Indonesia; international Islamic feminist networks; religious literary circles in Turkey; or prominent Islamic universities (such as Malaysia's) are all potential partners. The other religious actors are either ideologically opposed to a modernist project or do not have the political will to carry it out. The Salafists, who seek a society patterned exclusively on the Koran and Sunna, radically oppose modernity—which for them includes Islam's ninth-century, classical golden age. Salafists include violent groups like Al Qaeda and its affiliates as well as nonviolent groups associated with schools, sects, and doctrines that reject *ijtihad* and call for a return to an unmediated, original Islam.

Proponents of traditional Islam, including official religious scholars, state-run religious institutions, and chief muftis of prominent religious universities (such as Al-Azhar, in Cairo) are generally not hostile to the West. But they often are too closed-minded or dependent on authoritarian governments to provide a credible alternative to the Salafi onslaught. And radical Islamist parties—who compete for votes with the moderate Islamists—can be tempted by ideological extremism if they participate in the political process. Despite growing efforts and expanding networks, the prospects for an Islamic renewal across countries and regions remain slim unless these scattered efforts and networks coalesce in a coherent movement that can articulate a common modernist vision and propose concrete reforms to achieve it.

Conclusion

Current U.S. efforts to fight terrorism, promote democratic change, and improve the United States' image in the Muslim world are insufficient because they do not pay attention to the ongoing religious debate in the Muslim world. The United States could address these challenges by using the enormous, yet neglected, normative capital of Islamic reformist traditions in partnership with viable and credible Muslim partners. Obviously, the mechanisms, specific policies, and programmatic priorities of these concepts must be developed, refined, and synchronized to maximize impact and ensure cumulative success.

Policymakers should take into consideration differences among Muslim states and societies, as well as varying degrees of religious sensitivity. For example, it would be ill-advised to make Saudi Arabia the test case of religious reforms in the Muslim world, or to assert the human origin of the Koran as the starting point of the Islamic renewal project. Nonetheless, the principles of the reforms outlined in this essay are realistic and grounded in historical precedents. U.S. policymakers are beginning to see

the importance of engaging not just states and opposition groups, but Islam itself. Indeed, as the ideological fault lines become more apparent, several U.S. government agencies already are implicitly taking sides by supporting “moderate” Islamic leaders, groups, or parties. In this situation, U.S. detachment is not a realistic option.

Recommendations

First, the United States should support the establishment of a “Muslim World Foundation” to foster the development of peaceful, prosperous, and open Muslim societies and polities. Modeled after the Asia Foundation and funded by an Act of Congress, such a body would focus on the major crosscutting challenges, including religious reforms, facing the Muslim world. But a Muslim World Foundation need not be an exclusively U.S.-based body. The U.S. could appeal to a centuries-old Islamic endowment tradition called *wakf*—used by leaders, states, and wealthy individuals—to provide for charities, schools, and universities. The Muslim World Foundation would draw on local and international experts, donors, and partners. And it would collaborate with governmental and nongovernmental associates across the Muslim world to pursue its agenda. As a non-profit and independent organization, the Muslim World Foundation would retain its intellectual credibility and ability to act as a convener and peacemaker, regardless of international tensions or U.S. policies.

Second, the United States should provide special grants to U.S. universities to promote Muslim modernist writings and ideas and translate them into concrete policies. Muslim modernist thinkers are scattered throughout the world, and when they meet—on rare occasions—their debates and conference proceedings are not translated into practical reform policies. It is essential to establish regional forums where Muslim modernist thinkers meet regularly to sort out political, philosophical, and ideological differences and identify common denominators and goals. It is not sufficient to mobilize modernists to express themselves. It is also important to identify specific reform policies to be addressed to people and governments in the Muslim world, as well as to the international community—including Western powers, the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the International Court of Justice, and the World Bank.

The Arab Human Development Reports provide a very useful model. A similar series, exposing in stark terms the decay of Islamic cultures and civilizations and written by respected, diverse, and sympathetic Muslim scholars, would get the Muslim world’s attention.

Third, the United States should engage Islamist parties on normative grounds. Throughout the region, Islamist parties have emerged as major actors and likely winners when allowed to compete without constraint. Some of these parties run on conservative agendas and promise to apply strict forms of *sharia*; others are more liberal and advocate a modern social agenda. Yet most are pragmatic and willing to compromise on what amount of Islamic law should be applied. This raises the issue of how to integrate Islamists into the democratic process without compromising the spirit of democracy or the rules and procedures that sustain it.

In other words, the rationale of organizing free elections to promote democracy is questionable if the likely winners might subvert democratic norms and procedures. Yet, too many procedural constraints and pre-negotiated arrangements could de-legitimize the democratic process. When incentives are offered to moderate Islamists, the conservative rank-and-file and constituencies may rebel. Hence, institutional constraints to limit the power of Islamists, or incentives that look like cooptation measures, may actually backfire.

Instead of coercion and cooptation, “normative engagement” is a more constructive strategy. That is, debate with Islamists must take place about substantive issues such as civil liberties, freedom of worship, individual autonomy, gender equality, the rights of minorities, political pluralism, limitations on the powers of the state, and similar issues. For example: How would verbal commitment to the full range of civil and political rights play out in the real world? If Islamist leaders qualify the relevance of “divine sovereignty” and emphasize the role of elected rulers, that does not guarantee they will respect modern democratic rights. Anti-democratic norms and restrictions can be imposed in the name of a conservative majority that believes ultimate sovereignty rests with God. Islamist leaders are not clear about whom they represent. Some Islamic principles may well be compatible with modern democratic norms, but the challenge rests in how Muslims choose to apply them. The possibility exists that different, even contradictory, interpretations of Islamic principles can arise and, in the absence of an institutionalized religious authority that is accepted by all, lead to the subversion of democratic norms.

Fourth, the United States should put more emphasis on substantive social, educational, and religious reforms. National elections are essential to democratic legislative and executive authority, but if these reforms of the political process are abstracted from substantive issues, the exercise will result in a superficial formal process that can be manipulated by semi-authoritarian rulers and radical Islamists. Concern with normative, substantive issues does not preclude other crucial institutional reforms. The development of a robust civil society, an independent judiciary, a transparent government, a depoliticized military, and accountable security forces is just as important for creating hospitable conditions for democratic representation. Moreover, combining limited elections with serious institutional reforms to enhance the state’s performance and accountability can easily be justified according to Islamic traditions. Equally important, however, is the need for the U.S. government to encourage religious reforms to modernize Islamic principles, teachings, institutions, practices, and jurisprudence. The cornerstone of these reforms is the effort to expand the conceptual boundaries and foundations of *sharia* beyond the Koran and Sunna, or what Muslims consider the fundamental scriptural basis of Islam. In other words, it is important to establish publicly that *ijtihad* has been a major source in the formulation of Islamic law. This point is important in justifying modern advances in women’s rights, civil rights, human rights, and the accommodation of cultural and religious differences on Islamic grounds.

Fifth, the United States should refocus and coordinate its public diplomacy, democracy promotion, and aid programs to reinforce Islamic religious reforms and renewal. Public diplomacy efforts should draw connections between American values and Is-

lam's humanist traditions. Muslims are proud of a golden-age heritage they associate with openness, tolerance, and scientific achievement. Islamic traditions are entirely compatible with American values such as tolerance and entrepreneurship. Emphasizing these aspects of Islam and similar American values will help discredit Islamic extremists.

Pro-democracy initiatives should include religious reform. If permissible, organizations such as the National Democratic Institute and the National Endowment for Democracy should expand their programs beyond elections, political parties, and parliaments. Nothing in their mandate would prevent them from supporting the modern training of religious scholars, judges, and imams; providing special scholarships to women studying religious topics; and reprinting and disseminating writings by modernist Muslim scholars. The United States should support local groups that are at the forefront of these reforms.

Finally, the United States should consider supporting religious charities in the Muslim world. Because many Muslim governments' social safety nets are weak or nonexistent, religious organizations provide many services to the needy, including medical care, childcare, and disaster relief. Concerns that these networks are linked to terrorism are often misplaced. Extremists with a global jihadist agenda do not open local "soup kitchens" to build electoral support. They pursue different strategies. USAID should work with Muslim social networks and give impetus to moderate Islam by funding small charities and training programs for youth and women.

Global Islamism—Understanding and Strategy

David Douglas Belt*

The Sources of Islamic Revolutionary Conduct

In his introduction to *Milestones Along the Way*, or *Milestones*, as it is best known, Egyptian schoolteacher-turned-philosopher Sayyid Qutb described the failure of non-Muslim, modern ideologies, and reminded the Muslim community, or *umma*, of Islam's superiority:

Mankind today is on the brink of a precipice, not because of the danger of complete annihilation which is hanging over its head—this being just a symptom and not the real disease—but because humanity is devoid of those vital values which are necessary not only for its healthy development but also for its real progress. Even the Western world realizes that Western civilization is unable to present any healthy values for the guidance of mankind. It knows that it does not possess anything which will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence. ...

It is essential for mankind to have new leadership!

The leadership of mankind by Western man is now on the decline, not because Western culture has become poor materially or because its economic and military power has become weak. The period of the Western system has come to an end primarily because it is deprived of those life-giving values which enabled it to be the leader of mankind. ... Islam is the only System which possesses these values and this way of life.

All nationalistic and chauvinistic ideologies which have appeared in modern times, and all the movements and theories derived from them, have also lost their vitality. In short, all man-made individual or collective theories have proved to be failures.¹

Qutb then called Muslims to revolution to restore Islam as “the leader of mankind”:

At this crucial and bewildering juncture, the turn of Islam and the Muslim community has arrived—the turn of Islam. ... Thus the turn of the Muslim community has come to fulfill the task for mankind which God has enjoined upon it.

“You are the best community raised for the good of mankind. You enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in God.” (3:110) ...

It is the name of a group of people whose manners, ideas and concepts, rules and regulations, values and criteria, are all derived from the Islamic source. The Muslim community with these characteristics vanished at the moment the laws of God be-

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¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, Introduction; full electronic text in English available at www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/milestones/hold/index_2.asp.

came suspended on earth. If Islam is again to play the role of the leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form.²

Drawing from the puritanical, traditionalist *Salafiyya* ideology of the Wahhabis, Deobandis, Tablighi, and especially that of Pakistani Mawlana Abul A'la Mawdudi and Egyptian Hassan al-Banna of his own Muslim Brotherhood, Qutb articulated a form of Salafi existentialism that made the case for taking the leap of faith and acting out the most extreme interpretation of the Salafi worldview in the political realm, on the global stage. This *Qutbism*, or “global Islamism,” as we shall also call it, is distinct in many ways from traditional Islam, and yet it is seductively appealing at all levels of the human psyche and to Muslims everywhere. This was Qutb’s “genius.”

The traditionalist, Salafi mind had always honored the sacred text, the Koran, and strictly imitated the life of its Messenger, Muhammad, especially when seeking God’s favor during trying times. “Islam is the solution,” was a common view, but how to implement the Islamic solution and how broadly to cast its revolution is what distinguishes the traditionalist from the extremist. Qutb’s ideology was extremist from the start. It began with this honor-restoring metanarrative:

1. *What went wrong?* Muslims, and especially Arabs, know all too well that something is wrong. Qutb, who traveled to America and lived there for two years in the 1950s, returned to Egypt only to be humiliated, seeing all around him what one American journalist saw: “An apathetic public, economic mismanagement and a wildly out-of-control birthrate have become the cancers of Cairo, sapping its strength and leaving its dazed inhabitants the victims of what is known in Egypt as the IBM syndrome—*inshallah* (if God is willing), *bokra* (tomorrow), and *malesh* (never mind). It doesn’t matter what gets done or how it’s done. If not today, then tomorrow. God decides anyway, so why worry?”³ Qutb’s explanation for this humiliation is seductive:

- The *umma*, or community of Muslims, abandoned its divinely ordained rise and began its great decline when it abandoned its stewardship of Islam as the only true and complete way of life, suspended Islamic law, or *sharia*, and corrupted itself with Western ways.
- The *umma* thus recreated the time of ignorance and barbarism, or *jahiliyya*, that existed in pre-Islamic Arabia. This “new jahiliyya,” as he called it, incurred God’s judgment on the so-called “Muslims,” who are in reality heretics and apostates.

2. *Islam is the solution!* To restore God’s blessing on the *umma* and reestablish Islam in its most honored place as the leader of mankind, Muslims must restore Islam “to its original form;” they must revolt against this “new” *jahiliyya*, following the pattern Muhammad did against the “old” *jahiliyya*:

² Ibid.

³ David Lamb, *The Arabs: Journeys Beyond the Mirage* (New York: Random House, 1987), excerpt published in www.aliciapatterson.org/APF1001/Lamb/Lamb.rtf.

- Unite the *umma* spiritually, ideologically, culturally, socially, and politically through the call to Islam as it was preached in “its original form,” as Muhammad and his companions—the *salaf*, or “good ancestors”—would have known and preached it, without any manmade accretions and subsequent “explanations” and “solutions.” This mandates a revival of the dormant *Salafiyya* reform movements that began earlier in Egypt and Arabia.
- Restore the totalitarian system of Islamic law, or *sharia*, under the leadership of a single divinely guided religious authority, or caliph.
- Through violent struggle, or jihad, destroy the enemies of Islam that created and sustain the “new *jahiliyya*.”⁴ These include both the internal, near enemy (apostate Muslims, apostate regimes, and their new *jahiliyya* systems of thought), and the external, far enemy (infidel, non-Muslim civilizations and the secular system of government they have imposed on Muslims).

Looking through Qutb’s lens, today Islam’s honor has reached its nadir, and its humiliation is at its zenith. Driven by the pressures of relative and absolute deprivation, and a sense of utter cultural humiliation, Muslims today are increasingly prone to see the world through the Salafi-jihad-*sharia*-caliphate revolutionary lens that Qutb so clearly focused on his Islamic utopia. Today’s global civilization—which in many ways was born only in 1989, and is embodied and advanced by radically secular Europe and the radically secular entertainment, media, and materialistic business culture of America—has taken the new *jahiliyya* to even newer lows, further impoverishing Muslims and corrupting Muslim youth, and further advancing the very infidel societies that usurp Islam’s rightful place at the head of the global order.

Global Islamism’s revolutionaries today embrace Qutb’s extreme *Salafiyya-jihadiyya*, meticulously following every word and deed of Muhammad in his successful post-*hijra*, “Medina phase”—the imperialist, offensive jihad phase of Islam. For example, Muhammad, in his farewell address in March 632, declared, “I was ordered to fight all men until they say, ‘There is no God but Allah.’” Shiite revolutionary Ayatollah Khomeini paraphrased these famous words: “We will export our revolution throughout the world ... until the calls ‘there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah’ are echoed all over the world.” And Sunni revolutionary Osama bin Laden mimicked: “I was ordered to fight the people until they say there is no god but Allah and his prophet Muhammad.”⁵

⁴ Chapter 4 of Qutb’s *Milestones*, “Jihad in the Cause of God,” is violent Islamism’s most persuasive “cumulative case” argument that *jihad* in Islam was meant to mean only one thing: offensive violent fighting or combat against non-Muslims to make Islam supreme over all the earth. Qutb makes the case that jihad was never intended to be understood as defensive or as an internal struggle. Those false, “narrow meanings” of *jihad*, he says, are ascribed to the term “by those who are under the pressure of circumstances and are defeated by the wily attacks of the orientalist, who distort the concept of Islamic Jihad.”

⁵ Cited in Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), Introduction.

And under this broad *Salafiyya-jihadiyya* rubric, the violent wing of global Islamism has advanced other innovations. This order “to fight all men,” reasoned Egyptian Mohammed Abdussalam Faraj in 1980, is the “neglected obligation,” and neglecting this order is the main reason for Allah’s judgment upon the whole nation of Islam, producing its almost universal decline. In his tract *The Neglected Duty*, Faraj—also a member of the Muslim Brotherhood—restated Qutb’s creed of a world in new *jahiliyya*, where Muslims are forced to submit to earthly idols, such as nationalism. “The idols of this world,” Faraj argues, “can only be made to disappear through the power of the sword.” He declares: “The infidels know that when Muslims realize what is truly expected of them in their religion, about fighting the infidels, it will mean the end of their amoral rule. Consequently they fight against Fundamentalism in every sphere and struggle to dislodge Jihad from its proper role in Islam.”⁶

But in the wake of the persecution in the early 1980s following the Muslim Brotherhood’s role in assassinating Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, the Islamist’s ideal to “fight all men” “through the power of the sword” fell to earth. They realized the utter unfeasibility and incoherence of trying to do so until the *umma* was stronger and more unified. Accordingly, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood moved to an interim “near-violent” strategic posture. The Brotherhood’s symbol is the book over crossed swords, indicating Koran-directed jihad. And today, the movement under Qutb’s inspiration is alive and advancing its interim, near-violent strategy of deception, or *taqiyya*, waiting for a time when Muslims are strong enough to use both near-violent and violent means, along the continuum of *da’wa* (preaching, warning) and jihad (combat). The top-secret version of this far more deceptive near-violent strategy of world conquest, called “The Project,” was drafted in a fourteen-page leaflet dated December 1982.⁷

The Brotherhood’s website today reveals their continued commitment to world conquest:

Soon after the biggest calamity happened in 1924 with the collapse of the “Khilafa,” and the declaration of war against all shapes of Islam in most of the Muslim countries, the Islamic “revival” entered into the movement phase in the middle east by establishing “Al-Ikhwan Al-Moslemoon” (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt, 1928. Soon after that date, it began to have several branches outside Egypt. Al-Ikhwan, since that date, began to spread the principal Islamic idea: That Islam is “Creed and state, book and sword, and a way of life.” These principles were uncommon at that time even among many Muslim “scholars” who believed that Islam is restricted within the walls of the mosque. The Ikhwan, after a few years, were banned and tor-

⁶ Muhammad ‘Abdus Salam Faraj, *The Neglected Duty* (1980), 44. The first English edition of this book is currently printed and sold commercially by Maktabah al Ansaar in England. It can be ordered at www.maktabah.net/books/default.asp?Subcategory=&Start=10&Offset=10&alpha=all.

⁷ Based on the French text of “The Project” published in Sylvain Besson, *La conquête de l’Occident: Le projet secret des Islamistes* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2005), 193–205, “The Project” was translated into English by Scott Burgess and was first published in serial form by *The Daily Ablution* in December 2005; available at http://dailyablution.blogs.com/the_daily_ablution/2005/11/the_project_par_1.html.

tured in most of the Muslim countries. However, the “mother movement” kept growing and working.

Under this interim, near-violent framework, establishing the Islamic system that Qutb called for entails “preparing (most of) the society for accepting the Islamic laws,” which means plans for “spreading the Islamic culture, the possible media means, mosques, and *da’wa* (missionary) work in public organizations such as syndicates, parliaments, student unions.”⁸

And today the Brotherhood continues “growing and working.” Patiently, ghetto by ghetto, courtroom by courtroom, school by school, youth group by youth group, near-violent Islamists are advancing “the Project.” Well-funded and inspired by European taxes and a *zakat* (alms) coffer swollen by petro-dollars, they are imperceptibly transforming the face of Islam, creating a world of Qutb-reading youth that will not be able to live peaceably with anyone on earth... *especially other Muslims*.

In the late 1980s, in the heady days of impending victory in Afghanistan over the superpower Soviet Union, the global jihadist wing of Islamism was reborn, solidifying the violent wing’s shift in emphasis from the near enemy to the far enemy, and from defensive jihad to offensive jihad. The leading ideologue of this shift was the Palestinian al-Azharite sheikh Abdallah Azzam. Azzam, who taught Osama bin Laden while a professor of Islamic jurisprudence in Saudi Arabia, was also an earlier member of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt. In 1987, Sheikh Azzam wrote *Join the Caravan*, in which he advanced Qutb’s perspective that the *umma* was extinct and that offensive jihad is the lifeblood of Islam. To make his case, Azzam drew upon Islamic jurisprudence and historic analogy dating back 1300 years.⁹ A year later, in 1988, Azzam published in his *al-Jihad* monthly periodical an article entitled “Al-Qa’idah al-Sulbah,” or “The Solid Base,” and established Al Qaeda as the vanguard for this offensive jihad movement.¹⁰

The offensive jihad movement, in which Al Qaeda was to serve as the leading edge, received another boost after the first Gulf War in the early 1990s from the Saudi opposition movement, which sought to further Islamize Saudi society in response to a perceived Western “cultural attack” on the Muslim world.¹¹ After the mysterious death of Azzam, the offensive, global jihad movement kept rising through 1996 and 1998 declarations of war against the far enemy by Al Qaeda’s new leader, a Saudi-born hero of the war in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden.

Qutb’s revolution by offensive jihad against Western civilization again fell to earth as the world responded to Al Qaeda’s plane operation on 11 September 2001, or “9/11,” as it has become known. The U.S. quickly moved and defeated Al Qaeda’s Af-

⁸ Muslim Brotherhood Movement Homepage, at www.ummah.net/ikhwan/ (accessed 19 January 2007).

⁹ Abdallah Azzam, *Join the Caravan* (1987); available in English at www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_caravan_3_part1.htm.

¹⁰ Abdallah Azzam, “Al-Qa’idah al-Sulbah,” *al-Jihad*, No. 41 (April 1988): 46.

¹¹ Uriya Shavit, “Al-Qaeda’s Saudi Origins; Islamist Ideology,” *Middle East Quarterly* 13:4 (Fall 2006); available at www.meforum.org/article/999.

ghani hosts, the Taliban, and then, with unprecedented international cooperation, destroyed Al Qaeda's hierarchichy and its support streams, and killed or captured nearly all of its leadership. Offensive jihad fell further from grace when the reborn Muslim Brotherhood—which up until 9/11 had been silently advancing their deceptive near-violent strategy without opposition—realized that their ignorant and self-serving cousins in Al Qaeda woke the slumbering giant; “the Project,” as they coded it, was only a generation away from lawfully conquering the lands of their former imperial masters, whose citizens were weakened by moral blindness and radical tolerance.¹²

With the old hierarchical, centrally-controlled Al Qaeda destroyed and, Qutb's acolyte Mustafa Setmariam Nasar advanced yet another new mutation. Under the pseudonym Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, Nasar's massive 1600-page *Call to Global Islamic Resistance* articulated a bold and innovative strategy of “leaderless jihad,” designed to elude the global reach of the no-longer-sleeping giant's growing “pursue” capabilities.¹³ Nasar and other global Islamist strategists believe that such a dispersed, cell-based, grass roots resistance movement, or *muqawama*, is the only strategy possible under current conditions. This resistance will economically weaken Western civilization to the point where it can no longer threaten the revolution's goals of creating an Islamic sharia state, and then topple other nearby states in the quest for an ideologically, politically, and geographically united *umma* that, unshackled, could then rise to its rightful place.

After 9/11, the violent wing of global Islamism was also watching its foot soldiers turn the *umma*'s hearts away, pushing them toward the near-violent wing. Even the violent Islamist ideologue Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi warned Iraqi insurgency leader Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi: “Beware of separating jihad from its concept that builds the nation and enhances its power. Do not focus on the means and forget about the end and do not separate from knowledgeable people or proponents of *da'wa*.” Al-Maqdisi repeatedly distinguished between the “mujahideen” and “the proponents of *da'wa*” as two humps on the same camel.¹⁴

Up until Nasar's “call to global Islamic resistance,” there were three active “resistances” in the Arab world: the Palestinian movement, under Hamas; the Lebanese resistance, under Hezbollah; and the Iraqi insurgency, under various Sunnis fighting under the banner of Al Qaeda. Nasar ingeniously created a fourth resistance by taking this concept of *muqawama* global implementing it at the grassroots level around the world. This grassroots concept of global resistance has proved so appealing that near-violent Muslims are joining the caravan. While a quick reading of “resistance” websites reveals that “resistance” and “jihad” are synonyms, a new fifth and global resistance is

¹² See Douglas Farah, “Splits Between Muslim Brotherhood and ‘Offensive Jihadists’ Brewing in Europe,” International Assessment and Strategy Center (16 May 2006); available at www.strategycenter.net/research/pubID.108/pub_detail.asp.

¹³ Abu Mu'sab al-Suri, *Call to a Global Islamic Resistance* (translated by official sources, July 2006).

¹⁴ Abu-Muhammad al-Maqdisi (July 2004), cited by Fu'ad Husayn, “Al-Zarqawi... The Second Generation of Al-Qa'ida,” *Al-Quds al-Arabi* (London) (20 May 2005), 17.

emerging—a global solidarity among the *umma* against everything Western, and especially against the United States.

The greater religious concept of the middle way, or *wasatiyya*—as well as common sense and conscience—have deterred the vast majority of young Muslims from embracing the violent wing of the revolution. But when its murderous means are severed from its utopian ends, the remaining “near-violent,” or “cultural jihad” part of resistance, gives the Qutbian revolution a new respectability—a middle way all its own, with a place for everyone, offering a morally superior means to struggle while retaining the legitimacy of and solidarity with the jihadis.

Thus, the popularity of this new fifth and global *muqawama* in all its forms—non-violent, near-violent, and violent—creates freedom of movement and respectability for the fourth resistance of the violent wing. Until 2006, the violent wing’s leading figurehead and existential actor, Osama bin Laden, enjoyed a higher favorability rating than any other historical figure save Muhammad in the Muslim world. Hezbollah’s Sheikh Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah now holds that position, until the fifth *muqawama* finds yet another great resistor-of-all-things-Western to succeed him.

But where bin Laden and Nasrallah are now Islam’s most noble *doers*, Qutb remains its most lauded *thinker*—few Muslim youth in connected neighborhoods fail to revere him; fewer still do not know of him. Under the advancement of the near-violent wing’s strategy, Qutb’s violent revolutionary works are everywhere, prominently displayed on the pages of average Islamic Websites, and many youth organizations and mosques, from Dallas to Melbourne, systematically introduce him to young, impressionable minds (see the website cited in fn. 1 for a typical example).

These global resistances—both violent and near-violent—and support for Qutb are strongest and most radical where freedom and democracy reign in Europe, proving that the more radical the secularism in a society, the more radical the reaction. Sheikh Musa Admani, an adviser on Muslim affairs to the U.K.’s higher education minister and a chaplain at London Metropolitan University, runs a charity that helps to rehabilitate young Muslims caught in the *muqawama*’s web. “We are dealing with people filled with hatred,” said Admani in November 2006. “It’s hatred for the white man and the West in particular, because they have read the works of Qutb and Maududi who set Muslims apart from everyone else.”¹⁵

If all this philosopher of Islamist terror did was set Muslims apart from other Muslims and non-Muslims, then there would be no ongoing revolution, and its current phase of near-violent and violent global resistance would evaporate like rain in a desert *wadi*. But Qutb and these other Islamist revolutionaries have laid the ideological foundation to advance the darkest possible face of Islam. Explaining the injustice in society, and divining the darkness in our nature, they created the ideological basis for resistance against everything that is not represented in the section of the Koran that deals with the period between Muhammad’s *hijra*, or flight from Mecca to Medina, and his

¹⁵ Abul Taher and Dipesh Gadhur, “Islamists Infiltrate Four Universities,” *The Sunday Times* (London) (12 November 2006); available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-2449930,00.html>.

death eleven years later. Their manifesto, predictably—legalistically, literally, and even ritualistically followed—is everything Muhammad said and did during that period of Arab barbarism in which he struggled to establish Islam.

Thus, global Islamism and its newfound respectability in resistance, or *muqawama*—a significant minority movement within Islam’s broad continuum—is an idea whose time has come. The revolution inspired by Qutb is finally in its first phase of both near-violent and violent resistance, working everywhere at once—by all lawful and all unlawful means—to weaken the West and its perceived quisling “apostate” regimes in the Muslim world, and to unify and incite the *umma* through *Salafiyya* and *sharia*. And Qutb’s followers are hopeful for the first time in decades; they have reached the first of the “milestones along the way” to their utopia.

The Struggle’s Nature

Successful strategy must ultimately address both these aforementioned ideological sources of Islamism’s revolutionary conduct, as well as aspects of the more subtle nature of the revolution and our struggle against it. Here are only three aspects of the struggle’s nature that should inform our strategy.

A Clash of Civilizations, and a Clash between Civilization and Barbarism

The struggle, in Samuel P. Huntington’s terms, is a “clash of civilizations”¹⁶ along the “great historic fault lines” of the more secular and liberal West and the more sacred and traditional Islam. The world order advanced by Western civilization is secular—a culture of freedom and change centered on human reason and scientific materialism. In Islamic civilization, these concepts run a distant second to the more fundamental duty of justice and imitating the Messenger, centered on stewardship of divine revelation. To simplify greatly, where the West creates and changes, Islam preserves and remains the same.

Were the two husband and wife, then they would be complements, each bringing to a more perfect union some strength the other lacked. But Western culture judges the *traditional* Islamic civilization—much of which is in stasis—as unfit for survival in the ever-changing world. Even Muslims view the world through the West’s more pragmatic, materialistic lens and ask, “What went wrong?” And *traditional* Islamic civilization—the civilization known by the vast bulk of the Muslim world—judges the West as ever-changing and adrift in a world that God intended to remain the same. And we in the West often view the world we have created through this more rooted lens and join them in heaping blame upon ourselves, joining with more traditional peoples in longing for the smaller village and a larger connectedness.

To exaggerate somewhat and risk oversimplifying again, where the West has its identity in materialism, rugged individualism, and freedom; the traditional Muslim

¹⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (Summer 1993), available at www.foreignaffairs.org/19930601faessay51188/samuel-p-huntington/the-clash-of-civilizations.html.

world, on the other hand, draws meaning from spiritual traditions, the tribe, or community, and justice, or honor. So, in as many ways as we are perfect complements, we are also polar opposites—the kind of opposites that *do not* attract, but repel, like oil and water. Sadly, Qutb’s judgment of the West—that it does not “possess anything which will satisfy its own conscience and justify its existence”—looks only at the differences and cannot see the more perfect union possible in a global civilization where Islam and the West bring to each other what each one so desperately needs. This is the struggle’s real nature—to at once contain Qutb’s metanarrative, and to create and appreciate this more perfect union in a global civilization.

And our struggle is also a clash between the spirit of this global civilization and the spirit of barbarism—the “old” *jahiliyya*. Qutb’s brand of global *Islamism* is Islam as the worst of human nature could possibly interpret it. Under the guise of self-righteous religious obedience, it transforms religion into a bullying chauvinism that tolerates no other view of the world. Through this lens, Islam cannot bring its better forms to marriage with the West to create the more perfect global union, for bullies do not join, they resist; they must stand alone in self-righteous resistance to everything other—whether good or evil—until only Self remains. This is pure idolatry—the barbarous essence of the “old” *jahiliyya*.

A Competition with Global Islamism’s Enduring Appeal

A second essential aspect of this struggle is that of competition against the enduring appeal of Qutb’s metanarrative. Part of this enduring appeal is guaranteed by uncontrollable megatrends. The explosive arrival of restive Muslim youth over the next generation will in all likelihood coincide with an implosive departure of wealth and honor from the Muslim world, caused by depletion of oil and gas resources and the worsening education and investment gap resulting from the Salafi and global resistance movements. This conjunction will widen the already broad appeal of parts of Qutb’s metanarrative to this large impoverished youth population, which will find itself without normal political and economic outlets for its aspirations, thus adding fuel to the extremism and fighting spirit already inherent in young demographic groups.

Beyond this conjunction of external megatrends, global *Islamism’s* enduring appeal is felt at every level of human behavior—spiritual, ideological, cultural, psychological, emotional, and even physical.

Spiritual. Jihad (physical struggle in the cause of God), *shahada* (martyrdom), and *sharia* (strict obedience to God’s requirements) are powerful spiritual symbols. In Islam, the existential “leap of faith,” as embodied in jihad and shahada, are the most powerful expressions of worship possible. They add the deepest sense of spirituality that renders the other five more mechanical pillars of the faith pallid in comparison. In Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, they represent the “self-actualization” level within Islam. Most Muslims—obeying their conscience and rational mind—spurn the violent “lesser jihad” and struggle in the non-violent “greater jihad” against the greater enemy within each of us. Yet self-sacrifice is the most powerful religious concept, and

as the last part of the Muslim Brotherhood's creed describes, many Muslims hope to die a martyr, or *shahid*.¹⁷ To many, the prospect of fighting in a legitimate jihad, or dying as a *shahid* in jihad provides their only real assurance of salvation in an increasingly promiscuous new world order where sin is all too near, especially among those recent converts in and immigrants to radically secular Europe.¹⁸

Strict, sacrificial obedience to God's often-difficult commandments is the other major existential leap in Islam. Ironically, the appeal of the fundamentalist view of *sharia* to the religious mind is *not* because it is pleasant—a duty whose burden is easy and yoke is light. Instead, its attractive spiritual power is in the harsh puritanical demands that it makes of us; it draws us because of its sheer *otherness*—its radical counterbalance to the materialistic and often radically secular surrounding culture. And in a culture that places a premium on stewardship of what God gave, *sharia* is a way both to honor God and to regain our honor before him. To the religious mind, the fact that God is obliged to act upon these existential leaps of faith is powerful; it is electrifying to know that the created can, through extreme obedience and self-sacrifice, cause the Creator to create again, and miraculously create new facts on the ground.

Ideological. As global Islamism's trinity of spiritual symbols—jihad, shahada and sharia—provide an intensely personal element of its enduring appeal, the logical system of ideas outlined by Qutb and the other ideologues provide a second, more social aspect. Islamism's ideology appears both *logically* and *legally* unassailable. That Qutb's ideology is legally unassailable is understood when viewing the strong and high walls framed by Islam's most secure pillars of legal reasoning and analysis, such as Malik's *Al-Muwatta*, al-Shafi'i's *Risala*, Ibn Saybani's *Siyar*, Ibn Kathir's *Tafsir*, Ibn-Khaldun's *Muqaddimah*, al-Misri's *'Umdat al-Salik*, and Yusuf Ali's *The Meaning of the Holy Quran*. History is replete with peaceful martyrs who attempted bold reform in Islam, only to fail because they ignored Islam's "fixed" doctrines of Islamic law established by these authorities, and disregarded the obstacles to meaningful reform presented by the doctrines on *ijma* (scholarly consensus), *naskh* (the concept of abrogation), and *bid'a* (innovation).¹⁹ From the legal standpoint, the Islamists operating in the post-hijra, Medina mentality stand on firm ground for their revolution and their means to achieve it (except for the mass murder of women and children). The only ideological

¹⁷ Muslim Brotherhood Movement Homepage, at www.ummah.net/ikhwan/ (accessed 19 January 2007).

¹⁸ For example, in his *Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, "Abu Mus'ab al Suri" wrote that, "In the Hadith that was told by Ahmed and Al-Turmuzi quoting Al-Miqdam Bin Mu'ad: God promised the martyr seven characteristics, with the first sum of his blood he will be forgiven, he will see his seat in paradise, he will be wearing the suit of faith, he will be wed to seventy two wives ... is saved from suffering in the tomb, he will be secured from the great fear ... and will be able to secure salvation for seventy of his relatives (The Right Collection 5058) (*Call*, 1466).

¹⁹ For example, see George Packer, "The Moderate Martyr: A Radically Peaceful Version of Islam," *The New Yorker* (11 September 2006); available at http://www.newyorker.com/printables/fact/060911fa_fact1.

strategies against global Islamism left to moderates are the philosophical, logical, and moral arguments—strategies of the *kufur*, or apostates.

That violent Islamism is legally unassailable is one of the reasons for the “silence” among Muslims. Those who in their *greater* jihad are bold enough to risk their lives and rescue their faith are bullied with the Islamist strategy of *takfir*—they are declared to be apostates and, in effect, are excommunicated. To silence Muslims who want to join globalized civilization, live as equals in Western states, embrace the governance principles of political secularism, democracy, and parliamentary law, or even just abide by international law, Islamists simply invoke this *aya* from the Koran: “They who do not rule by that which God has revealed are the unbelievers” (5:44).

Muslims know that Islamism departs from the middle way, or *wasatiyya*, but it is hard to get a mass counter-movement going when the Islamists have so effectively positioned themselves firmly within the legal redoubt as the only ones remaining who are still “judging by that which God has revealed.”

Cultural. Through persistent bullying over the course of decades, global Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood have taken near-complete ownership of most of the key cultural institutions within Islam—schools, seminaries, mosques, youth and political organizations, charities, and the media—and use them to advance beliefs and conspiracy theories that align with Qutb’s metanarrative, and all for the purpose of uniting the *umma* under the narrowest Salafi interpretation of Islam. Today, far too many young Muslims are taught that the West’s presence in their world and the Western-led new global civilization is not for interdependent partnership but rather designed to steal their God-given resources. Young Muslims are taught that the Western-led world order—with its high-tech materialism, integrated supply chains, financial networks and Internet—is designed from the ground up to serve non-Muslim societies that create and change, not Islamic ones that preserve and stay the same. Under this metanarrative, Israel is the West’s tool to further weaken the Muslim world through humiliation and intimidation. Advancing this broad “us vs. them” metanarrative for decades the near-violent Qutbites have created a culture that at the very least passively supports the revolution.

Psychological. Qutb’s metanarrative is a sump for every imaginable psychological weakness within human nature, guaranteeing its appeal to the weak and ignoble. Qutbism has all the psychological allure of delivering to the tribal mentality the elimination of humiliation from relative deprivation, the restoration of their lost territory and honor, and the satisfaction of their need for revenge. It appeals to our darker natural tendencies to stereotype, scapegoat, and dichotomize, projecting its soul onto the “other.” It speaks to former chosen glories and chosen traumas as if unjustly victimized for centuries. And it contains ample conspiracies to explain the parts that might bring dishonor home.

Emotional. The revolution’s appeal is greatest at the emotional level, and here the Islamists give the greatest attention. Keeping the *umma* on the brink of rage amplifies everything, and creates the fifth strand in Islamism’s appeal to both hearts and minds.

Islamists incite rage—or, in the words of one influential Saudi preacher, “general and peaceful Islamic anger”²⁰—at every opportunity, amplifying the otherwise innocuous actions of a single person among six billion to make them symbols of one civilization humiliating another. Islamists have always particularly relied upon the Palestinians, finding them perfect sacrificial lambs, keeping them in perpetual shambles as the best inciter of humiliation-based rage.

Physical. Finally, at the most basic level of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the global revolutionaries often work to meet the most basic physical and security needs of impoverished and disenfranchised Muslims. By controlling the institutions that hold the purse strings of global *zakat*, they can do what disenfranchised moderates cannot and what corrupt petro-authoritarian governments will not.

A revolution whose nature generates this kind of appeal in a world with convergences of rising youth population and falling standards of living promises to be enduring. And any strategy deployed against it must compete with its appeal on each of these levels.

A Struggle for Islam’s Future and Soul

A third aspect of the struggle’s nature too often overlooked in the West is Islamism’s dual threat to Muslims and Islam. Yet Islamism’s strategy, culture, and ideology have all but eliminated its viability as a threat to the West.

First, Islamism’s strategy fails. Hitler’s utopian dreams failed because, on the balance, he built defense (resistance) and the Allies built offense. Islamism’s revolutionary utopians will likewise fail because their resistance is also merely a defensive strategy. Its lack of an offensive, futuristic, world-changing component leaves it vulnerable to a rescripted Western leadership that resolves to lead—to provide better ideas and new facts on the ground; to create real hope for the swelling ranks of Islam’s youth.

Second, Islamism as a culture also fails. Patterning Qutb’s mind, theirs is a culture of hatred and death, not love and life. Even if they do succeed in creating an *Arab* caliphate—for no others would be allowed—Islamism’s utopian, resistance-minded, dichotomizing culture is fundamentally incapable of creating unity and then materially, technologically, or militarily dominating the West. Thinking they could marry both light and darkness, oil and water, this inconsistent, duplicitous dream palace of the Islamists has shattered the hopes of millions now living in the nightmare slums that even the most casual embrace of Qutb’s metanarrative produces. Like any disease, the symptoms will only get worse.

Third, Qutb’s Islamism fails as a religion; the notion that Islamism could morally topple traditional Islam and the other world’s major religions ignores the essence of truth in religion, which is in love and the middle way, or *wasatiyya*. Stripped of its eloquent literary garb and utopianism, Islamism is entirely about personal honor in a tribal culture, not about God’s truth in the grand universe. Qutb’s angry followers cannot understand a religion where one’s relationship with God is rational and personal and

²⁰ “Salman Al-Awda Calls for Islamic Anger against the Pope of the Vatican,” Tajdeed.org.uk, 16 September 2006, www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?threadid=45451.

characterized by love of the world's people; the only thing Islamist ideology understands is mechanical obedience through outward structure and totalitarian culture and hatred of everything and everyone other. This concept of religion is intuitively wrong, and antithetical to both human and divine natures.

So, aside from the resistance's disastrous impact on the souls and socio-economic quality of life of the next generation of Muslim youth, the real threat to Muslims is its impact on Islam itself. It will divide the *umma*, creating fitna, like no other force. And it will do this by subtly creating a rigid new orthodoxy for a significant segment of Islam's continuum, forcing the recognition of a new, virulent sect.

This evolution of this new orthodoxy occurs slowly but surely through a series of logical unopposed steps. The revolution's utopian ends, ironically, gravitate toward the barbarous means that existed in seventh-century Arabia, an ethos that Islam claims to have come to eradicate. This *jahiliyya* ethos—the worst part of human nature—forces the worst possible interpretation of the sacred texts. To build toward critical mass, Islamism incites young minds to hatred, which, in turn, becomes a kind of mutation of religious beliefs. Hatred colors its interpretations of sacred texts, changing those interpretations away from the *wasatiyya*, or middle way, and God's logical, loving, and good nature. Incapable of seeing God's true nature, those bent on revolution innovate creative doctrine, interpretations, and connections to make their case that a particular ambiguous text should be seen in its darkest possible light. That culture over time creates an evolution in the faith's belief-sets, as those darkly interpreted passages are popularized by prominent Web ideologues and then enshrined in a body of Internet literature, just as al-Banna, Mawdudi, Qutb, Faraj, Azzam, and other mutation-producing ideologues have done. In the end, a mutant, disfigured, harmful worldview evolves, with an entirely different god, a different view of creation, a different view of man, and of God's will for man. It has become a disease worse than the diseases it was originally designed to cure.

To a certain extent, the West's soul is also at stake. In a changing world, Western culture is far less anchored in rigid legal and sacred texts, and is more threatened by ideological and cultural creep under the pressures of materialism, amassed wealth, self-focus, and entertainment culture, structural philosophical secularism, and reliance on the "black box" of future technology to solve all of our problems. Qutb's indictment of the West as a civilization "unable to present any healthy values for the guidance of mankind" is overdone, but should nonetheless spur us to keep these extremisms at bay.

Strategy

A failure to grasp the struggle's more subtle natures—only three of which were just outlined above—can produce unhelpful "isms" in our strategy. If those three natures of the struggle revealed anything, they revealed a need for a greater measure of realism in our strategic recipe.

Beginning with the end in mind, the first place to inject realism into our strategy is with our concept of "victory." As the struggle's nature reveals, "victory" will not come marching on the world stage like a savior, as it has in the past. It will be more humble

in form. Given the megatrends at work, and the enduring appeal of radical Islamist ideology, our strategy should admit that “victory,” in the manner that it was achieved over fascism in Europe, may never come at all. “Victory” may consist in containing the ideology’s spread by increasing our resistance to it, just as we do when “managing” a stubborn global disease.

This concept of resistance, as if resisting a disease, is logically a strategy tailor-made for a resistance-type revolution, which is now in its first phase. While it may be unwelcome to Western ears, a strategy under the broad overarching rubric of “greater resistance” has merit for the following reasons:

- *Muqawama*, or resistance, as we have seen, is a powerful concept in Islam, and the Islamists have won a victory by taking possession of this rhetorical ground; the appeal of the idea of resistance can and is luring millions to their thinking. Born in 1948 amidst the Palestinian catastrophe, or *nakba*, the concept of resistance was already alive and well in a culture that had endured invaders from the Mongols to Napoleon. Hamas (an acronym for *Harakat Al-Muqawama Al-Islamia*, or Islamic Resistance Movement) harnessed this concept of resistance in their rise to power. Overcoming this powerful cultural symbol of resistance will require the use of an even *greater* symbol, and the only symbols more powerful than resistance are “greater resistance” and love—the latter of which, while the most powerful of all, is understandably too “soft” for the global security community.
- A strategy of greater resistance aligns with time-honored strategic maxims; Sun Tzu taught that “what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”²¹ Revolution through resistance is the enemy’s strategy; greater revolution through greater resistance is ours. We must capture the frame of “resistance,” and not cede the ideological high ground inherent in the term *resistance* to the Qutbites.
- Whereas the term *war*—as in the “Global War on Terrorism”—dignifies our adversary by creating the notion of a worthy opponent, and folds nicely into the Qutbian metanarrative, the term *resistance* refuses to so dignify Islamism, relegating it as such to a kind of disease that plagues us, and denies its metanarrative the enemy that it needs in order to thrive.

The Strategic Framework of Greater Resistance

The concept of greater resistance is *not* the strategy; it is only the strategy’s *character*; it is the *strategic culture* that guides the various elements of the strategy to keep them working together, and to prevent any one from becoming counterproductive. And in view of the sources of Islamism’s revolutionary conduct and the nature of our struggle

²¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 77.

against it, the rubric “greater resistance” should encompass two broad and simultaneously applied counterstrategies: *firm containment* and *moral competition*.

Firm containment is “defense.” It firmly contains the myriad causal factors, their movement, their strategy, their strengths, and our vulnerabilities. *Moral competition*, on the other hand, is “offense.” It works to lessen the opponent’s appeal, and increases our own. Because the struggle is ultimately a *new* “great game” between competing systems—between which the exploding population of young Muslims will ultimately decide—moral competition is what will cause young Muslims to see us and not the Islamists as the one (to use Qutb’s words) whose “life-giving values” enable it “to be the leader of mankind.”

What It Is Not

Before any more detailed discussion of what greater resistance is, we need to outline what it is not. First, and perhaps most important, it is not pacifism. Pacifism is an “ism” that fails when it is pitted against barbarism. Gandhi and King prevailed in strict pacifism because they struggled against their own kind—civilized people whose moral judgment was clouded. Greater resistance will mean greater violence against those taking up the sword, greater near-violence against those who condone such violence and incite others to it, and greater non-violence against those global Islamists who struggle morally as we do, but whose moral judgment is clouded by Qutb’s appealing metanarrative.

Second, greater resistance is not appeasement or compromise. Greater resistance should harbor no “Munich analogy”; it is firm, demanding that Muslim leaders unequivocally renounce the global revolution in all of its forms, or be treated like the enemies of global civilization that they are.

Third, it is not greater deception. Greater resistance is unapologetic and open about our resolve to wipe the spirit of Qutb’s revolution from the face of the earth. Their ideology-driven strategy of *taqiyya*, or deception, is no match for our openly communicated strategy of firm containment and moral competition. The strategy of greater resistance can be published in the clear, transmitting our resolve to, first, “heal the wrong divide” between Islam and the West, and second, “create the right divide” between Islamism’s barbarism and the burgeoning population of young Muslims in our global civilization. Communicating such a two-part strategy openly and honestly puts us under its obligation, thus holding ourselves accountable to execute it.

A Catalyst for Moral Clarity and Resolve

The framework of “greater resistance” helps create the resolve necessary to undermine Islamism’s enduring appeal, and to address the non-violent and near-violent strategic elements of a religious revolution. Greater resistance helps create necessary confidence in the moral superiority of our cause—the certitude in knowing that all ideologies and the cultures they create are not equally worthy, and that non-violent and near-violent global Islamism—by creating and advancing a culture of hatred and death—is just as destructive as the violent wing of Islamism, since it works to destroy hope, and lengthens and deepens the struggle and its effects.

Pacifism that has lost its will to exert greater resistance—through lack of moral clarity, misplaced cultural relativism, hedonism, or post-colonialist guilt syndrome—will destroy both Islam and our nascent global civilization. This global civilization was born in 1989 with the fall the Berlin Wall, and the tearing of what Churchill called the “Iron Curtain.” But pacifism fails to see that another wall is rising as Islamism’s curtain descends, dividing Muslim and non-Muslim, thus preventing the “more perfect union” described earlier that our global civilization needs. If we allow these misguided utopians to erect this wall, then we have set the young Muslim’s world perpetually at war. In their elementary, irrationally legalistic literalism, they exchange the truth about God for an extremism that puts all *ayas* in the Koran like the order “to fight all men until they say there is no God but Allah” on par with those more mundane that dictate rules for diet. When such a curtain falls over the rising population of young Muslim minds, then *peace* will become a relative term; besides brief interludes of *fitna*, or extreme disunity, there will be only war and rumor of war... as usual, mostly between Muslims. Such misguided pacifism creates greater evil.

Sadly, this resolve does not yet exist at “9/11 + 5”—or, five years after the Qutbites’ fatal mistake. Instead, our intellectual left makes excuses for this culture of hatred and death, joins with Islamism’s carefully scripted strategy in heaping all blame on the West, and especially the U.S., for causing “Muslim anger.” And in their political correctness they categorically refuse to talk about the “elephant in the living room”; they refuse to acknowledge that Salafi Islam’s orthodoxy and Muslim actions (or inactions) and culture are the second and third pillars that support and fuel all such Muslim anger and violence. What’s more, in the United States, where most of the revolution’s hatemongering websites exist under U.S. Internet Service Providers (ISPs), radicalized freedom prevents us from taking them down. This is moral cloudiness, not clarity.

Finally, such a strategy of a greater resistance is the middle way between the extremes of the approach of mere “law enforcement,” as practiced in Europe, and the United States’ approach of fighting a “global war on terrorism.” It acknowledges the struggle’s enduring, non-violent, near-violent, and violent nature, and gives us the resolve and confidence that we can both contain and compete successfully with those who wish to dominate us and change us. Such a *wasatiyya* strategy of firm, patient containment and moral competition is a kind of ethos in itself. A middle-way ethos of civilization’s greater resistance is inherently superior to the extremist ethos of barbarism’s resistance, thus reducing its relative appeal, and defusing the Islamists’ metanarrative of a Western “war on Islam.”

Firm Containment

Firm containment entails dozens of complex strategic elements, of which only three can be mentioned here. First, firm containment means containing the causal factors that make “Qutbism” appealing, as well as containing the strategies that advance it. A state-by-state world tour of revolutionary activity reveals how global Islamists steadily advance their goals to simultaneously weaken existing regimes; to unify the *umma* under the most puritanical, irrational, legalistic interpretation of Islam; and to incrementally

implement extreme *sharia*, which, in turn, creates more support for the extremist worldview, and changes the traditional, familiar face of peaceful Islam everywhere it goes. The non-violent and near-violent wings of Islamism operate where democracy reigns, and the violent wing operates where autocracy reigns.

Attacking the enemy's strategy means firm containment of the more virulent forms of the *Salafiyya* movement that Qutb built his ideas upon, and its extreme forms of *sharia*, morally confident in the knowledge that, wherever they go, structural violence and every manner of oppression also go. In every state and locale and neighborhood, the global networks of networks—of public and private, bureaucratic and grassroots, Muslim and non-Muslim—must create political, economic, and social bulwarks that impede the spread of Salafist ideology and extremist *sharia*. In the first time in our young history, global civilization must deliberately advance a peaceful counter-strategy to contain the strategy of the puritanical Wahhabis to replace traditional views of Islam around the globe. No amount of wishful thinking will change this unpleasant reality; courageous leadership, deliberate strategy, and firm resolve must face the facts, and act. If such a firm containment “counterstrategy” is not executed, then the Islamic culture that has enriched the world will gradually fade from existence, deliberately replaced by the puritanical “us vs. them” Wahhabi-like worldview that allows Qutbism to flourish. In another generation of uninterrupted, unchallenged, petro-dollar driven spread into impoverished areas that cannot resist it, or into Western civil liberties sanctuaries, the movement will gain the critical mass needed to advance to the second of Qutb's “milestones along the way.”

Firm containment also means creating legal bulwarks to impede the spread of Islamism in all of its non-violent, near-violent, and violent forms. The importance of this “zero-tolerance” culture is understood by those who know the Islamists best. Al Qaeda's prolific Web impresario Nasar, in his *Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, laments that “The president of Syria, Hafez Assad, himself an agnostic, has reached such levels of conceit to where he has declared the death penalty a punishment for whoever is proven to be belonging to the Islamic Brotherhood!!!”²² De-Nazification and de-Shinto-fication after World War II was a form of firm containment then; lawful de-*Ikhwan*-fication is firm containment now, even if it does follow the example of Assad and all other Muslim regimes. A trip to the Muslim Brotherhood's website and a stroll down its memory lane helps spur the timid to introduce legislation to better control its schemes, just as we closed “charities” linked to other violent groups after 9/11.

A third element of containment, and the last that can be mentioned here, is our containment of our own vulnerabilities that global Islamists exploit to advance their revolution across the globe, for example:

- Our tendency to either overreact or not act at all produces a mentality of complete victory (the “war on terrorism” approach) on one end of the spectrum and pacifism (the “law enforcement” approach) on the other, with no middle ground. Our Islamophobia and our willful ignorance has helped create the perception of a

²² Al-Suri, *Call to Global Islamic Resistance*, 1495.

Western war on Islam. Such a perception hinders our two-part strategy to: 1) “heal the wrong divide” (between Muslims and the rest of civilization); and 2) to “create the right divide” (between us all and the global Islamists).

- Our ignorance of the ideological sources of Islamism’s revolutionary conduct and the struggle’s nature have prevented much-needed conceptual unity and resolve. Such willful ignorance of Islamism creates a reliance on moderate Muslims to explain the struggle’s causes and nature, when they themselves do not fully understand it. And our ignorance has disheartened those true moderates who watch as our political leaders cozy up to wolves in sheep’s clothing. Our willful ignorance also forces us to remain inside our comfort zone, to continue to view this struggle through the lens of the Cold War. Such myopia forces us to make up for our gaps in knowledge by projecting our culture onto the enemy, or extrapolating from past experiences, projecting them onto present phenomena.²³ And our ignorance creates the problem of “one step forward, two steps back,” as our flawed and incomplete knowledge of the enemy causes such rhetorical blunders as “Islamofascism,” and our current tendency to vastly overestimate the present unity, scope, and strength of global Islamism.
- Our reliance on elegantly simple panacea strategies like democratization, economic assistance, globalization, and multiculturalism produces despair and further overreaction and harmful agitation when they predictably fail.
- Our lack of political, theological, and moral clarity that gives Israel a “blank check” and fails to hold it accountable for its own extremism creates the obvious conclusion that we are identical with Israel, and that we share in their extremism. It also hinders Israel’s ability to take the appropriate steps in pursuing its own self-interest, because the Israeli leadership believes they are doing what we want them to. Our lack of concern for Israeli peace and complacency creates despair for Muslims, who see the issue as playing an increasing role in radicalizing young Muslims around the world.
- At the heart of this clash is our lack of motivation to engage in real dialogue—dialogue that goes beyond the intellectual suicide of merely looking for common ground; dialogue that goes directly to the hardest things that each side says in private among friends. Presently, we have two monologues, but no dialogue, and no hard work committed to produce the synthesis of the “more perfect union” of the West and Islam that we all know is possible. Our politically correct and postmodern ideology assumes that all religious ideas and cultures are the same, creating an unwillingness to confront a group that claims to be speaking on behalf of religion and engage it in a dialectical type dialogue aimed at producing real synthesis.
- Our materialism produces a mentality that holds that “the military is defense, and technology is security,” preventing us from embarking upon meaningful long-

²³ Jeff Stein, “Can You Tell a Sunni from a Shiite?” *New York Times* (17 October 2006).

term strategies. Our blindness to the weaknesses of the free press has created an unwillingness to balance those weaknesses with a deliberate strategic communications or information strategy; we allow the “press at war” syndrome and sensationalist journalism to heighten tensions and obscure truth. Our dependency on the welfare state’s bureaucracies to solve the world’s problems prevents us from looking to the grass-roots, for solutions that are inspired by individual people and businesses rather than the bureaucratic state.

Dozens of other elements of firm containment exist that cannot be mentioned here. Firm containment entails all of our *pursue* and *protect* strategies, which as of this writing—five years after 9/11, and seventeen years after the fall of the Iron Curtain—has represented global civilization’s entire strategy. Firm containment entails only a small part of the *prevent* strategy that must be our center of gravity over this long, enduring struggle. As mentioned earlier, firm containment—for all of its necessity—is only the “defense” element of the new great game. And the defense in any game can never win; it can only hold the opponent while the offense plays to its strengths and attacks the other defense’s vulnerabilities. It is offense, then, that ultimately wins the game. And our offense in the “new great game” is moral competition.

Moral Competition

Our wisest thinkers have understood that moral culture and moral action is the greatest power a nation can wield. To the ancient Chinese sage Sun Tzu, moral and mental strength were the greatest arsenal in war.²⁴ To Israel’s ancient wise King Solomon, “righteousness exalts a nation.”²⁵ And America’s own wise man, the late George Kennan, believed that his generation’s “great game” “is in essence a test of the overall worth of the United States as a nation among nations,” and that to win “the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions....”²⁶ The power and necessity of moral competition are so fundamental that even the Islamist ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, from his prison cell in Jordan, conveyed his understanding of the point to al-Zarqawi in 2004: “I advise my fraternal mujahideen to protect their efforts and keep jihad in its brightest image. This is the best victory for them—better than sacrificing their lives.”²⁷ Similarly, at the dawn of this generation’s great struggle with its own “ism,” global Islamism—Qutbism—the success or failure of humanity rests in large measure on the nature of Islamic and Western civilizations themselves. To deny the Islamists the hearts and minds of the next generation of young Muslims, we need only measure up to our “own best traditions.”

The first phase in such a moral struggle is creating a break with the Cold War mentality that failed to provide just leadership in the Muslim world, and the new global

²⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 39.

²⁵ Proverbs 14:34.

²⁶ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947).

²⁷ Abu-Muhammad al-Maqdisi, July 2004, cited by Fu’ad Husayn, “Al-Zarqawi... The Second Generation of Al-Qa’ida,” *London Al-Quds al-Arabi* (20 May 2005), 17.

civilization that resolves to justly lead. Think of it as a new era's resolution—a re-scripting with honor, allowing a new, just champion of the young Muslim's cause to emerge.

The first goal of this re-scripting is *credibility*. The United States' Cold War-informed satisfaction with the status quo took our credibility to zero and then beyond, creating conspiracies galore. The main conspiracy describes how the U.S. is really Islam's eternal enemy, strategizing to keep the Muslim world down, everyone else out, and ourselves in position to steal both the Muslim world's resources through economic imperialism and the Muslim youth's faith through cultural imperialism. As incredible as this seems, it is the only explanation that is credible to hundreds of millions.

On the other hand, the Islamists enjoy immense credibility in the Muslim world; they are the ones living in squalor and spending their own wealth to provide the social services that give Muslim youths a glimmer of hope. To narrow this credibility gap, the rescripted and emergent new global civilization's leadership must leave behind the silence in our rhetoric that failed to acknowledge their grievances and our failures. Our new emergence must bring articulations of deep respect and understanding and deep commitment to just action. And we must communicate this in ways that hold out more hope than Qutb's seductively utopian but vacuous metanarrative offers.

The second phase of moral leadership is one of demonstrated respect, of intense listening and dialogue to create real *empathy*—not as an end in itself, for that creates few facts on the ground, but as means to the greater end of jointly creating and communicating three things: 1) a new metanarrative for Islam; 2) a new multifaceted strategy; and 3) a determined resolve to execute this strategy and create the new facts on the ground. From this point forward, we must hold these three pillars continually before both ourselves and the young Muslims in our global civilization; they form the essence of our competition with the Qutbites to earn the title of champion for the Muslim youth; they are the essence of our offense.

The first pillar is a metanarrative superior to Qutb's Islamism, one that is thoroughly Islamic, yet is new and promising because it is a more faithful a steward of the changeless truth of Islam, and is more focused on promoting the good and preventing vice—the very things that the constantly increasing population of young Muslims will undoubtedly see as their mission. Such a superior metanarrative must convincingly advance a model of Islam that offers better “life giving values” that enable it “to be the leader of mankind”—a faith to be emulated, not a faith to be feared and despised—something that, in spite of its lofty words, Qutb's dark model could never do. Such a new metanarrative must entail:

- The resolve that “solution” is Islam, but not the “Islam” of extreme Salafist-*sharia* totalitarianism and *al-walaa wal-baraa*²⁸ exclusionism. Instead, the solution is an Islam that fully engages the struggling global civilization and leads by love and by example—something that Muslim “leaders,” hampered by their personal dreams of a pan-Arabian nation under their rule, never would do.
- A rejection of Qutb’s and the Brotherhood’s metanarrative as the wolf in sheep’s clothing; the Muslim world’s problem is not that it never fully embraced the elements for success against the barbarism of seventh-century Arabia, but that it never fully embraced the elements for success in a free-market economy in the twenty-first-century’s global civilization. These elements for success are neither inherently Western nor Islamic, but are simply laws that were set in motion at the same time as the physical laws were set in motion.
- A rejection of the “us versus them” thinking at home among the Salafi community, which forever enshrines structural violence, prevents the rule of law from taking root in the traditional Muslim world, and scares away economic investment and cultural exchange.

The second pillar of competition is a jointly created strategy—a “Muslim Youth Security Strategy,” if you will—on a level of complexity and resourcing equivalent to the U.S. Trident submarine-missile program. The real “war of ideas” begins and ends here, not so much in finding the correct panaceas, but in pursuing the correct down-to-earth actions—actions that will incrementally bring about the “solution” long sought. The hard-fought plan created in this phase of moral competition will entail many, complex, multifaceted, long-term, incremental-minded strategies that address the many and complex causes that set Qutb’s and other Islamist pens in motion.

The third pillar of moral competition goes beyond listening, dialogue, new metanarratives and strategies: it is *world-changing action*, the real center of gravity of the strategy. Visionary leadership for a world “teetering on the brink of chaos” does not come with elegantly simple panaceas wearing custom-tailored suits of pure virgin wool;²⁹ it comes in more down-to-earth overalls, and work shirts with the sleeves rolled up. Instead of silencing the dialogue between civilizations by imposing creative, untested, panacea-like “hopeful monsters,” credible leadership creates a culture and or-

²⁸ *Al-Walaa wal-baraa* is an Islamic doctrine which decrees that there must be absolute allegiance to the community of Muslims, and total rejection of non-Muslims and Muslims who have strayed from the path of Islam. This concept of *al-walaa wal-baraa* is sacrosanct, yet it fuels every kind of extremist thought. Saudi Arabia reform movement researcher Stéphane Lacroix describes how Saudi sheikhs from the growing Salafi-Jihadi trend, who act as guardians of Wahhabi orthodoxy, consider *al-walaa wal-baraa* unquestionable as part of Islam; the concept is so strong among prominent Saudi sheikhs that none dare question it. See Stéphane Lacroix, “Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia’s New ‘Islam Liberal’ Reformists,” *Middle East Journal* 58:3 (Summer 2004): 346.

²⁹ Bashar Assad, “America Must Listen,” interview with *Spiegel* (24 September 2006); available at www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,438804,00.html.

ganization geared for constant activity in implementing a sound plan full of not-so-exciting miniscule steps. It advances the principle of *continuous improvement*, or cycle of permanent incremental change that W. Edward Deming taught to Japanese manufacturers in the 1950s, sparking the post-war Japanese economic “miracle.” That is how the Japanese transformed their civilization, and it is how our global civilization—working together—will transform the young Muslim’s threatened world. The “genius” in such a strategy, as the inventor Thomas Edison said, is “two percent inspiration and ninety-eight percent perspiration.”

Part of this third pillar of moral competition is healing the catastrophe, or *nakba*, one heart, one neighborhood at a time, beginning in the heart of Palestine. Moral leadership means moving the rhetoric and activity of the peace process—bit by bit, nothing too small—into high gear, with conferences and town-hall meetings throughout the region to create dialogue between Israelis, Palestinians, Syrians, Egyptians, Jordanians, and Lebanese. It means exposing and minimizing the self-serving designs of all groups outside of this conflict that benefit from keeping the conflict brewing, and it means elevating and keeping at center stage the views of the Palestinians and the Israeli people themselves, who have both long been held hostage by outside forces with agendas other than peace. Credibility in leadership means keeping this level of rhetoric and activity at the same fever pitch as is maintained in an election campaign in the U.S. Daily press releases, weekly conferences, and continual “good news” stories from our modest but diligent efforts will—over the next decade—create a cumulative case for a sea change in how the two civilizations view each other. The Islamist resistance will find itself resisting the solution.

Such a marriage of a better metanarrative, better strategic vision, and realistic old-fashioned hard work—void of grand elegant schemes that are attractive for their political capital and simplistic nature—will, over time, create new facts on the ground that history books will describe as a world-changing revolution. And new facts on the ground will, in turn, provide the new metanarrative with the greater credibility it needs to compete ideologically.

Capping all three pillars is a strategic communications plan that saturates the ideological battlespace with the message of how we are working to create the solution that the Islamists claim to be pursuing, and of our efforts to earn the title of “champion of Muslim youth.” That we have not adequately championed the causes of Muslim youth is *our* neglected obligation. Make no mistake—only one leader will emerge in the minds of young Muslims. It will be the stasis of the discredited Cold Warrior, or the false but seductive panacea of the Islamist metanarrative... or it will be global civilization’s leader rescripted and aware of its true calling as “world changer for the world’s youth.”

Conclusion

In his farewell address on 17 January 1961, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower articulated the basis for our present-day international security strategy with this prayer: “We pray that peoples of all faiths, all races, all nations ... will come to live together in a

peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love.”³⁰ This “binding force” of mutual respect and love is a *strategic culture*; it is the “right spirit” that amplifies a good strategy, whereas the lack of such a right spirit will nullify even the best strategy.

Such a strategic culture of mutual respect and love infusing our strategy of greater resistance—with its centers of gravity in firm containment and moral competition—will give us a new lens through which to accurately view the ideological struggle in which we are engaged. Through this lens we can see that a battle of ideas is at heart really a competition of resolve and behavior. When this moral competition is bundled with firm containment, then our greater resistance becomes a kind of “tough love”—a contract with Self to create the revolution in the young Muslim’s world. Such tough love is the most noble and hardest of paths, and those who embark upon and consistently walk such a path have already won the struggle for their own soul.

Finally, this new great game—Islamism’s resistance versus our greater resistance—will be the drama of the new century, playing out in the global arena, where the burgeoning population of Muslim youth are watching to see who will work the hardest to bring much-needed change to their world. The game strategy for the war makers is set; the game strategy for the peacemakers is not yet in place. Our mission as peacemakers demands that we resist their game strategy with all we *have*, and advance ours with all we *are*. This will be *our* struggle; it is *our* jihad—*our* neglected obligation.

³⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Farewell Address, 17 January 1961; available at www.eisenhower.archives.gov/farewell.htm.

Combating Extremist Ideologies: Measuring Effectiveness— Considerations for Public Diplomacy

Raphael Perl *

Combating terrorist ideology receives high (if not top) policy emphasis in the Bush Administration's September 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*.¹ This article addresses issues posed by the challenge of measuring effectiveness in combating extremist ideology. In particular, it examines the case of Islamist extremism, which is the primary terrorism-related threat currently faced by a growing number of nations. It offers some thoughts on potential measurement criteria and measurement techniques, and presents some options for consideration. Statements of personal opinion herein may reflect independent analysis, and are not necessarily the viewpoint of the U.S. Government.

Scattered or sporadic instances of terrorism by individuals or small groups have been occurring in various forms for centuries. These have historically been limited in scope. But when an extremist group develops a large enough cohort of adherents and supporters to reach a "tipping point" or "critical mass," it becomes a well-financed, ongoing process, the synergy of which is extremely difficult to disrupt. Benign neglect of such an environment that fosters extremism is a recipe for future violent conflict, an outcome that we have seen in several countries.²

When extremism becomes widely diffused in a country or society, the local government may be unable to effectively combat it, or indeed may share its extremist views. If one wishes to avoid the danger of armed conflict against that country, with its huge cost in money and human lives for all concerned, one might consider directing more resources early on towards mitigating extremist ideologies, rather than reacting to them after they have already taken hold. The concept of pre-emptive strikes against ter-

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¹ The September 2006 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* states in its overview that: "Today, we face a global terrorist movement and must confront the radical ideology that justifies the use of violence against innocents in the name of religion" (available at www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/). The strategy aims to "advance effective democracies as the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism." One policy pitfall, however, may be an over-reliance on using elections as the litmus test for democracy, with some observers suggesting that the bottom-line test of democracy is not elections, but rather whether one can go to the town square, express one's views, and not be punished. See for example: Natan Sharansky, *Is Freedom for Everyone?* Heritage Foundation Lecture No. 960 (15 June 2006); available at www.heritage.org/Research/WorldwideFreedom/h1960.cfm.

² For a discussion of existing and emerging terrorist threats, see Raphael Perl, *Trends in Terrorism: 2006*, CRS Report RL33555 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006); available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33555.pdf.

rorism has been set forth by the Bush Administration. Arguably, a need exists for pre-emptive strikes in an ideological sense as well.

It is important to differentiate between efforts aimed at *behavioral* versus *ideological* mitigation of extremism. Increased security and harsh punishments help dissuade people from extremist behavior temporarily, but as long as attitudes remain unchanged, the potential for terrorism may fester unabated.

Measuring the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs requires a clearly enunciated strategy, with stated goals against which to measure progress.³ It also requires ongoing measurement of available levels of resources and trained personnel.⁴

So where does one start? In my view, academic discussions concerning the nature of programs and measurements have gone on too long already. There is little benefit to further delay, and indeed every reason to forge ahead as soon as possible. The United States and like-minded governments can and should begin collecting data immediately.⁵ Regardless of the specifics of any plan formulated to combat violent extremist ideologies, baseline data will be required to support such endeavors, so data collection efforts would not be wasted. How those descriptive data are organized and used can be decided later, while the program to combat extremism continues to take shape.

One set of measurements that can serve as initial indicators of effectiveness is a skills and resources inventory. Among government employees in the field, at the sharp end of the spear in combating extremist ideology, how many are fully fluent in the languages of their host countries? When I say “fluent,” I mean as fluent in that foreign language as Adel Al Jubair, the Saudi political advisor, is in English: fluent enough to present or debate points of view on television against charismatic ideological adversaries. What are the numbers and grade levels of officers in the field who are specifically charged in their work requirements with the mission of ideological countermeasures? What are their funding and staff support levels? How many radio and television stations do we have that broadcast our message of freedom and tolerance, or which jam

³ On the issue of public diplomacy and anti-terrorism generally, see Susan B. Epstein, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: Background and 9/11 Commission Recommendations*, CRS Report RL32607 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2005); available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL32607.pdf.

⁴ On the issue measuring the effectiveness of counter-terror efforts generally, see Raphael Perl, *Combating Terrorism: The Challenge of Measuring Effectiveness*, CRS Report RL33160 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2005); available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33160.pdf. Note that when seeking to measure the effectiveness of efforts to counter radical extremism, it is important to recognize that, with some deeply indoctrinated groups, progress in combating radical extremism may not be achievable, and hence is not measurable. If so, perhaps we need to accept our losses and focus on the next generation of potential followers and leaders.

⁵ Of central importance here is the need for enhanced data to facilitate understanding of the factors terrorists exploit to generate support and gain recruits.

the broadcasts of extremist stations?⁶ These are obvious data which are readily available, and which will help us set a baseline for further measurements later.

It is important to evaluate how effectively national governments are recruiting talented officers, the best and the brightest, into government service. Are government agencies expanding the talents of recruited personnel subsequent to their being hired, or rather constricting them in a bureaucratic quagmire, where career success is often based on being cautious and not making mistakes rather than on taking risks and achieving greatness, with occasional failures? Since time and personnel are scarce resources in diplomacy efforts, do officers have enough administrative support and funding so that they can spend their time most effectively on their core duties?

Have our field officers, and those of allied nations, studied the doctrine of Islamist extremism to the same extent that such officers previously studied Communist ideology during the Cold War? The basis of the doctrine is readily available in the Koran, but more is available in the *Hadith*, the collected sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Can our officers debate extremist views by quoting the Koran as easily as they quote sound bites from the press guidance, to question the adherence of Islamist extremists to false teachings or interpretations? For example, would officers think to question why Osama bin Laden has not paid blood money to the families of innocent Muslims he is responsible for killing by mistake, as required by the Koran (Sura 4, verse 92)?⁷ Would officers speculate that a possible reason extremists refer to their enemies, including Muslim leaders, as “unbelievers” might be that this same verse prohibits believers from killing other believers, except by mistake?

Are our officers poised, proficient, and fully trained in public speaking techniques? Do they have inter-cultural sensitivity and extensive experience in communicating in Islamic societies? Clearly, major elements in any public diplomacy campaign are communication and understanding. If our officers do not have the necessary skills or experience, are there plans in place for additional training, recruitment, or replacement?

A need clearly exists for personnel fully skilled in public diplomacy, and also for people skilled in its less diplomatic counterpart, which is called “propaganda” when others do it, but lacks a suitable euphemism when we do it. The term “information war-

⁶ Note that the practice of “jamming” transmissions may be controversial, given the argument that jamming contravenes democratic principles. However, one might equally argue that nations have a responsibility to their citizenry to counter hate-based disinformation or incitements to violence.

⁷ “It is not for a believer to kill a believer except [that it be] by mistake; and whosoever kills a believer by mistake, [it is ordained that] he must set free a believing slave and a compensation [blood-money, i.e. *Diya*] be given to the deceased’s family unless they remit it. If the deceased belonged to a people at war with you and he was a believer, the freeing of a believing slave [is prescribed]; and if he belonged to a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance, compensation [blood-money, or *Diya*] must be paid to his family, and a believing slave must be freed. And whoso finds this [the penance of freeing a slave] beyond his means, he must fast for two consecutive months in order to seek repentance from Allah. And Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

fare” could be appropriate, but that has already been taken to mean cyber-warfare. The term “deprogramming” is too specific, and is generally limited to small religious cults. A need exists for a name that sells itself to the public. For the moment, however, let’s call this effort “counter-indoctrination,” where one seeks to interdict, mitigate, and redirect the behaviors and attitudes deriving from ideological doctrines with which one disagrees.

The Strategic Information Initiative (SII) was considered by many to be an excellent and timely counter-indoctrination program. Arguably however, it was not properly sold to the public or to the various agencies with which its mission competed. Had it been fully implemented, we would by now be in a position to measure its effectiveness over the past several years. For those unfamiliar with it, the SII involved, among other elements, sending skilled contractors to various American Embassies to explore, with a fresh view, how best to understand and influence our target audiences. This approach—together with data collection from attitude surveys—remains an essential step toward improving the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts, and it is likely that some variant of the program may be reconstituted in the future.

Arguably, it would be beneficial to have a skills and resources inventory outside the federal government as well. There is a vast reservoir of skills especially suited to combating extremist ideology within academic circles, think tanks, private security firms, multinational companies, independent consulting groups, ecclesiastical organizations, retired government employees, and others. Political scientists, social psychologists and psychiatrists, police “profilers,” pollsters, psychological operations (Psy Ops) officers, and similar experts could contribute greatly to our efforts.

However, caution is warranted regarding the efficacy of a private-sector skills inventory, since many of the individuals identified will not have security clearances and may lack access to relevant information. To permit in-depth discussion by a broadened range of participants, one might wish to arrange clearances for many individuals who are not government employees but who have essential expertise. Otherwise, the interchange of ideas would be extremely limited.

Another set of measurements that is not difficult to make would be simply to begin quantifying the number and intensity of extremist statements in mass media channels and in sermons at selected mosques. Although these measurements are partially subjective, they provide data to work with. If nations lack the staffing even to make these measurements due to the existing workload, this is a clear indication at the outset of a resource shortage.

Collection of data is important. Without it, measuring effectiveness is largely an exercise in conjecture. There are a great many data sets currently available, and we should start to gather and use them selectively.

When assessing the effectiveness of public diplomacy measures in combating ideological support for terrorism, one might begin with some basic questions as a first step in establishing measurement criteria.

1. To what extent is there already an existing strategy in place, supported by adequately trained personnel and sufficient funding? Does the nation have sufficient

will to implement it? A strategy without these elements will not produce much in the way of results.

2. To what extent is the strategy in question coordinated with those of similarly threatened, like-minded nations? Islamist extremism is a global phenomenon. Thus, a response without international coordination will at best produce limited progress to measure.
3. How does one define or characterize the ideology or ideologies one seeks to combat? What are the central or core components one needs to address?
4. How should indicators and factors of success be selected or defined? In other words, what should one be measuring?
5. How does the way one views success mesh with how our opponents may view their own success? For instance, does more visible ideological discussion and debate fuel recruitment by extremist groups?
6. How sympathetic to terrorist goals or tactics is the general public of a particular country?
7. To what extent does the media in various countries portray terrorist groups or actions in a favorable light?
8. Is the number of hatred-preaching mosques increasing or decreasing? Likewise, is the number of students enrolled or graduating from radical *madrasas* on an upswing or downswing?
9. Who should measure effectiveness? Should it be pollsters, academics, private think tanks, military analysts, the United Nations, or national governments?
10. What skills—especially skills from the social sciences—should governments bring to bear on their measurement efforts?
11. And finally, is it perhaps somewhat premature to attempt to measure the effectiveness of our efforts to combat Islamist extremist ideology at this juncture? Changing attitudes is often a lengthy process, and arguably the United States and allied nations are only in a startup mode.

Target evaluation and selection is an extremely important component of an effective strategy to combat extremist ideologies. If one has a poorly selected target audience, money may be spent needlessly without achieving the desired goals. Measuring effectiveness therefore also encompasses the valuation of one's targets.

For example, it is widely known that many *madrasas*—Islamic religious schools—teach extremism.⁸ Should the vast number of students receiving this extremist indoctrination be a major focus of efforts to combat the spread of radical extremist ideology, or should one instead use limited resources to target the extremist professors,

⁸ See Riaz Khan, "Pakistani Religious Schools Face Scrutiny," Associated Press, 19 July 2005; available at www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/w-asia/2005/jul/19/071903563.html.

or the extremist clerics who hire them, or the wealthy businessmen who fund the clerics, or the government officials who permit the clerics to operate?

To develop meaningful criteria for measuring effectiveness, input would be welcome from students, scholars, political scientists, psychologists, economists, military personnel, religious leaders, and others who have had a “total immersion” experience in Islamic culture and who can help structure public diplomacy and counter-indoctrination programs. One of the first requirements in a struggle of ideologies is to know the enemy. What are the cultural parallels and differences?

When evaluating the effectiveness of efforts to combat extremist Islamist ideology, one needs to understand how ideological support is generated. What factors, agents, and vehicles facilitate or enable ideological support? These need to be engaged and countered.⁹ One then needs to identify the groups or institutions susceptible to such enablers. These should be targeted as well.

“Enablers” for the growth of extremist Islamist ideology arguably include:

- Mosques and/or *madrasas* preaching radical Islamist extremism
- Governments actively supporting terrorism or countenancing its ideological incitement
- Extremist Internet sites and TV stations and the size of their audiences
- Foreign policy actions by the United States and anti-terror allies that may mobilize potential recruits to radical extremist ideologies
- Groups, channels, or mechanisms facilitating funding of radical Islamist extremist organizations
- Loopholes in law or policy facilitating the spread of Islamist extremism.

Ideological extremism takes years to develop and can take generations to quell.¹⁰ If young people grow up with a rigid ideological framework, it is very difficult to change their minds later. In the United States, segregation and severe racial bigotry continued until the mid-1950s, and although the undesirable behavior was mitigated through new laws, it has taken at least two generations for society to internalize the change. It took enough time so that children attending integrated schools grew up and had children of their own, for whom integration was “normal.” Youth enrolled in the Palestinian education system, daily being taught hatred for Israel and Jews, are another example of ongoing indoctrination. Consequently, counter-indoctrination is not a short-term solution, but rather a long-term investment in the future.

It is important to recognize from the outset that it will be impossible in practical terms to counter the vast funding that currently supports Islamist extremism. The com-

⁹ See generally Glenn and Carolyn Schweitzer, *America on Notice: Stemming the Tide of Anti-Americanism* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2006).

¹⁰ See Anne Gearan, “Hughes: Fixing U.S. Image May Take Years,” Associated Press (28 September 2006); available at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/28/AR2006092801185_pf.html.

bination of enormous oil wealth in countries with large Muslim populations, the Islamic religious imperative to contribute to charity, and the large number of entrenched and pervasive extremist organizations all serve to generate a huge cash flow.

In general, United States public diplomacy and counter-indoctrination resources appear to be consolidating, not expanding.¹¹ Within such a framework it becomes all the more important to choose wisely among the various strategies available, and to set funding levels so that chosen strategies can be successful. Given the large funding shortfalls, it may prove necessary to measure effectiveness in terms of acceptable losses. Moreover, it is unlikely during the next generation, or probably longer, that United States and allied efforts, regardless of their scope, will completely rob the wind from the sails of terrorism. Hatred and fanaticism are simply too strongly entrenched in certain population segments.

To be successful at public diplomacy, one needs to offer a “competitive product.” In the past, particularly during the Cold War, some people were willing to risk their lives to get to the West, not just for the economic opportunity, but for freedom, a freedom they could never have in their own countries. The West was united in opposition to totalitarian oppression. The United States had a strong national identity, and people did not ask what it meant to be an American, or how democracy compared to other political ideologies. Being American was enough, because it meant that one loved freedom and the opportunity for individual development.

Today the enemy is different. Islamist extremism is an evangelical—some might say imperialistic—worldview that is intolerant of any other perspectives, and that often promotes terrorism as a means of achieving political or ideological goals. Its adherents are generally not disenchanted with their political situations, as many citizens of Eastern Bloc nations were during the Cold War, and abhor rather than admire Western culture and morals (which, admittedly, have changed over the past half-century).¹²

One powerful and often-overlooked tool in combating radical Islamist ideology is Islamic law. Application and interpretation of Islamic law are often the subjects of widespread interest and discussion in both popular and intellectual circles in societies with large Muslim populations. Hence, a critical component of any strategy is to encourage debate within Islam itself and within the intellectual communities in Islamic

¹¹ The United States Information Agency has been subsumed into the Department of State. See also the discussion of public diplomacy issues in Raphael Perl, *International Terrorism: Threat, Policy, and Response*, CRS Report RL33600 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, updated 2007), available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL33600.pdf; Susan B. Epstein and Lisa Mages, *Public Diplomacy: A Review of Past Recommendations*, CRS Report RL33062 (2005), available at www.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33062_20050902.pdf; and Raphael Perl, *Terrorism, the Media, and the Government: Perspectives, Trends, and Options for Policymakers*, CRS Report 97-960 (1997), available at www.globalsecurity.org/intell/library/reports/crs/crs-terror.htm.

¹² See Christopher M. Blanchard, *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, CRS Report RL 32759 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, updated 2007); available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32759.pdf.

populations against violent ideologies that claim to be based in religion. The need for such an approach is gaining increasing recognition in policy circles.

The five pillars of public diplomacy effectiveness might arguably include credibility, truthfulness, policy consistency, encouragement of mutual understanding, and development of shared goals supported by adequate funding. These have traditionally been our strengths. Other forms of information countermeasures, such as deceit and disinformation, which fall outside the domain of public diplomacy, will involve different approaches.

To launch an effective public diplomacy campaign, one needs a vision and a clear national identity. It is not enough to say to the extremists, “Live and let live,” because we, ourselves, are not isolationist. Based on both shared interests and the considerations of *realpolitik*, the United States often finds itself supporting regimes whose track record in human rights and distribution of wealth is dismal. An overall foreign policy that demonstrates both strength and consistency is important. It is widely acknowledged that uncertainty can often lead to aggression, and to the extent that our foreign policy is uncertain, the likelihood of aggression by others—and, at least in theory, by ourselves—increases.

One challenge of public diplomacy that one cannot emphasize enough is the limited funding of America’s embassies abroad. This is not unique to American Embassies, but is a nearly ubiquitous problem for the international diplomatic community. As technology improves and communications become faster and more reliable, and as people travel more, embassy workloads increase, but there is no concomitant increase in budget.

Moreover, when one beefs up embassy security through enormously expensive infrastructure upgrades, budgets for other activities shrink. Among the first line items to be cut are representational and travel funds, so that official interactions between embassy staff and local government officials may diminish. All too often, embassy officials have limited skills in the languages used by countries with large Muslim populations. They do not have enough opportunities to obtain in-depth language training, because their absence from duty would mean critical staffing shortages in operational slots. This confluence of limitations—funding and staffing—is at odds with the imperative to expand public diplomacy efforts.

When addressing the issue of combating extremist ideologies, one would be remiss not to mention that, because of the tensions generated by the conflict between curbing the expression of radical Islamist ideological viewpoints and protecting civil liberties, democratic nations have often been reluctant to confront the issue of incitement to terrorism, especially when religion is involved. Although there is a fine line between religious freedom of speech and incitement to terrorism, a nation cannot shirk its obligation to protect itself from violence generated under the banner of religious freedom, just as it protects itself from speeches or sermons inciting racial violence generated under the banner of freedom of speech.

Some have suggested convening a high-level interagency group, to include representatives from both academia and the private sector in a retreat-like setting where ideas could be exchanged freely concerning strategies and measurement criteria. The

overall goal of such a group would be to formulate a public diplomacy and counter-indoctrination strategy to combat radical extremist ideology and to outline a methodology for evaluating its effectiveness. A shortcoming of past meetings of this sort, however, is that their findings have frequently not been accepted at higher levels. Notwithstanding, given the gravity and pressing nature of the threat of extremist ideologies, such a proposal may indeed merit active implementation.

The world today may well be at a major crossroads in history, where the effectiveness of Western and allied efforts in combating extremist ideologies may to a large extent shape the future political and economic landscape of the globe, either in favor of the West or dramatically against it. If a coalition of like-minded nations fails to confront and contain the threat that presently endangers the global economic system and our overall way of life, a new intolerant, radical, violence-prone political order may become the democratically-elected norm in many important countries around the world.

A Work in Progress: The United Kingdom's Campaign Against Radicalization

James Wither *

I speak to you today about the blessed raid in London which came as a blow to the insolent British Crusader pride and made it sip from the same glass from which it had long made the Muslims drink.

– Ayman Al-Zawahiri

Introduction

The United Kingdom (U.K.) has ample experience of terrorism. Over three thousand people were killed during the thirty-year-long campaign by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) for a united Ireland. However, the death toll from a single attack never exceeded twenty-nine, and the British public developed a certain stoicism in the face of intermittent bombings in London and other British cities. Like other European separatist groups, PIRA sought to establish legitimacy and broaden support by largely restricting its killings to representatives of the British government, members of the security forces, and collaborators.¹ Indiscriminate attacks on civilians were generally avoided, and warnings were often sent to the British authorities before bomb attacks on civilian or infrastructure targets. When suicide bombers struck the London transport system without warning on 7 July 2005, killing fifty-two people and injuring over seven hundred, it marked a stark departure from PIRA's methods and highlighted the fact that the U.K. faced a terrorist threat far more ruthless and dangerous than anything that had preceded it.

Since the 1970s, comprehensive anti-terrorist measures in the U.K., including tough legislation, evolved to keep pace with an able and adaptive adversary. Nevertheless, the battle against PIRA provides few if any lessons for dealing with ideologically motivated terrorists. Although Irish republicanism was nominally a social revolutionary movement, its leaders had little regard for radical political or religious ideologies. Splinter groups—like the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA)—that embraced Marxist-Leninism never had more than minimal support amongst republicans. As in any counter-insurgency, “winning hearts and minds” was an important component of British strategy in Northern Ireland, but the U.K. was not confronted by terrorists who were motivated by a radical and uncompromising ideology. Unlike France, Britain did

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¹ Families of service personnel and people who were associated or worked with the security forces were also regarded as legitimate targets.

not experience terrorism by Muslim radicals in the 1990s. The intelligence services monitored Islamic radicals in the U.K., but until the attacks of 11 September 2001, the main counterterrorism effort remained focused on Irish republican dissidents who rejected the peace process in Northern Ireland. Consequently, radical Muslim militants and preachers, such as Abu Hamza and Abdallah al Faisal, were able to exploit relatively lax asylum procedures and find refuge in the U.K. in the 1990s to propagate their extremist version of Islam.

After 2001, the U.K. became a major focus for what is now generally referred to as Islamist terrorism,² not least because of the government's active support for United States military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Before July 2005, the British authorities disrupted several potential attacks—including an attempt by a cell affiliated with Al Qaeda to produce chemical weapons in 2003—but the security services and intelligence agencies acknowledged that a successful attack was to be expected.³ It was also apparent that the threat came not only from foreign jihadists but also from British-born, home-grown radicalized Muslims. A mounting awareness of the danger posed by the latter made efforts to identify and address the sources of radicalization at home and abroad a matter of major importance for the British government. These efforts acquired a new urgency after the July 2005 bombings and the discovery of further terrorist plots involving British citizens.

This article examines the problem of countering ideological support for terrorism (CIST) in the U.K. For convenience, the American acronym CIST is used in the paper, although this is not a common term in the United Kingdom. Instead, British officials and commentators normally refer to “understanding and combating radicalization.” The paper is structured into five parts, covering the ideology of Islamist terrorism; the sources of radicalization; the motivation and background of U.K. terrorists; British government policies to address radicalization; and the barriers to effective implementation of CIST measures.

The Ideology of Islamist Terrorism

At a speech in parliament on 10 July 2006, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, John Reid, described the ideological threat confronting the U.K. in the following terms:

² *Islamism* refers to political ideologies derived from the beliefs of Muslim fundamentalists who believe that Islam is not only a religion but also a holistic system that provides the complete political, legal, economic, and social foundations for society. *Islamist* is the term generally used by Western analysts to denote radicals at the extreme end of the fundamentalist spectrum that have resorted to terrorism. However, *Islamism* is not synonymous with *terrorism*. Many Islamist groups have renounced or avoided violence. Politics (rather than violence) gives mainstream Islamist groups their growing influence in many parts of the world.

³ Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, Cm. 6785 (London: The Stationery Office, May 2006), 9–10.

... the people involved in those terrorist attacks are driven by a very particular and violent ideology. A common thread running through terrorist attacks of the past decade has been a claim by those involved that they have been acting in defence of Islam. It is crucial that we understand that the extreme interpretation espoused by Islamist terrorists to support their actions is not an interpretation of Islam that is shared by the vast majority of Muslims in the U.K. and abroad.⁴

As a set of universal principles, a system of values, or as blueprints for an ideal society, ideologies can offer potent justifications for terrorism. Zealots can claim that sacrifice and violence are perpetrated in the service of a higher cause. Revolutionary Marxist-Leninism provided the main stimulus for twentieth-century ideologically motivated terrorism, but since the collapse of the Soviet Union, radical Islamism has supplanted it as the terrorist ideology of choice. Marxist-Leninist terrorist groups of the Cold War era were prepared to use ruthless violence to achieve their objectives, but indiscriminate attacks on civilians were rare. By contrast, the rise of Islamist terrorism since the 1980s has been characterized by the use of suicide attacks intended to cause maximum civilian casualties, justified by the perpetrators on both strategic and ideological grounds. It has also raised the hitherto unthinkable prospect of a catastrophic terrorist attack involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The philosophical roots of Muslim militancy are complex, and it is not possible to do justice to this complexity in the short summary offered here.⁵ Nevertheless, some background is necessary to provide insights into the nature of the ideology that inspires Islamist terrorism in the U.K. and elsewhere. Since Islamism supplanted Arab secular socialism and pan-Arabism in the 1980s, Islamists have sought to offer a simple ideological solution to the Muslim world's contemporary problems in the form of return to the fundamentals of Islam as an all-encompassing religious, political, and social system. The most severe Islamists are normally referred to as Salafists,⁶ although not all members of this Sunni group advocate violent methods to purify Islam. Islamists generally share a common religious perspective, but often differ in their interpretation of

⁴ House of Commons Hansard Debates for 10 July 2006 (pt 0850), Col. 1116. As head of the Home Office, John Reid is the U.K. government minister primarily responsible for tackling domestic terrorism.

⁵ Recent analyses can be found in Robert Reilly, *The Roots of Islamist Ideology* (London: Centre for Research into Post-Communist Economies, February 2006); Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, & Marina Ottaway, *Islamist Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World*, Carnegie Papers No. 67 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, March 2006), available at www.CarnegieEndowment.org/pubs; and Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29:3 (May 2006): 207–39.

⁶ The Arabic word *Salaf* means "predecessors or early generations," and literally refers to the first three generations of Muslims (those who were companions of Muhammad and the two generations following). Salafism refers to a fundamentalist version of Islam as supposedly practiced by the first few generations of Muslims. The creed transcends cultural and national differences. The term is often used synonymously with *Wahhabism*. *Qutbism*, named after the Egyptian Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb, is sometimes used to describe violent radicals to distinguish them from non-violent Salafi purists.

contemporary politics and events. Under the Islamist umbrella are scholars who focus exclusively on non-violent methods of conversion, political activists who seek to achieve power through the ballot box, and militant jihadists who reject the concept of the nation-state and advance their agenda through violence and revolution.

Islamism offers pride in a common religious identity to relieve the feelings of anger, frustration, and humiliation felt by many in the Muslim world. These emotions are aroused by many different factors, including the economic and political backwardness of much of the Middle East, but a perception that the Western powers are the source of the Muslim world's ills has reinforced a sense of grievance. Osama bin Laden, as leader of Al Qaeda, has effectively played on Muslim anger to gain support for his radical agenda. In a message after the 9/11 attacks, he claimed: "Our nation has been tasting this humiliation and contempt for more than eighty years. Its sons are being killed. Its blood is being shed, its holy places attacked and it is not being ruled according to what God has decreed."⁷ Consequently, Al Qaeda has proved capable of mobilizing support across class, ethnic, and intra-Islamic sectarian boundaries.

Islamist ideology has led to the creation of widespread, grass-roots social networks throughout the Middle East and, in states that have permitted their formation, Islamic political parties are well established as a legitimate electoral force. But the same philosophy—as it evolved in Egypt, where the Islamist movement faced brutal repression—provided the ideological basis for a particularly virulent form of extremism. The philosophical foundations of the movement are rooted in the Sunni Salafi school of Islam, and in the works of the seminal Islamist thinkers Hassan al Banna (the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood) and Sayyid Abdul Ala Mawdudi. However, neither Mawdudi nor al Banna advocated terror; the first true theorist of Islamist terrorism was the Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb, who was executed in Egypt in 1966. He married a Salafist interpretation of the Koran with radical socio-political theory.

Like Marxist-Leninism, Qutb envisaged a totalitarian, universalistic, revolutionary ideology characterized by utopian ideals and coupled with contempt for alternative political or religious systems and beliefs. Although Qutb was strongly opposed to communism, his concept of using revolutionary vanguards to mobilize the masses for Islam directly echoed Lenin's concept of a "Vanguard of the Proletariat." It is not surprising that a number of analysts have described the radical Islamist movement that he spawned as a form of Islamic Leninism.⁸ Qutb's advocacy of violence and his claim that it is the religious duty of Muslims to challenge the authority of non-Islamist governments was a major influence on Iranian revolutionaries and later groups such as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Al Qaeda.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a seminal event in the evolution of Islamist extremism, as it brought together fighters from different strands of radical Islam and

⁷ Broadcast on Al-Jazeera Satellite Television (in Arabic), Doha, Qatar (7 October 2001).

⁸ See, for example, Reilly, *Roots of Islamist Ideology*, 9; Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Globalized World in the 21st Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005), 393–95; and John Gray, *Al Qaeda and What It Means to be Modern* (London: Faber & Faber, 2003), 3–4.

revived the idea of jihad to evict foreign occupiers from Muslim territory. In this context, Abdullah Yusuf Azzam, known as the “Godfather of Jihad,” is of particular note, as he helped develop the concept of a global terrorist network by placing Islamic universalism above considerations of sectarianism or nationalism.⁹ Osama bin Laden and his deputy and chief ideologist Ayman al-Zawahiri have built on the legacy of radical Islamist thinkers to create the principles and strategy that support Al Qaeda’s global jihad. In 1998, in another echo of revolutionary Marxism, bin Laden announced the creation of the “World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders.”¹⁰ His intention was to erect an umbrella organization for Islamist groups from Morocco to China.

Over time, the basic religious and political agenda of Al Qaeda has remained consistently focused on two major goals: the expulsion of foreign forces and influences from Muslim societies and the ultimate creation of an Islamic caliphate ruled by *sharia* law.¹¹ The concept of armed resistance, or defensive jihad, is central to Al Qaeda’s thinking, as it appeals to the collective religious duty of all Muslims to come to the defense of the faith. The two key Al Qaeda policy statements of the 1990s both invoked defensive jihad, but also demonstrated the terrorist group’s intention to take the war to America and its allies—the “far enemy,” as opposed to the “near enemy” against which jihad could also be directed (insufficiently pious Muslim rulers of Muslim lands). In the *Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Mosques*,¹² issued in 1996, bin Laden described his enemies as the “alliance of Jews, Christians and their agents,” and condemned the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and U.S. support for Israel. Defensive jihad was also invoked in the 1998 fatwa, which called for armed resistance and ruled that “to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim....”¹³ In 2002, bin Laden made a further unequivocal statement that he regarded all Americans as legitimate tar-

⁹ Al Azzam’s uncompromising slogan “Jihad and the rifle alone: no negotiations, no conferences and no dialogues” is said to have inspired bin Laden, among others. See the page on Azzam at the website of Perspectives on World History and Current Events: Middle East Project, at www.pwhce.org/azzam.html.

¹⁰ This formed part of the 1998 fatwa urging jihad against the U.S. This organization was replaced by a new framework called Qa’idat al-Jihad (The Jihad Base) in spring 2002. See Ely Karmon, “Al-Qa’ida and the War on Terror After the War in Iraq,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 10:1 (March 2006): 2.

¹¹ See Christopher Blanchard, *Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology*, CRS Report RL32759 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, updated January 2007); available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32759.pdf.

¹² *Al Islah* (London) (in Arabic) (2 September 1996).

¹³ “Text of Fatwa Urging Jihad Against Americans,” *Al- Quds al- Arabi* (London) (in Arabic) (23 February 1998), 3.

gets. Al-Zawahiri expressed similar sentiments about the British people after the London bombings in July 2005.¹⁴

Despite the loss of its base in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda remains the inspiration for a whole new generation of Islamist extremists, including the “born-again” converts from the Muslim diaspora who were responsible for the attacks in Madrid and London. The terrorism analyst Marc Sageman has described these European jihadists as groups of friends whose primary motivation is grounded in group dynamics and identity, drawing on support from the “virtual *umma*” on the Internet.¹⁵ However, Sageman’s findings also stress the importance of a “link to the jihad,” which provides the necessary resources and know-how to turn would-be fighters into effective terrorists.¹⁶ Information emerging from investigations into terrorist activity in the U.K. suggests that contacts with militants in Pakistan are a significant feature of the planning and indoctrination process, although the extent of Al Qaeda’s direct involvement in U.K. terrorism remains unclear.¹⁷

The Sources of Radicalization

In its report on the London bombings, the U.K. Intelligence and Security Committee stressed the importance of understanding radicalization, especially as the Security Service (normally referred to as MI5) could find “no simple Islamist extremist profile,” and concluded that those who appeared to be well assimilated into mainstream British society might pose just as significant a threat as individuals from socially or economically deprived sections of the community.¹⁸ The British government’s counterterrorism strategy paper published in July 2006 offered a preliminary analysis of the potential factors leading to radicalization, but acknowledged that radicalized individuals did not necessarily go on to become terrorists.¹⁹ Three major factors were put forward for consideration: a sense of grievance and injustice, personal alienation or community

¹⁴ Osama bin Laden, “Letter to the American People,” text in English, posted at www.waaqiah.com (26 October 2002) (since removed); transcript of Zawahiri’s message regarding the July 2005 bombings on *BBC News* (16 November 2005); available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/4443364.stm.

¹⁵ Marc Sageman, Presentation to the Program for Terrorism and Security Studies, George C. Marshall Center for Security Studies, February 2006.

¹⁶ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terrorist Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 120–21.

¹⁷ See, for example, Home Office, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005* (London: The Stationery Office, 11 May 2006), 20, available at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/7-july-report.pdf?view=Binary; and Nicola Woodcock, “Al-Qaeda Wanted Multiple Bombing,” *The Times* (London) (30 March 2006). In a video broadcast in September 2005, Al-Zawahiri claimed that Al Qaeda launched the bombing attacks in London.

¹⁸ Intelligence and Security Committee, *Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*, 29.

¹⁹ *Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom’s Strategy*, Cm. 6888 (London: The Stationery Office, July 2006), 10.

disadvantage, and exposure to radical ideas. A wide range of specific issues were also identified as potential influences on the radicalization process both domestically and internationally, including the disruptive impact of globalization, Western policies in the Muslim world, social exclusion and discrimination in the community, and inspirational role models.

The widespread protests in February 2006 against the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad provided a graphic illustration of the antipathy felt by Muslim extremists towards the West. In London, marchers held placards calling for those who insulted Islam to be butchered and promised that Europe would experience its own holocaust, sentiments that are not representative of the majority of British Muslims. The uproar associated with the cartoons contributed significantly to what the Pew Global Attitudes Project has described as a “great divide” separating the viewpoints of Westerners from those of Muslims.²⁰ Nevertheless, a low opinion of Western culture and states does not necessarily translate into support for terrorism. The same survey found that 70 percent of British Muslims questioned felt that violence against civilians could not be justified in defense of Islam, although, less reassuringly, 15 percent felt that it could be sanctioned at least “sometimes.”²¹ That a minority of British Muslims appears to support extremism is confirmed by other recent public opinion polls. The Populos poll for *The Times* and ITV News in July 2006 found that 13 percent of British Muslims surveyed believed that the July 2005 bombers should be regarded as “martyrs,” 2 percent would be proud if a family member joined Al Qaeda, and 16 percent would be “indifferent” about such a decision.²² A Poll by NOP for Channel 4 reported that 9 percent of Muslims surveyed strongly agreed or tended to agree that the use of violence by political or religious groups was “acceptable.”²³

The Iraq war is mentioned as a catalyst for radicalization by a number of sources, not least the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate of April 2006, which described the

²⁰ The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 22 June 2006); available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=253>. The survey found that, although Western and Muslim publics viewed relations between them as generally bad, Europe’s Muslim minorities were consistently more moderate than their co-religionists elsewhere in the world.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 3–4. The Office of National Statistics, using figures from the 2001 census, estimates that there are 1.6 million Muslims in the U.K., with Pakistanis making up the largest non-white, ethno-religious group in Britain, with a population of 700,000 concentrated in Birmingham, Bradford, and London. See www.statistics.gov.uk/cgi/nugget.asp?id=293.

²² Alexandra Frean and Rajeev Syal, “Muslim Britain Split Over Martyrs of 7/7,” *Times Online* (4 July 2006); available at www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article682599.ece.

²³ Growth from Knowledge, NOP Social Research, *Attitudes to Living in Britain—A Survey of Muslim Opinion* (27 April 2006), 35; available at www.imagineate.uk.com/MCC01_Survey/Site%20Download.pdf. Curiously, the same survey found that 45 percent of Muslims polled believed that the 9/11 attacks were a conspiracy by the U.S. and Israel.

conflict as the “*cause celebre*” for jihadists.²⁴ Peter Neumann, the Director of the Centre for Defence Studies at King’s College London, has stated that “the Iraq War contributed to the radicalization of European Muslims, creating a more supportive environment which Salafi jihadists could draw on for finance and recruits.”²⁵ After the foiled plot in August 2006 to blow up aircraft on transatlantic flights, leading British Muslims wrote to Prime Minister Tony Blair to assert that British foreign policy provided “ammunition to extremists.” The letter made specific reference to “the debacle of Iraq.”²⁶ Not surprisingly, the British government has consistently rejected any suggestion that the war has made the U.K. a target for terrorist attack, and calls for a public inquiry into the effects of British foreign policy on Islamist radicalization have been refused. It is debatable whether such an inquiry would have assuaged the feelings of the 31 percent of young British Muslims questioned by the NOP poll in April 2006 who agreed that the July 2005 bombings were justified because of British involvement in “the war on terror,” which is perceived by many Muslims as a war against Islam.²⁷ As will be discussed below, British foreign and military policies were also cited as motivation by some of the perpetrators of the London attacks.

Recently, some commentators and politicians have highlighted the U.K.’s tolerance of multiculturalism as a factor leading to the apparent alienation of young British Muslims from mainstream influences in society.²⁸ The well-meaning attempt by the political establishment over the last twenty years to avoid imposing a single British identity and culture on immigrants to the U.K. is blamed for the self-imposed segregation of Muslim communities, a proliferation of mosques staffed by radical clerics, and the establishment of Muslim religious schools that emphasize Koranic studies and teach South Asian languages. Many Muslims agree that assimilation needs to be improved. For example, the Populus Poll referred to earlier found that 65 percent of British Muslims surveyed felt that their community needed to integrate more fully with the broader U.K. society.²⁹ Analysts frequently cite problems of alienation and unfulfilled expectations as a significant factor in the motivation of young European Muslims to join jihadist groups.³⁰ Psychiatrist Anne Speckhard suggests that an additional factor is a

²⁴ Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Assessment, “Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States,” April 2006; available at http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf.

²⁵ Peter R. Neumann, “Europe’s Jihadist Dilemma,” *Survival* 48:2 (Summer 2006): 74.

²⁶ “Full Text: Muslim Groups’ Letter,” *BBC News* (12 August 2006); available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/uk_news/4786159.stm. See also “Miles Apart,” *The Economist* (19 August 2006), 22–23.

²⁷ NOP, *Attitudes to Living in Britain*, 34.

²⁸ See, for example, Michael Nazir-Ali, “Multiculturalism is to Blame for Perverting Young Muslims,” *The Daily Telegraph* (15 August 2006); and “British Exceptionalism,” *The Economist* (19 August 2006), 10–11.

²⁹ Frean and Syal, “Muslim Britain Split.”

³⁰ See Petter Nesser, “Post-millennium Patterns of Jihadist Terrorism in Western Europe—Part 1,” *Jane’s Terrorism and Security Monitor* (15 June 2005): 3; and Tamara Makarenko, “Takfiri Presence Grows in Europe,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* (1 February 2005), 3–4.

conscious repudiation of the perceived corruption of the West through the cleansing embrace of a particularly fundamentalist and militant form of Islam.³¹ Some British Muslims have also argued that the roots of the radicalization problem are economic and social, pointing to relative deprivation, exclusion, and discrimination.³² A recent report by the Office of National Statistics concluded that British Muslims were more than twice as likely to be unemployed as followers of other faiths, and up to five times as likely to live in overcrowded conditions.³³ However, it is hard to establish a direct link between social exclusion and terrorism. Three of the July 2005 bombers, for example, were depicted by the Home Office official report on the attacks as “apparently well integrated into British society.”³⁴ Dhiren Barot, a Muslim on trial for a “dirty bomb” plot, has been described as “not the usual image of a terrorist ... born a Hindu and brought up in a north London suburb by middle-class parents.”³⁵

As John Reid’s remarks above illustrate, government ministers—anxious not to offend the majority of British Muslims—avoid any suggestion that the religion of Islam itself is to blame for radicalization. The government’s counterterrorism strategy paper is at pains to stress that the Muslim communities in the U.K. are not themselves viewed as a security threat. Nevertheless, a number of analysts in the U.K. and elsewhere have argued that violence is inherent in a fundamentalist approach to the Koran and the Hadith.³⁶ Patrick Sookhdeo, a British scholar who is Director of the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, has argued that Muslims need to recognize that war and terrorism feature in their teachings. He has called for Muslims to stop their self-deception that Islam is a religion of peace and “with honesty recognise the violence that has existed in their history in the same way that Christians have had to do.”³⁷ Similar calls for Muslims to engage in the ideological battle for the future of Islam have come

³¹ Anne Speckhard, “Understanding Suicide Terrorism: Countering Human Bombs and Their Senders,” in *Topics for Terrorism: Toward a Transatlantic Consensus on the Nature of the Threat*, eds. Jason S. Purcell and Joshua D. Weintraub (Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council Publications, 2005).

³² See, for example, “Just over a Year Since the Terrorist Attacks on London’s Transport System on July 7, 2005, Britain is on Alert Again,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* (16 August 2006).

³³ Office of National Statistics, *Focus on Ethnicity and Religion 2006* (October 2006); available at www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=14629.

³⁴ Home Office, *Official Account*, 26.

³⁵ Duncan Gardham, “Muslim was Planning Dirty Bomb Attack in UK,” *The Daily Telegraph* (13 October 2006).

³⁶ See, for example, Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005); Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs* (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Of particular note are the remarks of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, quoted in Mark Tooley “Department of Strange Bedfellows,” *The Weekly Standard* (29 September 2006).

³⁷ Patrick Sookhdeo, “The Myth of Moderate Islam,” *The Spectator* 298:9234 (30 July 2005): 12–15.

from scholars and commentators on both sides of the Atlantic.³⁸ However, British official efforts to counter the extremist ideologies that support terrorism do not address the religious debate directly. The government is naturally reluctant to intervene in a matter that is best left to Islamic clerics and scholars. At the same time, there is growing official frustration that Muslim community leaders are not doing enough to tackle the extremism that appears to be flourishing in their midst.³⁹

The Background and Motivation of “Home-Grown” Terrorists

What of the background, influences, and motivations of the actual terrorists or would-be terrorists themselves? Clearly, with many investigations ongoing, and some cases still *sub judice*, it is impossible to obtain a complete picture of what has inspired British Muslims to kill their fellow citizens. The official report by the Home Office into the July 2005 bombings offers the most comprehensive analysis to date, but as the authors acknowledge, much research remains to be done. Nevertheless, the personal profiles offered in the report provide useful insights into the radicalization process, and are therefore summarized below.⁴⁰

The bombers were aged between eighteen and thirty. Two were married with children. Three of them were second-generation British citizens of Pakistani origin who grew up in an area described by the report as “deprived,” although none were considered poor by the standards of the area. The fourth bomber was born in Jamaica and had an unstable family background, although the report does not attempt to link this directly to his radicalization. Mohammed Sidique Khan, the oldest and the presumed leader, was a well-respected teaching assistant and youth worker who was considered a role model for young people. He is also described as someone who used drugs and alcohol and “got into fights” in his youth, but had become religiously devout and clean-living from the late 1990s onwards. In view of the psychological profile identified by Speckhard noted above, it is interesting that one of the suspects arrested following the August 2006 airline bomb plot is also reported to have had trouble with drugs and alcohol before a recent life-changing conversion to Islam.⁴¹ Shazad Tanweer had recently left university, Hasib Hussein had just completed school, and Jermaine Lindsay had worked in a series of odd jobs.

³⁸ See, for example, M. Zuhi Jasser, “Muslims in the Crosshairs,” *Washington Times* (3 August 2006); and Shmuel Bar, “The Religious Sources of Islamic Terrorism,” *Policy Review* 125 (June/July 2004); available at www.policyreview.org/jun04/bar.html.

³⁹ See David Hencke and Hugh Mair, “Kelly: Imams Failing to Deter Extremism,” *The Guardian* (U.K.) (14 August 2006); and Toby Helm, “Back British Values or Lose Grants, Kelly tells Muslim Groups,” *The Daily Telegraph* (12 October 2006).

⁴⁰ The investigators’ description of the background and lifestyle of the bombers is in Home Office, *Official Account*, 13–18.

⁴¹ Jumana Farouky, “Profile the Suspects: Converts to Islam,” *Time* (11 August 2006); available at www.time.com/time/world/printout/0,8816,1225687,00.html.

The Home Office report claims that the backgrounds of the individuals were “un-exceptional,” and John Reid described the bombers as “ordinary British citizens.”⁴² However, the bombers’ behavior hardly merits these descriptions. All four were particularly devout by normal Muslim standards in the U.K.⁴³ Lindsay was a recent convert to Islam who seems to have been strongly influenced by the extremist preacher Abdallah al Faisal, who is now serving a prison sentence for incitement to murder and racial hatred. The others were reported to have become increasingly strict in their religious observance in recent years.⁴⁴ Investigations have shown that the group was in contact with other extremists in the U.K., and both Khan and Tanweer are known to have visited Pakistan, where it is thought that they met with Al Qaeda members.⁴⁵ Like other European jihadists, Khan, Tanweer, and Hussein appear to have bonded through mosques, youth clubs, a gym, and an Islamic bookshop. Some acquaintances interviewed for the report claimed that some of these establishments were “centers of extremism,” but the evidence is far from conclusive. The group also took part in outdoor activities such as camping and white-water rafting, which may have offered opportunities for further bonding and ideological indoctrination.⁴⁶

In a video made by Khan, he claimed that perceived injustices by the West against the Muslim world justified violence to protect and avenge other Muslims. His message was couched in religious terms, and his separate last will and testament stressed the importance of martyrdom as evidence of commitment to Islam.⁴⁷ Tanweer’s statement, which did not emerge until the anniversary of the bombings in 2006, is much more explicit, as it refers not only to the religious duties of all Muslims to fight for Allah, but also to the British presence in Afghanistan and Iraq and support for the United States and Israel.⁴⁸ Few concrete facts are known about the motivation of the other bombers, although Hussein and Lindsay were noted to have expressed extremist views at school.⁴⁹

⁴² House of Commons Hansard Debates for 11 May 2006 (pt 0126) Col. 522.

⁴³ For example, in the NOP Poll of April 2006, 54 percent of Muslims surveyed stated that they never attended a mosque, or only did so on special occasions.

⁴⁴ Devout religious observance has been a notable feature of the behavior of suspects in other terrorist cases in the U.K., although traditional dress and displays of religion have become more popular generally with young Muslims in the last decade. See Sean Rayment, “MI5 Fears Silent Army of 1,200 Biding Its Time in the Suburbs,” *The Daily Telegraph* (4 June 2006).

⁴⁵ Intelligence and Security Committee, 12.

⁴⁶ An interest in outdoor activities appears to have been a common factor for members of other terrorist cells disrupted before and after July 2005.

⁴⁷ Home Office, *Official Account*, 19.

⁴⁸ The full text of Tanweer’s statement is available from the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Clip No. 1186 (8 July 2005); available at www.memritv.org/Transcript.asp?P1=1186. In a typical example of “black propaganda,” the broadcast implicates the U.K. in “the genocide of over 150,000 innocent Muslims in Fallujah.”

⁴⁹ Home Office, *Official Account*, 19.

The final section of the Home Office report attempts to place the radicalization process of the July 2005 bombers in a wider context, given what is known about other Islamist terrorist conspiracies in the U.K.⁵⁰ First, family background and social or economic circumstances appear to give no indication of an individual's relative vulnerability to radicalization.⁵¹ Attendance at a mosque with links to extremists is often a factor, although the report acknowledges that radicals increasingly use private houses and other premises as meeting places in order to avoid detection. Not surprisingly, exposure to extremist spiritual leaders is also identified as a common contributor to radicalization, not only through direct contacts, but also often by means of audio-visual material and the Internet. Mentorship is described as having a potentially "critical" impact. Mentors, like Khan, have helped to identify and groom potential terrorist recruits, and help them to bond with like-minded individuals.

The Home Office report identifies common stages in the grooming process. Initially, mentors place an emphasis on being a devout Muslim, without introducing an extremist agenda. Potential recruits are then subjected to propaganda illustrating the abuse and persecution of Muslims around the world. Religious justifications from the Koran and Hadith are then given for violent jihad and, in the case of suicide attacks, the importance and rewards of martyrdom are emphasized. The report concludes that there is little evidence of compulsion. Instead, the mentors rely on building individual commitment to the cause, along with group identity and solidarity.

U.K. Government Policies to Address Radicalization

The British government's long-term strategy for tackling terrorism is known as "Contest." The strategy aims to both reduce the terrorist threat to the United Kingdom and its vulnerability to a terrorist attack. Counterterrorist activities are divided into four principal strands, known as "Prevent," "Pursue," "Protect," and "Prepare."⁵² CIST measures form the core of the "Prevent" strand, which focuses on reducing the number of individuals that might be inclined to support Islamist terrorism or become terrorists themselves. The government has recognized that it is no longer possible to separate the domestic and international dimensions of the threat, and the strategy reflects this. In July 2006, following detailed analysis of the context of the July 2005 bombings, the government launched an unclassified strategy paper for countering international ter-

⁵⁰ Ibid., 31–32.

⁵¹ This conclusion is supported by initial reports on the backgrounds of suspects in the August 2006 transatlantic flights bombing plot. See "Who are the Terror Suspects," *BBC News* (11 August 2006); available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/gov/pr/fr/-/1/hi/uk/47832215.stm>. See also Kamran Siddique "My Friend: The Football Fan who Dreamed of Being a Doctor," *The Guardian* (U.K.) (15 August 2006).

⁵² "Contest" is a classified document, but a general description of the strategy is given in the official reports on the July 2005 bombings referred to here. The Home Secretary also describes Contest in Hansard Debates for 10 July 2006, op. cit., Columns 1115–18.

rorism based on “Contest.” This provides the best summary of U.K. CIST policies to date.⁵³

Reflecting the level of threat, the U.K. has gone farther than its European partners to engage with Muslim communities and produce a comprehensive package of measures to address radicalization. By comparison, European counterterrorism strategies with respect to CIST tend to provide general statements of intent rather than policy specifics.⁵⁴ U.K. thinking on CIST is essentially sober and pragmatic, rather than idealistic. Whereas the United States’ *Quadrennial Defense Review* (QDR) of 2006 states that “the appeal of freedom is the best long-term counter to the ideology of the extremists,”⁵⁵ the U.K. places noticeably less emphasis in official documents on an ideological struggle between democratic freedoms and extremism.

The first set of U.K. CIST measures comes under the official heading “Tackling disadvantage and supporting reform,”⁵⁶ and reflects the government’s belief that inequalities and lack of opportunity in the U.K. and abroad contribute to Muslim radicalization. The *Improving Opportunities, Strengthening Society* policy paper outlines a broad race and community cohesion strategy launched in January 2005.⁵⁷ It is intended to help Muslims and other minorities improve their educational performance, employment opportunities, and housing conditions. This initiative includes support to help Muslim faith-based organizations engage with the government, other faiths, and civil society more effectively. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion was announced in June 2006.⁵⁸ The commission works with Muslim communities to examine causes of tension, barriers to integration, and the means of improving the capacity of these communities to resist extremist ideologies. The commission is due to report its findings to the government in July 2007.

With the issue of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) strategic priorities in March 2006, the government reaffirmed that countering terrorism was the de-

⁵³ *Countering International Terrorism*, 11–16.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Council of the European Union, *The European Union Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*, 14781/1/05 REV 1 (Brussels: European Union, 24 November 2005), 1–6; and France’s strategy document, *Prevailing Against Terrorism: White Paper on Domestic Security Against Terrorism* (Paris: Le documentation Française, 2006), 115–22.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 6 February 2006), 22; available at www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/dod/qdr-2006-report.pdf. See also National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley’s speech to the United States Institute of Peace regarding the National Security Strategy, delivered on 16 March 2006; text available at www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/wh/63257.htm.

⁵⁶ *Countering International Terrorism*, 11.

⁵⁷ Available from the Home Office website, at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/improving-opportunity-strat?view=Binary.

⁵⁸ The Terms of Reference of the Commission are available from the Department for Communities and Local Government website, at www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501522.

partment's foremost task.⁵⁹ The government claims that the FCO's Global Opportunities Fund supports projects and initiatives intended to promote effective and accountable governments, democratic institutions, and human rights in the Muslim world.⁶⁰ In view of the perceived role of schools in the radicalization process, the FCO has focused on educational reform, including the establishment of partnerships with *madrasas* in Pakistan and Bangladesh and enhanced scholarship and exchange programs targeted at Muslim countries. As a contribution to the "battle of ideas," the FCO has also increased its complement of Arabic and Urdu speakers in order to be more proactive in explaining British foreign policy and highlighting the development aid and security assistance provided by the U.K. to Muslims in places such as Kosovo, Bosnia, and Kashmir.

The second set of CIST activities falls under the heading "Deterring those who facilitate terrorism."⁶¹ The main focus here is on enhancements to counterterrorism legislation to combat the spread of extremist ideas. *The Terrorism Act 2006* made it a criminal offense to encourage acts of terrorism, including the distribution of publications advocating or glorifying terror.⁶² It also broadened the criteria that can be used to proscribe organizations that promote terrorism. A list of so-called "Unacceptable Behaviors" was published by the Home Office in August 2005.⁶³ This list identified activities that could lead to non-U.K. citizens being excluded or deported, namely the use of any medium to foster hatred or justify terrorism. The *Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006* has also been introduced in support of these measures to facilitate deportation.⁶⁴ This remains a contentious issue, as there are tensions between attempts to speed up the process of deportation and the country's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights not to return individuals to states where they may be subject to torture or abuse.⁶⁵

Mr. Andy Hayman, Assistant Commissioner on Special Operations, Metropolitan Police, has described prisons as a "hot spot" for radicalization.⁶⁶ Consequently, initiatives to prevent radicalization within the prison population are also included under the "deterrence" category.⁶⁷ Proposals include specialist training for imams working within the prison service, a mentoring program to identify prisoners susceptible to extremist

⁵⁹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World: The UK's International Priorities*, Cm. 6762 (London: The Stationery Office, March 2006), 29; available at www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/fullintpriorities2006.pdf.

⁶⁰ *Countering International Terrorism*, 11.

⁶¹ *Countering International Terrorism*, 12.

⁶² Full text available at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/60011-b.htm.

⁶³ See "Acts of Hate: Full List of Deportation Acts," *TimesOnline* (24 August 2005); available at www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-20749-1748674-20749,00.html.

⁶⁴ Full text available at www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060013.htm.

⁶⁵ See discussion in U.K. Parliament Home Affairs Committee, *Counter-Terrorism and Community Relations in the Aftermath of the London Bombings*, Uncorrected Transcript of Oral Evidence (13 September 2005), 5, 11.

⁶⁶ Home Affairs Committee, *Counter-Terrorism and Community Relations*, 19.

⁶⁷ See House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 8 March 2006 (pt 30).

views, and support for Muslim prisoners to reintegrate into society following the end of their sentences.

The third set of measures to counter the ideologies that support terrorism is referred to under the rubric of “The battle of ideas.”⁶⁸ Under a project called “Preventing Extremism Together,” seven community-led working groups were established as part of a major government effort to engage with Muslim community leaders, women, and young people.⁶⁹ The principal recommendations from this project engendered several initiatives, including a “Scholars’ Roadshow,” which provides an opportunity for Islamic scholars and thinkers to argue against extremism and terrorism with young British Muslims; the creation of regional forums to bring together members of local Muslim communities, the police, and public service agencies to discuss action against both radicalization and Islamophobia; and the implementation of a Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board to examine the accreditation of imams, improve the governance of mosques, and increase interfaith activity.

At the time of writing, government action had already been completed on other recommendations, including measures to improve the academic performance of Muslim students and extend equal opportunities legislation to cover discrimination on the grounds of faith. However, there has also been criticism that the government has been tardy in addressing some proposals,⁷⁰ and the Liberal Democrat peer, Lady Falkner, has dismissed the whole exercise as “a very hurried, let’s-do-something sort of response rather than anything substantive.”⁷¹ Other commentators have argued that the government may be confronting extremism in the wrong places, as available information suggests that the radicalization of individuals is taking place away from established mosques and community facilities.⁷²

CIST: The Barriers to Effective Implementation

At a presentation in 2003, the Director General of the U.K. Security Service, Eliza Manningham-Buller, acknowledged the severity of the ideological challenge confronting British policy makers and security officials: “Breaking the link between terrorism and religious ideology will be difficult in the short term. Political dialogue and a proc-

⁶⁸ *Countering International Terrorism*, 13.

⁶⁹ Under a government reorganization of May 2006, responsibility for this project has been taken over by the Department for Communities and Local Government. For details see www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1501973.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Hansard 10 July 06, op. cit., columns 1122–23.

⁷¹ Quoted in Martin Bright, *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries: The British State’s Flirtation with Radical Islamism* (London: Policy Exchange Limited, 2006), 26; available at www.policyexchange.org.uk.

⁷² See, for example, Faisal Devji, “A Muslim Militancy Born of Modernity not Mosques,” *Financial Times* (28 August 2006), 11.

ess of reconciliation are not on the horizon as groups like Al Qaeda have aims that are absolute and non-negotiable.”⁷³

Since 2003, the British government has increasingly placed efforts to combat radicalization at center stage of its overall counterterrorism strategy. However, the development of a coherent program to counter extremist ideology remains a work in progress. It will take time to both fully understand the process of radicalization in the U.K. and for domestic and international policy initiatives to have an impact. The British government’s efforts to sway Muslim opinion at home and abroad will continue to be hamstrung because of the unpopularity of Britain’s policies in the Muslim world. It is also questionable whether efforts by the U.K. and other Western states to work through friendly Muslim governments and elites will find a receptive audience in communities where ordinary citizens are already alienated from these same governments and elites. The terrorism analyst Sebestyén Gorka claims that the West has already lost the battle for perceptions because of the immaturity of political environments in the Middle East and Central Asia and the widespread influence of anti-Western conspiracy theories in these regions.⁷⁴

CIST may be a lengthy process, but unfortunately intelligence agencies have learned that the radicalization of young Muslims can take place very rapidly.⁷⁵ Inevitably, such heightened threat perception has led to a more proactive and intrusive police presence in Muslim communities. Security alerts, especially when they involve the arrest or shooting of innocent people, infuriate ordinary Muslim citizens and undermine the government’s efforts to promote cooperation against radicalization. A report by the U.S. Congressional Research Service claimed that nearly 900 people had been arrested in the U.K. since 9/11 under anti-terrorism laws, but only 138 had been charged with terrorist related offenses, and only 23 actually convicted.⁷⁶ The U.K.’s most senior Muslim police officer, Tarique Ghaffur, has claimed that robust police action and tougher anti-terrorism laws have discriminated against Muslims and caused distrust, anger, and alienation.⁷⁷ However, government ministers and security forces face what BBC political journalist Andrew Marr has called an “appalling dilemma,”⁷⁸ being caught between overreacting to threats on the basis of unquantifiable intelligence or

⁷³ Speech to the Royal United Services Institute, 17 June 2003; available at www.mi5.gov.uk/output/Page210.html.

⁷⁴ Sebestyén L. v. Gorka, “Al Qaeda and Von Clausewitz Rediscovering the Art of War,” unpublished paper delivered at the U.S. Joint Special Forces University Symposium, “Countering Global Insurgency,” 2–5 May 2006.

⁷⁵ Intelligence and Security Committee, 29.

⁷⁶ Kristin Archick, Carl Ek, Paul Gallis, Francis T. Miko, and Steven Woehrel, *European Approaches to Homeland Security and Counterterrorism*, CRS Report RL33573 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 24 July 2006), 43; available at www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/RL33573.pdf.

⁷⁷ Assistant Commissioner Tarique Ghaffur, quoted in John Steele, “Tougher Police Tactics on Terror Driving Muslims Apart, says Police Chief,” *The Daily Telegraph* (8 August 2006).

⁷⁸ “Ministers Highlight UK Terror Threat,” *BBC News* (14 February 2003); available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2751361.stm.

not doing enough to prevent an attack and being universally condemned for inaction afterwards. After the shooting of an innocent man during a house search for a chemical device in June 2006, police in London have agreed to consult a panel of Muslim leaders before mounting counterterrorist raids or making arrests. The panel will have the opportunity to offer their assessment of the accuracy of the police intelligence and the impact of the raid on community relations. It is not yet known whether the panel will be allowed access to classified information from the Security Service.⁷⁹ What is clear is that tension between the “Prevent” and “Pursue” strands of the government’s counterterrorism strategy seems likely to continue.

The government’s attempts to co-opt Muslim leaders in the struggle against terrorism have proved controversial, with complaints that too much weight has been given to the views of more radical elements in Muslim communities, which has left mainstream Muslims underrepresented in the consultation process.⁸⁰ The situation is not helped by the need for Muslim leaders to condemn extremism but at the same time avoid being perceived by their constituents as government stooges. One of the problems confronting the government and local authorities’ attempts to find credible partners to confront radicalization is that Britain’s Muslims are deeply divided, and are represented by a variety of associations that are often in dispute with each other.⁸¹ The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is still viewed as the main voice of British Muslims, but it is challenged on the one hand by the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), which is ideologically close to the Muslim Brotherhood, and on the other by the more liberal, Sufi-influenced British Muslim Forum (BMF). In addition, there are a number of smaller groups, including the al Khoei Foundation, which represents the U.K.’s small population of Shiite Muslims; the British Muslim Initiative; and radical affiliates of the banned al Muhajiroun group.

Islamist organizations that claim to eschew violence, but have nevertheless been linked to extremism, create particular difficulties in a liberal democracy with a tradition of freedoms of speech and association. Recently, both the missionary group Tablighi Jamaat and the radical international political Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir have come under the spotlight, with calls for their proscription.⁸² The BMF claims to represent 80 percent of British Muslims but complains that, unlike the MCB, it lacks the ear of the government.⁸³ In a monograph released by the conservative Policy Exchange research institute, Martin Bright, the editor of the left-wing *New Statesman*

⁷⁹ Abdul Taher, “Police to Brief Muslims Before Terror Raids,” *The Sunday Times* (24 September 2006).

⁸⁰ See, for example, House of Commons Hansard Debates for 5 December 2005 (pt 3), Column 593.

⁸¹ “Who Speaks for British Muslims?” *The Economist* (17 June 2006), 36–38.

⁸² See, for example, Sean O’Neill and Roger Boyes, “Islamic Missionary Group Links Alleged Plotters,” *TimesOnline* (17 August 2006); available at www.timesonline.co.uk/printFriendly/0,,1-2-2316667-2,00.html. See also “Hizb ut-Tahrir,” *BBC News* (6 August 2005); available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4127688.stm>.

⁸³ “Immoderate Voices,” *The Wall Street Journal* (18–20 August 2006), 12.

magazine, has accused the government of working with unrepresentative radical Islamists in both the U.K. and the Middle East.⁸⁴ Bright argues that the government has treated radical Islamists in the MCB and Muslim Brotherhood as the voices of mainstream Muslim opinion, and has consequently granted them an undeserved legitimacy. He claims that “Whitehall has embraced a narrow, austere version of the (Muslim) religion” that is not helping tackle the ideology that breeds terrorism.⁸⁵ The British authorities are caught in a central dilemma of the war on terror, namely the degree to which a government can establish a dialogue with political Islamists without being seen to legitimize terrorism.

The U.K.’s perception of the threat from Islamist terrorism remains grave. Peter Clarke, Scotland Yard’s Head of Counterterrorism, recently told a BBC 2 interviewer that the police were monitoring thousands of people in the U.K., and described the intelligence picture as “very disturbing.”⁸⁶ In these circumstances, there is a real danger of polarization between Muslim communities and mainstream British society. Ghaffur has warned of a sense of separateness in Muslim communities, and the demonization of Muslims and Islam by the media.⁸⁷ A You Gov poll for *The Daily Telegraph* in August 2006 found that 53 percent of people surveyed felt that Islam itself (as distinct from Islamic fundamentalism) posed a “major” or “some” threat to the nation.⁸⁸ Only 16 percent answered positively to the statement: “Practically all British Muslims are peaceful, law abiding citizens who deplore terrorist acts as much as anyone else.” Another You Gov poll, for *The Spectator* in September 2006, found that 73 percent of respondents agreed that the West was engaged in a global war against Islamic terrorism.

Clearly, these polls may have been influenced by the major terrorist plot uncovered in August 2006, and the publicity surrounding the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, but nevertheless there has been a growing consensus recently from all shades of political opinion that it is time to reassert so-called mainstream British values. Part of this trend is a reaction to the perceived takeover of “political correctness,” but there are also more disturbing indications that this is the beginning of a backlash against what are widely viewed as unwarranted concessions to Muslim sensitivities in the name of multiculturalism and appeasement.⁸⁹ Such developments are unlikely to make the government’s attempts to engage Muslim communities any easier or more successful.

⁸⁴ Martin Bright, *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries*. Particular criticism is directed at the “Arabists” in the FCO who advocated direct talks with Hamas and Hezbollah.

⁸⁵ Bright, *When Progressives Treat with Reactionaries*, 12.

⁸⁶ Peter Clarke, quoted in “Terror Police Monitor Thousands,” *BBC News* (2 September 2006); available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hk/uk/5306580.stm>.

⁸⁷ Steele, “Tougher Police Tactics on Terror.” One senior government adviser in conversation with the author claimed that there was even a danger of “intifada” in British cities.

⁸⁸ Both *You Gov* surveys quoted here are available at www.yougov.com.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Patience Wheatcroft, “Multiculturalism Hasn’t Worked: Let’s Rediscover Britishness,” *The Daily Telegraph* (8 October 2006); Henry Porter, “Jack Straw Should be Praised for Lifting the Veil on Taboo,” *The Observer* (8 October 2006); and “Multi-faith Agenda Separates UK,” *BBC News* (10 August 2006); available at http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/hi/uk_news/4801605.stm.

Conclusions

It is still too early to judge the effectiveness of British attempts to combat Islamist radicalization. There remains only a partial understanding of both the ideological dimension of the threat and the motivation of terrorists who have mounted or attempted to mount attacks in the U.K. Nevertheless, some advances have been made. For example, it is far harder now for extremist Islamist clerics to openly preach an ideology of hatred than in the recent past. However, it remains to be seen whether the government's strenuous efforts to engage Muslims in the effort to counter the ideologies that support terrorism will prove fruitful, or fail in the face of sectarian divisions and a growing siege mentality generally within Muslim communities. The perception that British foreign policy amounts to a war against Muslims is likely to persist, as the anticipated change of Prime Minister next year is unlikely to prompt a shift in the U.K.'s international security priorities. As emphasized above, CIST measures will take time. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that the jihadists will grant the government the time it needs to advance its CIST agenda. Another serious Islamist terrorist attack against civilians in the U.K. will likely lead to even tougher law enforcement measures that will further isolate ordinary Muslims, and—even worse—could provoke a violent backlash from elements of the white majority. Measured by any yardstick, the situation does indeed remain, in Peter Clarke's words "very disturbing."

Countering Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia

Rouben Azizian *

Introduction

Radical Islamist groups make up the bulk if not all of the terrorist organizations presently found in Central Asia. Despite the loss of their bases in Afghanistan, terror groups in the region have adapted, and are mounting increasingly potent operations. New alliances have sprouted up as well. These groups and their message have produced an increase in discord between neighbors in the region, as some states blame others for cross-border terrorist activities, as when Uzbekistan accused Kyrgyzstan of harboring terrorist training grounds for those responsible for the Andijan uprising.¹ According to Nurliman Abdulhasan, a professor at Tashkent Islamic University, there is a growing threat from Islamist extremism throughout Central Asia. These groups are increasingly diverse and are actively engaged in efforts “to initiate strong ties with religious extremist organizations abroad and to involve the latter in the training of militant groups and providing material and technical support for their activities.” Abdulhasan notes a lack of regional cooperation in combating these groups, and specifically criticizes Kyrgyzstan for “failing to take serious measures against religious extremist organizations.”²

Poverty, rampant corruption of political elites, and a lack of political freedom have caused many in the Central Asian population to align themselves with terrorist groups, because they feel such groups offer them a better avenue to participate in the political process. As one young man was quoted saying in the *Christian Science Monitor*, “All we have got [from the post-Soviet secular order] is poverty, unemployment, strife, and immorality all around. People need to be brought up properly. If we had Islamic law here, we would have peace and order.”³

In terms of locating the main geographic hotspots of religious extremism, in the past Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have traditionally been identified as the most problematic and explosive locales. The high level of Islamist radicalization among their populations, along with a repressive form of governance, was considered objectively conducive to extremist activity. On the other hand, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were seen as less problematic due to their societies’ nomadic traditions, high degree of secularization, and better governance. Some experts consider Islamist radicalism in Kazakhstan

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¹ “Uzbek Official Accuses Kyrgyzstan of Negligence Towards Extremists,” *BBC Monitoring Newsfile* (15 September 2005).

² Interfax News Agency, 11 May 2006; summary available at www.hri.org/news/balkans/rferl/2006/06-05-12.rferl.html#20.

³ Fred Weir, “Islamic Gambit in Central Asia,” *Christian Science Monitor* (19 July 2006).

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 the cultural, spiritual, and everyday life of a society, 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 traditional teachings of Islam. In contrast, fundamentalist groups are often able to flourish in areas where Islam has not put down deep roots.⁴ Islamist radicalism is on the rise in both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. If the challenge is not treated seriously and consistently, it may develop into a serious threat to the region and beyond. Destabilization in these countries would be a concern to a number of geopolitical players, but it would in particular seriously harm the strategic interests of the United States. After the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan became America's key military partner in Central Asia, despite the recent volatility in their bilateral relations. Kazakhstan, on the other hand, remains the strongest economic partner of the United States in Central Asia, and perhaps the most promising candidate for political liberalization.

Islamist Radical Groups

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) represent today the most serious threat to stability and democracy in Central Asia. The IMU and HT include various splinter groups and affiliations, reflecting struggles over ideological agendas and methods of activity within the broader Islamist movement. Despite claims by Central Asian governments of an alliance between HT and the IMU, there is no evidence that such cooperation exists. It is true that both groups advocate the establishment of an Islamic state, typically a restoration of the caliphate. Also, since Hizb ut-Tahrir is the only Islamist group active in the region that has a coherent ideology, other Islamist groups, including the IMU, have relied on the comprehensive teachings of HT, which is currently the most popular radical movement in Central Asia.⁵ The main difference between the two groups is one of focus: the IMU openly advocates and carries out militant operations, while HT concentrates on the ideological battle. The two groups nonetheless admit the closeness of their goals, and both are propelled closer to the achievement of their ends by the weakness of Central Asian states.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Although the activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan have been diminished after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the group has by no means disappeared. The IMU is considered active in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and has been

⁴ Nurlan Alniyazov, "The Muslim Board and Muslim Community in Kazakhstan," in *State and Religion in Countries with a Muslim Population*, eds. Z.I. Munavvarov and R.J. Krumm (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2004), 175.

⁵ Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante E. Cornell, "Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU," Silk Road Paper, presented at the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute (Washington, D.C.: SAIS, July 2006), 18.

blamed for attacks throughout these three states. There is, however, the issue of the veracity of official Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Tajik reports of stepped-up IMU activity, which is somewhat less than absolute. This is a long-standing problem throughout the region, as Central Asian governments have a well-documented history of using the threat of extremism to justify politically motivated crackdowns, alleging militant activity without providing credible evidence, failing to conduct adequate investigations in the wake of violent incidents, and obtaining convictions with confessions extracted under highly dubious circumstances. These states' track record does not necessarily invalidate their official statements, but it does make it difficult to draw clear conclusions.

For example, Akramiya, a splinter group from the IMU (or HT, according to other sources), was blamed, along a few other extremist groups, for masterminding the events in Andijan in May 2005, in which Uzbek troops fired into a crowd of protesters who the Uzbek government claimed had been incited by radical Islamist groups, killing an unknown number of "terrorists" and sparking days of unrest. After the leader of Akramiya, Akram Yoldoshev, was captured, he admitted the group's involvement. However, due to the authorities' habit of using torture as a means to extract confessions, it is not clear how seriously this confession should be taken.

Reports of IMU activity in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan come at a time when relations between those two countries and Uzbekistan—where the government of President Islam Karimov has long been the ultimate target of the IMU—are heading in very different directions. While Kyrgyzstan has started to increasingly cooperate with Uzbekistan, the state of Tajik-Uzbek relations (which were never noted for their warmth) have recently taken a marked turn for the worse amid tit-for-tat spying allegations, and Tajik charges that Uzbekistan has allowed the operation within Uzbek territory of more than ten training camps for supporters of Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdiev, who was behind a failed 1998 coup attempt in Tajikistan.

Against this domestic and regional backdrop, the current status of the IMU remains unclear. In February 2006, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) examined a range of answers to the question, "Is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Really Back?" No consensus emerged among regional experts.

Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir, while not officially considered a terrorist group by the United States, is regarded as one in Central Asia. Having only been active in Central Asia since the 1990s, the group has spread to Russia, China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. Although it is regarded as being most active in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, its influence in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan is increasing.

Representatives of Hizb ut-Tahrir say their activities are peaceful, and claim they do not engage in political violence; rather, they only instruct and convince Muslims of the need to establish a modern caliphate. But the governments of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Russia regard HT as an extremist organization, and have banned its activities. Hundreds of accused Hizb ut-Tahrir members are now held in jails across Central Asia as "religious extremists" who pose a danger to law and order. The Uzbek authorities were also quick to accuse Hizb ut-Tahrir of involvement in

the violence in Andijan in May 2005. But many human rights groups are not convinced that all those who have been arrested are guilty of trying to overthrow the state. They allege that the Uzbek government is cracking down on all forms of political dissent, and say that even peaceful Muslims practicing their faith outside state-controlled religious establishments risk persecution.

According to Michael Hall, Director of the International Crisis Group's (ICG) Central Asia Project, the lack of justice, accountability, and fairness in their political institutions is the main reason why many Central Asians are increasingly driven to join groups like HT and become susceptible to arguments suggesting that a caliphate, or global Muslim state, would provide this kind of accountability, justice, and fairness.⁶ Hizb ut-Tahrir member Badalov insists that government repression has increased the group's popularity. "The people have already seen the governments' slander against us," he said. "They understood that it is slander and provocation. The authorities can blame us, but the people already know very well that we won't do anything like [carrying out acts of violence]."⁷

Hizb ut-Tahrir, which says it abjures violence and only uses agitprop (agitation-propaganda) methods for propagating its ideology, focuses on penetrating the student community, the armed forces, and the security agencies. It has also managed to build up a large following among Muslim medium- and small-scale entrepreneurs. It advocates what it describes as "Islamic democracy," in which Allah and not the people will be sovereign, and an Islamic version of the free market economy, in which private entrepreneurs accept a moral responsibility for the welfare of their employees. Private enterprises are expected to serve the cause of religion and the community. Every member of HT is required to contribute ten percent of his or her earnings to the organization. Its other sources of funding are not known.

In view of its emphasis on propaganda, HT tries to invest in printing presses and publishing houses directly or through intermediaries. The group has not been identified as controlling any *madrassas* (seminaries) of its own. Rather, it recruits its student members from all educational institutions—religious or secular, public or private. It also advises its clerics to avoid attracting attention to themselves; they are discouraged from keeping long beards, and are even advised to dress in Western clothes.⁸

Central Asian Counterterrorism Strategy

Across Central Asia, governments are increasingly asserting their control over the religious establishment, and have begun banning groups that refuse to cooperate with the state. These governments are motivated by the fear that uncontrolled Islam could be a

⁶ Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Central Asia: Suppressing Hizb Ut-Tahrir Could Radicalize Youths," *RFE/RL* (28 July 2006); available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp072906.shtml>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ B. Raman, "Islamic Blame Game," *Asia Times Online* (17 May 2005); available at www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/GE17Ag03.html.

potent force for political opposition. But, as regional governments try to crack down on groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, there is no sign yet that the movements are disappearing. Some analysts caution that state efforts to control political Islam—including by arresting members of Islamic organizations that refuse to join the state-approved religious establishment—could eventually backfire. The other worrying sign is that, if a few years ago Uzbekistan's repressive policy toward Islamist and other opposition was regarded as excessive, other Central Asian states (including relatively democratic Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) are resorting to force today in dealing with Islamist groups. All of these states, however, are doing much less to address the sources of Islamist radicalism than they are doing to suppress its organized manifestations. The following case studies of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan indicate the increasingly aggressive approach taken by authorities in these states toward Muslim opposition groups.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has long been a fertile ground for the growth of fundamentalist Islam. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, it was Kyrgyzstan that adopted the most liberal approach toward Islamic fundamentalist organizations among the five Central Asian republics, allowing, for example, Hizb ut-Tahrir 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 in the region that have experienced more serious Islamist radicalism. Finally, Kyrgyzstan has a significant Uighur population, which has radical anti-Chinese and/or pro-independence aspirations.

It is, however, Hizb ut-Tahrir that 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 support for HT. Uzbeks make up 12.9 percent of the population of Kyrgyzstan, and 40 percent of the population of the Osh region. According to official figures, 92 percent of Hizb ut-Tahrir activists are ethnic Uzbeks.⁹ At the same time, HT propaganda material has been heavily distributed in cities in northern Kyrgyzstan, including the capital, and Kyrgyz law enforcement officials have reported a surge in HT leafleting. According to Sadykzhan Kamuluddin, President of the Islamic Center of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and former *mufti* and member of the Kyrgyzstan Supreme Council, Kyrgyzstan alone has about two to three thousand members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, suggesting that HT is numerically strongest in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁰ Other sources estimate HT membership in Kyrgyzstan to be close to five thousand members. Officials of a Kyrgyz state commission

⁹ Alisher Khamidov, "Islamic Radical Group Intensifies Underground Activity in Kyrgyzstan," *Eurasia Insight* (14 April 2003); available at www.eurasianet.org.

¹⁰ Igor Rotar, "Hizb ut-Tahrir Today," *Terrorism Monitor* 2:5 (11 March 2004); available at www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=400&issue_id=2920&article_id=23608.

for religious affairs admit that Hizb ut-Tahrir poses a significant “threat to national security.”¹¹

The Akaev government took several measures to control the spread of radical Islamist ideology. One was the adoption of a strict licensing system regulating the publication of religious printed matter, under the supervision of the Ulema Council, Kyrgyzstan’s foremost spiritual body for Islamic affairs. The Kyrgyz State Commission for Religious Affairs passed a number of other regulations to govern religious expression and counter radical elements. In addition, the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic issued a ban on four Islamic groups. Henceforth the activity of these groups, which the court officially labeled as “terrorist and extremist,” is considered illegal within the republic. These groups are Hizb ut-Tahrir, the Islamic Party of Turkestan, the East Turkestan Liberation Organization, and the East Turkestan Islamic Party.¹²

The March 2005 parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan once again brought Hizb ut-Tahrir under close scrutiny by the international community. HT’s anti-government propaganda made some contribution to the public uprising against the Akaev government. At the same time, the HT leadership did not support the new government, as it does not differentiate between new leaders and former president Askar Akaev’s administration. Hizb ut-Tahrir members view the events of March 2005 as simply a reshuffling of power, lacking any significant departure from the previous regime’s policies. “We will support 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 Hizb ut-Tahrir,” according to Dilyor, a HT activist in Kara-Suu.¹³

Kyrgyzstan’s social and economic situation after the “Tulip Revolution” has shown no signs of improvement. The Kyrgyz government is starting to have serious concerns about domestic stability, and is resorting to harsher methods of dealing with Islamist groups as their influence is once again starting to grow. There has been increased counterterrorism cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as the Kyrgyz authorities have taken a harder line in fighting extremism, which would be in keeping with Tashkent’s policies. Another sign of possible Uzbek influence on Kyrgyz counterterrorism efforts is the tendency to conflate Hizb ut-Tahrir with the IMU. This conflation has long been a staple of Uzbek official pronouncements, and has figured prominently in a number of trials in Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan

Governmental leaders in Kazakhstan are starting to reluctantly admit the growth of religious extremist activity in the country. In the past, the Kazakh government dismissed the danger of Islamist extremism, and somewhat patronizingly suggested that Islamism

¹¹ Kabar News Agency, 12 July 2005.

¹² Interfax News Agency, 14 January 2004.

¹³ Alisher Khamidov and Alisher Saipov, “Islamic Radical Group Bides Time on the Sidelines of Kyrgyzstan’s Revolution,” *Eurasia Insight* (14 April 2005); available at www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041405.shtml.

was present only in neighboring Central Asian states. They claimed that extremism was marginal in Kazakhstan, and was limited to Uzbek and other ethnic minorities, such as the Uighurs, Chechens, and Azerbaijanis, but was not present among ethnic 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 Islamist extremists and ordinary Muslims who simply 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 in Chimkent, making up around 18 percent of its population. Generally, the Uzbeks are far more conservative and observant than the Kazakhs in their practice of Islam, and consequently the number of Islamist radicals among them is much greater.¹⁴

The terrorist group known as “Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahideen,” which is structurally affiliated with Al Qaeda, has been exposed and dismantled in Kazakhstan.¹⁵ According to Kazakhstan’s National Security Committee (KNB), the Jamaat was administered from abroad through appointed leaders, known as emirs. One of them, Akhmed Bekmurzayev, was killed during counterterrorist operations in Tashkent in March 2004.¹⁶

East Turkestan (Uighur) radical groups connected to Al Qaeda and Iraqi insurgent groups are present in Kazakhstan as well. The leadership of the Uighur community in Kazakhstan is generally unhappy with President Nazarbaev’s policy towards the Uighurs, and accuses him of not caring about the plight of Uighurs in China. The government of Kazakhstan, hypersensitive to Chinese reactions, has always distanced itself from the East Turkestan problem and the plight of the Chinese Uighurs, despite the fact that the Kazakh 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 of Kazakhstan.¹⁷

According to Kazakh experts, there are four separatist organizations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan involved in anti-Chinese activities in Xinjiang. They are the Unified National Revolutionary Front of Eastern Turkestan; the Organization of Liberation of Uighurstan; the International Committee for Liberation of Eastern Turkestan; and Yana Ayat. The four groups differ regarding the tactics they use in their struggle, but they all

¹⁴ Igor Rotar, “Kazakhstan: Is Chimkent a Hotbed of Islamic Radicalism?” Keston News Service (17 January 2002); available at www.assistnews.net/Stories/2002/s02010044.htm.

¹⁵ See Igor Rotar, “Demographics, Borders Complicate Anti-Terrorism Efforts in Central Asia,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1:130 (18 November 2004); available at http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2368881.

¹⁶ Interfax-Kazakhstan News Agency, 11 November 2004.

¹⁷ Marat Yermukanov, “Astana Offers Clumsy Explanations for Banning ‘Terrorist Organizations,’” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1:108 (18 October 2004); available at http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2368710.

basically seek a radical overthrow of the government in Xinjiang.¹⁸ However, Konstantin Syroezhkin, a prominent China scholar based in Almaty, believes that most of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz members of the radical groups in fact immigrated from China in recent years. They lack education, and do not belong to the Uighur elite. They are normally of older age, believe in the break-up of China, and count on Western support.¹⁹ Further radicalization of the Uighur movement in Central Asia is possible, however. There is a great degree of hostility against Uighurs in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Uighur intellectuals in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan complain that constant attempts are made to label Uighurs as unpatriotic. According to such accounts, Uighurs are suspected of trying to create a Greater Uighurstan, which would include parts of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as well as China.

In October 2004, the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan recognized Al Qaeda, the East Turkestan Islamic Party, the Kurdish People's Congress, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) as terrorist groups, a decision that prohibits them from any activity in the country. The ban on activities of the East Turkestan Islamic Party 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, Hizb ut-Tahrir that is becoming particularly worrisome to the Kazakh government, as more and more HT cells are operating in the country. The group has now spread all over the country, and is no longer confined to the southern provinces. The number of Kazakh members of HT is on the rise as well. Most of the new members are attracted to HT for social and economic reasons. Kazakhstan's economic progress may be impressive, but it is uneven and inequitably distributed, and has in fact led to greater polarization in Kazakh society. In March 2005, the Astana City Court ruled to classify Hizb ut-Tahrir as an extremist organization and to ban it in Kazakhstan.²⁰

The lower house of the Kazakh parliament voted in May 2005 to adopt stricter anti-terror legislation. The legislation, consisting of a set of amendments to eleven existing national security laws, imposes heavier penalties for "extremist and terrorist activities," including "terrorist financing," and introduces more restrictive measures governing the activities and formal registration of religious organizations and political parties.²¹

Kazakhstan has positioned itself as a staunch supporter of the West's war on terror. Kazakhstan is undoubtedly working to establish itself as a state actively cooperating in 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, a perception that will clearly benefit domestic economic investment. But at the micro level, experts within Kazakh-

¹⁸ M. Laumulin, ed., *Trends in the Evolution of Extremism in Central Asia* (Almaty: Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies, 2003), 61–63.

¹⁹ K.L. Syroezhkin, *Myths and Realities of Ethnic Separatism in China and Security of Central Asia* (Almaty: Daikh Press, 2003), 466.

²⁰ *Kazakhstan Today* (29 March 2005).

²¹ ITAR-TASS News Agency, 12 May 2005.

stan are beginning to question the state's anti-terrorist agenda, and diverge in their views on what shape it will take in the future.²²

Like Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan has warmed to the Uzbek approach to dealing with Islamist groups. Despite traditional tensions between the two states, and the regional rivalry between Almaty and Tashkent, the level of security cooperation between the two countries has been steadily growing. After an initially cautious reaction to the Uzbek crackdown in Andijan in May 2005, the Kazakh government has responded more favorably to the Uzbek interpretation of the events in Andijan, and to Uzbekistan's hard-line policy in general.

External Partners

The Central Asian nations' balancing-act approach to counterterrorism—cooperation with the West, on the one hand, and Russia and China on the other—is evolving toward a closer interaction with their larger neighbors in the region. The Central Asian states face no criticism from China and Russia regarding their repressive methods in dealing with opposition, and are disturbed by Western pressure to improve their human rights situation. States in the region have also been disappointed with the level of Western economic assistance, including in the area of counterterrorism.

Russia and CSTO

The Central Asian states consider Russia to be their closest partner in dealing with religious extremism, and therefore treat the Russia-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as the main multilateral vehicle of counterterrorism cooperation. Kyrgyzstan hosts a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) counterterrorism center in its capital, Bishkek, as well as a Russian Air Force base in Kant. After the Andijan uprising, Uzbekistan rejoined the CSTO. The CSTO has set up rapid-deployment forces in the region and conducts annual counterterrorism exercises. The Rubezh-2006 CSTO military exercises were held in August 2006 in Kazakhstan's Mangistau province. The exercises, which were intended to test the CSTO's collective rapid-deployment force, involved 2,500 personnel, more than 60 armored vehicles, 50 artillery pieces and mortars, 40 aircraft and helicopters, and 14 warships and support vessels. The exercises centered on an operation to resist attempts by radical Islamist groups to establish an Islamic fundamentalist state. The scenario of the exercise was quite telling: "taking advantage of the local population's resentment over the results of a presidential election, terrorist and extremist organizations seize power in a Central Asian state and a neighboring nation's border districts in an attempt to create a caliphate and enlarge its territory by invading a neighboring country. ... The Kazakh authorities then ask the CSTO to provide military assistance to defend the country's sovereignty."²³

²² Roger McDermott, "Kazakhstan's Future Counter-Terrorist Agenda," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 1:115 (28 October 2004); available at http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?volume_id=401&issue_id=3122&article_id=2368757.

²³ Interfax News Agency, 28 August 2006; summary available at www.hri.org/news/balkans/rferl/2006/06-08-22.rferl.html#06.

During his visit to the Kant base in September 2006, Russia's Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov emphasized Russia's long-term interest in the base. According to Ivanov, Russia will invest several billions of rubles in the Kant air base in the next few years. The base is important first of all as an outpost of CIS antiterrorist forces in the region. Planes that take off from Kant can cover all of Central Asia as far as Afghanistan without refueling. Given the current conditions, large groups of narcotics traffickers and terrorists can be tracked and eliminated only with the help of aviation. A military exercise scheduled to be staged next year will practice precisely these tasks, the Russian Defense Minister said.²⁴

China and SCO

The Central Asian states, excluding Turkmenistan, are also involved in the expanding anti-terrorist activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as well as bilateral anti-terrorist cooperation with China. 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 terrorism, separatism, and extremism. In the declaration, SCO members pledged not to give refuge to individuals accused or suspected of terrorist, separatist, or extremist activities.²⁵ Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov proposed at a meeting of the CIS Defense Ministers Council in Dushanbe on 24 June 2005 that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization should create rapid-deployment forces.²⁶ Rakhmonov said that the SCO needs "strong collective rapid-deployment forces to counter international terrorism and religious extremism."

The SCO's anti-terrorist cooperation is, however, impeded by a number of factors. The Chinese formula of fighting all the "three evils"—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—does not fully resonate with other SCO members' interests. In particular, identifying who exactly is a "separatist" or "extremist" is problematic in many Central Asian states. Russia does not want the SCO to divert Central Asian states from focusing on their close military cooperation within CSTO. Kazakhstan is wary of joint military exercises under the rubric of the SCO, and fears the gradual transformation of the organization into a military grouping. Kazakh officials prefer to emphasize the confidence-building nature of the organization. For its part, 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 Kyrgyzstan does not intend to host a Chinese military base.²⁷ According to Madumarov, "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."

²⁴ Interfax News Agency, 21 September 2006.

²⁵ *Kazakhstan Today* (5 July 2005).

²⁶ *RFE/RL Tajik Service*, 25 June 2005.

²⁷ *Kazakhstan Today* (1 August 2005).

In accordance with the charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the SCO Convention on Fighting Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism of 15 June 2001, the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Organization Cooperation (RATS SCO) started functioning on 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 the SCO states, as well as a list of individuals sought for or suspected of terrorist, extremist, and separatist activities. It is also working to create a database to collect and exchange relevant information. RATS has developed a plan for joint anti-terrorist exercises among SCO member states. The Center has encountered a number of difficulties too, however. Its location in Tashkent and the fact that an Uzbek general is in charge of it at the moment have colored the activities of the Center, and have led to some misunderstandings and problems.²⁸

Kazakhstan and China held a two-stage Chinese-Kazakh counterterrorism exercise in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region in August 2006. The second phase of the exercise, which followed a first phase in Kazakhstan, involved 700 policemen and 100 observers from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). According to Vyacheslav Kasimov, head of the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, the exercise demonstrated regional leaders' commitment to fighting the "three evils" of separatism, terrorism, and extremism.²⁹ In October 2006, representatives of Kazakhstan's Eastern Kazakhstan Province and China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) signed an accord on police cooperation to fight terrorism and drug trafficking. Eastern Kazakhstan Province Governor Viktor Khrapunov referred to ambitious plans for cross-border security cooperation.³⁰ In September 2006, Uzbekistan and China signed a security cooperation protocol in Beijing to be in effect for 2006–07. It includes cooperation on police training as well as in fighting terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and cross-border crime.³¹

The U.S. Role

The September 11 attacks led the U.S. government to realize that it was crucial to the national interests of the United States to greatly enhance relations with the five Central Asian countries in order to prevent them from becoming harbors for terrorism. The U.S. government has moved to classify various groups in the region as terrorist organizations, making them subject to various sanctions. In September 2000, the U.S. State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. In August 2002, the United States announced that it was freezing any U.S. 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 U.S. interests and

²⁸ *Kazkhinform* (9 February 2005).

²⁹ Xinhua News Agency, 26 August 2006.

³⁰ Interfax-Kazakhstan News Agency, 12 October 2006.

³¹ Xinhua News Agency, 6 September 2006.

citizens. 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 United States has not yet classified Hizb ut-Tahrir as a terrorist group. According to the State Department's report *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001*, "despite [Eurasian] regional governments' claims, the United States has not found clear links between Hizb ut-Tahrir and terrorist activities." Reflecting this view, U.S. 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 as 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 U.S.-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."³²

The current U.S. military cooperation with Central Asian states is facing serious challenges, however, due to an angry reaction in Uzbekistan to Western criticism of its handling of the events in Andijan, as well as China and Russia's growing concern about the U.S.'s alleged role in sponsoring "orange revolutions" in Central Asia. The Central Asian political elites have also become suspicious that the United States has been involved in regime changes and social unrest in the post-Soviet region.³³ In the SCO summit's final declaration on 5 July 2005, the Organization asked the forces in the U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan to clarify a timeframe for withdrawal from U.S. bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Soon after, the Uzbek authorities asked the United States to pull all military forces out of the Karshi-Khanabad air base.

Unlike Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan has agreed that the U.S. air base can remain there as long as it is needed. Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev reiterated this approach in a recent interview with the Russian television channel Vesti-24. He stated that the U.S. air base in Kyrgyzstan will remain until "the situation in Afghanistan is normalized." "Afghanistan is a hotbed of both international terrorism and of drugs," Bakiev said. "It is a real evil. It poses a serious problem, not only to Kyrgyzstan, but to the entire Central Asian region. For this reason, we cooperate [and decided] to host the [U.S.] military base. It has precisely this kind of purpose, a local one: [stabilizing] the situation in Afghanistan."³⁴

Despite these reassuring comments, there is skepticism among Central Asia experts that the Kyrgyz government is treating the United States more like a source of revenue

³² *Washington Post* (27 December 2004), A4.

³³ Gulnoza Saidazimova, "Five Years After 9/11: Crackdowns Loom Behind Central Asia's War On Terror," *RFE/RL* (8 September 2006); available at www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/09/23b8c124-00f0-4ee5-b694-bcfb2772a5e9.html.

³⁴ ITAR-TASS News Agency, 30 August 2006.

(through increased rental fees for the use of the Manas base facility) rather than a genuine partner in combating Islamic radicalism. The 6 December 2006 incident at the Manas air base that culminated in the fatal shooting of a Kyrgyz citizen by a U.S. serviceman has posed an additional challenge to U.S.-Kyrgyz military relations. Kyrgyzstan's parliament passed a resolution on 15 December 2006 calling for a broad review of the U.S. military presence in the country. The resolution urges the Kyrgyz government to review the 2001 Kyrgyz-U.S. agreement on the status of U.S. forces in Kyrgyzstan, request the handover of the U.S. serviceman involved in the incident to Kyrgyz law enforcement authorities, and review the "expediency of the continued presence of Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan."³⁵

According to Dosym Satpaev, who heads an Almaty-based think tank called Risk Assessment Group, the Kyrgyz government is also facing pressure from Uzbekistan, and has therefore lately stepped up its cooperation against what both governments define as terrorists and religious extremists. Satpaev believes that, after 9/11, the Central Asian governments had certain expectations from their cooperation with Washington. They hoped that increased U.S. engagement in the region would help provide better regional security, but they have been somewhat disappointed, as the region continues to face threats and challenges similar to the ones it did five years ago.³⁶

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is quite clear that the United States' security cooperation with Central Asian states has reached a critical stage and needs to be seriously reassessed. It is becoming harder and harder for the United States to continue balancing its counterterrorism and human rights agendas in its relations with Central Asian states without seriously undermining one or the other cause.

U.S. objectives are jeopardized not only by the authoritarian parties of radical Islamist revolution such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, but also by the authoritarian nature of these Central Asian regimes themselves—with their rampant corruption, declining living standards, poor delivery of public goods and services, and stagnant or declining economic growth rates. By governing so poorly, and being intolerant and undemocratic to an alarming degree, these regimes are inadvertently helping to breed religious extremism. The challenge remains to determine how the U.S. can support secular and moderate Islamic regimes and movements, foster tolerance, and promote freedom of expression and freedom of religion without being identified too closely with the repressive actions of Central Asian regimes.

Some, if not most, of these tasks can not be fulfilled in the Central Asian region 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 efforts. There is no evidence of the United States seriously considering anti-terrorism cooperation with China and Russia in Central Asia. If the three nations can find a common lan-

³⁵ *RFE/RL Newslines* (19 December 2006).

³⁶ Interfax-Kazakhstan News Agency, 10 September 2006.

guage 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? It is not practical for the United States to continue dismissing or ignoring the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which is becoming increasingly active in anti-terrorism activities in the region. The United States needs to establish some sort of a dialogue with the SCO as well as the CSTO, and should openly recognize the constructive elements in their work.

The United States also needs to clarify the role of its basing facilities in the Central Asian states. Linking their operation to the campaign in Afghanistan only and, at the same time, implying a certain broader geopolitical context for their existence discourages the Central Asian states from considering the United States as a key partner in dealing with their own radical Islamist movements. Parallel to the establishment of constructive relations with the SCO and CSTO, the United States should make better use of the basing facilities for training regional anti-terrorist forces.

NATO should also explore expanding relations with the SCO. According to Ariel Cohen, for example, options for cooperative efforts may go beyond the existing NATO-Russia Council and the Partnership for Peace, of which most Central Asian states are members. NATO members have a degree of cohesion and unity of values that is not yet present among the SCO member and observer states. Equally important, the SCO is a relatively small organization, still in its infancy, with an operating budget less than USD 30 million and a staff of only a few dozen people. NATO—being larger, stronger, and more experienced in transnational security issues—can engage the SCO in discussions of the strategic issues facing the region, and can help develop paths for cooperation along the lines of Partnership for Peace.³⁷

³⁷ Ariel Cohen, “What To Do About The Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Rising Influence,” *Eurasia Insight* (21 September 2006); available at www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav092106.shtml.

The Potential Role of Women in Contributing to Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism: The Cases of Bosnia and Afghanistan

Frances Pilch *

Introduction

We should make no mistake: This struggle between religious forms, between prescriptive, repressive doctrine and the sublime adventure of faith, is one of the two great strategic issues of our time—along with the redefinition of the socio-economic roles of women, their transition from being the property of men to being equal partners with men (which is the most profound social development in human history).¹

One of the most-discussed topics in the fields of international relations and security studies at present is how Western governments can best work to counter ideological support for terrorism. The military action in Afghanistan that brought down the Taliban regime was essential and effective (at least in the short term); terrorist financial networks have been disrupted; and increased intelligence capacity has undoubtedly been developed. However, there is widespread consensus that we have not done well in countering terrorist ideology, which is what fuels recruits to join terrorist movements. Brian Michael Jenkins, one of the world's leading authorities on terrorism, has said, "[w]e cannot ignore the social phenomena and dynamic processes that turn young men like the London bombers into suicidal jihadists ... otherwise, even as we succeed in degrading the terrorists' operational capabilities, their ideology will spread and their base will grow. Here, I think, we have not done well."²

The central thesis of this essay is that there is a link between terrorism and issues concerning women's rights; and that, therefore, when women's rights are advanced, the ideological structures that provide support for terrorism can be subtly undermined. The importance of women's voices and issues, therefore, should not be overlooked, and the concerns of women should be addressed as a critical part of any effort to counter terrorist ideology.

The struggle for women's rights takes many forms and is fought on many fronts. The actors in this struggle are also many and varied, including human rights groups, committed individual activists, women's groups within countries, agents of interna-

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¹ Ralph Peters, "Rolling Back Radical Islam," *Parameters* (2002): 6.

² Brian Michael Jenkins, "Global Terrorism: Taking the Long View," *Worldviews for the 21st Century* 3:3 (Fall 2005): 10.

tional organizations, and women's groups that have an international reach. The agendas for all of these actors are also diverse—some are primarily interested in preventing violence against women, some advocate for greater socioeconomic freedoms for women, and others are primarily interested in promoting women's political participation. Women have been extremely important in dialogues concerning the peaceful resolution of international conflict and in supporting international initiatives on women's rights. Recognizing the diverse nature of both the actors and agendas in the struggle for women's human rights, this article seeks to encourage the inclusion of women's voices and interests in the discourse on terrorism.

Historically there has been a critical and undeniable link between radical Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.³ Radical Islamist regimes such as the Taliban in Afghanistan have harbored and sometimes encouraged terrorists. It is no accident that the northwestern provinces of Pakistan, in which Islamic fundamentalists operate with virtual impunity beyond the reach of the central government, are home to remaining Al Qaeda cells; nor is it a coincidence that such cells flourish along the coast of Somalia, where there has been a revival of fundamentalism in the chaos surrounding the failure of the Somali state. In these areas—areas in which Islamic fundamentalism either holds sway or is rising in importance—women's rights are often severely restricted and increasingly jeopardized.

Although radical Islamic fundamentalism is not the same thing as terrorism, there is a link between the two. Therefore, when women are mobilized to advance their rights, they may be, at the same time, perhaps even without their knowing it, advancing the fight against terrorism. In addition, women everywhere suffer from chaos and violence; they lose brothers, fathers, husbands, and children in violence perpetrated by terrorists. Women are the victims of regimes and cultural systems that do not permit them to have a voice, or even to have recourse to the law for redress of their grievances. Therefore, if we seek to undermine the ideology of terrorism in the name of promoting the rights of women, we must examine policies that tend to support regimes that habitually repress women. Additionally, when permitted to be part of the political process, women have been powerful advocates for peace, reconciliation, and moderation. Therefore, those who wish to address the ideology of terrorism would be wise to address as well the importance of women's issues and concerns.

While many policy-makers tend to think in terms of states and their actions and initiatives, in fact much of the change that is taking place in the world can be credited to the increased reach and dynamism of non-governmental organizations. These organizations have power that is seldom sufficiently recognized. Messages can be circulated worldwide in a matter of seconds; resources can be shared between groups in remote corners of nations on different continents; a group in one part of the world can model

³ Belinda Cooper and Isabel Traugott, "Women's Rights and Security in Central Asia," *World Policy Journal* 20:1 (Spring 2003): 62. Cooper and Traugott write that "women make up what might be called a ready-made antiterrorist potential. While it is certainly wrong to equate all fundamentalism with terrorism, terrorism today is closely linked with religious fundamentalism."

its message and behavior on that of a group in another part of the world; and women, who may have once lived and worked in isolation, can find support for their dreams and ideals as never before.

Much of the work of organizations such as the United Nations High Commission on Refugees is actually carried out by non-governmental organizations.⁴ Humanitarian missions worldwide depend on NGOs for specialized help. They are partners in every meaningful way in advancing the interests and well-being of the most vulnerable members of global society. Therefore, it is vital that efforts to counter terrorist ideology become aware of the potential of NGOs that address women's issues to act as potential vehicles of change and reform within the Muslim world.

Diversity Within the Muslim World and the Women's Movement

A powerful consideration about how best to involve women in countering the ideologies that support terrorism deals with the tendency to view women in the Muslim world as a monolith, or in the aggregate, as if they all had the same perspectives and problems. As Saimah Ashraf has written, "Many people don't realize ... that there are a large variety of Muslim women around the world, living in such diverse areas as the Middle East, South Asia, South East Asia, Yugoslavia, Northern Africa, and the Southern parts of the former USSR...."⁵ Political and cultural orientations toward women and the level of economic and social development within these areas vary widely. Additionally, there are many different interpretations of the meaning of the Koran within Islam itself, with significant variations across sects and regions.

One of the more interesting developments within the Islamic community concerns the relationship of the Koran to the modern world.⁶ Women have joined in this conversation, with some seeking to return to the earlier portions of the sacred text, which tend to be more tolerant and liberal, and some seeking to reformulate conservative approaches to women's roles in light of the history of Muhammad and his life. Saimah Ashraf makes a strong case for the original understanding of Islam, in which women had privileges and in which there were no double standards: "However, with the progression of time, the rights of Muslim women began deteriorating, and today, very few Muslim countries adhere to the Islamic ideal in their treatment of women."⁷

⁴ Author's interview with Dan Conway, former Human Resources Director for UNHCR, 10 November 2006.

⁵ Saimah Ashraf, "Shattering Illusions—Western Conceptions of Muslim Women," available at www.islamfortoday.com/shatteringillusions.htm.

⁶ For example, see the work of Abeer A. Ibrahim, visiting scholar at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, especially her forthcoming book, *Honor Behind the Veil; Representing Women in Islam*, in which she argues that faulty interpretations of the Koran that are detrimental to women's rights have been advanced by fundamentalists. Author's interview with Abeer A. Ibrahim, 14 December 2006.

⁷ Ashraf, "Shattering Illusions."

It is absolutely essential that one realize that the role of women varies significantly across different states and societies.⁸ The status of women and women's groups is completely different in Tunisia and Turkey than it is in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In Algeria, activist women's groups have flourished, while in Egypt, where women enjoy progressive access to education, some women's groups have been shut down and their leaders arrested. No culture is static; political and religious forces within a country can change, altering perceptions of the roles of women and limiting or increasing women's access to legal remedies, education, and social advancement. Women's movements themselves are quite different as well, and utilize disparate theoretical frameworks and tools. However, in almost all Arab countries, the legal status of women and the nature of family laws, or "personal status codes," is an enduring issue that promotes contentious debate.

In an occasional paper published by the United Nations Development Program, Valentine Moghadam notes that "all Arab countries have in place family laws—also known as personal status codes—that confer upon women the status of dependent and minor with respect to marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance.... The cumulative effect is gender-based discrimination and second-class citizenship for women...."⁹ Moghadam notes that, since the 1980s, questions concerning the role of women in society have become highly politicized, and that the conservative Islamic revival has brought into question the idea of Western conceptions of human rights that emphasize autonomy and choice, and has suggested in some cases instead the idea of "Islamic" women's rights, with "an emphasis on respect for family, religion, and community."¹⁰ The idea of the "Western woman" may be deeply linked with the idea of Western cultural imperialism, and may be viewed as an attack on Islamic culture itself.¹¹

Some women's rights advocates in the Middle East have reacted to religious laws and cultural practices that restrict women's freedom of choice in society by condemning Islamic "fundamentalism." However, it is important to note that there are interesting differences within feminist movements located in Islamic society. One of the principle arguments one might see, for example, is that Islam itself is not inherently mi-

⁸ This point was stressed at a panel addressing "Women, Human Rights, and Islam: Exploring the Complexities," held by Amnesty International in 2000. A summary is available online at www.amnestyusa.org/events/agm/agm2000/islam.html.

⁹ The single best source for information on women's activism in the Muslim world is the occasional paper by Valentine M. Moghadam, "Towards Gender Equality in the Arab/Middle East Region: Islam, Culture, and Feminist Activism," published by the Human Development Report Office of UNDP, and available online at http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications/background_papers/2004/HDR2004_Valentine_Moghadam.pdf.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹ Denis MacEoin, "Why Do Muslims Execute Innocent People," *Middle East Quarterly* 13:4 (Fall 2006): 6. The radicalized, jihadist type of Salafi thought and activism was advanced by Sayyid Qutb (1906–66), one of the most influential Muslim theorists. He says that true Muslims should fight the forces of modernity. His thinking is echoed today by Osama bin Laden and the Afghan Taliban.

sogynist, and that in fact, in the early days of Islam, women played a much greater role in society and in religion. The noted scholar Assam Afsaruddin takes this view, asserting that Islamic “modernists” believe that the Islamic moral/legal code can be interpreted within a general ethical framework. She notes that the *sharia* is *not* all-encompassing, but rather provides broad guidelines for conduct rather than specific prescriptions. She also notes that in the Islamic tradition there is to be found divine sanction for religious and cultural pluralism. Most importantly, regarding women’s issues, she notes that women were politically enfranchised in the seventh century under early Islam.¹² Therefore, within the Muslim world, you will find those who believe that women’s rights can be interpreted within the text of the Koran, and perhaps even within the context of Islamic resurgence, and you will also find those that hold a different view—that is, that women’s progress in the Islamic world is dependent upon cultural change, education, and the institution of new legal protections. According to Moghadam, “Islamic feminism is a Koran-centered reform movement by Muslim women with the linguistic and theological knowledge to challenge patriarchal interpretations and offer alternative readings in pursuit of women’s advancement and in refutation of Western stereotypes and Islamist orthodoxy alike.”¹³

Some Islamic feminists agree that women’s status in Muslim societies is inferior, but attribute that to the development of a highly patriarchal society—with its corresponding male-dominated structures of power—rather than to Islam itself. Many of these modern Islamic feminists “are aware of what may be called global feminism and many have attended international women’s conferences, but they are keen to make their case for women’s rights within a religious idiom.”¹⁴ To these, the priority that is given to the human individual in Western society may not resonate within their culture, which places high value on the maintenance of family and community. An example of this kind of thinking can be found in an interview with Ingrid Mattson, the first female to head the Islamic Society of North America. When asked what the term *Muslim feminism* means to her, she replied, “Feminism—the idea that women have rights, that women and men should exert themselves to ensure that women have a meaningful way to achieve their rights—is a good concept. But it shouldn’t be a defining worldview. My agenda is not a narrow one of only looking at the interests of women. I’m looking at the interests of our whole community.”¹⁵ Secular feminists, on the other hand, frame

¹² From a lecture by Asma Afsaruddin, “Islamic Perspectives on Democratic Virtues, Pluralism and the Common Good,” at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 26 July 2006.

¹³ Moghadam, “Towards Gender Equality in the Arab/Middle East Region,” 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵ Dilshad D. Ali, interview with Ingrid Mattson, n.d., 2006; available at www.beliefnet.com/story/198/story_19898.html.

the debate in terms of international conventions and the global discourse, and tend to talk in terms of democratization and human rights in general.¹⁶

Some scholars feel that the Western feminist movement has been derelict in appropriately addressing women's issues in the Muslim world. As Kay Hymowitz has written, "few quarrel with feminism's core moral insight, which changed the lives (and minds) of women forever: that women are due the same rights and dignity as men. So, as news of the appalling miseries of women in the Islamic world has piled up, where are the feminists? Where's the outrage?"¹⁷ Hymowitz talks about the three manifestations of current feminism: gender feminism, multiculturalism, and world-government utopian, the closest to classical liberal feminism. The question Hymowitz astutely poses is whether any of these strains of feminism is "interested in freeing women to make their own choices...."¹⁸

The debate concerning differing perspectives on women's issues within or outside an Islamic framework has been clearly evident in Iraq. Following a major effort by women's rights activists to prevent the adoption of *sharia* under the provisional government, U.S. representative Paul Bremer worked hard to establish a secular interpretation of the relationship between religion and state. However, provisions concerning a legal regime in Iraq proved to be a major battleground between various interpretations of the role of Islam as the new constitution was debated. While *sharia* was not adopted wholesale, the compromise that ensued generated the new provision that no law can be passed that contradicts the "established rulings" of Islam. This may prove to be a major setback to the advancement of women in Iraq. The question is, of course, who will determine what those "established rulings" are—that is, who will be the interpreters of what the Koran is intended to mean today.¹⁹

In many Muslim states, the development of the apparatus of the state has meant compromise with religious elites. Therefore, one must be conscious of different "domains" of women's rights. The "public domain" concerns women's right to vote, to hold jobs of their own choosing, to be educated, and to serve in elective office. These areas in general are somewhat more easily implemented than those matters pertaining to family law, which have typically been the preserve of religious elites. For example, while Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt allowed women more access to education and employment in the 1950s and 1960s, his regime could not address family matters.²⁰ One could interpret this as a clear distinction between the public sphere and the private

¹⁶ For an excellent overview of feminist arguments within the Islamic world, see Jasmin Zine, "Between Orientalism and Fundamentalism: The Politics of Muslim Women's Feminist Engagement," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 3:1 (2006).

¹⁷ Kay S. Hymowitz, "Why Feminism is AWOL on Islam," *City Journal* (Winter 2003); available at www.city-journal.org/printable.php?id=985.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁹ See Isobel Coleman, "Women, Islam, and the New Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 85:1 (Jan.–Feb. 2006).

²⁰ Moghadam, "Towards Gender Equality in the Arab/Middle East Region," 16.

sphere. This pattern, while not universal, is quite common in Muslim-dominated countries.

The gravity of the political difficulties of changing family law, or law defining the private sphere, was made evident in Pakistan in the autumn of 2006, when lawmakers from a coalition of six Islamic groups threatened to vacate their parliamentary seats if Pakistan's government were to change a rape law that had been criticized by human rights activists. Such a walkout could potentially have destabilized the government of President Pervez Musharraf. In August, his ruling party had proposed a bill to amend the Hudood Ordinances, Pakistan's religious-based laws governing rape and vice, which were adopted in 1979 after being pushed by a group of Islamic clerics. The move to amend them was initiated to advance protection of women's rights; under the Hudood Ordinances, for example, women who reported being raped had to "produce four male witnesses to the crime, or face charges that they had committed adultery."²¹ The new bill was stalled for a considerable length of time before it finally passed the lower house of parliament. However, the clerics and fundamentalists won a different battle on the provincial level in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The Hasba bill calls for an accountability bureau, headed by a religious cleric, who is to uphold "Islamic virtues."²²

Family laws are often used to justify violence against women, both within the home and in society at large.²³ "Honor killings" continue to take place in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and are a continuing problem within immigrant communities in Europe. Domestic violence is hidden inside family walls; violence against immigrant women workers in Arab households is a whispered fact of life in Saudi Arabia. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is tacitly condoned in Sudan and Egypt. In a neo-patriarchal state, it is virtually impossible for women to have access to legal remedies when crimes of violence are committed against them. Where fundamentalist forms of Islam have become allied with military or political power, or where clerics have assumed control over the apparatus of the state, political systems "have applied *sharia* in a harsher form than usual."²⁴

Reflecting the diversity of women's experiences and roles in Islamic states, women in Central Asia were frequently empowered under communist rule, and were able to obtain access to education and jobs. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many successor regimes, such as that in Uzbekistan, have experienced growing fundamentalist movements within their borders. Scholars such as Belinda Cooper and Isabel Traugott have noted some disturbing trends in this region: "Central Asian

²¹ David Montero, "Rape Law Reform Roils Pakistan's Islamists," *Christian Science Monitor* (17 November 2006); available at www.csmonitor.com/2006/1117/p07s02-wosc.html.

²² Ibid. See also Ashraf Khan, "After TV Series, Pakistan Rethinks Rape, Sex Laws," *Christian Science Monitor* (11 July 2006); available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0711/p01s03-wosc.html>.

²³ For an excellent discussion of Islamic law and punishment, see MacEoin, "Why Do Muslims Execute Innocent People?"

²⁴ Ibid., 6.

women ... have historical reasons to oppose religious extremism.... Yet throughout Central Asia, poverty, political repression, and a resurgence of traditionalism are keeping women out of the fight against terrorism and even pushing them into the arms of fundamentalists.”²⁵

Women’s Issues and Universal Norms

In spite of the entrenched patriarchal power structures in many Muslim states, women are slowly becoming more educated, are taking part in worldwide conversations about women’s issues through the use of the Internet, are traveling beyond their state boundaries, and are participating in conferences and symposia that address women’s rights as human rights. While they may disagree on the relationship of the women’s movement to Islam, they tend to unite around certain issues, the most prominent of which is violence against women. In general, women from all cultures seek to prevent the exploitation of women through sexual and other violence, and seek legal protections and remedies for women who are vulnerable to violence.²⁶

Arab women were active during regional preparations for the Beijing Women’s Conference in 1994. Women’s organizations proliferated worldwide after Beijing. In this period women turned their attention to a new range of activities. Moghadam identifies seven types of women’s organizations that developed during this period: service organizations; professional associations; women-in-development NGOs; worker-based organizations; research centers, women’s studies institutions, etc.; women’s auxiliaries of political parties, and; women’s rights or feminist organizations.²⁷ She notes that, of four common demands, two are directly related to the “private sphere”: the “modernization of family laws, and the criminalization of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women.”²⁸

In 1999, Human Rights Watch produced a powerful report on violence against women in Pakistan.²⁹ The report noted that “estimates of the percentage of women who experience domestic violence in Pakistan range from 70 to upwards of 90 percent.”³⁰ The explanations for the violence include rage over inadequate dowries, honor killings, and killings because of alleged sexual liaisons. It is clear that family structure in that country promotes the subordination and vulnerability of women.

The gains that were made by women when the Taliban was overthrown by the United States-led coalition in Afghanistan are even now in danger of being reduced, as the security situation becomes more volatile. Human Rights Watch reports that, while

²⁵ Cooper and Traugott, “Women’s Rights and Security in Central Asia,” 59.

²⁶ See, for example, Waheed Khan, “Pakistanis Try Confronting Shame of Honor Killings,” Reuters (22 May 2006); available at www.whrnet.org/fundamentalisms/docs/issue-pakistan-0606.html.

²⁷ Moghadam, “Towards Gender Equality in the Arab/Middle East Region,” 26.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, “The Scope of the Problem of Violence Against Women,” HRW Report (1999); available at <http://hrw.org/reports/1999/pakistan/Pakhtml-05.htm>.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

women in general say that life is better now than it was under the Taliban, women's rights advocates have been targeted, sexual assault is common, and violence against women, girls, and boys is "both frequent and almost never reported."³¹

Although women's groups throughout the world prioritize concerns differently, and frame the debate on women's issues in a variety of ways, there is some consensus that can be discerned. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action all seek to "promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all women throughout the life cycle." Most nations of the world have signed on to these agreements, although some have registered rather serious reservations. Nevertheless, there is some consensus that "women's rights are human rights," and that all states, regardless of their religious composition, should promote these rights. Women's groups can work toward that goal, within their individual perspectives and frameworks. In the Muslim world, this approach is reflected in the work of Islamic reformers, mostly outside the Arab world, who are trying to "bring Islam into closer harmony with universal standards of justice, tolerance, pluralism, and human rights."³² The feminist scholar Asra Q. Nomani is an example of this school of Islamic reform.

However, other Muslim writers disdain the idea of human rights as defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, saying that these are of Judeo-Christian origin, and that "human rights must be Islamic human rights."³³ To these scholars, "living by the *sharia* (religious law) is the key both to the moral life and to the regeneration of the Muslim faith."³⁴ Most Islamic fundamentalists pursue the twin goals of restoring Islamic laws and values while at the same time attacking and denouncing Western influences. Ana Serafim notes that, "Western values such as individualism, liberalism, human rights, equality, liberty, democracy, free markets, and separation of church and state often have little or no resonance in Islamic culture," and that Islam is a "pervasive religion" that regulates every aspect of human life.³⁵

Women's rights might be aided by a gradual recognition on the part of the most repressive states that the economic development and well-being of any state is influenced by the ways in which women are allowed to take part in the economy and polity. Ralph Peters has underscored the importance of women's rights to a Muslim states' economic success, noting that

[t]he West's liberation of women (which has been, to a great degree, their self-liberation in the face of stubborn resistance) is the essential element that renders so many Muslims irreconcilable to us. This particular set of freedoms threatens not only

³¹ Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights Watch Report on Afghanistan" (2003); available online www.hrw.org/reports/2003/afghanistan0703/6.htm.

³² MacEoin, "Why Do Muslims Execute Innocent People," 6.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴ Ana Serafim, "Terrorism—A Cultural Phenomenon?" *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 4:1 (Spring 2005): 63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66–67.

the Muslim male's religious prejudices, but his central identity. Until it successfully addresses the issue of women's rights—full rights—Islam will not compete successfully, in any area, with the West.³⁶

Women, networking with each other, can be powerful voices for certain goals. One of these goals concerns violence against women. Another goal concerns violence in general, and an interest in peaceful resolution to conflict. Women in Latin America and Russia—continents apart—have advocated for human rights through mothers' groups; in the Middle East, women from different religions have worked together to promote cultural understanding. Women and children suffer disproportionately during violent conflict; thus, it is in their interest to unite to promote peaceful solutions to disputes.

If women have a deep stake in the resolution of conflict, how then can we understand the recent increase in the number of female suicide bombers?³⁷ Explanations for this range from the desire of some women to take part in traditionally male activities to heightened recruitment of women by terrorist groups, perhaps because women arouse less suspicion and may gain more media attention for suicide bombings. As one analysis has noted, "Terrorist groups are persuading some women to view suicide attacks as an obligation to dead, wounded or imprisoned relatives.... Some women see carrying out a suicide attack as a selfless expression of love for their families."³⁸

How does one address the role of women and their voices as an antidote to the ideology of terrorism? Most importantly, as in all conflict resolution, the power of "listening" cannot be underestimated. Western policy-makers cannot assume they know and understand the grievances and concerns of women in societies other than their own. However, all people who desire peaceful resolution of conflict have a powerful tool that can be employed to counter terrorist rhetoric—the robust global network of women's organizations composed of women who care about human rights and women's issues around the world.

It is not the goal of this paper to outline the thousands of different women's groups that are at work around the globe. They are supported by women's advocacy groups within major international organizations, like the United Nations, and major NGOs, like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. UNIFEM, a group under the auspices of the United Nations Development Fund, maintains an outstanding website that brings women's groups together from all over the world.³⁹ There are groups within localities, regions, and states linked through the Internet to participate in a global conversation on the peaceful resolution of conflict and the advancement of the rights of all people, regardless of race or religion.

Particular women leaders are of special note, as they possess great moral courage in the effort to create a more peaceful and humane world. One such woman is Shirin

³⁶ Peters, "Rolling Back Radical Islam," 15.

³⁷ For an excellent discussion of women jihadists, see David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 375-84.

³⁸ Farhana Ali "The Bomber behind the Veil," *Baltimore Sun* (13 December 2005); available at www.rand.org/commentary/121305BS.htm.

³⁹ See www.unifem.org.

Ebadi, leader of the Defender of Human Rights Center in Iran. That organization has been declared illegal by the government, even while many within Iran's population hail Ebadi's recognition through her award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003—the first ever to a Muslim woman.⁴⁰

Arzu Merali, the director of research for the Islamic Human Rights Commission in the U.K., has written insightfully about the differences between Muslim and secular feminists, who “pity each other,” according to the author: “Whether we are Western, Muslim, both or neither, we must wake up to the possibility that what we see as problematic for women is much the same whoever and wherever we are. Plastered over billboards, or banished from view, women are subjugated by patriarchy. Demeaning Islam excludes the voices of Islamic women, and that liberates no one.”⁴¹

A recent educational initiative was spurred by an informal group of Muslim women from around the world, who developed a new publication called “Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies.” This manual, which is intended to be a non-threatening introduction to women's human rights useful in many different countries, is designed to promote self-awareness among women. Mahnaz Afkhami, executive director of the Sisterhood is Global Institute, a private organization based in Bethesda, MD, directed the effort to produce the manual, which is being tested in Bangladesh, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, and Uzbekistan.⁴²

The Rand Corporation study that looked at women suicide bombers arrived at the same conclusion that I have reached—that “one step that the United States and other nations can take is opening a new dialogue with Muslim women. This would help us better understand their grievances and work with them to make their lives better. The dialogue can begin with Muslim women's groups and institutions around the world.”⁴³

Women in Peacemaking and Reconstruction

Women can play a critically important role in peacemaking and reconstruction efforts. While this role was not sufficiently recognized until relatively recently, efforts are underway to ensure that women—who suffer disproportionately during conflict—will be vital partners in reconstruction efforts. Some of the important recommendations of a recent study undertaken by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on this issue were that “women have not only the right, but relevant information and knowledge, to

⁴⁰ See Shirin Ebadi, “Iran: An Open Letter from Shirin Ebadi” (11 August 2006); available from the Women Living Under Muslim Laws website, at <http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd%5B157%5D=x-157-541589>.

⁴¹ Arzu Merali, “They Hate Women Don't They?” *The Guardian* (U.K.) (21 June 2002).

⁴² Barbara Crossette, “Claiming Our Rights: A Manual for Women's Human Rights Education in Muslim Societies,” *New York Times* (29 December 1996); at www.islamfortoday.com/womensrights3.htm.

⁴³ Farhana Ali, “The Bomber Behind the Veil.”

participate in the design and implementation of programs to re-establish security at regional, national, and local levels.”⁴⁴

Post-conflict scenarios provide the possibility of transition to political systems that can be more inclusive of many sectors of society, including women. The USIP study advocates the adoption of quota systems during these critical transition periods to guarantee women’s political participation in postwar transitions. “In decision-making positions following war, research shows that women are leading efforts to promote good governance by fighting corruption, demanding accountability, and maintaining transparency in activities at national and local levels.”⁴⁵ Another recommendation made by the USIP report is that, in cases where the United States has a role in helping form transitional governments, a review of existing laws should be undertaken to assess guarantees for gender equality, and support should be provided for efforts to address violence against women, property rights, and equality in citizenship for both genders.⁴⁶

However, transitional post-conflict situations also have potential for destabilization, and may encourage the rise of new political forces that can potentially undermine progress toward women’s equality. Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban is a case in point; while advances have been made in the representation of women in the political process since 2001, Human Rights Watch reported in October 2005 that women in the public sphere were frequently harassed.⁴⁷ Outside the relative security of Kabul, violence against women is on the increase. The warlords that hold power in the provinces were hardly advocates of the rights of women in the past, and now that they are buttressed by Western support, many women fear that the bright future they had envisioned is in jeopardy.⁴⁸ Mariam Rawi notes that “[t]he war on terrorism has toppled the Taliban regime, but it has not removed religious fundamentalism, which is the main cause of misery for Afghan women. In fact, by bringing the warlords back to power, the U.S. government has replaced one misogynist fundamentalist regime with another.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Camille Pampell Conaway, “The Role of Women in Stabilization and Reconstruction,” United States Institute of Peace Stabilization and Reconstruction Series, No. 3 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, August 2006), 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁷ See the Freedom House website for country-by-country reports on democratization in the Islamic world, available at <http://freedomhouse.org/template.efm?page=84>.

⁴⁸ Mariam Rawi, “Betrayal (Women in Afghanistan),” *New Internationalist Magazine* (Jan/Feb 2004), 1. Rawi notes that, a full two years after the downfall of the Taliban, the current government was still unable to protect women. For information on the women’s advocacy group, Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan, go to www.rawa.org. See also speech delivered by Mariam Rawi, “Women in Afghanistan Today: Hopes, Achievements, and Challenges,” 27 April 2006; text available on the RAWA website.

⁴⁹ Rawi, “Betrayal,” 2.

Case Study: The Role of Women's Advocacy Networks in Addressing Violence against Muslim Women in Bosnia

Women's groups and other non-governmental organizations with a human rights focus have made significant progress in bringing instances of sexual violence to the attention of the international community, and this case study demonstrates what can be accomplished through solidarity and resolve. In Bosnia, women's advocacy groups researched and documented abuses, urged international aid agencies to pay attention to victims of sexual violence and to formulate plans for dealing with widespread rapes and pregnancies, and pressed tirelessly for justice for victims. In cases before the Ad Hoc Tribunals on the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, they pushed for indictments to include crimes of sexual violence and provided *amicus curiae* (friends of the court) briefs. In the debates concerning the Statute of the International Criminal Court and its rules and procedures, NGOs lobbied for important provisions on the legal treatment of sexual violence, forcible pregnancies, and sexual slavery.

The Vienna Conference on Human Rights and the Beijing Conference on Women provided the impetus for the growth and networking of many women's advocacy groups. Modern technology has facilitated communication between activists and groups interested in human rights. Most of the important groups and coalitions of groups are closely intertwined, often sharing expertise and databases. Many of them have well-developed websites and sophisticated e-mail lists. Most work in concert with grass-roots organizations, often worldwide. Their conscientious advocacy, collective expertise, and information and education campaigns have contributed greatly to a genuine revolution in the body of international law dealing with sexual violence. Because so many hundreds of groups are active, only the actions and achievements of a few can be documented here. However, they are representative of a pattern of interest articulation that is truly altering the face of the international system and its conduct of international legal affairs concerning sexual violence.⁵⁰ The involvement of non-state actors in the evolution of international law on sexual violence in terms of the documentation of human rights abuses; contributions to legal indictments, judgments, and interpretations; and the inclusion of a gender-sensitive perspective in the Statute of the International Criminal Court deserve mention.

NGOs have often been in the vanguard of reporting on sexual violence in areas of conflict. Their reports have documented incidences of rape, placed the incidents in the context of the conflicts, and suggested legal interpretations of those crimes. Documentation of crimes of sexual violence has not only raised public consciousness but has also provided invaluable information for criminal investigations. These reports have

⁵⁰ Scholarly literature on women and human rights and gender issues in international law has greatly expanded knowledge in these areas. See for example, Kelly Dawn Askin and Dorean M. Koenig, *Women and International Human Rights Law* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2000); Vesna Nikolic-Ristanovic, *Women Violence and War* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000); and Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, *Women and War Reader* (New York: NYU Press, 1998).

encouraged the international community, through the United Nations, to name “Special Rapporteurs” in many areas of concern. Investigative reports by NGOs are valued as independent assessments of human rights crises. Because organizations such as Human Rights Watch, *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (Doctors Without Borders), and Amnesty International have excellent working relationships with grass-roots organizations, they are often able to investigate where others fear, or are unable, to tread.

Examination of the testimony before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1993 indicates the importance of NGOs in providing documentation of systematic rape in the former Yugoslavia.⁵¹ The work of Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, and the U.S. Committee for Refugees in substantiating claims of widespread rape of women during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was critical to developing an understanding of the systematic nature of these crimes. Their contributions were noted in several of the Helsinki Commission hearings. In another example of the documentation efforts of NGOs, Physicians for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization, assembled an international team of female physicians under the auspices of the UN Commissioner on Human Rights to investigate reports of widespread rape and other forms of sexual abuse. In addition to documenting instances of rape, the reporting team instituted standard questionnaires for rape victims and argued that the collection of information about rape in war “must be handled by professionals trained to gather legal testimony and to recognize the psychological vulnerability of victims of rape.”⁵²

Equality Now is an NGO devoted to the rights of women. Its activist branch, the Women’s Action Network, consists of almost 20,000 members in more than one hundred countries around the world.⁵³ The Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of Equality Now testified before the Commission that she had just returned from Bosnia-Herzegovina, where she had spoken to “hundreds of survivors of rape camps and concentration camps.” She noted that “women are being raped and killed systematically just because they are Muslim.”⁵⁴ Equality Now was also active in assisting with the Final Report of the UN Commission of Experts, under the direction of Cherif Bassiouni, which preceded the establishment of the ICTY by the UN Security Council.⁵⁵

The investigations into sexual violence in the former Yugoslavia conducted by the European Community noted the use of “a wide variety of interlocutors,” including refugee centers and governmental and non-governmental organizations.⁵⁶ Refugee or-

⁵¹ The Office on Security and Cooperation in Europe, formerly known as the CSCE, monitors human rights in Europe.

⁵² CSCE, “Hearing: War Crimes and the Humanitarian Crisis in Former Yugoslavia,” 25 January 1993, 74; transcript available in four parts at www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=UserGroups.Home&UserGroup_id=58&CFID=18849146&CFTOKEN=53.

⁵³ E-mail to the author from Jessica Neuwirth, President of the Board of Equality Now, 18 March 2001. Equality Now’s website is located at www.equalitynow.org.

⁵⁴ CSCE, “Hearing: War Crimes and the Humanitarian Crisis,” 7.

⁵⁵ *Idem*. Annex IX of this report dealt specifically with “Rape and Sexual Assault.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Appendix.

ganizations were often critical sources of information. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, which also led a team to Croatia and Bosnia, issued a report entitled "Balkan Tail of Tears—On the Edge of Catastrophe" that chronicled crimes of violence against women. Frequently, investigation teams would visit refugee centers and interview aid workers and refugees themselves. In the Kosovo crisis, this pattern was repeated. A report on internal displacement in Kosovo and its impact on women and children noted that volunteer physicians working with the displaced were seeing signs of sexual abuse among the refugees, although the women themselves were often reluctant to speak of rape.⁵⁷

As issues affecting women gained attention, several of the human rights NGOs incorporated special "women's rights" units into their organizations. These units have employed very able personnel who have produced some insightful documentation and legal commentary on issues of sexual violence. For example, Human Rights Watch, in cooperation with several other NGOs, corroborated many accounts of rape. The conclusions of their report included grouping rapes into three categories: rapes in women's homes, rapes during flight, and rapes in detention.⁵⁸ The report asserted that Serbian and Yugoslav authorities knew that rape was going on, yet no precautions were taken to prevent further such war crimes. The report noted that the ICTY has jurisdiction over the crimes committed in Kosovo, but that, to that point, no indictments had listed charges relating to the use of rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons of war. An important contribution of reports such as these has been the clarification of international law concerning sexual violence through a review of recent judgments of the tribunals and other courts on sexual violence.⁵⁹

In addition to providing indispensable documentation of sexual abuse during armed conflict, NGOs have been exceptionally active in providing expert legal interpretation and advice. UN Security Council Resolutions 798 and 820 condemned the reports of "massive, organized, and systematic detention and rape of women" in Bosnia.⁶⁰ These resolutions and media reports of the "rape camps" played a large role in ensuring that rape was included under the jurisdiction of the Statutes of the Ad Hoc Tribunals. The first prosecutor of the tribunals, Justice Richard Goldstone, who was extraordinarily sensitive to issues of sexual violence, noted that "nongovernmental organizations also played a significant role in supporting the work of both the Yugoslavia and Rwanda tribunals. Soon after I arrived in The Hague, I was besieged by thousands of letters and

⁵⁷ Julie Mertus, "Internal Displacement in Kosovo: The Impact on Women and Children," Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Occasional Paper (June 1998).

⁵⁸ Martina E. Vandenberg and Joanne Mariner, "Kosovo: Rape as a Weapon of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" *Human Rights Watch Report* 12:3 (D) (March 2000).

⁵⁹ See, for example, Section V of the Human Rights Watch Report, "International and National Legal Protections against Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence," (2000), 30–34; available at www.hrw.org/reports/2000/fry/Kosov003-04.htm.

⁶⁰ S/RES/798 (18 December 1992), esp. 1; UN Document S/RES/820 (17 April 1993), esp. paragraph 6.

petitions signed by people, mostly women, from many countries, urging me to give adequate attention to gender-related war crimes.”⁶¹

Women’s advocacy groups were critical in supporting the inclusion into the Statute of the International Criminal Court crimes of violence against women, including rape as both a “grave breach of the Geneva Conventions” and as a war crime. The strides made by these advocates, within a formidable network of women’s advocacy organizations, give us a glimpse into the power of NGOs regarding issues involving women’s rights.

Case Study: The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)

The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) was founded in 1977 by a woman of only twenty years of age, Meena Keshwar Kamal (usually known as Meena), who articulated the group’s goals as “the restoration of democracy, equality for men and women, social justice, and the separation of religion from the affairs of the state.”⁶² It started with a group of eleven committed student activists. Ten years after establishing RAWA, Meena was assassinated. In her short time as the visionary leader of RAWA, she campaigned against the Russian intervention, the political regime that supported it, and also against fundamentalist Islamists. A firm proponent of secularism and opponent of foreign intervention, she was instrumental in organizing demonstrations, processions, and meetings to oppose both the Soviets and their supporters and the fundamentalists who eventually replaced them. The cause most important to her was the emancipation of Afghani women and the protection of their rights. She developed a bilingual magazine, *Payam-e-Zan* (“Women’s Message”) in 1981, and this magazine continues today as a forceful voice of opposition to the fundamentalist viewpoint.⁶³

Meena believed that the future of women in Afghanistan depended upon their access to education, and she established multiple schools for women in her own country and in the refugee camps in Pakistan.⁶⁴ She also helped establish hospitals, clinics, and handicraft centers for refugees through her organization. Because of her opposition to the Soviets, she was invited to represent the Afghan resistance movement at the French

⁶¹ Richard J. Goldstone, *For Humanity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 85.

⁶² Aryn Baker, “Meena,” *Time Magazine Asia, Special Issue: 60 Years of Asian Heroes* (13 November 2006); available at www.time.com/time/asia/2006/heroes/in_meena.html. For the best comprehensive history of RAWA, see Anne E. Brodsky, *With All Our Strength: The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁶³ See *Payam-e-Zan*, at <http://pz.rawa.org>.

⁶⁴ *View from a Grain of Sand*, a film directed by Meena Nanji, explores the lives of three Afghani women: a teacher, a doctor, and a social activist. Shot in Afghani refugee camps in Pakistan and in Afghanistan itself, it provides a wealth of information on the history of Afghanistan and its effect on women’s issues. One of the featured women, Wajeeha, now a social activist, was rescued by RAWA, who helped her flee to Pakistan and taught her to read and write after her husband was killed fighting the Russians.

Socialist Party congress in 1981, and she traveled widely in Europe to promote the cause of human rights in Afghanistan. Her assassination was believed to be a result of collaboration between Islamic fundamentalists and the Afghanistan branch of the KGB, known as the KHAD.⁶⁵

RAWA learned an important lesson from the tragic loss of their leader, and after her death RAWA was reorganized into a non-hierarchical structure, with women working in “semi-autonomous committees” with no single leader, but with decision making distributed among many members.⁶⁶ From its original founding group of eleven, RAWA has grown to an active membership of approximately 2,000, although no one knows for sure how many members the group has. Although there are some prominent spokeswomen for RAWA, usually only very close relatives and confidantes will know of a woman’s ties to the organization, for it membership is secret. The supporters of RAWA include many men—husbands, brothers, sons, and friends.

After the Soviet Union departed Afghanistan, RAWA continued as a vibrant organization operating in a truly repressive environment. Because of the great danger faced by women activists, RAWA went underground during the period of Taliban rule, and it remains a highly clandestine organization to this day. Schools, orphanages, and nursing courses were operated at great risk by the RAWA cadre, but usually under other auspices. Another of their hallmarks were the secret videos RAWA shot of women being beaten and executed under the Taliban, which were sometimes smuggled to the Western media and shown to publicize the extreme human rights abuses under Taliban rule.⁶⁷

After the U.S.-led war against the Taliban, RAWA continued its activities, attempting to highlight women’s issues to the new government and to keep them in the forefront of public dialogue. They also expanded their educational endeavors and began to reach out to potential supporters throughout the world, forging links where appropriate. For example, they established a program for the sponsorship of Afghani orphans through CharityHelp.org. They do not, however, advocate adoption of Afghani children by Westerners, preferring to solicit sponsorships for support of the orphans within their own environment.

For the first time in its history, in September 2006 a RAWA spokesperson appeared on a local Afghan TV channel, debating a hard-line fundamentalist. The group has also sponsored demonstrations and large meetings, most often in Pakistan, but sometimes in Afghanistan. For example, RAWA held a remarkably successful rally to commemorate International Women’s Day in Kabul in March 2006.

⁶⁵ “A Short Biography of Martyred Meena, Founding Leader of RAWA,” available on the RAWA website, <http://rawa.org/meena.html>.

⁶⁶ Onnie Wilson, “Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (RAWA),” available at [http://home.vicnet.net.au/~womenweb/actions/Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan \(RAWA\).htm](http://home.vicnet.net.au/~womenweb/actions/Revolutionary%20Association%20of%20Women%20in%20Afghanistan%20(RAWA).htm).

⁶⁷ RAWA has an excellent website on which these videos and other extensive information about the organization may be found. See www.rawa.org.

RAWA has achieved worldwide recognition for its activism and commitment to human rights, including the French Republic's Liberty, Equality, Fraternity Human Rights Prize and a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from the U.S. Congress in 2004. Members of RAWA have even branched out to fundraising and consciousness-raising events in Los Angeles, and there are subsidiary groups, like the Afghan Women's Mission, based in the U.S., that have strong links to RAWA. It has been featured on *Larry King Live* and has been promoted by Oprah Winfrey, and it has links with organizations throughout the world.

RAWA is a clear example of an advocacy group that might be perceived as a potential problem for U.S. policy-makers, in that RAWA has been highly critical of the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the situation that has arisen in the aftermath of the invasion. RAWA publicized civilian casualties during the war, and has railed against the collaboration of NATO forces with Northern Alliance leaders, whom they say pose great threats not only to women's rights but also to stability and good governance.⁶⁸ RAWA continuously publicizes its view that Afghanistan is becoming increasingly destabilized, and that the promise of improvements in women's rights after the fall of the Taliban has not been fulfilled.⁶⁹ It therefore is a voice that frequently contradicts U.S. pronouncements that a great victory has been achieved for women in Afghanistan through the NATO intervention. A RAWA statement says that "[o]ne fundamentalist band cannot be fought by siding with and supporting another. In its war on the Taliban and ... Al Qaeda, the U.S. has taken the 'Northern Alliance' into service through wooing and arming certain infamous warlords."⁷⁰

In June 2006, Amrita Mukherjee Mehmooda, a member of RAWA, offered these remarks in an interview for the *Times of India*: "Being strongly against the criminal fundamentalist leaders who are seizing the government and by criticizing their supporters and the negative role played by other governments makes [it] hard for RAWA to operate openly."⁷¹ And further, "Whenever the fundamentalist terrorists are in power and have key posts in the government, there will be no change in the situation of Afghan women: only a democracy based on secularism can bring some positive changes to the conditions of women. We never expect from the current government with its current composition to help women."⁷² Indeed, women in positions of power are at serious risk in Afghanistan. In September, 2006, Safia Ama Jan, a 64-year-old grandmother, teacher, and provincial director for the Ministry of Women's Affairs, was assassinated in Kandahar, even while she was fully clad in the *burqa*.

⁶⁸ See, for example, RAWA reactions online at www.rawa.org/us-strikes.htm.

⁶⁹ See for example, the RAWA report on a gang-rape in Badakhshan, online at www.rawa.org/gangrape.htm.

⁷⁰ RAWA, "Let Us Struggle Against War and Fundamentalism," 22 March 2002; available at www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=1953.

⁷¹ "Lifting the Veil: No End to Suffering," *Times of India* (Calcutta) (24 June 2006); available at www.rawa.org/calcutta.htm.

⁷² *Ibid.*

RAWA has noted that women's security outside of Kabul is perilous, and that warlords consistently brutalize the population, particularly women. A spokesman for RAWA, Mariam Rawi, in a speech in Australia, called attention to the deterioration of women's rights in parts of Afghanistan, saying that "in most parts of Afghanistan women are still banned from going outside their homes unaccompanied, and no education is provided for girls. Because of their continued oppression, a large number of young girls commit suicide, unable to bear the hardships. Tens of self-immolation cases are reported every month in Herat city and its surrounding provinces. Women and young girls are being raped or forced into marriage by the Northern Alliance commanders."⁷³ She went on to say that, under the circumstances, it is "painful to hear some Western leaders and media speak frequently about the 'liberation' of Afghanistan."⁷⁴ RAWA's unequivocal opposition to the collaboration between the NATO forces and former members of the Northern Alliance, driven by political and military expediency, has put the group frequently at odds with U.S. policy.

RAWA sees the fight for equality for women as part of the universal struggle for human rights and democracy. It advocates nonviolent change, and its programmatic goals include something it calls "economic democracy." Secularism is also extremely important in RAWA's philosophy.

One of its explicit goals is to forge links with other "pro-democracy and pro-women's rights groups nationally and internationally...."⁷⁵ One of the great successes of RAWA has been in its skillful use of new technology, particularly through its website, which it established in 1996. After the Taliban fell, RAWA continued to try to document human rights violations through photography, reports, and video. As Sonali Kolhatkar has noted, "Digital cameras have made RAWA's documentation much easier and also enabled RAWA to share the images of human rights violations more easily with an international audience...."⁷⁶ A poignant statement by a RAWA member captures the amazement at the power of new technology: "We never imagined the Internet would bring such a positive result for us. It is very important and something that now we can't imagine we could work without.... At the time I remember it was kind of amazing. The first email from the U.S. that we got, we all called each other to come see this and our eyes were so big...."⁷⁷

Clearly, RAWA sees a link between its efforts and goals and the fight against terrorism. One of its recent statements urges support of its activities:

Help stop terrorism at its root! By aiding a group of Afghan natives to bring about social change within their country, you can help reshape it into a more peaceful, benign society that will no longer be a haven for globally dangerous extremists. Young boys in RAWA orphanages and schools would otherwise end up in *madrasas*, where

⁷³ Onnie Wilson, "Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan."

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Sonali Kolhatkar, "RAWA: A Model for Activism and Social Transformation," 1 June 2006; available at www.rawa.org/sonali-model.htm.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

they would learn to hate women and the West, and learn only about the Koran and how to use weapons!⁷⁸

RAWA is markedly opposed to foreign domination of Afghanistan, and hence has been, from the beginning, outspokenly critical of U.S. policy. Some critics of RAWA have branded the group “Maoist,” a charge that was answered in a RAWA statement that stressed the prioritization of its goals—the foremost being the fight against fundamentalists (of all kinds) who would seek to disempower women.⁷⁹

This group is a prime example of an indigenous, grass-roots movement that has arisen from a complex history, therefore espousing a philosophy that is simultaneously anti-fundamentalist, anti-terrorism, non-violent, pro-democratic, anti-imperialist, and anti-interventionist in nature. It has utilized the technology available in this age of globalization to bring about awareness of the plight of women in Afghanistan; it has linked its humanitarian, educational, and health strategies to the future stabilization of its country. At the same time, it has deplored the political expediciencies that have brought about what in its view represents a resurgence of fundamentalism, which from RAWA’s perspective is the greatest threat of all.

Conclusion: Supporting Women’s Initiatives

The United States and other countries have often focused on democratization and good governance as their primary foreign policy objectives abroad. Invariably, working toward good governance and protection of human rights will involve concerns about the status of women. While these are worthy objectives, there is a fine line to be walked in order to avoid charges of cultural imperialism. In talking about attempts to counter terrorist propaganda and expose the hypocrisies of terrorists, one of the five main policy recommendations emanating from a study conducted at the University of Central Florida includes this statement:

Such support must in most instances be indirect, or else the charges of cultural imperialism will simply enhance the capabilities of terrorists to attract sympathizers and recruits. Governmental and non-governmental programs initiated and conducted by organizations in a given region will be more effective than attempts to impose external values.⁸⁰

One concrete step that can be taken by the U.S. government to influence perceptions of gender equality is to ensure that women are visible in leadership positions

⁷⁸ “About RAWA,” available at www.rawasb.org/rawa.html.

⁷⁹ “RAWA’s Answer to Nay Thupkaew,” 18 October 2002; available at <http://www.rawa.org/prospect.htm>.

⁸⁰ John Bersia and Stephen Sloan, eds., “A Global Assessment of Terrorism: Perspectives from Current and Future Leaders on Policy, Doctrine and Operational Implications,” Terrorism Studies Program, University of Central Florida and Global Connections Foundation White Paper (11 September 2006), 11; available at http://globalperspectives.cos.ucf.edu/files/white_paper_09_02_2006.pdf.

abroad, assigned to missions and as members of negotiating teams.⁸¹ The United States can also improve visibility of women's issues by continuing to support offices within its agencies and institutions devoted to women's issues. For example, in the Department of State, the Office of International Women's Issues seeks to incorporate gender issues into U.S. foreign policy; at USAID, the Office of Women in Development tries to integrate women's concerns into aid and development programs.⁸² Through the efforts of these organizations, local groups supporting women's rights can often be assisted.

In order to assist grass-roots organizations, accurate information about these groups must be accumulated. Lists of such organizations and influential women leaders should be generated and included in databases, and genuine links with leaders and groups should be sought. Once accurate information has been obtained concerning who the important groups and leaders are, these activists can be invited to conferences and assisted in multiple ways, wherever possible.⁸³

Women leaders who advocate reform are often at severe risk. There is probably no issue that is more sensitive within Muslim societies than the issue of women's rights. Where Islamic fundamentalism is experiencing a resurgence, women who have adopted "modern" dress and aspirations are frequently targeted, particularly during periods of transition and chaos. Therefore, security is a fundamental issue surrounding the achievement of women's rights.

Increasingly in Iraq, women activists are being threatened and sometimes killed. As one journalist has written, "There are a lot of women in Iraq who are looking forward to the freedom that Iraq's experiment with democracy promises them. And there are hard-liners who would kill them for it."⁸⁴ The change in the security situation in Iraq has affected women, who did fairly well under the previous Baath Party regime, which advocated equality of women in education and professional development. Now, many women are afraid to leave their homes, and attendance by female students at educational institutions appears to be in decline.⁸⁵ So while governmental transitions provide opportunities for increased inclusion of women in the political process, they may also provide opportunities for the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. In the case of Iraq, different regions also have different views concerning women's rights. As civil conflict becomes more and more prevalent, these different perspectives may exacerbate regional and religious tensions.

⁸¹ Conaway, "The Role of Women in Stabilization and Reconstruction," 5.

⁸² *Idem*.

⁸³ Camille Conaway notes that lists of international women's groups are maintained by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), but that local groups need to be recognized as well. See Conaway, "The Role of Women in Stabilization and Reconstruction," 7.

⁸⁴ Babak Dehghanpisheh, et al., "Iraq's Hidden War," *Newsweek* (7 March 2005).

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

Women generally have an interest in promoting reform in Muslim societies to enhance their human rights.⁸⁶ As such, they represent an under-valued resource in the fight against terrorism. Cooper and Traugott state that, “in pursuing its antiterrorism efforts, the United States could find long-term support among women, whose interests naturally conflict with those of radically fundamentalist regimes.”⁸⁷ Noting that Muslim women in Central Asia might be uniquely positioned to offer such support, they warn that “women in these societies are caught between the repression of the secular regimes in power and the dearth of realistic alternatives other than equally repressive fundamentalist movements.”⁸⁸

In addition to supporting and building women’s organizations, it is critical that the United States attempt to understand the specific concerns of women in their unique cultural and geographic contexts. Programs that enable women to participate in politics at all levels, lending institutions that enable women to improve their economic position in society, and access to education that helps women understand their legal rights should all be critically important objectives of U.S. policy, because they give women tools of empowerment. However, it is quite possible that women’s groups will also be opposed to certain aspects of U.S. foreign policy, or may advocate economic policies that are not viewed favorably in the United States. U.S. policy makers should attempt to understand the contexts in which various women’s advocacy groups have emerged, and should be careful not to disparage groups solely on the basis that they voice opposition to U.S. policies.

Women of all social classes need secure environments, for it is in the midst of conflict and turmoil that they become the most vulnerable. Domestic violence and violence against women increase dramatically during wartime. In war and in peace, women desire food and shelter for their families and education for their children; if these essentials are provided by religious groups, many of which advocate a fundamentalist outlook, women may develop loyalties toward an anti-Western ideology. Therefore, any approach concerning women and their rights must take into consideration basic human socio-economic rights as well as civil/political rights, the prevention and termination of conflict, and the stabilization of the environment.

Finally, those seeking to combat ideological support for terrorism must recognize that it is far preferable for the impetus for change in Muslim societies to come from within those societies themselves, rather than from external forces. Ana Serafim articulates this as follows: “There is a need for an Islamic Reformation to allow modernization to take place.... This is a battle within Islam itself, rather than between Islam and the West.”⁸⁹ The same can be said of the movement for women’s rights within the Muslim world. The reinterpretation of Islam by Islamic feminists cannot be dictated by the Western feminist idiom. This is not to say that genuine struggles for women’s rights

⁸⁶ See, for example, John Hughes, “Islamic Women Rise Up,” *Christian Science Monitor* (29 June 2005); available at www.csmonitor.com/2005/0629/p09s01-cojh.html?s=widedp.

⁸⁷ Cooper and Traugott, “Women’s Rights and Security in Central Asia,” 62.

⁸⁸ *Idem*.

⁸⁹ Serafim, “Terrorism—A Cultural Phenomenon?” 72.

should not be supported by global NGOs or recognized by Western groups and governments; however, it is important that the West hears the voices of women in an unmediated manner from within the Islamic world, as they articulate their concerns and their vision of fulfilled lives. This can be achieved with the help of the West and international networks of NGOs, but it must ultimately be generated within and sustained by Muslim societies themselves.

The poem, "I'll Never Return," by Meena, the founder of RAWA, summarizes aptly the idea that women have the potential to emerge as critical voices in the tumult of our century:⁹⁰

I'm the woman who has awoken
 I've arisen and become a tempest through the ashes of my burnt children
 I've arisen from the rivulets of my brother's blood
 My nation's wrath has empowered me
 My ruined and burnt villages fill me with hatred against the enemy
 Oh compatriot, no longer regard me weak and incapable
 My voice has mingled with thousands of arisen women
 My fists are clenched with fists of thousands compatriots
 To break all these sufferings all these fetters of slavery
 I'm the woman who has awoken
 I've found my path and will never return.

⁹⁰ Meena, "I'll Never Return," available at www.rawa.org/meena.html.

“When All Muslims Unite ...”: Islamism, Identification, and Western Fears of Terrorism in Africa

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The rapidly successful expulsion from Somalia in early January 2007 of Islamist faction the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) provides a tempting tactical model for countering terrorism in far-flung locations. Yet, in some respects, the success of the model was surprising. The Union of Islamic Courts took Mogadishu in early June 2006, and steadily expanded its control across the southern portion of Somalia, meeting little resistance. The UIC seemed so secure in its control of southern Somalia that, until the eve of its defeat, it boasted openly of ambitions of creating a united Islamic “Greater Somalia,” including all of breakaway Somaliland, Djibouti, and parts of Ethiopia. The operation was carried out by Ethiopian ground and air forces on behalf of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was constituted through regional negotiations in Kenya more than two years ago but had never gained more than a tenuous hold in the provincial town of Baidoa, far from the capital of Mogadishu. The Ethiopians acted with the tacit approval of Washington, and received minimal participation from U.S. Special Forces advisers.

Faced with overwhelming firepower from the Ethiopians, the Islamist faction fell like a house of cards, its leaders and militias melting away under cover of darkness rather than waging a fight. Their displacement and the subsequent installment of the TFG in Mogadishu was followed by U.S. air strikes in Mogadishu and along the Kenyan border against alleged Al Qaeda operatives allied to the deposed Islamists. Even before the Pentagon indicated whether or not those air strikes had hit their intended targets—Abu Talha al-Sudani, a Sudanese national suspected by the U.S. of being a long-time associate of Osama bin Laden based in East Africa, and Fazul Abdullah Mohammed and Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, two other alleged Al Qaeda operatives suspected in the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in East Africa—U.S. military strategists were already indicating that the combined use of selective strikes and “surrogate forces” like the Ethiopians provided a “blueprint ... they hoped to use more frequently in counterterrorism missions around the globe.”¹

Targeting suspected terrorists using military methods, however, is at best a dubious enterprise. Certainly, the killing and/or arrest of key known associates of Osama bin Laden has undermined and isolated the group’s core leadership. The death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the supposed leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq, however, did little to defuse the violent insurgency there. While the impact of the U.S. air strikes on possible terror-related activity in Somalia may always be uncertain, the effects of those attacks

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¹ Mark Mazzetti, “Pentagon Sees Move in Somalia as Blueprint,” *New York Times* (13 January 2007); available at www.nytimes.com/2007/01/13/world/africa/13proxy.html.

on Muslim attitudes across Africa registered immediately. The more reactionary voices that emerged were to be expected. Iqbal Jasset, chairman of the Media Review Network, a Muslim advocacy group based in Pretoria, wrote in an op-ed:

That America is hell-bent on catapulting the globe into a head-on collision with Muslims who are defined as “terrorists” is a reality and widely known. What is lesser known and not sufficiently debated is the fact that the defining characteristic of these so-called “terrorists” is their individual and collective refusal to submit to U.S. dictates. What it means therefore is that maintaining client-states in power requires the elimination of their adversaries.²

More worrisome was the criticism coming from more moderate voices. Hussein Solomon, a measured Muslim academic at the University of Pretoria, warned in the wake of the air strikes that South Africa’s participation in the proposed UN-backed African peacekeeping mission to Somalia, Igasom, would be a “bad bad move,” adding, “There are some who might see this as South Africa joining the ‘infidel’ agenda.”³

These remarks, while anecdotal, reflect two important factors. First, the robust U.S. military response in the wake of 9/11 and in the name of countering terrorism has both spread and deepened the perception among Muslims worldwide that the West is waging a war against Islam. Asked why some Muslims resort to terrorism, for example, Nassurulahe Intizane Dulá, the genteel provincial representative of the Mozambique Muslim Congress in the predominately Muslim northern province of Cabo Delgado, responded: “There is no other way to fight against the United States. The U.S. knows that when all Muslims unite, it will be dangerous for them.”⁴

Second, Washington’s support for the Ethiopian operation against the Islamic Courts and the subsequent air strikes have fundamentally altered Muslim perceptions about the nature of international intervention in Somalia. In the sixteen years since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in Somalia, there have been almost as many international attempts to constitute a new central government. Those attempts all failed because, as the British anthropologist Ioan Lewis notes, they were externally engineered, involving “an idiosyncratic selection of participants, belonging to—but not actually representing—different clans.”⁵ Such efforts were more reflective of UN aspirations to install a government than of prevailing internal social and political dynamics within Somalia. The TFG can be similarly appraised. Cobbled together in exile through negotiations formulated by regional actors, it faced an internal reception so hostile that its leaders could not even enter Mogadishu. Time has not improved its standing with ordinary Somalis.

² Iqbal Jasset, “Bush Goes on Africa Crusade,” *The Citizen* (17 January 2007).

³ Quoted in Peter Fabricius, “SA Troops Face ‘Black Hawk Down’ Perils,” *Sunday Independent* (14 January 2007).

⁴ Interview with Nassurulahe Intizane Dulá, Complexo Nautilus, Pemba, Mozambique, 4 January 2007.

⁵ Ioan M. Lewis, “UN ‘Peace Process’ Creates New Somali Warlord and Re-ignites Somali Wars,” 24 October 2000, available at www.somaliawatch.org/archiveoct00/001029201.htm.

Now, however, following the forced displacement of an Islamist faction and air strikes by two foreign powers, the installation of the TFG can no longer simply be seen as an attempt by the regional and international communities to help lift Somalia out of anarchy. The project presently afoot—at least as many Muslims in Africa view it—is to wage war against Islamic governance. If the goal of stabilizing Somalia—the quintessential ungoverned space—is to remove a potential safe haven and logistical hub for transnational terror, the Ethiopian and U.S. intervention may in fact have deepened the affinity of African Muslims for those of their co-religionists who resort to terrorism as a tactic of jihad.

This essay argues that countering ideological support for terrorism in Africa requires a different approach. It begins by noting that Africa's many and diverse Muslim communities are historically peaceful and that, at least in sub-Saharan countries, Islam as an identity is more often subordinate to more localized ethnic customs and allegiances. There is, however, at least a potential for the latter to change. Islam is the fastest growing religion in Africa. The West's post-9/11 military adventures elsewhere in the Muslim world, chronicled through the Internet and twenty-four-hour global real-time media, have increasingly exposed and united African Muslims to the grievances of their brethren farther afield. Most African Muslims are poor, and many live under the grip of repressive and corrupt regimes. Interviews with Muslims in a broad range of rural and urban settings in Africa, and the growth of Islamic charities and political parties across the continent, suggest that these factors are encouraging a form of identity that is more defined by confessional affiliation. Where this "Islamic consciousness" is political—as opposed to being primarily social—it is a reaction both to the war on terror (the perception of a war against Islam) and local circumstances (the daily reality of social misery and political exclusion). Consequently, efforts to stem ideological support for terror-related activity in Africa must be based on preventing or repairing cleavages between states and their Muslim populations by strengthening state capacity and broadening national political systems to address the socio-economic needs and political aspirations of those communities.

Islam, the Nation-State, and the West

In his cogent analysis of extremism in Pakistan, Hassan Abbas notes that, "For decades, higher national interests have compelled American administrations to support highly repressive regimes in many Muslim countries."⁶ This statement echoes the seminal texts of the influential Egyptian writer Sayyid Qutb, whose writings have been foundational to the Islamist ideology of Osama bin Laden and his associates. Qutb wrote: "The Americans and their allies in the Middle East reject an Islam that resists imperialism and oppression."⁷ The critical problem that emerges is the relationship between the United States and key governments in the Muslim world, and in concerned

⁶ Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift Into Extremism* (Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2005), 237.

⁷ Sayyid Qutb, quoted in Richard Bonney, *Jihad: from Qu'ran to bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan: 2004), 398–99.

regions more broadly—not the U.S. itself. Presumably, for Qutb, this would include Israel, but as Abbas and others have subsequently pointed out, it also has included at one time or another the House of Saud, the Shah of Iran, and Saddam Hussein in Iraq (to name only a few).

The U.S., however, was not the initial target of the Islamist movement. As Fawaz Gerges points out, Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden’s chief deputy, may regard the United States as the “leader of the criminals,” but until the late 1990s he “was emphatic about the need to keep the fight focused on the near enemy”—the “apostate” regimes of the Muslim world.⁸

Islam and the nation-state have a long and troubled history. The consolidation of the latter marked the fragmentation of the former—or, as Mahmood Mamdani suggests, the advent of the nation-state marked the beginning of an unresolved conflict between two systems competing for global conquest. Mamdani charts this confrontation back to 1492, the year “the armies of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella conquered the city-state of Granada, then seen as the last Muslim stronghold in western Christendom.”⁹ In the contemporary period, Bassam Tibi notes, “nation-states have failed to meet the twin challenges of promoting economic growth and erecting institutions for political participation” in the Middle East and North Africa. “They have failed, in short, to combine economic prosperity with democracy.”¹⁰ As a result,

The “primacy of the nation state as a universal political form of the current era” is not a construct acceptable to Islamic fundamentalists, and their revolt against the nation-state leads to a process of de-legitimization. To be sure, the legitimacy crisis of the nation-state in the World of Islam has not been brought on by religious fundamentalism. It is, rather, the other way around: the crisis of legitimacy derives from the failure of the nation-state to strike roots in an alien civilization, and fundamentalism, seeing its opportunity, is the political articulation of that crisis.¹¹

This problem of the nation-state failing to adequately supplant the social and political order that Islamists seek to achieve through Islam is no less acute in sub-Saharan Africa—where few states are predominately Muslim—than in the Muslim world proper. As Holger Weiss observes, the growth in academic interest in the social welfare of African Muslim communities in recent years reflects two simultaneous conditions: “the few, if not non-existent possibilities of the states to provide for basic needs of their subjects, a situation that has become painfully evident in most African states,” and “the rise of Islamism and the critique of the secular state, not only in Africa but throughout the Muslim world.”¹²

⁸ Fawaz Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13.

⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁰ Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 8.

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Holger Weiss, ed., *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies in Africa* (Stockholm: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002), 5.

Jared Diamond provides a concise description of the security mechanics of failed states, noting that those countries with “the worst problems of environmental stress, overpopulation, or both” also happen to be “the world’s worst trouble spots”:¹³

[C]ountries that are environmentally stressed, overpopulated, or both become at risk of getting politically stressed, and of their governments collapsing. When people are desperate, undernourished, and without hope, they blame their governments, which they see as responsible for or unable to solve their problems. They try to emigrate at any cost. They fight each other over land. They kill each other. They start civil wars. They figure that they have nothing to lose, so they become terrorists, or they support or tolerate terrorism.¹⁴

This is as true in Nigeria and South Africa, I would argue, as it is in Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan.

Diamond’s point finds a compelling illustration in Somalia and its self-governed secessionist northern territory of Somaliland. While the south has festered anarchically since 1991 despite so many international attempts to impose a central government, Somaliland has quietly and persistently rebuilt itself from within. Although it has failed to win international recognition, it has a democratically elected government and legislature and enjoys the benefits of both reconstruction and stability. During the past decade, Somalia has been used at least three times as a staging ground for cross-border terrorist attacks against Western targets in neighboring states and as a suspected safe haven for Al Qaeda operatives. In the same period of time, Somaliland has not been completely immune to Islamism. But, as Lewis notes, “It is fortunately true that Somaliland has managed to preserve its secular system of modern democracy, despite the presence of fundamentalist undercurrents. I think its stability reflects general satisfaction with its democratic system and two chamber legislature.”¹⁵

Terrorism and State Weakness in Africa: Three Country Briefs

Across Africa, different dynamics play out in different contexts. Certain states are prone to terrorist attacks, but the continent as a whole is not. In other areas, the primary terror-related concerns are financial, economic, or people-centered, related to issues such as money laundering and smuggling; mutual commercial interaction between Islamists and locals, and safe haven and documentation abuse. In all cases, state weakness is a central factor. It is not that nomadic Touaregs in northern Mali are particularly sympathetic to the attempts of Algerian Islamists to sack Algiers. Rather, the inability of the government in Bamako to exert sufficient control over its vast and empty northern desert spaces to offer jobs, education, health care, and foodstuffs provides an

¹³ Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 516.

¹⁴ *Idem.*

¹⁵ Ioan M. Lewis, quoted in “Post Global: Somalia’s Islamic Courts,” an online interactive debate forum of *The Washington Post* (30 August, 2006); at www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2006/08/14/DI2006081400488.html.

opening for cross-border alliances of economic convenience. Islamists driven southward from Algeria, who finance their operations by smuggling goods like pasta and cigarettes, find a ready, desert-savvy labor force in northern Mali. The issue is less one of radicalization and recruitment than it is the simple articulation of local economy, a situation that applies, in varying ways, across the continent. Such local realities should have a strong influence on any efforts that are undertaken to attempt to counter ideological support for terrorism, since this case shows that *ideological* support is really not the issue. The following section will briefly consider three relationships between the state, Islamism, and terror-related activity in Africa.

Morocco

The westernmost Arab North African state features all of the characteristics that enable or encourage terrorism in Africa: political exclusion, economic desperation, political and physical proximity to the West, corruption, and religious division. Morocco is a constitutional monarchy, where almost all power is vested in the king. Its sovereign claims special religious legitimacy through direct lineage to the Prophet Muhammad. As one assessment concludes, “Morocco is as vulnerable to Islamist violence as most other countries in the Arab world, through the combination of economic fragility, social deprivation, corruption, a weak parliament, and a powerful monarchy that bases its legitimacy on Islamic tradition.”¹⁶

The monarchy has ruled Morocco since independence in 1956. Relative to its regional counterparts, the country has solid economic indicators. GDP growth reached 5.2 percent in 2003, according to the World Bank World Development Indicators; inflation was low, at 1.2 percent, but formal unemployment hovered at 11 percent. But when Morocco’s performance is measured against poverty indices, even this growth rate is insufficient. Some 19 percent of the adult population lives below the national poverty line, while 50 percent is illiterate. Gross national per capita income, at USD 1,310, is below the regional average. Traditional revenue sources—remittances, agricultural exports, and tourism—were insufficient to balance the external account in 2005, and the same is projected to be true of 2006. Privatization has been slow and marked by cronyism.

The eruption of Islamist violence in Morocco in 2003–04 exposed the dangers of the monarchy’s fragile political balance. King Mohammed VI claims that Morocco’s violent Islamist threat originates from elsewhere, particularly Egypt and Algeria. In fact, the May 2003 Casablanca attacks were almost entirely an internal affair. Planning, logistics, and recruitment activities all took place in a Casablanca slum called Karian Toma, where policing is poor, and idle, jobless, uneducated young men are plentiful. As Jack Kalpakian notes, “There is consensus that the primary enabling factors that led to the availability of suicide bombers are poverty and illiteracy. Places like Karian Toma are underserved and suffer from the lack of economic opportunities.” Furthermore, he observes, Morocco’s “proximity to Europe, the transmission of images from

¹⁶ Oxford Analytica, “Morocco: Kingdom Faces Threats from Militant Islamism,” 9 November 2004.

Europe, and the ‘European letters’ sent by the Moroccans already there have made many Moroccans feel more impoverished than they really are.”¹⁷

The unification of religious and political authority in the person of the monarch carries inherent vulnerabilities. The king can use religious justifications for demonizing his political opponents, while internal critics may argue that poor governance or unpopular political reforms are “un-Islamic.” The planners of the Casablanca attacks appropriated the jihadist rhetoric of Al Qaeda against a state they regarded as apostate. There is almost no way for external partners of the regime to walk a middle path through this conundrum, particularly in the presence of a violent extremist opposition. Although only one Islamist group among several in Morocco espouses violence, the monarchy’s Western partners showed little ability to make the distinction. In much the same way that the monarchy used the threat of communism to secure Western support during the Cold War, it is now doing the same with Islamism to present itself to the West as a key ally in the war on terror.

The regime responded to the attacks with a series of quick reforms, including guarantees of greater gender equality and marginally improved political liberalization. These proved counter-productive, to the extent that they exacerbated the Islamists’ critique that the monarchy was governing in a manner contrary to Islam. Any substantial gains in political tolerance following the attacks have since been reversed. Only one moderate Islamist group has been legalized, and mass arrests against Islamists have become commonplace. The monopoly on power invested in the monarchy, meanwhile, has rendered the parliament nearly impotent, and this has in turn left secular political parties largely unable to exercise any measure of checks and balances. Popular political and economic frustration consequently has few effective release valves.

Nigeria

Poverty, the unequal distribution of political power and economic resources (in this case, oil revenues) between Christians and Muslims, geographical location, and perpetual corruption and misrule combine to render Nigeria susceptible to both internal and external Islamist ferment. Osama bin Laden has noted with specific encouragement the spread of *sharia* law and radicalized Islam in the north, which juts upward into the desert Sahel region, which is traversed by numerous traditional trade and smuggling routes. In a June 2006 column in *Sada al-Jihad* (Echo of Jihad), a Saudi online magazine held to be affiliated to Al Qaeda, a writer calling himself Abu Azzam al-Ansari finds specific exploitable vulnerabilities in the mystical Sufi practices of Muslims in Nigeria: “Many holy warriors in other countries have learned that working with the Sufis is easier than working with any other sect, such as the Shi’ites or the Communists.”¹⁸ Peter Pham expands on this notion by observing that “the Sufi brotherhoods among [northern Nigeria’s] largely Muslim Hausa and Fulani peoples have long-

¹⁷ Jack Kalpakian, “Building a Human Bomb: The Case of the 16 May 2003 Attacks in Casablanca,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 113–27.

¹⁸ Abu Azzam al-Ansari, quoted in Peter Pham, “Al Qaeda Moves to Africa,” *World Defense Review* (27 July 2006).

standing ties with the Middle East and, following the colonial interlude, proved receptive to the ministrations of Saudi-educated imams who looked down upon more moderate expressions of Islam.”¹⁹

Richly endowed with natural resources, Africa’s most populous country nonetheless ranks number fifty-four out of sixty on the *Foreign Policy Failed States Index*, which cites uneven development, poor security provision, and factionalism among elites as key indicators of instability. Poverty is paradoxically acute where oil reserves and mineral deposits are greatest. The eighth-largest oil producer in the world, Nigeria ranks 158 in the UN Human Development Index. Despite GDP annual growth rates topping 10 percent in recent years, 90 percent of the population live on less than USD 2 a day. Infant mortality is the second highest in the world after India, and the UNDP estimates it will take Nigeria forty years to reach the basic health targets outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. The country’s oil wealth, meanwhile, suppresses foreign aid flows, and has made lenders less inclined to offer debt relief. Nigeria’s annual debt service bill exceeds USD 3 billion.

The root cause of the country’s political and economic instability resides in its flawed federal system, which was supposed to institutionalize power sharing between ethnic and tribal groups, ensure common control of natural resources, and provide a structure for the equal distribution of revenues. Instead, it has led to sectarian abuses of state institutions, endemic corruption, and political and ethnic alienation. Federalism was supposed “to balance the apportionment of political positions, jobs and other government benefits evenly among Nigeria’s many peoples but is distorted by a second principle, that of indigeneity, which makes the right to such benefits dependent upon where an individual’s parents and grandparents were born.”²⁰ Internal movement consequently takes on a character of internal displacement, the penalty for which is discrimination and ostracism, which fuels political resentment and sectarian politics. One manifestation of this is the deepening of *sharia* law in the twelve predominantly Muslim states in the north.

The adoption of the Islamic legal code is not new in Nigeria, but dates back to the early 1800s. Then, as now, however, it was a response to commonplace “bribery, corruption, and illegal taxes,” as Karl Maier points out.²¹ The current crisis bloomed at the turn of the century, as local Muslim leaders in the north, “bereft of serious political programs, latched on to *Sharia* as an easy tool to win support from a population desperate for an end to years of frustration, corruption, and more than anything, hopelessness.... Muslims, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, flocked to the cause.”²² Seven years later, Islamist politics are deeply entrenched in the north, epitomized in the extreme by a group calling itself the “Taliban,” after the extremist Islamist faction deposed by the U.S. in Afghanistan after 9/11. Nigeria, the International Crisis Group

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, “Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment,” *Africa Report* No. 119 (25 October 2006); available at www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?l=1&id=4464.

²¹ Karl Maier, *This House Has Fallen* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 150.

²² Ibid., 144.

succinctly concludes, is “a cautionary tale of what happens when great potential is sabotaged by poor governance, lack of leadership and pervasive corruption.”

South Africa

The continent’s most powerful state, both in terms of its strong and stable modern economy and its well-armed military, appears on no lists of failed or faltering states. South Africa, however, provides an excellent example of how key factors of state weakness—combined with a large, politically active Muslim population; historically defined cultural and trade linkages with other points in the Muslim world; and a national consciousness conditioned by centuries of oppression and decades of struggle—create opportunities for radicalization. Put differently, the juxtaposition of relative affluence and global interconnectedness with the negative factors just mentioned make South Africa an attractive and enabling environment for terror-related activity.

In the assets column, South Africa provides the greatest degree of interconnectivity in Africa through its physical, financial, and telecommunications infrastructure. As a result, there is ready access to news and information, direct long-distance transportation, and foreign exchange. In the liabilities column, unemployment remains stubbornly at 40 percent despite a decade of internationally celebrated economic reforms reflected in one of the world’s most stable emerging markets. The public education system is in crisis, and HIV/AIDS is an acute problem. Perhaps more pertinently, corruption is rife, particularly in the Department of Home Affairs, which has authority over immigration matters. South Africa’s travel documentation is consequently vulnerable to easy and extensive abuse. While the country’s customs intelligence is relatively strong, its border controls and port security are weak. Only one port, Durban, is equipped to scan sea containers. That capability is severely strained both by the level of traffic and by international security priorities. Durban is able to properly inspect barely 1 percent of incoming and outgoing freight, with most of the latter being destined for the United States.

South Africa, like many African states, particularly those along the eastern edge of the continent, share deep historical, cultural, and economic linkages across the Indian Ocean rim. In an age of transnational terrorism, these connections create openings for the flow of money, arms, charity, and individuals between countries like Iran, Pakistan, India, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa, Swaziland, Mozambique, and Tanzania. The growth of foreign-funded mosques, *madrasas*, and community centers—within both existing and new Muslim communities—attests to the strength of these ties. So, too, does the flow of laundered money and individuals.

And then there is, for want of a better term, political ambivalence. That South Africa today is ruled by a former liberation movement is relevant in the context of transnational terrorism, not because the ruling African National Congress is a terrorist organization, but rather because it was once labeled as such. The struggle against apartheid heavily informs foreign policy in South Africa today. The ANC remembers who its friends were and were not. As it aspires to be the champion of the rights of non-aligned, or Southern, states, South Africa tends to view the Western discourse of terrorism with suspicion, and to regard as friends many of those states the West has la-

beled as “rogues.” This ambivalence is starkly embodied in legislation passed in 2006 regulating the involvement of South African citizens in foreign conflicts. The Prohibition of Mercenary Activities and Prohibition and Regulation of Certain Activities in Areas of Armed Conflict Act makes it illegal for South Africans to work for private security firms in foreign conflict zones, but allows for involvement in struggles against foreign occupation in other countries. One way to interpret that law is that, while the many South Africans employed in the contract security sector in Iraq are now suddenly engaged in illegal activity, any South African national wanting to fight with the insurgency in Iraq against Coalition troops could do so legitimately.

The combination of these factors—global interconnectedness, political ambivalence about terrorism, passport vulnerabilities, and strong cultural or family ties across the Indian Ocean—facilitates the flow of people, money, and ideas between South Africa and the Muslim world. Foreign-funded Islamic radio stations have proliferated in South Africa and engage listeners in discussions redolent with the anti-Western rhetoric of groups like Al Qaeda. In one indication of the potential these factors create, on 19 January 2007, two South Africans of Indian descent were placed on the UN list of international terror suspects as “facilitators and terrorist financiers” with alleged ties to Al Qaeda and the Taliban. The U.S. government provided the evidentiary documentation. Both men, Farhad Ahmed Dockrat and Junaid Ismail Dockrat, have denied the claims against them.

Conclusion

Islamism marks an attempt, whether through peaceful or violent means, to correct the ills of society wrought by secular governance through a return to religious control over all aspects of state, law, and society. It is an inherently political project. Its rapid spread across countries with Muslim majorities and those with large Muslim minorities during the past fifteen years is a symptom of the profound and widespread political alienation and economic desperation that exists across much of North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, the West has pursued a number of strategies to cope with this trend. Most of those responses—even those meant to capture the “hearts and minds” of local Muslim communities—have been of the mechanical sort: enhancing border controls and financial sector screening capabilities, training specific counterterrorism security forces, waging wars, and so on.

Countering ideological support for terrorism, however, implies a different, deeper question: What drives radicalization? Asked in the African context, the question becomes, Why would African Muslims be lured toward Islamist ideas, and what factors would render them receptive to even violent Islamist activities? The Australian counter-insurgency expert David Kilcullen points to the answer: “It is not the people Al Qaeda might kill that is the threat. *Our reaction* is what can cause the damage. It’s Al Qaeda plus our response that creates the existential danger.”²³

²³ Quoted in James Fallows, “Declaring Victory,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 2006), 60.

The United States radically reshaped the entire array of global security priorities after 9/11, and led its allies off to war twice in the name of countering terrorism. In doing so, it never sufficiently debated the motivations for those attacks. The West wrongly characterized 9/11 as an attack against its way of life rather than a symptomatic response to local-centric feelings of injustice, political alienation, and economic desperation. The consequences for misdiagnosing the problem in an age of globalized information and interconnectedness are dangerous and enduring. Not only has the West failed to address the root causes of Muslim antipathy, it has deepened the perception among Muslims that the war on terror is really a war against their faith and brethren in service of the pursuit of their resources.

Reversing this course requires, in the West, rethinking how interests are defined, aligned, and pursued. During the colonial and Cold War eras, engagement between Western nations and their client states was based on strategic considerations that had little to do with the needs or interests of the client states. The post-9/11 imperative is to recognize a new convergence of interests—not between developed and developing states, but between developed states and the people living in developing (or faltering) states. The critical questions become: What forms of engagement will best promote a national rather than sectarian identity? What forms of engagement build allegiance between the state and its people?

Whereas Somalia presents an open-ended challenge of trying to impose an externally constituted government on a hesitant population, the case of Somaliland underscores the importance of organic, internal processes of state building. Countering ideological support for terrorism requires identifying how to support such internal processes through external engagement. It requires dealing with the structural weaknesses that drive frustration and desperation; holding states accountable to higher standards of governance and delivery; and differentiating among Islamist groups—the majority of which eschew violence and aspire to address the socio-economic needs of their constituents. If Islamism is a political manifestation, it requires a political solution. The deepening of religious, ethnic, or sectarian identities in some African Muslim communities marks a failure by the state to cultivate a national consciousness. But such a national identity can only result from engendering allegiance through political accommodation, accountable governance, social amelioration, and more equitable distribution of the fruits of globalization that have become so visible—and so visibly denied—to most of humanity.

Countering Terrorism: Multiculturalism in Singapore

Norman Vasu and Kumar Ramakrishna *

Introduction

Why is it that a small number of Asian youth, and some non-Asians besides, are not attracted to our own society? Surely it is we who hold the balance of power and attraction here? It is a huge indictment of our own societies that we are unable to provide young people with rules, structures, a sense of purpose and meaning, as well as ways of realizing their ambitions, so that they end up looking for this elsewhere—in whatever twisted and abbreviated form that may take. It is not the magnetism of Al Qaeda we need to worry about, but the vacuum at the heart of our own society.¹

Some observers have argued that the prudent way to defeat militant jihadist terrorism would include counter-terrorist measures as well as counter-terrorism measures.² Counter-terrorist measures are those that create a hostile operating environment for terrorists. These measures not only include technical instruments—such as better surveillance, more intelligence gathering, and countering terrorist financing—but also entail capturing terrorist militants and leaders. As for counterterrorism measures, these include efforts to diminish the allure of the militant jihadi master narrative that is deployed by Islamist extremist groups to explain and understand local and global politics. Examples of these measures include debunking radical jihadi ideology,³ one mistaken theological point at a time, and starving this ideology of the support it may receive by responding to the grievances in communities where militant jihadis find their natural recruiting base.

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¹ Bill Durodié, “Social Bonds Can Withstand Most Bombs,” *Times Higher Education Supplement* (19 December 2003); available at www.durodie.net/articles/THES/20031219social_bonds.htm.

² See Kumar Ramakrishna, “Delegitimizing Global Jihadi Ideology in Southeast Asia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27:3 (2005): 343–69.

³ Ideologies are defined here as patterns of thought where “clusters of ideas, beliefs, opinions, values, and attitudes [are] usually held by identifiable groups, that provide directives, even plans, of action for public policy-making in an endeavor to uphold, justify, change or criticize the social and political arrangements of a state or political community.” Michael Freeden, “Ideology, Political Theory and Political Philosophy,” in *Handbook of Political Theory*, eds. Gerald F. Gaus and Chandran Kukathas (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 6.

Developing this two-pronged strategy further, the publication *The Fight Against Terror* (2004), in which Singapore's new National Security Strategy was unveiled, contains a chapter devoted to the argument that national security is a national effort based on the cornerstone of social harmony.⁴ This argument is significant because it supplements the two tracks highlighted above; social harmony created as a result of a multicultural policy promotes a relatively tranquil environment where militant jihadi ideology will have little appeal. The Singaporean exercise in attempting to use social harmony as a tool against militant jihadi ideology is not unique. For example, consider the Canadian government's belief that

[m]ulticulturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging.... The Canadian experience has shown that *multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence.*⁵

In addition, in a recent article in *Time*, Peter Skerry argued that the United States, unlike Europe,⁶ should not be overly worried about homegrown Islamic terrorism due to its successful multicultural policy.⁷ In essence, the question Skerry is trying to answer in the article is, Can a successful multicultural policy, where a harmonious environment is established between different communities, act as a bulwark against militant jihadi ideology? For Skerry, the answer is clearly yes; he believes that Muslim Americans, unlike the Muslims of Europe, are not as interested in the ideology of militant jihadi terrorists as they are in another 'ism': American multiculturalism.

The Singaporean government's key premise—that a cohesive and harmonious society can act as a defense against jihadist ideology—is worth investigating. Indeed, this paper proceeds on the premise that a successful policy of multiculturalism—where an amicable environment exists based on equality and fraternity that respects difference—

⁴ National Security Coordination Centre (NSCC), *The Fight Against Terror: Singapore's National Security Strategy* (Singapore: National Security Coordination Centre, 2004), 59–66.

⁵ Canadian Heritage, "What is Multiculturalism?" (20 January 2004); available at www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/what-multi_e.cfm. Emphasis added.

⁶ As noted by Fawaz Gerges, a professor of Islamic studies at Sarah Lawrence College, European countries face the threat of the "the jihad generation"—Muslim European converts to militancy in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and elsewhere who are becoming radicalized and are spawning "self-generating" networks and cells. Furthermore, Gerges is of the opinion that "[t]heir numbers are still relatively small, but I fear they could become larger as more young Muslims embrace militancy.... They're not part of Al Qaeda, but in their own eyes, they are foot soldiers who share Osama bin Laden's ideology." Quoted in William J. Kole, "Plot Shows Rise of Extremism in Europe," Associated Press, 13 August 2006; available at <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=2308252&CMP=OTCRSSFeeds0312>.

⁷ Peter Skerry, "The American Exception: Why Muslims in the U.S. Aren't as Attracted to Jihad as those in Europe," *Time* (21 August 2006).

is a necessary addition to the arsenal for defeating militant jihadist terrorism.⁸ Intuitively, such an environment should reduce the threat posed by terrorism for two main reasons. First, if all members of a polity are united and feel a commonality with each other, an environment will be created that is not conducive to terrorist activity. Second, ensuring that different segments of a polity are not economically, theologically, or politically alienated from the rest of society greatly reduces the recruiting base for jihadist terrorists. Hence, by using the experience of Singapore, this paper argues that modern approaches to multiculturalism may have to be revised to allow multicultural polities to act as successful defenses against jihadist ideology. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part defines the terms *multicultural* and *multiculturalism*, and presents a continuum of different approaches to multiculturalism. In the second part, we locate Singapore's policy on the continuum and discuss its approach. In the third part, we provide an analysis of the policy's underlying problems. Finally, by tracing recent alterations to Singaporean multiculturalism, the final section of the paper suggests possible adaptations that may be required to achieve the cohesive harmonious society necessary to help deter jihadist ideology.

Defining and Locating Multiculturalisms

When viewed from a long-term perspective, most societies, whether they acknowledge it or not, are multicultural. The term *multicultural*, used here as an adjective, describes the social demographic of polities where different cultural communities live together and attempt to build a common life while preserving their "original" identity.⁹ Furthermore, the multicultural nature of a specific polity is not unchanging—perceived difference may shift over time. For example, in discussions on a multicultural Britain, the focus is often on the "new" immigrants who arrived in the U.K. after 1945, although discussion of an earlier multicultural Britain comprising the political union of the Scottish, English, and Welsh is often oddly absent. The point is that the debate concerning difference at a particular moment in time for a polity may shift, thus resulting in the same polity possessing a different multicultural demographic.

The notion of multiculturalism used here is substantive, and refers to the different policies adopted by various polities to manage their multicultural constitutions, however the term may be understood in each individual context.¹⁰ In this sense of multiculturalism, "language, history or religion—any combination of which are sometimes referred to as 'ethnicity'—are frequent markers of distinct culture" which require some form of management within a polity.¹¹ For example, Britain, New Zealand, and Singapore are each multicultural societies that have different approaches to their con-

⁸ Admittedly, although the effectiveness of multiculturalism in reducing popular support for jihadist ideology within a polity is difficult to measure, this paper embraces the Clausewitzian dictum that what is not easily quantifiable may not necessarily be unimportant.

⁹ Barnor Hesse, "Introduction," *Unsettled Multiculturalisms* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Susan Moiler Okin, "Feminism and Multiculturalism: Some Tensions," *Ethics* 108:4 (1998): 662.

dition. Discussions on the assortment of different multiculturalisms are made even more complex when one considers the fact that different political philosophies do not champion a particular orientation towards multiculturalism; liberals, communitarians, and conservatives, for example, differ among themselves on the political stance that their philosophies support. As a result, there are many different types of multicultural society, and there is no single doctrine of multiculturalism.

In general, it is possible to arrive at three wide-ranging positions on multiculturalism: assimilation, integration (hard and mild), and separation. The various policies through which difference has been managed may be located within the continuum of assimilation on one extreme, and separation on the other. Located somewhere between assimilation and separation, this paper is more interested in mild and hard multiculturalism—two policies that advocate a politics of multiculturalism through integration. The diagram below (Figure 1) illustrates the continuum on which these theories on multiculturalism may be placed. In the diagram, these theories have been located on the continuum based on their regard for difference and the importance they place on individual and group identity.

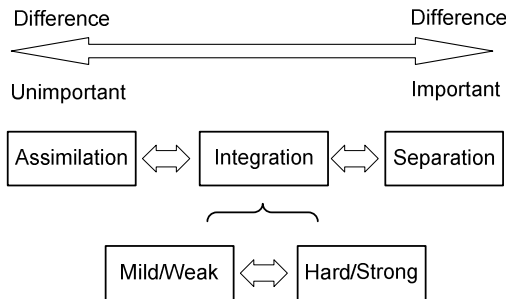


Figure 1: The Multiculturalism Continuum

At one extreme of the continuum lies assimilation. Assimilation into the dominant culture of a particular polity as a form of multiculturalism has roots in both liberal and socialist traditions. Liberals and Marxists of the nineteenth century regarded the smaller nationalities as backward and stagnant. These populations could experience modernity only if they abandoned their identity and assimilated into the identities of the larger, more successful nations.

Consider John Stuart Mill’s position on minority cultures for an example of the traditional liberal view on the need for assimilation:

Experience proves it is possible for one nationality to merge and be absorbed in another: and when it was originally an inferior and backward portion of the human race the absorption is greatly to its advantage. Nobody can suppose that it is not more beneficial to a Breton, or a Basque of French Navarre, to be brought into the current ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people—to be a member of the French nationality, admitted on equal terms to all the privileges of French citizenship

... than to sulk on his own rocks, the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish Highlander as members of the British nation.¹²

Marxists were no more receptive to the idea of rights for minority cultures. They considered the proletariat to possess no nationality. For Marxists, cultural and national divisions were considered a “speed bump” on the road to world citizenship. As noted by Engels,

There is no country in Europe which does not have in some corner or other one or several fragments of peoples, the remnants of a former population that was suppressed and held in bondage by another nation which later became the main vehicle for historical development. These relics of nations, mercilessly trampled down by the passage of history ... always become the standard bearers of counterrevolution and remain so until their complete expiration or loss of national character, just as their whole existence in general is itself a protest against a great historical revolution. Such in Scotland are the Gaels... such in France are the Bretons... such in Spain are the Basques.¹³

With their expectation for individuals and groups to abandon their identities by taking on that of the dominant group, proponents of this form of multiculturalism viewed difference and identity as unimportant.

The antithesis of assimilation is separation. Lying at the opposite end of the multiculturalism continuum, separation may be conceived in two divergent forms that are united by the fundamental belief that the differences between groups are insurmountable. Such a position views individual and group identity as both immutable and substantive. The first form of separation holds that, because differences between groups cannot be overcome, the only avenue left for political maneuver is a rigidly segregated polity—that is, apartheid. The aim is to keep the “Other” apart in order to purify and enclose a particular group identity.

The second form of separation calls for political, economic, and social autonomy for distinct groups. For most separatist movements, this calls for the establishment of a separate sovereign state. For example, this logic propelled the creation of Pakistan, and is at the forefront of the argument for the creation of Khalistan in the Punjab. This form of separation would represent the abandonment of any possibility of multiculturalism, driven by a freezing of group differences into unbridgeable binary opposition.

Finally, multiculturalism may take the form of integration. It is possible to subdivide the many formulations of multiculturalism of integration into “hard” and “mild” approaches.¹⁴ Similarly, Ralph Grillo distinguishes between “strong” and “weak”

¹² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 431.

¹³ Cited in Ephraim Nimni, “Marx, Engels and the National Question,” in *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, ed. Will Kymlicka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 70.

¹⁴ J. Citrin, D.O. Sears, C. Muste, and C. Wong, “Multiculturalism in American Public Opinion,” *British Journal of Political Science* 31:2 (2001): 250.

multiculturalism.¹⁵ Both hard/strong and mild/weak positions are united in their view that culture, understood as “a coherent cluster of beliefs, values, habits, and observances,” is a natural (and therefore desirable) accompaniment of ethnic and national diversity within a single polity.¹⁶ Both positions view collective identities as being part and parcel of natural human existence that cannot be abandoned at a whim nor need necessarily be opposed to each other. The critical distinction between the two versions rests with their stance toward concrete measures to institutionalize cultural differences in politics. “Hard multiculturalism” maintains that the very purpose of politics is to affirm group difference.¹⁷ Therefore, proponents of approaches at this end of the continuum on the whole support the protection of minority group rights through institutional recognition of cultural difference in the public sphere, including political representation. “Mild multiculturalism,” although acknowledging the diversity of cultures within a polity, holds that the business of states does not extend into cultural matters. Instead, cultural diversity is recognized to be part of the private sphere. For such a state, which is neutral toward questions of cultural diversity, the only assimilation expected from all its members is that they accept the idea of the neutral state in the public sphere. There-

¹⁵ Ralph Grillo, “Transmigration and Cultural Diversity in the Construction of Europe,” paper given at the conference “Cultural Diversity and the Construction of Europe,” Barcelona, Spain, 2000.

¹⁶ Citrin, et al., “Multiculturalism in American Public Opinion,” 249. This concept of culture is tied up with the larger debate on identity, and both terms will be used interchangeably here. The use of *identity* in place of *culture* here is similar to Parekh’s understanding of diversity. In discussing multiculturalism, Parekh identifies three forms of cultural diversity—or alternatively, three forms of cultural *identity* (Bhikhu Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory* [London: Palgrave, 2000], 2–4). The first form, subcultural diversity, refers to groups that, although they share in the broader culture, entertain different ways of conducting their life in particular areas and largely seek to pluralize but not replace the existing culture. The people that inhabit this form of diversity include gays, lesbians, followers of unconventional family arrangements, and artists. The second form, perspectival diversity, is deeply skeptical of the core principles of the prevailing culture and seeks to reconstitute it along suitable lines by intellectual dissonance; members of this group include feminists. The final form, communal diversity, involves organized communities that live within different systems of beliefs and practices comprising newly arrived immigrants and established communities with a religious tint, such as observant Jews. All three share common features, but differ in their particular relationship with the dominant culture. Subcultural diversity provides a limited challenge that is expressed through terms derived from the dominant culture, such as freedom, while perspectival diversity represents a radically different vision of life that the dominant culture either rejects or recognizes tacitly but not practically—for example, the feminist recognition of sexism and patriarchy. Communal diversity, however, springs from a plurality of established communities, each with a particular history and way of life it wishes to preserve. Applying the label *multiculturalism* to the first two is disingenuous, because many societies within history have had elements of these forms of diversity. On the other hand, the third form—communal diversity, or communal identity—is a unique feature that warrants an innovative approach to its study and development.

¹⁷ David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 132.

fore, a degree of assimilation is expected of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the public sphere of law and government, the market, education, and employment. The assimilation demanded of all members of the polity is an acceptance of the liberal political culture that enables the “benign neglect” practiced by the state¹⁸—a neglect that allows a political society to be “an association of individuals and groups living under the rule of law but pursuing separate ends or purposes.”¹⁹

Hard Singaporean Multiculturalism

Based on the discussion above, it is possible to locate Singapore’s multicultural policy within the category of hard multiculturalism. At its founding in 1965, Singapore embraced “multiracialism” as its official policy, with the racial differences within the new nation officially limited to the nomenclature of *Chinese*, *Malay*, *Indian*, and *Others* (CMIO). This racial categorization was largely a relic of census methods used during the colonial period, and reflects the three major sources of immigration to the island when the British first set up a trading post there—China, the neighboring region of Southeast Asia, and South Asians from British India. The immigrant Chinese soon developed into the majority, and by the 1960s made up 65 percent of the population. Upon political independence, the national demographic distribution stood at 75 percent ethnic Chinese, 17 percent Malays, 7 percent Indians, and a small percentage of “Others,” which included everyone that did not fall into the first three categories.

Each of the three racial categories was, of course, “a discursive practice that reduces and ‘homogenizes’ ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences within each category itself.”²⁰ More succinctly, in order to construct the categories, existing differences within the groups had to be elided. As such, despite being linguistically diverse and hailing from different provinces, the category of “Chinese” required forceful homogenization through the use of Mandarin as the common language in education institutions and the media. Like the Chinese, differences within the Malay category were also eliminated, Malay was selected as the standard language for this group, and the state recognized only Malays and Muslims. As for the Indians, the defining element was geography—anyone whose ancestors originated in South Asia was categorized as Indian.

¹⁸ Chandran Kukathas, “Multiculturalism as Fairness: Will Kymlicka’s Multicultural Citizenship,” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 5:4 (1997): 423–24; Chandran Kukathas, “Liberalism and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Indifference,” *Political Theory* 26:5: (1998): 686–699.

¹⁹ Admittedly, the word *neutral* here may be misleading, as no society is strictly neutral. All political institutions have a historical character that prevents them from being strictly neutral. For example, political institutions shaped by European traditions tend to produce governments and laws that are more likely to be conducted and written in a European language, their parliaments will betray some European influences in procedure, and they may practice certain holidays. Kukathas, 1998, 697.

²⁰ B.H. Chua, “Multiracialism as Official Policy: A Critique of the Management of Difference in Singapore,” Paper presented at the workshop “Learning from London: Exploring Social Resilience in Singapore,” Regent Hotel, Singapore, 28 July 2006, 2.

With the populace neatly divided into CMIO categories, the government gained a tool to manage the differences it had created earlier. By managing these differences through institutional recognition of cultural diversity, there is little doubt that Singapore practices a very “hard” form of multiculturalism. In schools, although English is the language of instruction, every student must also learn what is described as a “mother-tongue.” The Chinese learn Mandarin; the Malays, Malay; and the Indians (recognizing greater linguistic variation within South Asia) study Hindi, Tamil, or Bengali. With approximately 83 percent of Singaporeans living in government high-rise housing, their racial demographics are policed to ensure that no racial enclaves develop; all the flats in each housing block are divided up proportionally among Chinese, Malays, and Indians. If an apartment is to be sold after the quotas have been filled, sellers must find a buyer who belongs to the same racial group. The need to manage the CMIO categories has also entered the political arena. Singapore practices a variant of British parliamentary democracy, and in order to ensure that the non-Chinese minority in Singapore will consistently have representation in parliament, some constituencies have become Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs). Within a GRC, a team of politicians represents a constituency, and the members of the team have to include at least one non-Chinese person.

The Threat from Within: The Jemaah Islamiyah and Multiculturalism

Following the events of 11 September 2001, Southeast Asia, and especially the Malay Archipelago, has become known as the “second front” in the war against terrorism. Singapore became acutely aware of its position on this second front when Singaporeans were discovered to be among the members of the regional terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) that were detained in December 2001. The detainees were accused of planning to employ several truck bombs full of ammonium nitrate to attack the embassies of the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Israel, Singaporean military facilities, U.S. naval vessels at Singapore’s Changi naval base, and a local metro station frequently used by U.S. military personnel.²¹ Since the initial arrests in 2002, thirty-six people are currently detained under the Internal Security Act, while nineteen others are under Restriction Orders. Indeed, the Singaporean government believes that the country is “high on the list of targets for terrorist action,” arguing that it is a matter of *when* rather than *if* a terrorist strike will take place.²²

The arrests of Singaporean JI members have made it patently clear that the threat posed by such extremist groups is not one that is normally faced in a symmetric war. As the enemy cannot be understood solely as an external threat, since it exists within Singapore’s multi-racial fabric, the battle has become an ideological war for the hearts and minds of the people. In response to what has become an internal threat, the Singaporean government has established Inter-Racial Confidence Circles (IRCCs), while also beginning to implement a Community Engagement Program (CEP) and re-empha-

²¹ Ministry of Home Affairs, *The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests and the Threat of Terrorism* (Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2003).

²² NSCC, *The Fight Against Terror: Singapore’s National Security Strategy*, 11.

sizing the importance of the National Education Program for school children. IRCCs in particular were created in order to promote inter-communal harmony alongside “multi-racialism,” a Singaporean variant of multiculturalism, while also aiming to increase greater understanding between the different racial groups in Singapore. Government officials hope that the IRCCs will permit religious and community leaders to build personal trust and greater confidence, thus fostering a mutual rapport that could be useful in addressing racial and religious problems on the ground. Incongruously, IRCCs were also set up in order for members of the constructed groups of CMIO to discuss their differences. As noted by then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, “the primary objective is to get our irrational fears off our chest, and get to know each other better.”²³

Perhaps to supplement the establishment of the IRCCs, the government recently announced that it will begin a Community Engagement Program (CEP). Although not many details of the program have been revealed, it is believed that it will attempt to shift away from simply promoting understanding between the CMIO categories and give greater emphasis to developing a broader, overarching sense of community solidarity among adults. This desired solidarity, it has been argued, can be nurtured from racially neutral values of civility with the objective of demonstrating to participants how those values can be applied to the realities of daily life.²⁴ Similar to the objective pursued by the CEP, but aimed at school children, the importance of the National Education Program as a tool to transmit Singaporean values across the CMIO categories has been given new impetus. To achieve this objective, the education program has been built around the following six messages:

1. Singapore is our homeland. This is where we belong. We want to keep our heritage and way of life.
2. We must preserve racial and religious harmony. Though drawn from many races, religions, languages, and cultures, we pursue one destiny.
3. We must uphold meritocracy and prevent corruption. This provides opportunity for all according to their ability and effort.
4. No one owes Singapore a living. As a nation, we must find our own way to survive and prosper.
5. We must defend Singapore. No one else is responsible for our security and well-being.
6. We must have confidence in the future. United, determined, and well prepared, we shall build a bright future for ourselves.²⁵

²³ Ibid., 65.

²⁴ G. Koh, “Social Resilience and its Bases in Multicultural Singapore,” Paper presented at the workshop “Learning from London: Exploring Social Resilience in Singapore,” Regent Hotel, Singapore, 28 July 2006, 11.

²⁵ A. Tan and R. Wan, “Introduction to National Education in Singapore,” in *Securing Our Future: Sourcebook for National Education Ideas and Strategies for Secondary Schools and Junior College*, eds. Steven Tan Kwang San and Goh Chor Boon (Singapore: Prentice Hall, 2003), 3–5.

When considered together, the recent introduction of IRCCs, the CEP, and the revitalization of the National Education Program (NEP) indicate that Singapore's government acknowledges not only that the CMIO categories are too entrenched to be removed, but also that the hard multiculturalist approach it practices paradoxically perpetuates precisely the racial identity distinctions that prevent cohesion and harmony. As such, it appears that the IRCCs have been created to smooth over the differences created by CMIO; the CEP and NEP bank on the probability that solidarity and fraternity can be developed over time if the different racial categories are instilled with the neutral values of civility and infused with a common national understanding. The government's new approach towards multiculturalism seems to have shifted focus away from earlier policies that emphasized racial distinctiveness toward policies that will increase civil commonality among the groups.

A Constant Process: Ongoing Issues with Singapore's Hard Multiculturalism

On balance, the fact that Singapore has yet to experience a terrorist attack along the lines of the London transit bombings of 7 July 2005 may indicate the success of the hard multiculturalism practiced by the Singaporean government in managing cultural difference within its borders. With its creation of a particular brand of difference—the CMIO grouping—the Singaporean government has done a stellar job in ensuring that social harmony has been maintained. Furthermore, many of the policies extending from the creation of CMIO categories may possibly be instructive for other countries. For example, teaching of the “mother-tongue” in schools coupled with the use of English as the chief language of instruction has ensured that Singaporeans have been empowered with a common language that they can use to relate to one another. Additionally, the use of racial quotas in public housing has prevented the creation of ethnic ghettos where communities become more and more isolated from the greater polity.

However, today's success should not be taken for granted in the future. The Singaporean model of multiculturalism has worked for a substantial period of time, but the government must constantly safeguard this harmony, because it has been imposed from the top and lacks any qualities of natural, organic development. It is thus unsurprising that, faced with the global jihadist threat and the fear that elements of its own population may be seduced by jihadist ideology, the government has altered its policy to emphasize commonality and a shared destiny. It would simply be imprudent to do anything less. Nevertheless, Singapore's multicultural approach reveals the following three weaknesses:

- The government's approach to managing Singapore's society by means of categorization in the CMIO model challenges the objective of cohesiveness, as society becomes less able to look beyond the established differences separating each group
- Categorization based on defined differences gives rise to negative stereotyping
- A constant emphasis on difference hinders the natural development of shared commonalities.

First, the government, by establishing the CMIO categories, created artificial differences in order to sustain the categories. Ironically, constant compartmentalization of Singaporeans into CMIO molds may accentuate racial stereotypes and lead individuals to focus on each other's skin color while the government constantly reminds its citizens to look beyond superficial differences.²⁶ Further, in order to celebrate as well as inculcate the importance of racial harmony in Singapore, organized mass events may often inadvertently undermine the attainment of true harmony due to the manner in which they are celebrated. It is possible to argue that commemorating racial harmony may have raised an awareness of inter-racial "realities" that may not have existed before. The majority of such events often consist of cultural performances attended by participants in ethnic costumes. While this allows for the interaction of people of all hues in a non-threatening environment to foster closer bonds, it does not accurately reflect the natural setting in which the different races interact on a daily basis. Consequently, the manner in which racial harmony is celebrated in Singapore leads to the creation of racial caricatures that further prevent individuals from understanding one other.

Second, an unfortunate consequence of the CMIO categories is that negative stereotyping often occurs. Creating a category requires that it be filled with content. Unfortunately, this content is at times negative, with supposedly real differences becoming entrenched and reproduced.²⁷ This racial stereotyping due to the creation of distinct categories in Singapore often leads to issues that have little to do with group identity but come to be understood through a racial lens.²⁸ For example, the Malay-Muslim community is perceived to be predisposed towards drug addiction, teenage pregnancy, and high divorce rates, as well as being burdened with a perceived inability to perform as well as other racial groups in the educational and economic spheres. Moreover, this stereotyping is further exacerbated when it is related to supposedly "negative" cultural practices, and when attitudes are seen to be linked to Islam. For example, the high divorce rate is sometimes tied to the right to marry at a younger age under Islamic law than that allowed by the civil code.²⁹

The decision not to conscript Malay men into the army during the first twenty years of Singapore's armed forces provides another example of how the categories negatively influence reality. When the groups making up the Malay category—a diverse array of indigenous communities, such as the Javanese, Minangkabau, Baewanese, Achehnese, and the Malay—were lumped together, members of this category were perceived to suffer a potential moral conflict if Singapore ever had to fight a war with Malaysia or Indonesia (with their predominantly Muslim populations, which were also understood to be "Malay," in the same sense as the category was used in Singapore).

²⁶ Yolanda Chin and Norman Vasu, "Rethinking Racial Harmony in Singapore," *IDSS Commentaries*, No. 54 (20 June 2006), 2.

²⁷ A.K. Appiah, "Identity, Authenticity, Survival: Multicultural Societies and Social Reproduction," in *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 161.

²⁸ Chua, "Multiracialism as Official Policy," 5–6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

As expressed by then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, “It would be very tricky business for the SAF (Singapore Armed Forces) to put a Malay officer who was very religious and who had family ties in Malaysia, in charge of a machine gun unit.”³⁰

A third and final problem for the hard multiculturalism approach practiced in Singapore is that the constant emphasis on differences between groups does not foster an environment in which people understand the commonalities they share. The danger of being aware only of differences—and, moreover, of being overly aware of negative differences—is that groups can become alienated from Singaporean society as a whole. Members of alienated groups may then be attracted to, among other things, jihadist ideology, with its ready-made larger community in which they can immediately find solace. Further, one could argue that the differences have become so entrenched that they may inhibit the development of commonality in the future. For example, senior members of the Singaporean government have in the past admitted how difficult it would be to create a strong, national identity to displace the racial identities and officially sanctioned differences that were put in place at independence. According to then-Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, “They [racial fault lines] are not going to disappear in 20, 30, 40 years. But if we are aware of it, it is like living with an earthquake fault. We can build buildings which may be able to stand the shocks.”³¹

Mr. Goh Chok Tong, during his tenure as Prime Minister, also held a pessimistic view, similar to Mr. Lee. He maintained that, “In a crunch, where the interests of the tribe and the state diverge, can we be sure that the sense of belonging to the state will be stronger than the primordial instinct of belonging to a tribe? Are Singaporeans of different races prepared to lay down their lives for the sake of Singapore if there is a divide amongst the tribes?”³²

Conclusion: Incorporating Multiculturalism to Counter Jihadist Ideology

Jihadist ideology is at root highly polarizing and absolutist. In the worldviews of hard-core jihadists such as Osama bin Laden of Al Qaeda and Hambali (the *nom de guerre* of Riduan Isamuddin) of Southeast Asia’s Jemaah Islamiyah, the world is irrevocably divided between the *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) and the *Dar al-Harb* (House of War). There can be no middle ground. Even Muslims who do not buy into the extremist Islamist storyline are considered apostates and can be punished harshly, even killed. Clearly, if one wants to counter ideological support for radical Islamist terrorism, one needs a countervailing set of ideas that emphasizes the common humanity of all people, regardless of color and creed.

These countervailing ideas must exist at two levels. At one level, we would need a strongly articulated moderate Islamic philosophy that attacks and undercuts the philosophical bases of radical Islamist and Salafist ideology, addressing hot-button issues such as, for instance, the contemporary relevance of an Islamic state, or caliphate; the

³⁰ Quoted in the *Straits Times* (8 February 2001).

³¹ Lee Kuan Yew, Speech at a Parliamentary Debate on Singapore, 6 May 1999.

³² Goh Chok Tong, Speech at a Parliamentary Debate on Singapore, 5 May 1999.

meanings of jihad; and critically, the question of coexistence with non-Muslims within the same geographically demarcated polity. All these topics have been richly and accessibly addressed by well-known moderate Muslim scholars, such as Khaled Abou El Fadl, Abdulkarim Soroush and, within Southeast Asia, Ulil Abshar Abdullah and Azyurmadi Azra. Putting across the moderate Muslim viewpoint, however, is not enough. This effort has to be supported by well-conceived policy regarding multiculturalism. This, as we have seen, is easier said than done. Within pluralistic polities, multiculturalism should contribute to political stability by assuring disparate ethnic groups that their distinct cultural and religious identities enjoy legal protection and high status. At the same time, too strong an emphasis on difference could dilute the all-important sense of overarching commonality and shared destiny that all multi-ethnic societies need in order to function optimally. This is where hard multiculturalism in particular may unwittingly provide a soft ideological underbelly for jihadists to exploit. This is why the ultimate efficacy of Singapore's approach of hard multiculturalism in an era of transnational, globalized, religiously motivated terrorism is by no means a foregone conclusion.

The Role of Muslims in the Struggle Against Violent Extremist Ideology in Indonesia

Ahmad Haris *

Many recent acts of terrorism are believed to have roots in religious ideologies. Islam and its adherents are included among those suspected to be proponents of violent extremist ideology that promotes terrorism. This represents only part of the picture. While Islamic “revivalism” has emerged and proposes to establish an identity and to seek global justice, many Muslims in Indonesia have played significant roles in countering extremist ideology. Certainly, some extremist Muslims have inflicted significant harm upon humanity and the developed world. But several approaches could be implemented to minimize or eliminate the spread of terrorism or its ideology. This essay will review the status of Islamic extremism in Indonesia, and will briefly examine some of the efforts that have been made there to counter extremist ideology.

Prologue

The tragic events of 11 September 2001—the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York and part of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.—as well as terrorist activities on Indonesian soil, such as the 2002 nightclub bombings at Legian Kuta in Bali, the J.W. Marriott Hotel in Jakarta, and other attacks, have killed or injured thousands of innocent people and created deep sorrow and sadness for the victims and their families. Many people regard those bombings as acts of terrorism, and the actors as terrorists.

In Indonesia alone, twenty-four terrorist bombings have occurred since 2000. Intelligence agencies attribute most of these actions to “hard-line” Indonesian Muslims, led by Dr. Azahari bin Husin and Noordin M. Top. These two figures are suspected to be linked to Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda (Azahari was killed in November 2005; Top is still at large).¹ Because of these associations, many Westerners increasingly regard Islam as a religion that sponsors terrorism, and have become hostile towards it.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the role of Muslims in the struggle against violent extremist ideology, particularly in Indonesia, one of the world’s most populous

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¹ Hery Sucipto, “Radikalisasi Agama dan Strategi Pemberantasan Terorisme,” in *Mehamami Indonesia*, eds. Soengeng Sajadi and Sukardi Rinakit (Jakarta: Soengeng Sajadi Syndicate, 2006), 251–53. For Indonesians, the 9/11 tragedies and bombings in Indonesia were shocking. For thirty-two years, particularly during Suharto’s reign, they rarely heard about or experienced bombings.

Muslim countries.² First, I will define the meaning of *Islamic extremism*, in order to differentiate it from such terms as *fundamentalism* and *revivalism*. Second, I will elaborate on any possible existence of such extremist activity in Indonesia, in order to explore the relationship between Muslims, particularly in Indonesia, and acts of extremism or terrorism. Third, I will discuss some ways to counter such extremism. This will illustrate how Indonesian Muslims play significant roles in rejecting violent extremist ideology. Finally, I will propose some ways to eliminate or minimize the spread of Islamic extremist ideology and acts of terror.

Defining “Islamic” Extremism

The terms *extremist Islam* or *Islamic extremism* are used interchangeably in academic literature with other common terms, such as *Islamic fundamentalism* and *Islamic revivalism*. To some extent, each term or movement describes a different vision. John Esposito, for example, characterizes fundamentalism as representing a return “to the fundamental faith of religion.” He criticizes people who carelessly use the term to imply extremism, fanaticism, political activism, terrorism, and anti-Americanism. Instead, Esposito employs the terms *Islamic revivalism* or *Islamic activism* to describe the movement of the contemporary Islamic awakening, because these terms, in his view, reflect traditional roots in Islam.³

Muhammad ‘Abid Al-Jabiri uses the term *Islamic extremism* to refer to extremist Muslims who often direct their opposition against moderate Muslims. He believes that moderate Muslims are the longstanding enemy of extremist Muslims. He also distinguishes between extremist Islam in an earlier era and today. In the past, extremists focused their activities in the area of faith (*akidah*); now their attention centers on the area of *sharia* (the application of Islamic law) by waging war, if necessary, against the moderate schools of Islam.⁴

Muhammad Sa’id Al-Asymawi characterizes extremism as a movement trying to seize political power by manipulating religious (Islamic) issues. He argues that the dominant factor behind the emergence of extremist Islam is the mistrust of state, religious, and political institutions. Discourses on Islamic extremism have motivated them to infiltrate and utilize religious issues to seize power and rebel against the existing “secular” law. Hence, the significant factor in this movement is power. (This form of extremist Islam, which seeks to overthrow the structures of the secular state and replace it with a Muslim caliphate, is frequently referred to as *Islamist*, to distinguish it from more legitimate uses of the term *Islamic*.) In Islamic history, the Kharijite sect

² Frans Magnis Suseno, “The Challenge of Pluralism,” paper for the annual conference at the Postgraduate Programs of IAIN and UIN, Alauddin State Islamic University, Makassar, 25–27 November 2005.

³ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 7–8.

⁴ Muhammad Abid Al-Jabiri, *Al-Dîn wa al-Daulah wa Tathbiq al-Syarî’ah* (Beirut: Markaz Dirâsât al-Wahdah al-‘Arabiyah, 1997), 152–57.

was notorious for mixing religious issues with political ones, and for using violence and intimidation to achieve their goals.⁵

The emergence of violent and radical movements is closely linked to religious issues. This provokes extremists to violent action. According to Yusuf Al-Qardawi, acts of violence and terrorism are triggered by fanaticism and intolerance, which extremists use to reject or isolate themselves from other possible interpretations. Moreover, extremists tend to force their ideas and inflexibility upon others.⁶ Once in a while, this overwhelming spirit (*ghirah*) explodes into active energy with the power to injure other people.

Up to this point, we could assert that “Islamic extremism” includes any immodest or immoderate action, attitude, interpretation, or practice of Islamic values. Such extremism can apply to both “left-” or “right-wing” Islam, though in fact the term *extremism* is often directed more to the latter rather than the former.⁷ However, an Islamic extremist is not necessarily a Muslim terrorist. For instance, Abu Bakar Ba’asyir is often linked to Al Qaeda because of his extremist interpretation of Islam. He is also suspected of being the mastermind behind terrorist actions in Indonesia.⁸ He publicly expresses hatred of the United States as well as Australia, and propagates the implementation of *sharia*, or Islamic law, within a Muslim state structure. However, no strong evidence links him to terrorist movements in Indonesia or elsewhere. He has even been released from jail.

Nevertheless, extremist Muslims who interpret religious texts rigidly and stringently and regard people outside their circle as heretics are perceived as threats. When their agenda, ideology, and religious conviction converge and mix with specific personalities and groups, the ideology can become manifest in violent action. If they have access to sophisticated technology, extremists may pursue paths toward radical action

⁵ Muhammad Sa’id Al-Asymawi, *Al-Islâm Al-Siyâsî* (Cairo: Sina li al-Nasyr, 1987), 66. See also Al’Asymawi’s works in *Against Islamic Extremism*, ed. Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001), especially 108–23.

⁶ See Yusuf Al-Qardawi, “Extremism,” in *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook*, ed. Charles Kurzman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 199–201. The term *extremism* is most often used to refer to strict conservative forms of Salafist Islam, which adheres to traditionalist interpretations and rigid observance of Islam. This includes groups such as Front Pembela Islam (the Front for Islamic Saviors), Hizb ut-Tahrir (the Liberation Party), and the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (the Mujahideen Council of Indonesia), among others. “Left-wing” Islam represents liberal Islam, a more rational branch of the faith that tries to accommodate Islam to foreign concepts such as secularism, pluralism, and liberalism. Liberal and fundamentalist Islam frequently engage in a battle of ideas and represent the two poles of Islamic thought. Although liberal Islam tends to be more extreme in its ideological variation, it never engages in radicalism or participates in anarchy.

⁷ See note 6 above.

⁸ For further information on this matter, see Fauzan Al-Anshari, *Saya Teroris? (Sebuah Pledoi)* (Jakarta: Republika, 2002). As the title implies (*Am I a Terrorist? A Plea*), this work explores Abu Bakar Ba’asyir’s defense against accusations that he was involved in terrorist movements.

and terrorism. In short, extremism provides fertile ground for nurturing and growing radical Islam or Muslim terrorists.

“Islamic Extremism” in Indonesia

In his 2005 book, *Membongkar Jama'ah Islamiyah*, Hery Sucipto refers to Nasir Abbas, the former head of *Mantiqi* (region) III in Jama'ah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian Islamic extremist group that has been identified as a terrorist organization. Abbas states that extremist Muslims believe that enemies of Islam must be killed whenever they are found. Based on this idea, shedding the blood of the *kafir* (unbelievers) is permitted because they have waged war against the Muslim community in countries such as Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Accordingly, they consider U.S. citizens and their Western allies to be unbelievers, and attack places in Indonesia where many Americans or Australians gather, such as cafés, beaches, or embassies.⁹

Moreover, some teachers at Islamic boarding schools (*pesantrens*) in Indonesia have been found to have espoused extremist ideas, and some of their students or alumni have engaged in terrorist activities. One of these schools is *Pesantren Al-Mukmin* in Ngruki, headed by Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. This *pesantren* is accused of having disseminated extremist ideology and promoted the establishment of an Islamic state, and of preaching anti-American hatred. Ba'asyir himself is the head of the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia* (MMI), which is reported to have connections with the Jama'ah Islamiyah and Al Qaeda.¹⁰

It should be asserted here, however, that extremism and other forms of radicalism in Indonesia are not necessarily affiliated with—or sponsored by—religions, including Islam. Since the 9/11 tragedy, various Indonesian works and comments have criticized terrorist, radical, and extremist movements that have hijacked the name of Islam. These works have shown that terrorism or radicalism have no place in Islam, and should not be tolerated anywhere.¹¹ Nahar bin Abdurrahman bin Nahar al-'Utaiby says that Islam has no connection to and no responsibility for any terrorist action in the world. Although those committing terrorist acts may be Muslim, they do not understand the true meaning of Islam.¹²

The act of labeling terrorism and extremism as “Islamic” has also undermined the Muslim community in general, and Indonesian Muslims in particular. The Indonesian Muslim community, by and large, rejects the extremist interpretations of Islam. Aisyah

⁹ Hery Sucipto, *Membongkar Jama'ah Islamiyah* (Jakarta: Grafindo Khazanah Ilmu, 2005), 249.

¹⁰ See Endang Turmudi and Riza Sahbudi, eds., *Islam dan Radikalisme di Indonesia* (Jakarta: LIPI Press, 2005), 133–39.

¹¹ See Luqman bin Muhammad Ba'abduh, *Mereka Adalah Teroris: Sebuah Tinjauan Syari'at* (Malang: Pustaka Qaulan Sadida, 2005). The author criticizes the work of Imam Samudra, the “notorious terrorist,” who wrote *Aku Melawan Terorisme* (“I am against Terrorism”).

¹² Nahar bin Abdurrahman bin Nahar al-'Utaiby, *Islam Bukan Agama Kekerasan, Menolak Tuduhan Terorisme Terhadap Islam*, translated by Hanif Yahya (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Sofa, 2002).

Hamid Baidowi, Head of the Center of Islamic Studies at Al-Hidayah Jakarta, represents this view. She has said that her organization would readily mobilize around seven million members of the Center to investigate or pressure those that teach or promote a misleading understanding of jihad (which, literally translated, means “strenuous effort”).¹³

The stereotyped belief that Islam is equal to terrorism will not increase our understanding of the nature of “Islamic” extremism or of the dynamics of Indonesian Muslim society. Instead, it could offend the Muslim community, and may motivate moderate Muslims to embrace radicalism.

It is more useful, I believe, to invite the Muslim community to participate in the global war on extremism or terrorism. In many ways, Muslim participation could effectively counter what we have been calling “Islamic” extremism.

Countering “Islamic” Extremism

Countering Islamic extremism cannot be the sole responsibility of any one government. All parts of society must cooperate in such an undertaking: the common people, Muslim organizations, political parties, and Muslim intellectuals must all participate.

The Role of the Muslim People

Cooperation between the government or security officers and the people is an effective means to countering the activity of extremist groups, because a large population can overwhelm the limited number of officers responsible for monitoring potential terrorist activity in the society. An example of efforts to forge such cooperation can be seen in the requirement for an outsider to report to local leaders whenever he or she enters a precinct.¹⁴ This report is forwarded to the security officers for future investigation, particularly when an act of terror occurs, especially in heavily populated cities like Jakarta and Bali. The discovery of the whereabouts of Dr. Azhari in Batu, Malang, attests to the significant role and involvement of the Muslim people.

The Role of Muslim Organizations

In Indonesia, two large social organizations, the NU (*Nahdlatul Ulama*) and *Muhammadiyah*, play a significant role in countering the infiltration and development of extremist Islam. Not only are the NU and *Muhammadiyah* the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, but they also share some cultural basis and platforms. Both represent mainstream, moderate forms of Islam that promote the concept of *rahmah lil-'alamin* (“mercy used for all beings”) and characteristics such as inclusiveness, moderation, tolerance, straightforwardness, equality, and prosperity. Their objectives and goals are nothing more than sustaining or empowering social justice, law enforcement, and people’s prosperity within the frame of good governance. K.H. Hasyim Muzadi (NU) and Prof. Dr. Ahmad Syafi’i Ma’arif (*Muhammadiyah*) are two Muslim leaders

¹³ *Kompas* (23 November 2005), 4.

¹⁴ *Media Indonesia* (14 November 2005).

par excellence who represent the Indonesian Muslim voice against terrorism and extremism.¹⁵

The Roles of the Government and Political Parties

Both the government and the political parties in Indonesia have played their legislative roles by issuing important regulations targeted at countering terrorism. On 18 October 2002, Indonesian President Megawati signed Executive Rule 1/2002 on “Eliminating the Crime of Terrorism.” Executive Rule 2/2002 followed, which retroactively extended rule 1/2002 to cover the 12 October 2002 terrorist attack in Bali. In order to make the rules more effective, they were passed as Indonesian legislation (15/2003 and 16/2003) on 4 April 2003. With these efforts, Indonesians have forged a base to effectively counter terrorism.

The Role of Muslim Intellectuals

In Indonesia, the *ulamas* (religious scholars) are a vital part of any effort to prevent the growth of extremism and terrorism, particularly at the level of ideology. The *ulamas* are not only experts on religious issues, but also have structural and cultural authority to issue decrees on religious matters (*fatwa*). K.H. Ma’ruf Amin, who heads the Fatwa Commission of the *Ulama* Council of Indonesia (the MUI), states: “terror and suicide bombing are forbidden in Islam. It is not jihad and martyrdom.”¹⁶ The MUI also analyzes how religious interpretations awaken radicalism and extremism.¹⁷

Another concrete action toward fostering global peace occurred during a gathering of Muslim intellectuals in June 2006 at the International Conference of Islamic Scholars II (ICIS II) in Jakarta. After official opening remarks by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Jusuf Kalla, the Vice President, delivered an appeal to the Muslim communities to promote tolerance and democracy by strongly affirming the values of human rights. To counter extremist ideology, the Vice President also requested representatives from informal circles, such as those from *madrasas* (seminaries) and *pesantrens* (Muslim boarding schools), to pursue modernity through science and constructive dialogue.¹⁸

Although Muslims in Indonesia have made many efforts to counter extremism and terrorism, there are still some approaches that should be pursued further.

Approaches to Countering “Islamic” Extremism

Other alternatives can be employed to counter extremist ideology in Islam. In Indonesia, cultural, educational, ideological, psychological, political, and military approaches should be explored.

¹⁵ See Jamal Ma’mur Asmani, “Salafi Radikal, Pesantren, dan Terorisme,” *Jaringan Islam Liberal* (9 January 2003); available at <http://islamlib.com/id/index.php?page=article&id=409>.

¹⁶ *Kompas* (23 November 2005), 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Republika* (20 June 2006).

Cultural Approach

A cultural approach comes from within, namely from Muslim self-consciousness or reflection. Although this is a rather slow process through which to effect change, its influences are long-term. Muslim countries, such as Indonesia, that do not have radical or extreme cultures, can pursue efforts to directly or indirectly remind Indonesians that their culture emphasizes the virtues of tolerance, open-mindedness, friendliness, and progressiveness. Efforts to integrate Islam with local cultures can also promote similar values.

I must emphasize that Muslim countries such as Indonesia, although often accused of supporting terrorist, extremist, and radical networks, do not have violent cultures. Muslims in Indonesia generally are culturally moderate, as the followers of the *Nahdhatul Ulama* and *Muhammadiyah*, Indonesia's largest Muslim organizations, have demonstrated.

Educational Approach

Although education is usually considered a positive activity, it bears a neutral value. Education may be directed towards negative as well as positive goals. Quoting William O'Neil, education basically represents and transforms an ideology.¹⁹ Consequently, education becomes dangerous if it is infiltrated by some extreme ideologies, which are usually disseminated through a closed system of education.

Anticipating the risk posed by such extremist ideology, we need a formula for democratic and humanistic Islamic education. In Indonesia, I believe the existence of Islamic institutions and universities, such as IAIN/UIN, is a significant factor that could impact the nation's Muslim population. These institutions, even today, still reflect a mainstream view of democratic and moderate Islam. Certainly producing more moderate Muslims from such Islamic universities will be a positive development; these graduates are perceived to be accredited academic authorities, and are committed to the "valid" interpretation of Islam.

The same approach may be applied to traditional educational institutions, such as *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). To anticipate and discourage the spread of radical Islam, a Muslim summit and conference, entitled "The Development and Cooperation of the *Pesantrens* in Countering Religious Radicalism" ("*Pengembangan dan Kerjasama Pondok Pesantren dalam Menanggulangi Radikalisme Keagamaan*"), met at Asrama Haji Medan, on 1–3 October 2004. The conference's agenda focused attention on radicalism and extremism as the wrong path, representing a deviation from Islam. To decrease the appeal of extremist ideology, the conference recommended that *pesantrens* should fulfill their obligation to produce well-educated graduates instilled with integrative, open-minded, and inclusive characteristics; *pesantrens* should implement open management processes; *pesantrens* should promote the theology of affec-

¹⁹ See William F. O'Neil, *Educational Ideologies: Contemporary Expressions of Educational Philosophies* (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, 1981).

tion and peace; and that *pasantrens* should attempt to establish an inter-faith dialogue with non-Muslims to create mutual understanding and avoid religious polarization.

Religious/Ideological Approach

The distinction between religion and ideology is narrow. Both are defined in terms of vision, mission, and goals. Islam, as a religion, is more than an ideology; it is also a moral code, and a belief system about ultimate reality. In contrast, ideology is associated with politics. An “ideologized” religion, therefore, is nothing more than a process that reduces the value of religion itself.

Looking at extremist Islam’s underpinnings from a religious-ideological perspective would shed light on extremist attitudes and beliefs. It would also demonstrate the chasm between legitimate religious teachings and the acts committed by terrorists. This approach attempts to understand all aspects of Islam, from the *ulamas*, or religious scholars; the *ustadz*s, or religious teachers; and Muslim intellectuals. These institutions are intended to convey a “true” understanding of Islam, and to provide good examples for the Muslim people.

Jusuf Kalla, the Vice President of Indonesia, has said that the Indonesian war on terrorism will be more effective if it is bolstered by ideological support from the *ulamas*, the *ustadz*s, and the *kyais*. Kalla believes that this support is vital in the effort to sever ties within the terrorist network and to discourage new recruits from joining terrorist ranks.²⁰

Psychological Approach

Understanding the psychology of terrorism—specifically, understanding how and why Islamic terrorist and extremist networks function—is critical if we want to prevent further expansion of these networks. The rapid increase of Islamic terrorists and extremists has shocked the Muslim community in Indonesia. Terrorist leaders, who with skill and seeming ease recruit and train new followers who morph into militants, have certainly succeeded in capturing our attention. Given the *fatwa* issued by the *ulamas* (MUI) that prohibits these networks and activities, why do radicalization and extremism still occur?

Komaruddin Hidayat, director of the Postgraduate Program at the State Islamic University (UIN) in Jakarta, investigated the problem and concluded that injustice, intimidation, and social marginalization eventually result in delayed psychological responses that lay the foundation for terrorism.²¹ To address this situation, he suggested that all sides come together and share information honestly and openly in an attempt to solve problems by pursuing strategic and humanized actions.

Political Approach

A political approach incorporates an effort to establish a political network untainted by terrorist and extremist infiltration. This requires intensive professional cooperation, be-

²⁰ *Kompas* (23 November 2005), 4.

²¹ Komaruddin Hidayat, “Psikologi Terorisme,” in *Kompas* (23 November 2005), 6.

cause terrorists and extremists have cast a wide network and spread their influence to many countries.²² Terrorism and extremism have become extraordinarily transnational, and operate without regard to borders.

Anticipating that radicals or extremists will be active politically will limit their success. It will be more difficult for them to win sufficient seats in parliament, where they could transform their ideas and ideologies into national legislation or obstruct legislation that they oppose. So far no extremist group has won seats in the Indonesian Parliament. Executive rules 1/2002 and 2/2002 on “Eliminating the Crime of Terrorism,” as well as Indonesian legislative acts 15/2003 and 16/2003 on the same issue, illustrate that the parliament has not been infiltrated by the power of extremists.

In contrast, Egypt’s moderate Muslims feel continually threatened by extremists. Article 161 of the Egyptian Penal Code imposes three years of imprisonment and fines ranging from E£100 to E£500 on those who publish material or act in any way against the commonly accepted standards of Egypt’s faith. According to Al-Asymawi, only militant Muslims reject Article 161.²³

Military Approach

A military approach must be considered a last resort if other approaches fail to deter extremism or terrorism. Military action describes any government or police effort to prevent a terrorist action or attack. Indonesian police pay close attention to Islamic extremist organizations, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia and Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defense Front). These organizations often use physical force to promote their ideas or convictions. An Indonesian Police spokesman, Brigadier General Anton Bachrul Alam, says that it is possible to disband an Islamic mass organization if it persistently pursues violent solutions.²⁴ In a larger context, the military approach must be considered very carefully. George Soros, the Director of the Open Society Institute, warned that the military approach can be counterproductive and create a vicious circle of terrorism.²⁵

Epilogue

Islamic extremism is not a new phenomenon in Islamic history. The Kharijities in classical Islam were the earliest extremists. Although extremism may be an internal dynamic within Islam and Muslim society, it may be found in other religions as well. Efforts to counter Islamic extremist ideology should come from within the Muslim communities.

²² See M. Imadudin Rahmat, *Arus Baru Islam Radikal; Transmisi Revivalisme Islam Timur Tengah ke Indonesia* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), 26–27.

²³ Al-’Asymawi, *Against Islamic Extremism*, 123. One well-known case is that of Nasir Hamid Abu Zaid, who under legal force was divorced from his wife for his controversial work that many believe to be an assault on the Koran.

²⁴ Khamami Zada, “Mempersempit Aksi Anarkistis,” in *Republika* (15 June 2006).

²⁵ *Kompas* (7 January 2006).

In Indonesia, several efforts to counter extremism have been made simultaneously. These efforts have included Indonesian Muslims in general, as well as the government, parliament, and Muslim organizations and intellectuals. Several approaches—for example, the cultural, educational, ideological, psychological, political, and military approaches—could be described in greater detail. Mutual cooperation with foreign governments or organizations may also be fostered without interfering too much in the internal affairs (particularly any hidden political interests) of the Muslim community. These approaches will be more effective if they are coordinated. One-sided action will not only waste energy, but will create uncertainty.

In the future, additional efforts to create peace and global justice are vital. Extremism, radicalism, and terrorism are basically psychological expressions that occur whenever and wherever injustice, intimidation, and insecurity exist. Overcoming these problems requires cooperation and mutual understanding from everyone involved; measures to counter extremism, radicalism, and terrorism must not be implemented inequitably, nor should they support the interests of one group at the expense of another group.

The former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, has said that combating terrorism must not be done at the expense of human rights and civil liberties. If we do not follow his warning, our efforts will be fruitless and may result in the victory of the terrorists.²⁶ Confronting terrorism by pursuing another form of terrorism will only create more terrorism, thus resulting in a vicious circle that offers victory to no one.

²⁶ *Republika* (20 June 2006).