



**Combating Terrorism Center**  
at West Point



## Occasional Paper Series

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# Sunni and Shi'a Terrorism

## Differences that Matter

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are significant and little appreciated differences in the trajectory of Sunni extremist terrorism and that of Shi'a extremism. The differences exist across six key areas that impact American policy considerations, especially in light of steadily escalating tensions with Iran. First and foremost, Sunni radicals and Shi'a extremists differ in the overall approach and main objectives for their use of terror. The former tend to operate in a continuous, mid-to-high intensity manner, seeing war against infidels and apostates as a perennial condition featuring overlapping waves. Outside of an ongoing and seemingly open-ended campaign against Israel, terrorist attacks by Shi'a groups have by and large featured discrete terror campaigns tethered to state and organizational objectives. Second, Sunni terrorists and Shi'a extremists manifest different patterns for recruiting terrorist operatives and developing terrorist missions. Shi'a terrorists, unlike their Sunni counterparts, enjoy direct state support and for that reason are far more likely to originate from Iranian embassies, consulates and state-run businesses. Third, despite holding a minority viewpoint within the wider Sunni Islamic community, Sunni extremists, especially Salafi-Jihadis, rely more extensively on the support of their coreligionist expatriate communities in facilitating terrorist activities. Fourth, while employing similar tactics and methods, Shi'a terrorist groups have shown a much greater propensity to kidnap innocents to barter, while Sunni extremists more frequently abduct to kill. Fifth, Shi'a terror groups exhibit a much higher incidence of targeted assassinations for specific political gain, rather than the high-casualty killings featured in Sunni terrorism, and particularly of the Salafi-Jihadist variant. Finally, each sect's extremists manage publicity and propaganda differently. The Sunni approach to information management tends to feature doctrine and resources geared to take immediate credit and widely amplify a terrorist event. Shi'a terrorists, while not averse to normal media publicity and amplification, by and large take a much lower-key approach.

Importantly, this study does not argue or imply that violence perpetrated by Sunni or Shi'a extremist groups is carried out for reasons that are inherent to one or the other tradition of Islam. There is no evidence sought or identified in this work contending that historical patterns of terrorist attacks by organizations identifying themselves as Shi'a, for example, are pre-determined by Shi'a theology or philosophy. What this study does suggest, however, is that those Shi'a organizations that have conducted terrorism in non-combat zones display

several preferred operational patterns that contrast markedly from their Sunni counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Even though additional research is warranted, a preliminary review of these six areas of differentiation suggests that the United States and its western allies should carefully and seriously consider the dissimilarities between Sunni and Shi'a terrorism.

### **Key Findings**

- Over the twenty-five year period from 1981-2006, Sunni terrorism in non-combat zones evolved in four overlapping waves. Conducted by hundreds of ideologically similar groups, Sunni terrorism has featured continuous, mid-to-high intensity operations viewing war against infidels and apostates as a perpetual condition.
- Terrorism by Shi'a groups in non-combat zones over the same period has been conducted in five discrete campaigns and by two main actors: Iranian state agents from special national paramilitary and intelligence services, and Hezbollah operatives.<sup>2</sup> The rationale for terrorism by Shi'a groups over that time frame was tethered tightly to Iranian state and Hezbollah organizational objectives, especially that of state/group survival.
- The six significant differences between Sunni extremist terrorism and Shi'a terrorism over twenty-five years of practice in non-combat zones have major policy implications for the United States and its western allies in the event of overt hostilities with Iran over Tehran's advancing nuclear program.
- The intense correlation between survival aims of Iran and Hezbollah on the one hand, and the instigation of terrorism against western overseas interests on the other, suggests that there is a high likelihood that a mid-to-high intensity terrorist campaign by Shi'a groups—along the lines of three campaigns carried out by Hezbollah and Iranian agents during the 1980s—would be initiated in response to any U.S. or Israeli strike against Iranian nuclear sites or wider regime targets.

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of "combat zones" is discussed later in the paper.

<sup>2</sup> Although several militant groups call themselves "Hezbollah," the Hezbollah organization discussed in the present paper refers exclusively to the Lebanon-based group bearing that name.

- Any new campaign of terrorism by Shi'a actors of this type could have a profound, unsettling impact on overseas American diplomats, businessmen, educators and commercial agents who would likely become the focused targets of bombings, kidnappings and assassinations.
- Such a terror campaign would likely circumvent much of what the United States is presently doing to combat terrorism overseas, and greatly challenge America's hostage negotiation and crisis management capability.
- U.S. political leaders should carefully consider the differences in Shi'a terrorism and Sunni terrorism in non-combat zone as part of a comprehensive assessment of all the costs involved in a crossing of military thresholds that would likely trigger an Iranian-backed campaign of Shi'a terrorism in the first place.

### Key Recommendations

- **Refocus and Better Resource Intelligence and Counterintelligence against Terrorism by Shi'a groups:** America's intelligence and counterintelligence for combating terrorism overseas must expand and extend capabilities to monitor Iranian embassies, consulates, state-owned businesses, their key employees and suspected agents of terrorism by Shi'a actors. Our intelligence services should be resourced to step-up monitoring and clandestine operations against Iranian officials and suspected operatives in several dozen critical countries, most notably those with weak governance; corrupt and inefficient law enforcement and legal systems; and porous borders, where Iranian embassies are located. These conditions are most attractive to Iranian agents and Hezbollah operatives, as they were among those that made Lebanon and several other states of the Arab world prime playgrounds for non-combat zone terrorism by Shi'a groups two decades ago.
- **Enhance Targeted Intelligence and Law Enforcement Collaboration against Shi'a Terror:** The U.S. needs to enhance its collaboration with critical partners to get a step ahead of Shi'a terrorists and Iranian agents. Many of the states most vulnerable to Iranian agents and Hezbollah terrorist operatives in the 1980s have dramatically improved their counter-



terrorism posture. But like America, these states have focused improvements against Sunni extremist terrorism patterns. The United States needs to establish protocols for timely sharing of national-level information regarding Iranian agent operations and transit of allied government territory. It also needs to work with allied state intelligence and interior ministries to target and share timely and accurate information on suspected Iranian agents, operatives and front companies.

- **Dramatically Improve Overseas American Diplomatic Capacity to Manage Any New Terror Campaign on the part of Shi'a actors:** America's diplomatic readiness abroad requires significant improvement to bear-up under the brunt of any future Shi'a terror campaign. We must draw greater allied law enforcement and security attention to protection of western schools, living quarters, places of worship and work places. Attention also must be paid to a much more detailed array of abduction and assassination scenarios. Our diplomats and politicians must prepare to deal with a spike in hostage negotiations. All of this must be managed in a sober and deliberate fashion, and must be properly funded to succeed.
- **Psychological Preparation of the Nation:** Any new terrorism campaign by Shi'a groups targeting Americans in non-combat zones would greatly increase public risk, pushing it into dimensions not confronted in the popular American psyche for nearly twenty years. Without fear-mongering, our political leaders need to set general public expectations properly so that prudent precautions are taken to reduce personal risk and so that the psychology of terrorism practiced by Shi'a groups will not frustrate a public now calibrated to understand the risks from and precautions for Sunni extremist terrorism.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1990s, America has poured billions of dollars into intelligence, counterintelligence and force protection programs designed to anticipate and deny Sunni extremist groups, such as al-Qa'ida and its associated movements (AQAM),<sup>3</sup> an ability to conduct spectacular terrorist strikes against the U.S. homeland and its critical national assets abroad.<sup>4</sup> A small fraction of this funding—in addition to a classified amount of counterintelligence money—has been spent to deter, detect and disrupt terrorist access to vital American assets and interests overseas.<sup>5</sup> While much of this effort has been focused in locations like Iraq and Afghanistan, where declared combat with Sunni extremists is

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<sup>3</sup> The terms “Sunni extremism,” “Sunni Islamism” and “al-Qa’ida and associated movements” will be used throughout this paper as short-hands to identify the more than one hundred Sunni terrorist groups around the globe that practice catastrophic violence for the sake of forcing radical change in local, regional or global governance. (See Appendix A2 – Sunni Terror Groups.) Since 1998, many Sunni extremist groups have become directly affiliated with al-Qa’ida. Most Sunni extremists draw their main inspiration for catastrophic violence from the radical writings of Egyptian Islamist Sayyed Qutb, who espoused the necessity of global Islamic jihad under the banner of Salafi-Jihadist ideology. A minority view within Sunni Islam, *Salafi-Jihadist* ideology helped inform the rationale for action by disparate Sunni extremist terrorists in the 1970s and 1980s, but did not explicitly drive their activities. Since the founding of al-Qa’ida, however, the *Salafi-jihad* has become the formal grounding for a preponderance of Sunni terrorist groups. Thus, this term will be used most frequently to identify Sunni terrorist groups and activities in the past dozen-or-so years. For a detailed overview of Sunni extremism and the important subset of *Salafi-jihad*, see Richard A. Clarke, et al., *Defeating the Jihadists: A Blueprint for Action* (New York: The Century Foundation, 2004), 9-62; Mark Stout, et al., *The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaeda and Associated Movements* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 1-23; Robert C. Martinage, *The Global War on Terrorism, An Assessment* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Analysis, 2008), 11-30.

<sup>4</sup> From the beginning of fiscal year 2002, on 1 October 2001, to the end of fiscal year 2007, on 30 September 2007, United States federal funding for homeland security programs rose over 32 percent to \$58.3 billion. Even though this figure does not include spending on special counterterrorism intelligence and information collection, Americans dedicated \$312 billion, about \$52 billion each year, over this six-year period to combat terror at home and abroad. See Jennifer E. Lake, et al., *Homeland Security Department: FY2008 Appropriations – CRS Report for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2008), 120-21.

<sup>5</sup> In fiscal year 2007, Department of State spending to combat terrorism abroad was about \$3.4 billion, or less than 6 percent of the total account. See *Combating Terrorism: Department of State Programs to Combat Terrorism Abroad*, GAO Report 02-1021 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002), 5-13; *Combating Terrorism: State Department’s Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes*, GAO Report 08-336 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008), 8-11; *Budget in Brief, U.S. Department of State – Fiscal Year 2008* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2007), <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/bib/>.

ongoing, a large majority of American expenditures to combat terror overseas since the mid-1990s has been focused on places away from direct combat activity, but where Sunni Islamist terrorism seems most likely.<sup>6</sup>

Outside of references to the large number of incidents perpetrated against Israel, or those involving the wartime activities of Iranian militia proxies in Iraq since 2004, one is challenged to find direct reference to terrorist strikes by Shi'a groups against western overseas targets. True to this pattern, the 1996 terrorist strike by Shi'a groups against United States airmen housed at the Khobar Towers apartment complex in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, is often superficially linked to patterns of extremist activities against the United States overseas that are almost exclusively Salafi-Jihadist in nature.<sup>7</sup>

As the United States enters the seventh year of a declared war against AQAM, it finds itself gripped in an increasingly tense cycle of ultimatum and retort with Iran, the Shi'a Islamic Republic held responsible for state support of Hezbollah and several other terrorist groups. Much of the recent American policy discussion about a potential direct military conflict between the United States and Iran has focused upon conventional Iranian military counters to a U.S. or Israeli military strike.<sup>8</sup> Chief among these are the potential launching of Iranian ballistic missiles against U.S., Israeli and other regional targets; Iran's military options to disrupt Persian Gulf shipping; and the likely interplay of Iranian air

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<sup>6</sup> See *Combating Terrorism: Department of State Programs to Combat Terrorism Abroad*, GAO Report 02-1021; *Combating Terrorism: State Department's Antiterrorism Program Needs Improved Guidance and More Systematic Assessments of Outcomes*, GAO Report 08-336; and, *Budget in Brief, U.S. Department of State – Fiscal Year 2008* at, <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/bib/>.

<sup>7</sup> For example, see the discussion of Khobar Towers in *The 9/11 Report: The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Washington, DC: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 88-89. The report's language was curiously qualified when discussing the Iranian-inspired, Shi'a terror dynamics behind the 1996 Khobar attack despite the unambiguous determination by former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director Louis Freeh that the attack was solely the undertaking of Iran, through Shi'a terror proxies in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. See Louis J. Freeh, *My FBI: Bringing Down the Mafia, Investigating Bill Clinton, and Waging the War on Terror* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 1-20. In support of Freeh's conclusions, see Thomas Hegghammer, "Deconstructing the myth about al-Qa'ida and Khobar," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 3 (14 February 2008).

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., "Lieberman: Bomb Iran If It Doesn't Stop," *Face the Nation at CBSNews.Com*, 10 June 2007, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/06/10/ftn/main2908476.shtml>; Norman Podhoretz, "The Case for Bombing Iran: I Hope and Pray that President Bush Will Do It," *Wall Street Journal*, 30 May 2007; Daniel Pipes, "Prepare to Attack: Only a Credible Threat Can Persuade Iran to Abandon Its Nuclear Program," *USA Today*, 11 June 2008, 10; Fouad Ajami, "Iran Must Finally Pay a Price," *Wall Street Journal*, 5 May 2008, A15.

defenses against U.S. or coalition strike aircraft.<sup>9</sup> Most western defense analysts conclude that there is a low probability of any successful and irreversible military strike against Iranian nuclear facilities or Iranian-based training sites for Iraqi Shi'a militia. There is an even greater degree of confidence that some 65 million Iranians would galvanize against such a strike and that Tehran's leadership would tap popular outrage by unleashing every military and paramilitary asset in Iran's arsenal.<sup>10</sup> As one Israeli Middle East analyst recently observed, "Tehran has created a situation in which anyone who wants to attack its atomic facilities will have to take into account that this will lead to bitter fighting" on multiple fronts across the region.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, a broader and more difficult question for American policy should be asked regarding military options against Iran: If the United States were to conduct a military strike, what are Iran's most likely violent responses, and how prepared is the United States to deal with them? History suggests that if Iran would feel directly threatened, Tehran would most certainly turn to aggressive proxy terrorism—managed by its intelligence service (MOIS) and its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, military special units (IRGC-Qods Force).<sup>12</sup> Most likely, Iran's terror activity would leverage a regional Hezbollah terrorist network and an affiliated, globally focused Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO) network with a twenty-five year track record of involvement with specialized terrorist recruiting, activity planning and targeting in and out of the greater Middle East.

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<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Peter Brookes, "Israel vs. Iran: 1<sup>st</sup> Strike Strategies," *Armed Forces Journal* (February 2008), 27-29. For a sample of the popular western discourse concerning likely Iranian responses to a military strike that omits specific attention to terror and proxy terror beyond that between Hezbollah and Israel, see Dion Nissenbaum, "Case Builds for a Military Strike On Iran," *Miami Herald*, 12 June 2008, 1.

<sup>10</sup> See Vali Nasr, "The Implications of Military Confrontation with Iran," in *Iran: Assessing U.S. Strategic Options – DRAFT*, ed. James N. Miller, Christine Parthemore and Kurt M. Campbell (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2008), 2-18.

<sup>11</sup> This direct quote from Israeli policy analysts Ehud Yaari, as cited from the Jerusalem Post dated April 28, 2008 and as found in Thomas L. Friedman, "The New Cold War," *New York Times*, 14 May 2008. For a similar, historically-based assessment, see Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Countdown to Crisis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran* (New York: Crown Forum, 2005), 515; Martinage, 89-96; Shaul Shay, *The Axis of Evil: Iran, Hizballah and the Palestinian Terror* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 245-51.

<sup>12</sup> Among others with a detailed understanding of Iran's historic resort to asymmetric warfare and terror in times of perceived peril to the Islamic regime or the Persian nation, Vali Nasr explicitly lists choreographed terror in and out of the Middle East as an important option for Tehran. See Nasr (2008), 9-18.

As tensions continue to build between Tehran and Washington over Iran's nuclear program, sober American and western policymaking needs to consider the array of indirect, proxy-based terror options that Tehran may choose beyond those now evident in Iraq, Afghanistan and against Israel. Our action-reaction calculus must contemplate the risks of Iranian-inspired terrorism against several million relatively exposed American and western diplomats, businessmen and women, and military liaisons in states where these agents can operate effectively.<sup>13</sup>

If the expansive, post-9/11 American study of AQAM and development of anti-terrorism countermeasures could be shown to address all of the critical dimensions of a likely Shi'a-inspired terror strike against overseas western "soft targets," especially those in non-combat zones, then relative ignorance of the special aspects of terrorism by Shi'a groups would be inconsequential. A quarter century of historical record, however, shows that the many obvious similarities between Sunni and Shi'a terrorism are balanced by significant differences. These differences matter to critical U.S. policy calculations regarding our overseas exposure to Iranian-backed, Shi'a terrorism.

The purpose of this monograph is to conduct a brief analytical survey of the key differences between Sunni terror group patterns and those observed in terror operations inspired by Shi'a groups in non-combat zones and excluding Israel. (For a listing of groups in each category, see appendices A1 and A2.) It will then suggest how these differences should help inform adjusted U.S. policy in the counterterrorist arena if terrorist strikes by Shi'a groups become increasingly likely. This survey and analysis of Islamist terrorism focuses on the quarter century from 1981 through 2006 and will summarize the historical dimensions of known terrorist attacks by Sunni and Shi'a groups during that period. The focus is upon terrorist operations and strike patterns in non-combat zones, as it is these patterns that are most relevant to understanding how any possible increase in terror activity by Shi'a groups might impact Americans and westerners in international locations now perceived to be reasonably secure. This approach also avoids the troubling propensity of many recent terrorism databases that conflate guerrilla tactics and irregular operations in war zones with terrorism.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> There are no official statistics of American expatriates overseas, although classified estimates are deduced annually by the Department of State. Best estimates are that some 4 million Americans reside overseas as of 2006. See *American Citizens Abroad News Report, 2006-Number 1*, 1-12, <http://www.aca.ch/nr6-1.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> While debatable, this conflation is indefensible when considering terrorism's impact on unsuspecting and relatively unprepared targets, for this melding dubiously implies that the

A separate, but related, caveat is that this study has omitted Islamist terror strikes against Israel and Israeli military forces. While clearly not a combat zone, Israel is a unique case where the population targeted by Islamist terror is acutely aware of its vulnerability and where its government has mobilized an impressive security infrastructure to deter and disrupt terrorism.<sup>15</sup> (See Appendix A3 for those Sunni and Shi'a terror groups omitted from the analysis based upon these limitations.)

Working from the insights gained through this analytical focus, the survey will highlight the extensive similarity in Sunni and Shi'a group terrorism, but also suggest that at least six substantial differences are present. These differences, exhibited in both targeting patterns and mission execution, suggest that U.S. and western policymakers need to more clearly differentiate terrorism practiced by Shi'a groups from that employed by Sunni organizations, including the latter's most predominant contemporary variant, the Salafi-Jihadis. It is of equal importance to adjust focus and counterterrorism resources in several areas to properly counter terrorism by Shi'a groups against overseas U.S. and western

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normalcy of civil society is the backdrop to the violence. Terrorism, by its very nature, is focused on the attack of unarmed non-combatants and against people and physical locations that are not commonly alerted to, structured for or substantially protected against the application of extreme violence. Consequently, terrorist strikes are designed to produce personal and physical insecurity in a normally secure environment. It is precisely such an unsuspecting target set that matters to this study. Consequently, the study's methodology has taken pains to omit strikes by Islamist terrorist groups of both sects committed in combat zones around the world from 1981 through 2006. Among these, the following five major combat zone locations have been formally set aside from the analysis: Afghanistan, from 1981-89 and from 2001-2006; Iraq at war with Iran from 1981-88 and under Coalition occupation from 2003-2006; Somalia from 1992-2006; Chechnya from 1994-2004; and, the states of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, from 1991-99. Clearly, there are many more nation-states where combat has occurred during the twenty-five-year period from 1981 to 2006. However, no others have experienced combat activity with direct participation by Islamist-inspired or affiliated terrorist groups. For a nice summary of appropriate emerging challenges to the conflation of guerilla tactics and irregular operations with true terrorism, especially in terrorism data collected since 2003, see Fareed Zakaria, "The Thing We Have to Fear," *Washington Post*, 26 May 2008, A-17.

<sup>15</sup> Israel's intense security posture significantly alters standard patterns of Islamist extremist planning, resourcing and conduct of terrorist attacks. Thus, the dominant patterns of radical Islamist terror against Israel are different in many dimensions from those witnessed against western nationals in locations where normalcy is not so conditioned by a state of siege. Israel is also a place where Sunni and Shi'a groups intermix and even cooperate in conducting terrorism and where secular Palestinian organizations collaborate as well. No such complex and interwoven pattern is observed elsewhere in the universe of Islamist terror activity. Consequently—but for separate reasons—Islamist terrorism's attacks against Israel join those conducted in combat zones as excluded due to the focus of this study.

interests. Intelligence-gathering, counterintelligence options, and force protection programs each merit scrutiny before a day when terrorism by Shi'a groups may overtake Salafi-jihadist terrorism as the major threat to American and western overseas interests in non-combat areas abroad. If trends continue, that day may be upon us very soon.

## Part 1

### Suni and Shi'a Terrorist Evolution from 1981 to 2006

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The militant variants of Sunni and Shi'a Islam have manifested themselves in significant forms of terrorism since the watershed year of 1979. Beginning in that year, the Islamic Revolution swept Iran and sent shock waves across the entire Muslim world and beyond.<sup>16</sup> It also helped unleash a series of political, social and military forces that transformed the landscape across the wider Muslim world and inspired subsequent Islamic fundamentalists and extremists. Radical Islam emerged as a violent political movement. Many Muslims perceived it as the worthy successor to the heavily discredited ideologies popular especially in the aftermath of World War II, including Arab nationalism and communism, both of which were tapped to eradicate western colonialism and relieve the political and economic frustrations of tens of millions across the wider Islamic world.<sup>17</sup>

#### A - Shi'a Terrorism Since 1981: Focused Objective, Tehran to Lebanon.

The ideological construct justifying forceful, violent, revolutionary change and a dominance of fundamentalist Shi'ism in daily national politics and governance sprung from Ayatollah Khomeini's controversial concept of *velayat-e faqih* (rule of the jurisconsult). Even as the fragile revolution continued across Iran, Khomeini

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<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion of the Iranian Revolution's impact across the Islamic world, see Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts in Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 119-168.

<sup>17</sup> A succinct summary of the inspirational nature of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 to the rise of Shi'a and Sunni radicalism as a force for overcoming popular frustrations across the Islamic world is found in Nasr (2006), 81-145. See also Ali M. Ansiri, *Confronting Iran: The Failure of American Foreign Policy and the Roots of Mistrust* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2006), 55-146. For important references to the Iranian Revolution's significant impact across the Sunni Islamic world and especially for Saudi Arabia, see Steven Coll, *The Bin Ladens: An Arab Family in the American Century* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 221-31, 245-46. See also Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle East Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 35-63, 96-131.

strove to emerge dominant over other prominent regional Shi'a clerics who rejected his religious interpretation of divine rule by a single Ayatollah from Tehran. These pan-Muslim objectives led Khomeini to posture the Islamic Republic of Iran as the champion of a broad Islamic revival incorporating Sunni and Shi'a Muslims under a common banner.<sup>18</sup> He moved to choreograph a broader Islamic revolution throughout Arab and Muslim lands. His appeal rested upon highly resonant Middle Eastern themes of anti-Zionism and anti-Westernism. His rhetoric inspired activist Shi'a militia groups to revolt against autocratic Sunni regimes in Arab and other nearby Muslim countries. But aspirations for a broad-based Islamic uprising under Tehran's leadership quickly fizzled. Between 1981 and 1985, minority Shi'a communities and movements in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Jordan flirted with Tehran's overtures, but did not join its wider cause.<sup>19</sup>

Even in Lebanon, where the Shi'a-dominated Amal militia had trained many of the Iranian expatriates who became prominent during the 1978-79 Iranian revolution, Tehran's courtship was initially rebuffed. In fact, despite Lebanon's sizable Iranian expatriate Shi'a population, Amal—which was Lebanon's principal politico-militia—proved too nationalistic and too tepid for Khomeini's broader agenda. Seizing upon Israel's late 1982 decision to remain in southern Lebanon in the heart of the Levant's Shi'a population, Khomeini and his Revolutionary Guards Force therefore encouraged development of a more aggressive Shi'a movement that was destined to overshadow Amal and become the only revolutionary Shi'a movement outside of Iran: Hezbollah. Angry that Amal did not seek immediate confrontation with remaining Israeli forces in the southern Levant, Lebanese Shi'a clerics Muhammad Fadlallah and Muhammad Shamsuddin broke from Amal to forge their own dynamic Shi'a movement. These activist Lebanese Shi'a clerics openly embraced Khomeini's controversial interpretation of modern Shi'ism and appropriated associated Shi'a myths and legends for use with the Shi'a minority in Lebanon to garner support and fealty for their militant agenda. Partnering with President Hafez al-Assad of Syria, a Shi'a of the Alawite variant, Ayatollah Khomeini quickly adopted the fledgling Hezbollah movement by financing it, arming it and providing it religious inspiration for its bloody struggle against Israeli and western influence in Lebanon.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 125-26, 134.

<sup>19</sup> Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 144-45.

<sup>20</sup> Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 139-44. Initially known as Islamic Amal, this Shi'a militia was alternatively known as Islamic Jihad, the Islamic Resistance and Hezbollah before becoming



From its 1982 inception, Lebanese Hezbollah has been the main protagonist of Middle Eastern and international Shi'a terror, including in non-combat zones. In the period from 1981 to 2006, Hezbollah operations accounted for 78 percent of the strikes and over 95 percent of fatalities caused by Shi'a extremist groups in non-combat zone events outside of Israel.<sup>21</sup>

Hezbollah's relationship with Iran grew broader and deeper throughout the 1980s, eventually coming to feature a sophisticated set of paramilitary linkages with special elements of the Iranian intelligence service and Iran's famed Revolutionary Guard Corps' irregular military operations force.<sup>22</sup> As it matured, Hezbollah has featured self-interested military and paramilitary operations against Israel and other non-Shi'a adversaries in the Lebanese civil war. Simultaneously, it has provided proxy terrorist services against western interests in Lebanon that advance Tehran's political aims, generating the training, equipment and often the cadre leadership for Iranian terrorist operations that target Tehran's political objectives in other countries across the Middle East.<sup>23</sup> Through the vehicle of its Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO), Hezbollah has also

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widely known as Hezbollah by the end of the 1980s. For a more comprehensive review of the decline of the Amal militia and the evolution of Hezbollah in Lebanon as both a social movement and as a primary vehicle of Shi'a radicalism, see Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: The Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987); and Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> As will be linked to database references later in this monograph, Hezbollah terror activity accounts for some 122 of 158 non-combat zone Shi'a terror group attacks and more than 2,750 of roughly 3,000 Shi'a terror victim deaths over the twenty-five year period of study.

<sup>22</sup> Many, but not all, of the linkages between Tehran and Hezbollah worked through the conduit of Syria. For a review of Hezbollah's evolution as the dominant element in Iran's external terrorist operations, see Norton (2007); Shay, ch. 2 & 3; Thomas Joscelyn, *Iran's Proxy War Against America* (Claremont, CA: The Claremont Institute, 2007), 64-71. While some still dispute the conclusion, the IRGC-Qods Force has long been cited as a principal agent in Iran's state sponsorship of terror. It has been on the annual U.S. Department of State Sponsors of Terrorism report since 1984. On 25 October 2007, the IRGC-Qods force itself was designated a terrorist and terrorist support organization pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 13224 (September 2001), and it and many of its leaders have been subject to financial and economic sanctions by the United States and allies pursuant to this and subsequent designations. See *State Sponsors of Terrorism – 2008* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2008), <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/c14151.htm>; *Terrorism, What You need To Know About US Sanctions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control, 2008), 1, 13, <http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcemnt/ofac/programs/terror/terror.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Norton (2007); Shay, 58-71; Nasr (2008), 12-13.

developed an ability to conduct high impact terrorist operations around the world.<sup>24</sup>

## **B - The Five Shi'a Campaigns of Terror: 1981 to 2006**

Since 1981, Shi'a terrorism has featured two distinct lines of operation, each led by one of two main actors. While at least ten Shi'a terror groups have operated globally and continue to operate to varying degrees today, there are only two truly dominant terrorist actors of Shi'a persuasion: Hezbollah (including its affiliated IJO) and Iranian agents (generally from the MOIS or IRGC-Qods force). (See list at Appendix A1.) The first of the two operational lines has been led by Hezbollah in Israel and against Israeli targets in southern Lebanon occupation zones. The second has been driven from Tehran, facilitated through Lebanon, and focused on discrete campaigns to achieve specific policy objectives.<sup>25</sup> Five distinct campaigns of terrorism perpetrated or sponsored by Shi'a actors are evident within this second line of operations.<sup>26</sup> (See Table 1.)

An initial, high profile terror campaign marked the Shi'a awakening across the greater Middle East. It ran from 1981 to 1989 and featured violent uprisings and acts of terrorism against non-Shi'a national regimes and upon U.S. and western

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<sup>24</sup> Shrouded in mystery, the IJO is a small, shadowy sub-element within Hezbollah that evolved to focus on worldwide terrorist operations under the leadership of Hezbollah terrorist mastermind Imad Mugniyah. Small and tightly affiliated with the Iranian leadership in Tehran and the Hezbollah senior leadership in Beirut and Damascus, the IJO's extremely close relationship with Iran's IRGC-Qods force should see it through to a future of terror beyond that generated by Imad Mugniyah, who was assassinated by car bomb in Damascus, Syria in early February 2008. For detail on Mugniyah and IJO, see Carl Anthony Wege, "Iran's Terrorist Asset: A History of Imad Mugniyah," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 17 (8 September 2006), [www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370123](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370123); Patrick Devenny, "Tehran's Terror Master," *FrontPageMagazine.com* (26 May 2005), <http://www.frontpagemag.com/ARTicles/Printable.aspx?GUID=625E2D6B-6857-4228-A4>; James Risen, "Slain Hezbollah chief was among world's most feared terrorists," *International Herald Tribune*, 13 February 2008, <http://www.iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=10029084>.

<sup>25</sup> Here, I use the term "campaign" to denote a set of terrorist activities with specific, discrete purposes or aims that are achievable in a short-to-medium time frame. These aims eschew sweeping, overarching objectives, and can be realized short of the target state or organization completely capitulating to some grandiose, ideological design. This context is much akin to the definition of a classic military campaign.

<sup>26</sup> My five-campaign, non-combat zone construct aligns well in context, but differs in detail from the three eras of Iranian-sponsored terror presented by Shaul Shay. See Shay, 6-9, 42-71. This difference stems from Shay's inclusion of Shi'a-inspired terror against Israel and Iranian terror operations against secular and moderate Shi'a Mujahideen-e-Khalq and Kurdish counter-revolutionaries inside of Iran, while I set these aside in my analysis.

interests in states on or near Iran's borders. In addition to Sunni-led regimes, these actors targeted American and Israeli interests in Lebanon, Pakistan, Kuwait and elsewhere across the Arabian Peninsula. Results of this campaign were mixed. It only realized Tehran's aspirations in Lebanon, where a large and reasonably organized Lebanese Shi'a community with ties to Iran and the Shi'a holy city of Qom existed prior to 1979. As Tehran's exhortations met with frustration elsewhere, its focus upon Lebanon assured the ascendance of Hezbollah and facilitated the Iranian partnership with Hezbollah as a surrogate agent in bombings, kidnappings and other acts of terror, thereby fulfilling Tehran's goals for driving off American, French and other "imperial" western powers from the region.<sup>27</sup>

A second, low-intensity and largely successful campaign of terror by assassination ran concurrently from 1981 through 1992. The targets of these assassinations, carried out by the Ayatollah's paramilitary forces and intelligence operatives, were charismatic leaders from Shah Muhammad-Reza Pahlavi's government.<sup>28</sup> Campaign victims included individuals believed most likely to inspire a counter-coup against the Islamic Republic of Iran. After about a dozen assassinations in as many years against targets outside of Iran, the campaign culminated in early 1992, when Iran determined it had effectively ended the main threat with the stabbing assassination of the last prime minister of the Shah's era, Dr. Shapour Bakhtiar, in August 1991 in Paris, France.

A third and highly successful short, sharp Shi'a terror campaign ran from 1984 to 1988 in France. Complementing Hezbollah terrorism against French targets in Lebanon, Iranian agents in France directed a targeted bombing campaign that featured over a dozen attacks designed to eliminate Paris' political-military

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<sup>27</sup> For a general review of these Iranian campaign objectives, see Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (New York: Times Books, 2006), 12-15, 26-30; Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 217-18, 253-81; Daniel Pipes, "[Iraq and Iran:] The Tarbabies of American Politics," *National Review* (16 November 1992), <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/224>; Shay, 39-45, 58-72, 81-84.

<sup>28</sup> Iranian agent involvement in these assassinations is highlighted in, among other sources, the short summaries at The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism Global Terrorism Data Base (START-GTD), [http://www.start.umd.edu/data/gtd/gtd1\\_and\\_gtd2.asp](http://www.start.umd.edu/data/gtd/gtd1_and_gtd2.asp); UNCHR, Final Report of the Special Representative on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, E/CN.4/1993/41, ¶¶ 64-66, <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G93/104/51/PDF/G9310451.pdf?OpenElement>; William C. Rempel, "Tale of Deadly Iranian Network Woven in Paris," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 November 1994, 1.

activism in Lebanon and end its assistance to Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>29</sup> Both of these objectives were fully achieved. Like the United States, France had an established policy of supporting Saddam Hussein's war against Iran. An Iranian victory seemed a very real possibility between 1982 and 1985, following the success of Iran's horrifically bloody, human-wave military counter-offensives.<sup>30</sup> Tehran sought to stop France's military and financial support for Saddam and added a campaign of random terrorist attacks in France—principally in Paris—to augment the political leverage it was generating from Hezbollah bombings of French assets and kidnappings of French nationals in Lebanon. This audacious, yet very subtle campaign worked brilliantly. To stop the bombings, France ended its formal support for Baghdad in 1987, and also agreed to supply over one million dollars in embargoed military parts to Tehran. By early 1988, Paris also compensated Tehran financially to secure release of several French hostages seized in Lebanon by Hezbollah during prior years.<sup>31</sup>

Largely focused on Israel during the 1990s, Shi'a-extremism featured a fourth, short and successful low-profile, high-impact revenge terrorist campaign against international Jewish and Israeli targets from 1992 until 1994. Determined to make a political statement on a grand stage outside of the numbing terrorist activity against Israel in South Lebanon and in Israel proper, Hezbollah master terrorist

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<sup>29</sup> France's assistance to Iraq during the war was based upon military and economic ties that developed in the late 1970s. In addition to overt assistance, including the loan of five Super Etendard fighter bombers to Baghdad in 1983, French assistance included denial of longstanding contractual support for maintenance and repair of French military equipment in the Iranian military inventory. See Shahram Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 2, 193; Anthony Cordesman and Abraham Wagner, *The Lessons of Modern War, Volume II: The Iran-Iraq War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 52-53, 156-7, 171-74.

<sup>30</sup> See Cordesman and Wagner, 146-86.

<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the United States was not subject to a similar Iranian campaign of terrorism to counter Washington's equally overt military and financial support of Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq war. Two factors are most often cited to account for this dissimilarity. First, the United States had severed relations with Iran, while France had not. This meant Iran had no embassy or consulates in America, while it did in France. It also meant that the United States applied extensive scrutiny to Iranian expatriate travel while France did not. Second, France had a "sanctuary doctrine" that allowed terrorists to come and go as they saw fit so long as France was not made the target of the group's terror. Successful in the 1960s and 1970s with groups like the Palestine Liberation Organization that had no terror aspirations within France, the sanctuary doctrine failed miserably in the case of Iranian agents who purposefully targeted French people and locations, utilizing members of other terrorist groups living freely in France to help with the attacks. The Iranian campaign in France led Paris to scrap the sanctuary doctrine completely. For a review of the sanctuary doctrine and the Iranian campaign of terror in France, see Jeremy Shapiro and Benedicte Suzan, "The French Experience of Counter-terrorism," *Survival* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 69-76; Shay, 173-79.

Imad Mughniyah, working with Iranian agents in Argentina, planned and executed strikes against two Jewish targets in Buenos Aires. These attacks were in retaliation for Israel's February 1992 targeted killing of Hezbollah leader, presumably Sheikh Abbas Mussawi, and its May 1994 apprehension of Hezbollah operations chief, Mustafa Dirani. These South American terrorist strikes were gruesomely effective, killing twenty-nine and eighty-five people, respectively, while injuring nearly another 500. The death and destruction immediately resonated with Jews worldwide, while the Argentines languished mightily to figure out who the perpetrators were and why the strikes took place.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, from 1996 through 2006, the pattern of terrorism by Shi'a groups outside of combat zones featured a low-profile campaign targeting only the most vulnerable American military and diplomatic locations across the Middle East and South Asia. There were less than a dozen terror attacks as part of that campaign. The most spectacular one took place at Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on June 24, 1996, leaving 19 American airmen dead and another 370 wounded. At Khobar, Iran effectively used its IGRC-Qods force connections with Hezbollah to hatch the strike plan from meeting locations in Damascus, Syria. Lebanese Hezbollah's top terrorist trainers and facilitators oversaw the implementation of the plan within Lebanon from inception to mission completion.<sup>33</sup> The majority of this fifth campaign period, however, has been marked by quietude. From 1996 through the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iran displayed limited interest in instigating regional or global terror. Similarly, Hezbollah kept its terror focus on Israel, passing on some high profile opportunities to conduct wider regional terror operations during the war with Israel in the summer of 2006.<sup>34</sup> Since at least 2003, the focus of terrorism by Shi'a groups has turned increasingly toward combat zone venues in Iraq, and to a lesser extent Afghanistan. Thus, while there is no evidence that the fifth campaign of Shi'a terrorism outside of combat zones ended in 2006 (although the

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<sup>32</sup> See Shay, 95-101; Alon Ben-David, "Hizbullah Vows to Avenge Death of Mughniyah," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (20 February 2008), 18; *Hezbollah, Part 2: Profile of Lebanese Shiite Terrorist Organization*, Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Center for Special Studies, July 2003, [http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/hizbullah/pb/hezb\\_B.htm](http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/hizbullah/pb/hezb_B.htm).

<sup>33</sup> See *USA v. Al-Mughassil, et al.*, Indictment (U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Virginia – Alexandria Division, 22 June 2001), [www.globaljihad.net/view](http://www.globaljihad.net/view); Freeh, 1-20; Shay, 169-70.

<sup>34</sup> This sentiment regarding widespread Shiite terrorism as "the dog that didn't bark" during the Israeli-Hezbollah war of July 2006 is ascribed to former Central Intelligence Agency station chief in Lebanon, Robert Baer. See Seymour Hersh, "The Redirection," *New Yorker*, 5 March 2007, [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa\\_fact\\_hersch](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/03/05/070305fa_fact_hersch).

data available for this study did), this latest non-combat zone campaign of Shi'a group terrorism may now be squeezed out of the limelight by motivated Iranian and Hezbollah attention toward use of terror tools inside nearby wars.

As international pressure against its nuclear ambitions continues to mount, and as a U.S. military presence persists astride all four of its national borders, Iran's history of conducting terror campaigns to support discrete, vital national policy objectives—most notably regime survival—cannot be ignored. Indeed, multiple indicators suggest that Tehran already may be setting the preconditions for a new, more overt campaign of terror against western interests as part of what it perceives to be discrete, defensive political objectives.<sup>35</sup> While tactics being used in the Iraqi combat zone might be featured in such a campaign, the conditions in countries other than Iraq and Afghanistan suggest strongly that Iran and Hezbollah will instead opt for historic non-combat zone tactics, making certain that every bit of their thirty-year experience with terror in vulnerable, under-protected venues comes into play.

The five campaigns of terrorism by Shi'a actors outside of combat zones from 1981 to 2006 highlight three important, if unsurprising insights. First, Hezbollah attacks are the dominant terrorist events by Shi'a groups in non-combat zones, with Iranian agent activity a distant runner-up. Second, the intense reciprocal dynamic between Iranian agents and Hezbollah in the execution of terrorism, especially in venues beyond Lebanon, suggests that while the main terrorist agents are clearly Shi'a, their choice of when to use terror and their methods of perpetrating terrorism do not derive from any conspicuous dimension of Shi'a theology or doctrine. Instead, the contours of "Shi'a terrorism" beyond combat zones from 1981 to 2006 are best understood as predominantly related to Iranian state objectives, as well as those of Hezbollah. Third, terrorism campaigns by Shi'a actors have been largely successful. While western policymakers may not be acutely aware of this success rate, they should be clear that Iranian and Hezbollah leaders are able to make future decisions regarding the use of terrorism to achieve political objectives from a perspective of high confidence.

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<sup>35</sup> Reporting since 2006 from Kuwait, Bahrain, Turkey, Central Asia and the Caucasus highlights that Iranian government agents and long-dormant Hezbollah/Islamic Jihad Organization operatives have become increasingly active and brazen in travel and intelligence gathering against western embassies and other suspected terror targets. For details on this phenomenon in the Caucasus, see Stephen Blank, "Walking A Tightrope: Azerbaijan and The Politics of Iranian Nuclear Weapons," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 9, no. 1 (10 January 2007), 10.

Table 1<sup>36</sup>



## Campaigns of Shia Terrorism (1981-2006)

Terror CAMPAIGN	Time Period	Locus & Policy Objective(s)	Excluded Combat Zone(s)	Intensity and Results
The Shia Awakening	1981-89	- Empower Shia voice & clout across Islamic world - Drive U.S. & western influence from Arab world - Evolved focus in Lebanon	- Afghanistan (81-89) - Iran-Iraq (81-88) - Israel	HIGH Mixed – Only successful in Lebanon
Securing Islamic Republic from Counter-Revolution	1981-92	- Inhibit charismatic former Iranian leaders from organizing counter-revolt. - Organized assassination campaign to eliminate threat	- Afghanistan (81-89) - Iran-Iraq (81-88) - Israel	LOW Successful
Changing French Policy	1984-88	- End French Support for Saddam in Iran-Iraq War - Drive France from Lebanon - Focus on France	- Afghanistan (84-88) - Iran-Iraq (84-88) - Israel	MEDIUM Successful
Avenging Mussawi & Dirani	1992-94	- Target International Jewish symbols for spectacular, revenge attacks - Two strikes in Argentina	N/A	LOW Successful
Opportunity Strikes vs. U.S. Regional Targets	1996-2006+	- Focus from Lebanon - Strike U.S. military & diplomatic targets when feasible, & - Avoiding extreme alienation of Sunni neighbors	- Afghanistan (01-06) - Balkans/Kosovo (98-99) - Iraq (03-06) - Israel - Somalia (98-06)	LOW To be Determined

### C - Terrorism by Sunni Groups Since 1981: An Expanding Torrent

Long oppressed, Sunni fundamentalists across the Middle East took courage from the Iranian revolution, but without gratitude, much less fealty, toward Ayatollah Khomeini. From the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood to the extremist disciples of martyred Egyptian dissident Sayyed Qutb to the reactionary *Wahhabi* clerics in Saudi Arabia, Sunni extremists viewed Shi'a success by force-of-arms in Iran as a clarion call to accelerate their own violence against "corrupt" Muslim monarchies. Iran's evident success told them that the time was at hand to seize hold of a more fundamentalist Islamic era based upon Sunnism, not Shi'ism.

<sup>36</sup> For purposes of this table, intensity is defined as LOW if the number of Shi'a group terror attacks averages less than or equal to three per-year over the campaign period, MEDIUM if between four and twelve per-year over the campaign period, and HIGH if above a dozen per-year on average. Only one of five Shi'a terror campaigns rose to the threshold of HIGH intensity.

Sunni radicalism was far more decentralized and non-statist in form. Its wellspring was Islamism, which has deep roots in the radical mosques of Egypt, and the core philosophy of Salafism, especially its Saudi Arab strand, *Wahhabism*.<sup>37</sup>

Decidedly non-mainstream within the broad outlines of Sunni Islam practiced from Morocco to the Philippines, Salafism was highly resonant with many Arab Sunni Muslims due to their frustration with tribally-based and highly-corrupt autocracies that seemed to do nothing for their people, while much at the behest of foreigners. Openly hostile toward the very concept of a nation-state, Sunni radicals share a belief that return to a caliphate—an expansive, stateless empire based upon Sharia law (Islamic law) and governed by a single Sunni clerical vanguard—was the ideal outcome of the necessary overthrow of the modern order across the Islamic world.

In the aftermath of the repression of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the move of Qutbist elements of the brotherhood to Saudi Arabia, a new ideology emerged on the Arabian Peninsula, known as the Salafi-Jihad, which combines elements of both Salafism and Wahhabism. Salafi-Jihadis believe that Israelis and westerners are fundamentally evil and part of a non-Muslim occupation army bent on exploiting Arab lands and resources. Throughout the early 1980s and most of the 1990s, their focus was toward the violent overthrow of what they saw as corrupt, apostate nation-state autocracies across the Arab and Muslim world. The assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981 by *jihadists* within the Egyptian army was one of few successes for the loosely-affiliated movements. The security apparatus in Egypt and other Muslim states across the Arab world quickly and effectively cracked down on Sunni extremists in the early 1980s. Most known and suspected Salafi-Jihadis found themselves jailed in places like Cairo, Riyadh, Tunis and Damascus before they could ever pose a dire threat to standing state regimes. Concurrently, many Muslim countries exploited an opportunity to export their problem with jihadist extremists. Thousands of Sunni radical prisoners from across the Arab world were released between 1981 and 1989 on the condition that they catch the first plane to Pakistan and join the

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<sup>37</sup> For details on Salafism and its violent offshoot, the Salafi Jihad, see Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006), 207-239. The *Salafi Jihad* is the radical ideology underpinning al-Qa'ida, the self-appointed vanguard of the jihadi movement, and that shapes the violent tactics of over one hundred Sunni terror groups around the globe. (See Appendix A2.) For more detail on this ideology and its al-Qa'ida vanguard, see Stout, et al., 1-31; Assaf Moghadam, "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 3 (February 2008), 14-16; Clarke, et al., 9-19.



mujahidin fighting the infidel forces of the Soviet Army occupying Afghanistan. Arab leaders hoped that they would never come back. In most cases, the problem of Salafi extremism was vented away, but this pressure release was short-lived.

Service with the mujahidin in Afghanistan and Pakistan proved an incubator for and an inspiration to Salafi-Jihadis. When the Soviets pulled out of Afghanistan in 1989, thousands of Sunni radicals foresaw a new beginning for their struggles back home.<sup>38</sup> They left Afghanistan confident that they now possessed the organizational and material skills necessary to topple the corrupt regimes that had sent them into exile in the first place. From Algeria to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and later Uzbekistan, Sunni radicals spent the first half of the 1990s focused upon toppling their home state regimes by terrorism and targeted violence.<sup>39</sup> Across the board, their insurgency efforts and terrorist tactics failed. Corrupt though they were, Arab and Muslim regimes proved capable of weathering the early-1990s spike in Sunni radical violence. Despite improved methods and organizations, nationally-focused Sunni terrorist groups were still too weak to pose any serious threat to their target regimes.

Spurred by conspicuous failures from 1990 to 1995 in Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and a half-dozen other Islamic nations, the leadership of several decentralized and diffuse national *jihadi* movements who had known each other during their Afghanistan days gravitated back together. Initially huddled in Khartoum, Sudan, they licked their wounds and reassessed strategy, organization and methods. Led by Usama bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri, this rogue's gallery of what came to be known as Salafi-Jihadis recast itself between 1994 and 1996 from one with loose affiliation and local focus in single countries, to one led by an anointed vanguard: al-Qa'ida. This group collectively committed itself to a new thesis focusing on directly attacking corrupt, non-believing, western countries that propped-up the local corrupt Muslim regimes.<sup>40</sup> After abandoning Khartoum in 1996, the leadership of al-Qa'ida migrated back

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<sup>38</sup> See Steven Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 221-24, 266-79; Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama bin Laden, Radical Islam and the Future of America* (Washington, DC: Brassey's Incorporated, 2002), 105-18.

<sup>39</sup> While the mujahidin dispersion into local and national insurgencies was most pronounced from North Africa to Uzbekistan, Sunni extremist veterans of the Afghanistan war and their recruits played very important roles in local wars and local insurgencies fought throughout the 1990s in Bosnia, Chechnya, the Southern Philippines and Nagono-Kharabakh (Armenia-Azerbaijan). For a short review of the Salafi-jihadi linkage between several of these cases, see Michael Taarnby, *The Mujahidin in Nagono-Karabakh: A Case Study in The Evolution of Global Jihad* (Madrid, Spain: Real Instituto Elcano – Working Paper, May 2008), 1-2, 5-11.

<sup>40</sup> Coll (2004), 221-24, 266-79; Anonymous, 105-118.

to Afghanistan and the protective comfort of the newly-established Sunni extremist government in Kabul, the Taliban.<sup>41</sup> The metamorphosis of the Salafi-Jihadist movement from loose affiliation and local action to one with an overarching vanguard and international terror objectives launched a final—and still ongoing phase—of the Sunni extremist campaign of terror: one committed to taking violence and terror to the heart of the “far enemy” in order to drive western powers out of Muslim lands, thereby rendering the “near enemy,” i.e. the Muslim regimes, ripe for destruction at the hands of the Sunni extremists.<sup>42</sup>

#### D - Four Waves of Sunni Terrorism: 1981 to 2006

With its distinct ideology and long-term, sweeping goals, aspirations and motivations, radical Sunni terrorism has evolved through four general waves since 1979.<sup>43</sup> (See Table 2.)

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<sup>41</sup> Coll (2004), 340, 379-80; Anonymous, 143-60.

<sup>42</sup> Citing ongoing debates within the al-Qa’ida leadership and *Salafi-jihadi* practitioners, some have questioned whether the extremist movement is shifting focus back toward the “near enemy” in recent years. While worth monitoring, evidence for such a conclusion about movement targeting preferences in 2007 to 2008 remains ambiguous. Moreover, there is little to suggest any formal change in “far enemy” targeting by the vanguard of the *Salafi-Jihadist* movement, al-Qa’ida, during the period of this study, ending in 2006. Indeed, al-Qa’ida leader involvement in facilitating the London transportation attacks of 7 July 2005, the failed August 2006 London-Heathrow multi-airline liquid gel terror attack, and foiled summer 2007 terror attack plans in Germany strongly indicate that the vanguard of the *Salafi-jihadi* movement still covets spectacular global terror against the “far enemy” as an integral part of its strategy for success. For a review of significant evidence regarding the continuing relevance of both al-Qa’ida and the *Salafi-Jihadist* imperative for catastrophic terror against the “far enemy,” see Bruce Reidel, “Al Qaeda Strikes Back,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 3 (May/June 2007); “The Myth of Grass Roots Terrorism: Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters – A Review of Marc Sageman’s *Leaderless Jihad*,” *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 3 (May/June 2008).

<sup>43</sup> Here, I use the term wave of terror to connote a vibrant and important episode of terrorism that is part of a much broader era (or time-period) where terrorism was used as a principal tactic to achieve sweeping and substantive changes in the global politico-economic order. In this context, the wave is normally but one of several clusters of terror activity targeting localized objectives, but firmly anchored within a broader ideological movement’s long-term vision and objectives. This is very different than a discrete terror campaign, where a terror group seeks specific and limited political objectives that can be granted directly in order to make the terror stop. It is also a different notion of a “terror wave” than found in UCLA political scientist David Rapoport’s 2002 essay describing an “Anarchist Wave,” an “Anti-Colonial Wave,” a “New Left Wave,” and a “Religious Wave” of terrorism since 1880. See David C. Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11,” *Anthropoetics* 8, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002), <http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0801/terror.htm>. Useful in its own right, Rapoport’s taxonomy uses the word “wave” as a synonym for something that historians more often refer to

The first wave, which ran roughly from 1981 through 1985, featured a decentralized set of national insurgencies targeting Arab regimes. Sunni radicals, including those from regional Muslim Brotherhood groups, attacked Arab regime leaders and security forces from Algeria to Egypt, Syria and Yemen in an effort to topple insufficiently Islamic regimes and drive off decadent non-Muslim influences. It was a major failure. The second wave, which overlapped only briefly with the first, quickly focused all jihadi energy on a successful insurgency based in Pakistan that defeated the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan over a period from 1981 to 1989.<sup>44</sup> A third wave of radical Sunni terrorism ran from 1990 through 1998, and again featured a decentralized set of insurgencies against Arab regimes and western interests in Arab lands. Although run by the hardened, optimistic battlefield veterans of the Afghanistan war, it also foundered. Failure of the third wave begat a fourth. This wave commenced in 1998 and continues today. It was inspired, organized and remains coordinated by al-Qa'ida. It features an expansive concept of jihad calling for terrorist attacks against western targets in western countries as well as in Muslim lands, with the objective of driving corrupting western influence out of the Islamic world. Within this wave, operational planning against U.S. and western targets across North America, Africa, Australasia and the Pacific has continued since 1998. Franchise Salafi-Jihadist affiliates have also surged in terrorist attacks against regime and western targets in Saudi Arabia (2003-2005); struck in Spain and the United Kingdom in order to split off Europeans from stubborn U.S. presence in the Islamic world (2003-present); moved to fortify Pakistan as a Salafi-Jihadist safe haven (2005-present); and, most recently, begun a new focus on organizing terrorist organizations and operations across North Africa and the Maghreb (2005-2006).

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as an "epoch" or "era." Ibid. Conversely, I use terror wave in this study in the manner that best appreciates the word's meaning as a specific, yet textured event radiated from a wider ocean of terrorism activities inspired by the ideological movement.

<sup>44</sup> The participation of the foreign fighters in the war against the Soviet occupation waged by Afghan mujahidin was neither dominant nor decisive. Thus, one is correct to observe that the 1979 through 1989 insurgency against the Soviets was much more than a *Salafi-Jihadist* fight. However, Sunni extremists (and the cadre of the coming *Salafi-Jihadist* movement), led by bin Ladin and Zawahiri view this counter-Soviet insurgency in mythical terms, and have amplified it to a major period of battlefield success. Consequently, it is incorrect, if not impossible, to view the battle in Afghanistan as anything other than a major wave of Sunni terror. See Coll (2004); Anonymous.

Table 2 <sup>45</sup>



## Waves of Sunni Terrorism (1981-2006)

Terror Wave	Time Period	Locus/Focus of Terror	Excluded Combat Zone(s)	Intensity and Results
Decentralized Insurgencies, Phase I	1981-85	- vs. Arab regimes - vs. westerners & interests in Arab states	- Afghanistan (81-85) - Iran-Iraq (81-85) - Israel	MEDIUM Unsuccessful
Focused Insurgency vs. Soviets in Afghanistan	1981-89	- vs. Soviet occupation of Afghanistan - Arab regimes export <i>Salafi-extremists</i> to fight with Afghan <i>mujihadeen</i>	- Afghanistan (81-89) - Iran-Iraq (81-88) - Israel	VERY HIGH Successful
Decentralized Insurgencies, Phase II	1990-98	- vs. Arab regimes - vs. westerners & interests in Arab states - fortified by returning Afghan war vets	- Balkans (91-98) - Chechnya (94-98) - Israel - Somalia (92-98)	HIGH Unsuccessful
al Qaeda – inspired & managed global jihad	1998-2006+	- Update focus vs. western targets outside & inside western world - Spectacular, symbolic strikes in west to drive out of Islamic states - Continuing terror against corrupt Islamic regimes across Muslim world	- Afghanistan (01-06) - Balkans/Kosovo (98-99) - Chechnya (98-04) - Iraq (03-06) - Israel - Somalia (98-06)	MEDIUM To be Determined

### Part 2

#### Waves, Campaigns, and the Subtle Patterns of Terror that Matter

As described above, there have been nine major phases of radical Islamist terror since 1981 conducted by Sunni and Shi'a extremists outside of Israel and active

<sup>45</sup> For purposes of this table, intensity is defined as LOW if the number of Sunni group terror attacks averages less than or equal to three per-year over the campaign period, MEDIUM if between four and twelve per-year over the campaign period, and HIGH if above a dozen per-year on average. The use of VERY HIGH is reserved for the combat zone of Afghanistan, which was clearly a self-identified wave of Sunni group terror, even though not one reviewed in this comparative study of non-combat zone terrorism.

combat zones. These Sunni waves and Shi'a campaigns account for more than 850 terror attacks and over 10,000 individual deaths during the twenty-five-year period.<sup>46</sup> The specific events and the general patterns of terrorism across these periods reveal many similarities in choices, means and methods of attack. Yet, a more detailed assessment indicates important dissimilarities in both near-term and long-term attack dimensions.

The five campaigns of Shi'a group terror have each been designed to achieve a specific policy objective approved by the clerical leadership in Iran, or in coordination between Iranian agents and elements with Hezbollah and the Government of Syria.<sup>47</sup> Over the same twenty-five-year period, four waves of Sunni terrorism evolved in time with Sunni extremist beliefs regarding the best path toward achieving their broad objectives of destroying unacceptable Muslim state governments while replacing all Muslim states with a borderless Islamic caliphate.<sup>48</sup> A detailed analysis of some key numbers associated with these Shi'a and Sunni terror campaigns outside of combat zones amplifies some common wisdom and provides some unconventional insight.

As the more decentralized and global movement, Sunni terrorism accounts for more than four times the number of non-combat zone terrorist attacks when compared to Shi'a ones (700 vs. 158),<sup>49</sup> and slightly more than twice as many

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<sup>46</sup> See Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism – Terrorism Knowledge Base (MIPT-TKB), formerly located at <http://www.tkb.org> until shut down on 31 March 2008; START-GTD. Like the ratios and numbers that follow in this section, these exclude data for attacks in Israel and the five combat zones defined earlier. The exclusion of Israel-related events accounts for the 100-incident variance in Shi'a terrorist attacks found in Shaul Shay's count of 260 for the years 1980 through 1999. See Shay, 81-89.

<sup>47</sup> For similar conclusions, see Shay, 2-7, 250-58; Daniel Byman, "Iran, Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31 (Spring 2008), 170-73.

<sup>48</sup> Sunni radicalism and the impetus toward anti-state, anti-western violence and "martyrdom" operations are tightly tethered to the ideology of *Salafi-jihad*. The chief apostles, among several standouts, of *Salafi Jihad* are the Muslim leader of holy war against the Mongol empire in the early 1300s, Ibn Taymiyya, the 1940s-1966, Egyptian prophet of violent anti-westernism, Sayyed Qutb, and Pakistani *Salafi* extremist Mawlana Mawdudi. See Mary Habeck, *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadi Ideology and the War on Terror* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 17-40, 107-160; *Militant Ideology Atlas*, ed. William McCants (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> This 4-to-1 ratio reflects roughly 700 *Salafi-jihadi* terrorist attacks in non-combat zones from 1981 through 2006 against some 158 attacks tied to Shi'a-inspired terrorism. See MIPT-TKB; START-GTD. Simultaneously, my analysis acknowledges an unavoidable variance of up to 20 percent, most likely on the low side, due to inherent database limitations including the high probability of event undercounting in states with tight media control. (See Appendix A4 for more on data sources and limitations.)

fatalities as Shi'a terrorist attacks (roughly 7,000 vs. 3,000).<sup>50</sup> Sunni militancy has thousands of touch points in Sunni Islamic communities from the Philippines to Morocco, as well as in western states where exiled or expatriate Sunni fundamentalists gather. Although Sunni-extremist fervor dissipates the further one travels from the wellsprings of Cairo and Riyadh, Salafist (and very similar *Wahhabi*) teaching is prominently featured at thousands of worldwide schools funded by fundamentalist Sunni Muslim charities, especially those from Saudi Arabia and across the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, and despite growing evidence of self-radicalization of Sunni extremist groups inspired via the internet, worldwide radical Sunni mosques, learning centers and fundamentalist charity headquarters continue to play a vital role in terrorist candidate vetting and recruiting and in networked planning for Salafi-Jihadist terrorist attacks, especially in the region stretching from Algeria to Pakistan.<sup>51</sup> As a result, the intellectual and physical precursors for global Sunni terrorism in non-combat zones over the past thirty years have been more broadly based than those associated with Shi'a extremism, which remains ascendant mainly in Iran and Lebanon.

Shi'a group attacks, which are tied to discrete Iranian and Hezbollah policy objectives and end when these objectives are reached, have been most common in the Levant with almost one hundred attacks, principally in Lebanon. This is followed by far fewer attacks in Europe—less than thirty—and then North Africa and Egypt, with eleven. (See Maps 1, 2 & 3.)

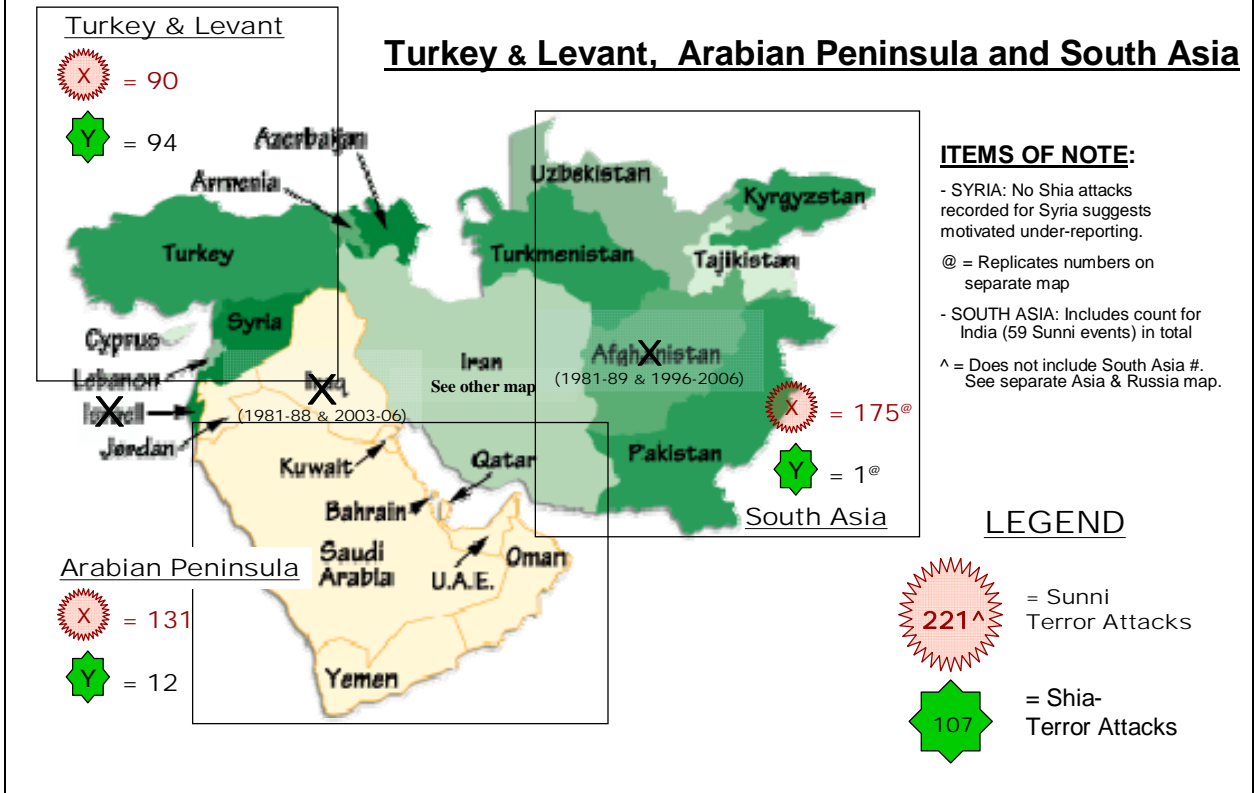
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<sup>50</sup> The ratio is approximately 7,000 reported deaths from Sunni terrorism to 3,000 reported deaths for Shi'a-inspired terror. See MIPT-TKB; START-GTD.

<sup>51</sup> While there is a contemporary debate over the reportedly growing importance of self-radicalization vis-à-vis radical mosque and madrassa conditioning of Sunni extremists and terrorists, the details of over 700 Sunni terrorist attacks in non-combat areas over the period from 1981 through 2006 strongly highlights the importance of these physical sites to Sunni group vetting, recruiting and planning for terrorism. For an overview of the position that self-radicalization is increasingly important in understanding Sunni group terrorism, especially in Europe, see Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Ending Terrorism: Lessons for Defeating al-Qaeda: Adelphi Paper 394* (London: Routledge, 2007). For a countering viewpoint emphasizing that there remains far more evidence to indicate that face-to-face vetting and training of terror recruits by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates remains the standard and vastly preferred *Salafi-jihadi* approach to assimilating terrorists and conducting terrorism, see Hoffman, "The Myth of Grass Roots Terrorism: Why Osama bin Laden Still Matters;" Mark E. Stout and Colonel Thomas Lynch, "Responding to the Salafi Jihadist Threat," *America's Security Role in a Changing World: A Global Strategic Assessment, 2009* (Washington, DC: National Defense University – Institute for National Strategic Studies (NDU-INSS), forthcoming).

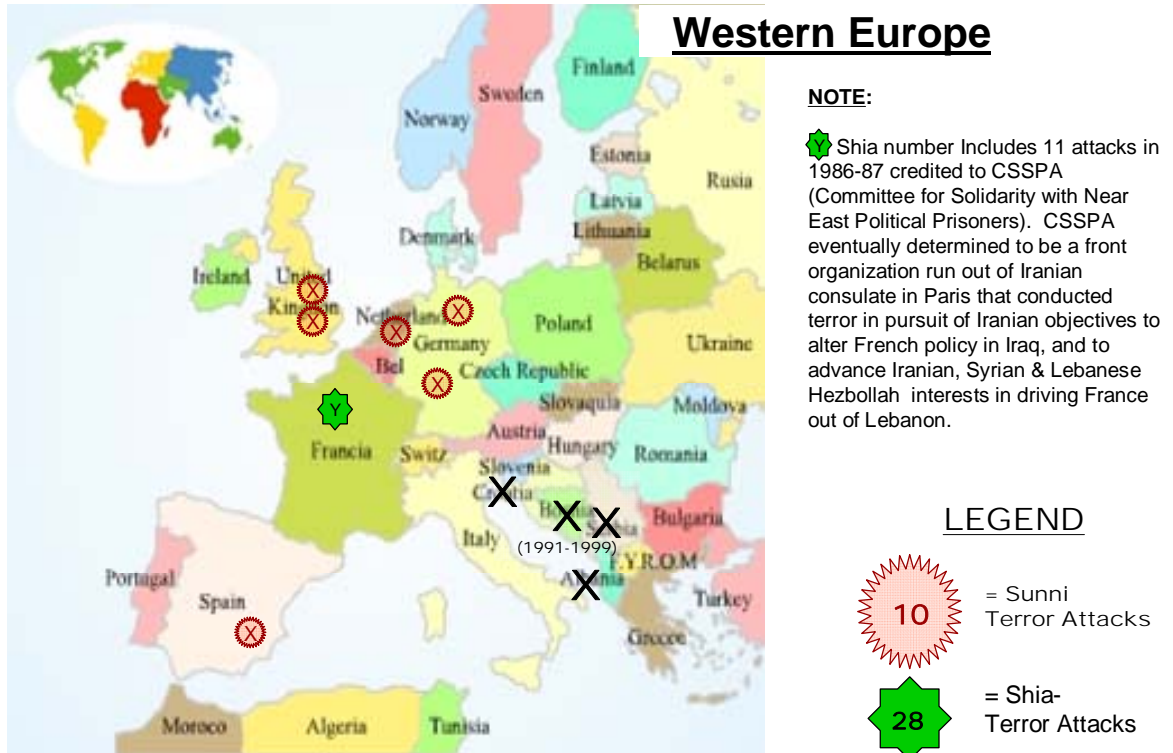
# Map 1

## Sunni v. Shia Terrorist Incidents Outside Combat Zones (1981-2006)



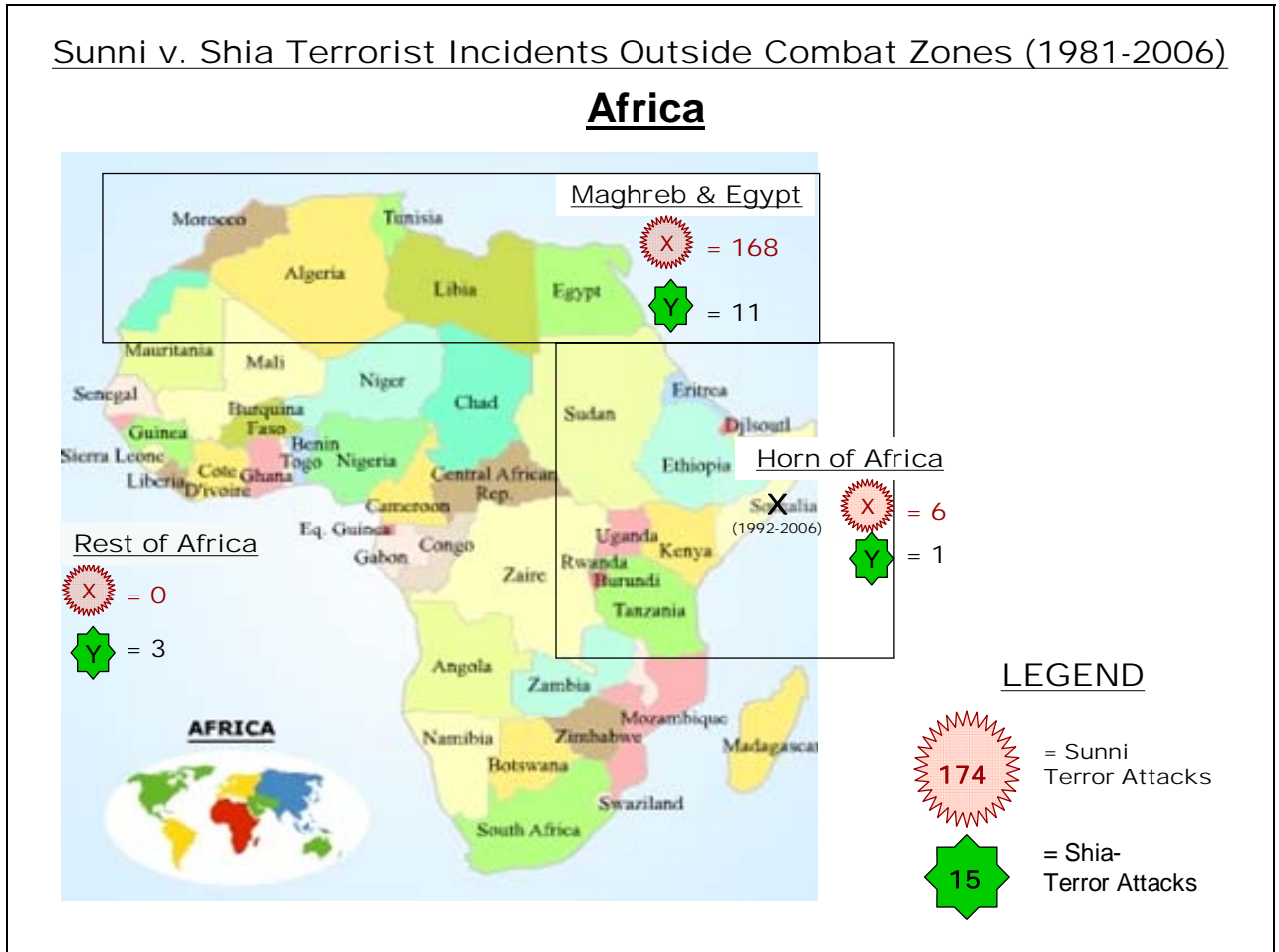
## Map 2

### Sunni v. Shia Terrorist Incidents Outside Combat Zones (1981-2006)





### Map 3



Outside of the 1984 to 1988 terror campaign in France, the two-strike campaign of revenge terrorism in Argentina is the most conspicuous Shi'a-inspired terrorism conducted beyond the Levant.<sup>52</sup> (See Map 4.)

### Map 4

<sup>52</sup> As noted earlier in the study, there was a global campaign to assassinate charismatic counter-revolutionaries before they could organize against the new Islamic Republic of Iran. This campaign is significant and indicates relevant patterns of operations that will be assessed later in the study. It was, however, tightly targeted on a small group of Iranian expatriates beginning with assassinations of prominent Iranian figures in Europe in the early 1980s and culminating with the assassinations of exiled Colonel Ayatollah Bay-Ahmadi in the UAE (1989) and former Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar in Paris, France (1991). See START-GTD; UNCHR Report, 64-66.

## Sunni v. Shia Terrorist Incidents Outside Combat Zones (1981-2006)

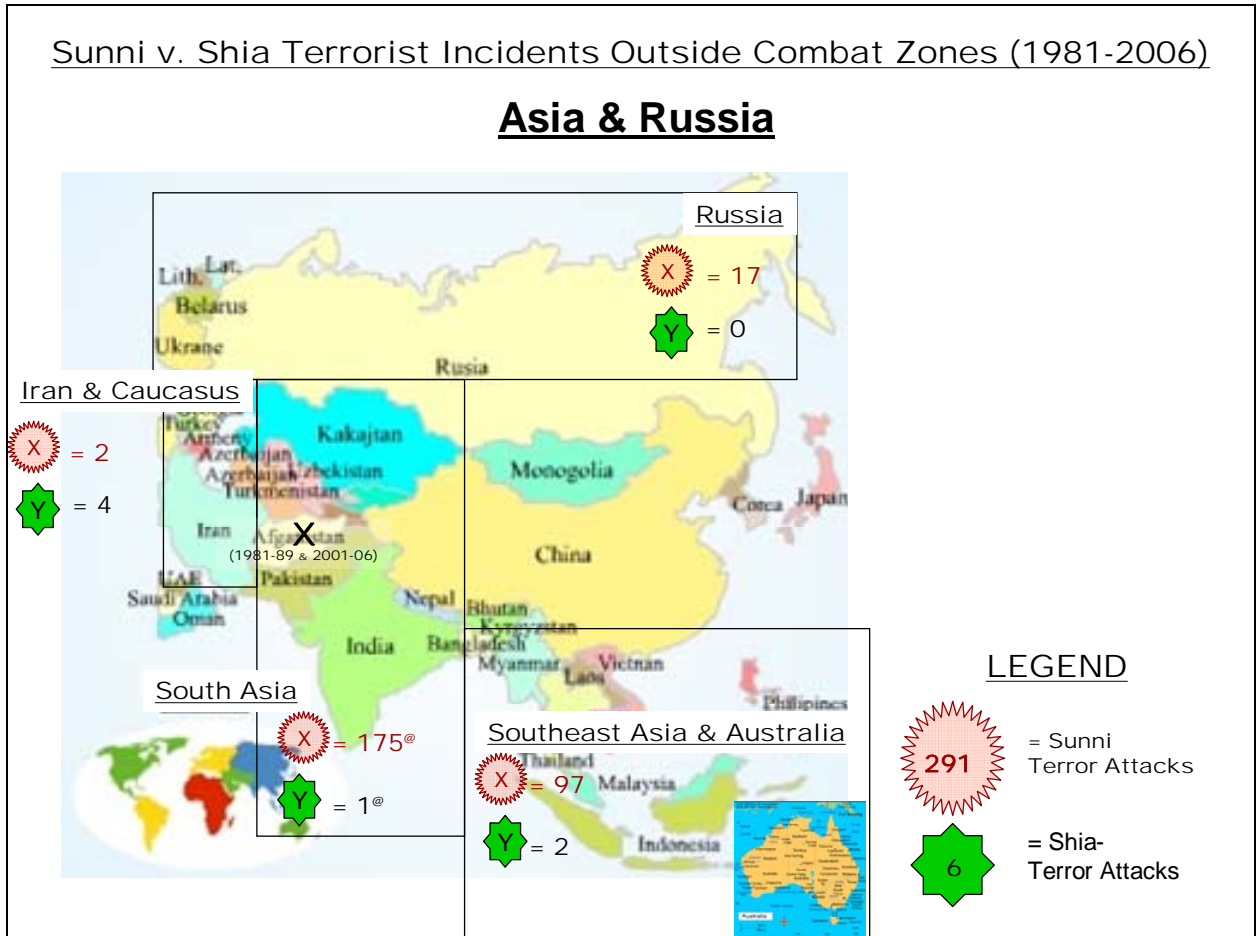


Consequently, one can best understand terrorism by Shi'a groups since 1981 to be exceptionally regional in orientation, while tethered to Iranian and Hezbollah policy motivations that tend toward the defensive and revenge-oriented, and most proficient with proxy terrorist activity against perceived U.S. and/or western military and diplomatic threats in the countries that are proximate to Iran.

Well before the notorious al-Qa'ida-inspired fourth wave began in 1998, including explicit attacks targeting the "far enemy", Sunni terrorism has been very different in scope, scale and ambition. Attacks against national governments and western interests in non-combat zone locales from Morocco to the Philippines have been featured in all but the Afghanistan wave of Sunni-extremist terror. Bombings, shootings and other calculated acts of Sunni extremism have been omnipresent since 1981, with most of this radicalism focusing on attacks in South Asia (at least 175 terror attacks), the Arabian Peninsula (over 130 attacks) and North Africa (at least 168 attacks), followed by

Southeast Asia (97 attacks), Turkey and the Levant (a combined 90 attacks). (See Maps 1, 3 & 5.)

Map 5



Since the inception of al-Qa'ida and wave four of Sunni group terrorism, once sporadic jihadi terror attacks in Africa, Europe and North America have become more pronounced and focused on the spectacular. (See Maps 2, 3 & 6.)

## Map 6

### Sunni v. Shia Terrorist Incidents Outside Combat Zones (1981-2006)



Another insight from the overview of twenty-five years of Islamist-inspired terrorism in non-combat zones is that the most overt and obvious terrorism techniques are common to both Shi'a and Sunni extremists. This is not surprising. We know that Usama bin Ladin greatly admired and sought to pattern al-Qa'ida after the terrorist operational standards of Hezbollah pioneered by Mugnyah.<sup>53</sup> Thus, many common techniques have been cross-pollinated between terrorist operatives from the Sunni and Shi'a camps. A brief look at these similarities amplifies the point.

Terror targets of both Shi'a and Sunni extremist groups, for instance, are relatively similar. Diplomatic, military, governmental and business targets associated with "corrupt" local regimes or the west are common objectives in

<sup>53</sup> See Shay, 42-44, 48-56; Jocelyn, 48-55; Robin Wright, "Commander Became Prototype of Extremism," *Washington Post*, 14 February 2008, 21.

terrorist attacks. Minor differences in targeting selection appear in two cases. Sunni terrorist groups are much more apt to strike at businesses, notably western businesses that serve alcohol, across the Islamic world. Hotels, restaurants, nightclubs and other establishments that cater to western taste for alcohol appear on the top of the hit list across all Sunni groups. Indeed, a quarter century's worth of data indicates that western businesses in Muslim lands are about 40 percent more likely to be struck by Sunni terrorists than Shi'a-related ones.<sup>54</sup> Conversely, Shi'a terrorists are more apt to strike at media members and journalists than are Sunni ones. The pattern here is heavily influenced by Hezbollah and Iranian proxy agent activities in Lebanon from 1981 through 1990 and highlights an important finding. Generally inclined toward kidnapping of hostages to begin with, Shi'a terrorists show a propensity toward abduction and kidnapping of those who can provide them significant news coverage, and from whom they can extract significant ransom and concessions.<sup>55</sup> Thus, of more than forty kidnappings of non-Israelis by Hezbollah and other Shi'a extremists in Lebanon during the 1980s, two-dozen were western reporters or journalists.<sup>56</sup> The year-long abduction by Hezbollah of French journalist Roger Auque in 1987 displayed the negotiating power it garnered. Calling itself the "Revolutionary Justice Organization," Hezbollah managed to draw prominent French and western attention to its major causes by constant media coverage of its demands to the French government for Auque's release. These demands ranged in scope from a prisoner exchange for seventeen convicted Shi'a terrorists in Kuwaiti jails and several hundred Lebanese Shi'a and Palestinian prisoners held by Israel, to cash ransom. Eventually, French President Jacques Chirac's personal talks with Hezbollah officials in the Ivory Coast were the price of prestige paid by France to secure Auque and French photographer Jean-Louis Normandin's release.<sup>57</sup> As will be discussed again later, Sunni extremist abductions are far fewer in number and less likely to end with a live hostage release.

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<sup>54</sup> Author computations and comparisons based upon data from MIPT-TKB and START-GTD.

<sup>55</sup> For independent confirmation of general Shi'a terrorist propensity toward hostage-taking, see Shay, 81-85.

<sup>56</sup> Author calculations based upon data from MIPT-TKB and START-GTD data for Lebanon terrorism. See also Ihsan A.Hijazi, "Beirut Sources Say Israel Talks with Kidnappers," *New York Times*, 11 February 1987.

<sup>57</sup> Officially denied by France, the release of Auque and Normandin reportedly cost the French over \$4 million in ransom money paid to Hezbollah through Lebanese intermediaries. See Ihsan A. Hijazi, "Kidnappers are Said to Seek Ransom in Talks with French," *New York Times*, 4 April 1988.

The methods of target attack are also very similar between sects, converging in many dimensions over the twenty-five-year period under review. Hijackings, bombings, kidnappings and abductions, small arms attacks and assassinations, and even suicide bombings are shared attack approaches across Islamist extremist terror groups. Two attack methodologies have evolved significantly but in opposite directions over the past quarter century, however. They merit brief attention here. Airplane hijackings, a galvanizing but increasingly contested terrorist tactic, began as featured fare for both Sunni and Shi'a extremists in the early 1980s, immediately following the hey-day of hijackings that plagued western airliners in the 1970s. But Islamist terrorist hijackings have trended downward since. In the 1980s, Sunni or Shi'a extremists accounted for thirty of the sixty-two documented hijackings around the world, with nearly two dozen of these attributed to Sunnis, outnumbering Shi'a hijacking by a three-to-one margin.<sup>58</sup> While the number of reported global hijacking incidents trended significantly upward in the period from 1990 to 1997, the absolute number of Islamist terrorist hijackings remained steady, and its proportion to global events declined notably. With 143 international hijacking incidents reported in this eight-year period, thirty of them were tied to Sunni group terror and none to Shi'a terrorism.<sup>59</sup>

This hijacking pattern bears witness to the very low level of intensity observed in the two Shi'a campaigns of terror during the 1990s. It also highlights the onset of the third wave of Sunni terror, when three or more hijacking incidents occurred in the jihadi-targeted countries of Afghanistan, Algeria, India, Sudan and Pakistan during the early-to-mid 1990s.<sup>60</sup> Despite the high profile attacks of 9/11 in the United States, the decade since 1999 has witnessed the dramatic decline in the tactic of airline hijackings by Islamist and non-Islamist terrorists alike. In less than fifty reported incidents from 1999 through 2006, Sunni groups outside of combat zones accounted for thirteen events, four of those on 9/11. Shi'a terrorists

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<sup>58</sup> Author counts of sixty-two total airline hijacking events with twenty-three Sunni terrorist associated, while only seven associated with Shi'a extremist were derived from data found in MIPT-TKB and START-GTD 1 databases. Consistent with its exclusion as more secular than religious elsewhere in this study, 1984 to 1986 hijacking incidents within Iran and all hijackings associated with the Mujahideen-e-Khalq counter-revolutionaries have been excluded from this count.

<sup>59</sup> Author counts of 143 total international hijacking incidents from 1990 to 1997, with thirty linked to Sunni-extremists, derived from MIPT-TKB and START-GTD 1 databases.

<sup>60</sup> See MIPT-TKB; START-GTD 1.

accounted for none.<sup>61</sup> Intense and ever-expanding global efforts to thwart airline hijackings and airborne terrorism should extend this trend, meaning we should expect to see Islamist terrorists pursuing other tactics against insufficiently safeguarded targets in the future. Moreover, the absence of terrorist hijackings or airborne incidents perpetrated by Shi'a groups for nearly two decades should suggest to western policymakers that this is an unlikely location for concerted terrorist activity by Shi'a groups in the event of deepening hostilities with Tehran or Hezbollah.

A second common Islamist terror tactic meriting comment is that of suicide bombings. While neither unique nor exclusive to Islamist-inspired terrorism—the Tamil Tiger rebels of Sri Lanka, for example, have used suicide terror in their insurgency for many decades—Islamist terrorists have a well-earned reputation for extensive use of this chilling attack technique during the past twenty-five years. Indeed, Islamist suicide bombings have trended steadily upward since 1981. Hezbollah was the first to use suicide bombings as a tactic for Islamist terrorism beginning with attacks against U.S. and French targets in Beirut during 1983, ultimately carrying out at least thirty-six suicide attacks within Lebanon in the 1980s. The group continued to use the technique against Israel in the 1990s. Iran also made use of a variant of this tactic from 1982 through 1988, employing suicide combatants in waves during its grueling war against Iraq. Thus, it is clear that terrorism by Shi'a actors may feature suicide operations when the tactic is feasible. However, suicide operations by Shi'a terrorist groups in non-combat zones have been somewhat subdued over the past decade-and-a-half, and principally focused against Israel.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, Sunni terrorism, and especially by Salafi-Jihadist groups, has featured “martyrdom operations” extensively since the early 1990s, and Salafi-

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<sup>61</sup> Author counts are derived from MIPT-TKB and START-GTD2 databases. As before, two hijacking incidents in Iran during 1999 and 2000 attributed to Mujahideen-e-Khalq have been excluded from this count.

<sup>62</sup> A review conducted by the author identifies three-dozen separate incidents of suicide operations in Lebanon from 1981 to 1990 that were not directly focused against Israeli security forces or Israeli targets. Normally, these operations were bombings undertaken against Druze or Sunni Lebanese, and quite frequently in retaliation for terrorist strikes against Shi'a communities that had come from one of these groups. More than 130 “martyrdom operations” have taken place against Israeli targets during the period from 1989 to 2006. Thus, the Shi'a-terrorism experience with suicide operations is very robust, albeit not heavily practiced in peacetime locations. See MIPT-TKB; START-GTD 1. For excellent analysis of Shi'a notions of martyrdom and jihad, see Assaf Moghadam, “Mayhem, Myths and Martyrdom: The Shi'a Conception of Jihad,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1 (March 2007), 131-40.

*Jihadis* have garnered most attention for their widespread adoption of this particularly heart-wrenching form of terrorism over the past decade.<sup>63</sup> The trend is strong and growing more pronounced as expertise from in-combat zone operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is shared across the jihadi terror community. Nevertheless, when it comes to suicide terror operations against western targets in non-combat zones, policymakers should not be fooled by the recent profile of Sunni-inspired radicals. Shi'a terrorists are highly capable and deadly efficient in these kinds of operations as well. The good news is that much of the work done to combat terrorism overseas against one sect's suicide terrorist operations should produce valuable defense against "martyrdom operations" conducted by the other.

### Part 3

#### Assessing the Differences: The Six Significant Points of Divergence

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##### A - Campaigns or Waves – For the Nation or from the Movement

The truck bomb attack against the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, in August 1998 that killed 213 individuals, including twelve American and thirty-two local employees of the embassy, and injured 4,000 others was undertaken by Sunni jihadi terrorists hailing from Arab countries. They were encouraged and abetted by senior members of al-Qa'ida, with extensive organizational capacity still resident in Khartoum, Sudan.<sup>64</sup> It showcased how divergent philosophies

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<sup>63</sup> See Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 149-61; Mohammed Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: Strategy & Ideology of Martyrdom* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2007); Robin Wright, "Since 2001, A Dramatic Increase in Suicide Bombings," *Washington Post*, 18 April 2008, A-10; Shay, 85-103.

<sup>64</sup> See *USA v. Odeh and Al-'Owhali*, Indictment (U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, 29 September 1998), [www.jya.com/usa-v-mso-mra.htm](http://www.jya.com/usa-v-mso-mra.htm); *USA v. Usama bin Laden, et al.*, Indictment (U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, 4 November 1998), [www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/fbi/11041998.htm](http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/fbi/11041998.htm); Press Release, Federal Bureau of Investigation – New York Office, 4 November 1998, [www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/fbi/11041998.htm](http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/fbi/11041998.htm); *Report of the Accountability Review Boards: Bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya... August, 1998* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 1999), [www.stat.gov/www/regions/africa/board\\_nairobi.html](http://www.stat.gov/www/regions/africa/board_nairobi.html); Benjamin Weiser, "Man Charged in Bombing of U.S. Embassy in Africa," *New York Times*, 9 October 1999; Phil Hirschorn and Deborah Feyerick, "Agent: Defendant Said Kenya Embassy 'Easy Target,'" *CNN.com/Law Center* (8 March 2001), <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/LAW/03/07/embassy.bombing.trial>; Phil



between Sunni and Shi'a radicalism manifest themselves in Salafi-jihadist terrorism's wave-like ebbs and flow, while Shi'a terrorism appears as campaigns in support of Iranian national objectives or the organizational objectives of Hezbollah.<sup>65</sup>

The Salafi-Jihadist variant of Sunni terrorism pursues the broad ideological aims of reactionary Sunni Islam. Its orientation is toward a stateless, Sunni Islamic caliphate stretching from Morocco to Indonesia and even the Philippines. Its methods tend to feature boundless violence and terror, while its declared approach since Usama bin Ladin's 1998 fatwa has been to drive out the western "far enemy" from Muslim lands in order to expose and topple the corrupt "near enemy" of Islamic state leaders from power. The loosely choreographed fourth wave of Sunni terror underway since 1998 has adapted and evolved, continuing with its overarching imperative to strike decisively and dramatically at western symbols of decadence and empire, while simultaneously encouraging local terrorist affiliates to strike at vulnerable Arab and Muslim state regimes. The strikes against the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania during the late summer of 1998 were the early ripples of this fourth Sunni terror wave. After extensive focus on Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt from 2003 to 2005, the Sunni-extremist spotlight began shifting during 2005 toward primary interest in Iraq, Pakistan, and most recently, Algeria. Despite losing traction in Iraq throughout 2006, Sunni extremist operations in Pakistan and Algeria continued to grow. The wider Salafi-Jihad also began showing great interest in recruiting second and third generation western Muslims to join its terror ranks, apparently of the belief that this revitalized terror base will be able to circumvent extensive customs and immigration controls across the modern world that have hindered global terror operations since 9/11.<sup>66</sup> True to its credo, the Salafi-Jihadist movement continues to pressure vulnerable state regimes in Islamic states with an objective to establish itself in a safe haven from which to plot wider global terror. It is from this framework that Salafi-jihadi terrorists pose an ongoing threat against western targets in and out of the Muslim world.

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Hirschhorn, "Jury Hears How Defendant Fled Kenya Before Attack," *CNN.com/Law Center* (2 April 2001), <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/LAW/04/02/embassy.bombing.trial>.

<sup>65</sup> Syrian state goals and objectives are also important to understanding the campaigns of Shi'a-inspired terrorism. However, Syrian involvement in Shi'a terror operations tends to be as a supporting intermediary, not an independent actor capable of driving any focus or objectives for the particular terror campaign. See Shay, 63-71.

<sup>66</sup> For a review of these evolutionary dimensions in the fourth wave, see Stout, et al., ch. 8; Martinage, 62-88.

Agents of Shi'a-inspired terror do not display as deep an ideological grounding. With the exception of Hezbollah's longstanding, continuous terror campaign against Israel, Shi'a terrorism has not rivaled the relentless and unending character observed in Sunni terrorism. Shi'a group terror in non-combat zones appears to spring from specific Iranian or Hezbollah policy objectives, running a campaign course that ends when the policy objective is realized. The first terror campaign marking the Shi'a awakening ran a ten-year course ending in 1989. It culminated as Ayatollah Khomeini's expansive aspirations foundered, and his less ambitious objectives—an end to Western interference in Lebanon and in the Iran-Iraq war—were secured. The second campaign ended when the major charismatic leaders from the Shah's era, and the most logical threats to the Ayatollah's Islamic state, were dead. The third campaign, in Paris, ended after France acquiesced to multiple policy demands from Tehran. The fourth concluded with proof-of-point that Hezbollah could strike Israeli and Jewish interests worldwide in response to targeted assassinations and abductions of Hezbollah leaders by Israel. Across these non-combat campaigns, Shi'a terrorism largely emanated from threats perceived as regime threatening and proximate to Tehran or to Hezbollah's seats of power. The first campaign was to secure the notion of a Shi'a Islamic movement itself. The second to safeguard the Shi'a state of Iran from counter-coup. The third campaign neutralized the most overt supporter of Saddam's threat to Tehran and the Druze threat to Hezbollah. The fourth campaign struck at innocents in Argentina in a retaliatory manner that showed how vulnerable Hezbollah's leadership felt to an Israeli targeted assassination and abduction campaign.

Outside of combat zones, therefore, terrorism by Shi'a groups displays several important markers, none of which is directly linked to, much less foreordained by, Shi'a theology or doctrine. It is motivated by distinct policy objectives and features discrete start and endpoints linked to achieving purposeful political objectives. Moreover, it will use an array of techniques from suicide bombings to kidnapping to targeted assassinations to achieve success.<sup>67</sup> American and western leaders should anticipate an intense non-combat zone terror campaign

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<sup>67</sup> For a similar conclusion, see Shay, 250-53. While these patterns are most dominant in Shi'a terror emanating from Iranian agents and Hezbollah, they are consistently observed in the limited number of strikes by other Shi'a terror groups like Amal and Turkish-Hezbollah conducted from 1981 to 2006. (See Appendix A5.) It is impossible to say that teachings in the Shi'a religion or ingrained beliefs from its senior religious scholars cause these patterns to occur. However, it is clear that these patterns are highly correlated with Shi'a terror attacks, and thus preferred by the trainers and planners of terror. Consequently the patterns must be appreciated and fully considered by western policy analysts and counter terrorism officials.

when Tehran or Hezbollah feels truly threatened by western policies in the immediate region.

### **B - Via the Embassy, Not From the Mosques: Recruiting, Training & Facilitating Terror**

In 2002, Argentine prosecutors indicted an individual who had worked in the Iranian Islamic Guidance Ministry in Buenos Aires from 1992 through 1994, Musheih Rabani, as a key Iranian Intelligence Ministry facilitator of the 1994 attacks at the Buenos Aires Jewish cultural center that killed 85 and wounded hundreds.<sup>68</sup> Less than a decade earlier, Wahid Gordiji, a translator attached to the Iranian Embassy in Paris, was the focus of international media attention as France and Iran tussled over his fate. Fingered by French police as the key operative in a dozen terror bombings across Paris during 1986, Gordiji claimed diplomatic immunity and took refuge in the Iranian Embassy before he could be arrested in 1987. After several months of acrimonious exchange, Gordiji was allowed to leave France as part of a wider deal that secured a host of Iranian political objectives, richly rewarding the calculated campaign of terrorism that Gordiji facilitated.<sup>69</sup>

Rabani and Gordiji are poster children of the second and third campaigns of Shi'a group terror outside of combat zones. Their roles represent a main difference in terrorism between Shi'a and Sunni terrorist groups. Iran's pivotal role in worldwide Shi'a terrorism makes its overseas embassies and cultural centers critical nodes for facilitating terror. This is very different from the methodology featured by Sunni radicals, who have historically focused recruiting, organizational and planning frameworks around radical mosques, extremist-leaning Islamic learning centers and fundamentalist madrassas.<sup>70</sup> By

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<sup>68</sup> Shay, 95-101; Patrick Devenny, "Tehran's Terror Master: Imad Mugniyah," *FrontPageMagazine.com*, 26 May 2005,

<http://www.discoverthenetworks.org/individualProfile.asp?indid=1978>.

<sup>69</sup> See Shapiro and Suzan, 72-74; Patterns of Global Terrorism – France: 1987 Overview, MIPT-TKB, at <http://www.tkb.org/MorePatterns.jsp?countryCd=FR&year=1987>.

<sup>70</sup> For a detailed discussion of *Salafi-jihadi* recruitment, training and facilitation of terror through groups hubbed around radical mosques and centers, see Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Stout, et al., 197-228. Some terrorism analysts, including Marc Sageman in *Leaderless Jihad* (2008) have suggested recently that internet-based inspiration and self-radicalization into major terror activity is becoming the new and most dangerous method of *jihadi* terror generation. However, there is far more evidence to indicate that face-to-face vetting and training of terror recruits by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates

contrast, Shi'a-inspired terror in non-combat zones relies on locations that are much more akin to those seen in espionage and spying between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which featured diplomatic immunity and the figment of commercial legitimacy. Shi'a terrorism relies upon infrastructure that allows terrorist choreography in five different dimensions: (1) through Iranian embassies and consulates; (2) through Iranian state-run institutions, organizations and companies; (3) through Iranian or Shi'a Muslim expatriates residing throughout the world; (4) with proxy organizations primarily driven by Hezbollah; and, to a lesser extent, (5) through pragmatic cooperation with non-Shi'a radical organizations and states like Sudan.<sup>71</sup>

While Sunni terrorist operations display parallels in three of these five organizational dimensions, Shi'a group terrorism has fundamentally differed in its use of Iranian state agencies, institutions and companies as the focal points for terror. Sunni extremists share no parallel construct of state or state-owned corporate sponsorship. Consequently, Shi'a-inspired terror radiates primarily from the Iranian embassy and its various extensions. The second and third campaigns of non-combat zone Shi'a terror in France and Argentina are important reminders. The state-led nature of Shi'a terrorism means that Iranian intelligence agents and Hezbollah operatives work under diplomatic cover to recruit agents, plot activities and facilitate terrorism. The Khobar Towers indictments and convictions confirm this pattern, right down to the fact that they named the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, Syria as the origin point for the plot and fingered Hezbollah agents as the ones who "ran" the Shi'a Saudis who refined the plan, organized the details, and executed the attack.<sup>72</sup> By contrast, the historic pattern of Sunni terrorism has most often promulgated along a web hubbed around a radical mosque.<sup>73</sup>

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remains the standard and vastly preferred *Salafi-jihadi* approach to assimilating terrorists and conducting terrorism. See Hoffman; Reidel; Stout and Lynch.

<sup>71</sup> European law enforcement agencies intercepted five separate weapons smuggling schemes choreographed by Iranian agents running under diplomatic or business-related cover in Europe from 1984-1990. Many more incidents are suspected, but not documented. See Shay, 42-46.

<sup>72</sup> See *Al-Mughassil* Indictment; Freeh, 1-28.

<sup>73</sup> This conclusion stands as a major one from research into non-combat zone terror during the period from 1981 to 2006. Refer to footnotes 51 and 70 for the evolving debate over the growing importance of the internet over the mosque in fulminating Sunni terrorism; and, for the countering argument that the internet may matter, but not yet in a way as meaningful as that featuring physical contact between senior *Salafi-jihadi* leaders and their would-be catastrophic terrorists.

Significantly, this finding suggests that proper western preparation for any future campaign of Shi'a terrorism in non-combat zones must carefully reconsider its present counterterrorism orientation. The intense intelligence and counterintelligence focus trained upon Salafi-jihadi terrorist organization and planning hubs requires a shift, at least in some significant degree, toward a vantage point trained on Iranian embassies and consulates.<sup>74</sup> The good news is that America has extensive experience with espionage and counter-espionage vis-à-vis the USSR during the Cold War. The bad news is that this experience is twenty-years old; most American agents skilled in the detail of an intense diplomat-diplomat cover espionage game are long retired and their skill sets with them. Most importantly, the manpower requirements and costs to really blanket Iranian Embassies and consulates in all the countries where the U.S. would need to do more than just rely on local state agencies are not trivial.

### C - Among the Oblivious or From an Empathetic Community

The role of Sunni Islamic communities and Shi'a Islamic communities in abetting non-combat zone terrorism is not clear-cut. In both terrorist traditions, attackers normally have been co-religionists, but there are exceptions.<sup>75</sup> The key difference originates from the divergent terrorist philosophies of each Islamist extremist

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<sup>74</sup> Here, the size and scope of U.S. intelligence and counter-espionage operations against Iranian embassies, consulates and related state-run companies is hard to pin down due to the highly classified nature of such programs. Generally, U.S. government officials with detailed program knowledge cannot comment on them in general scope, much less helpful detail. Author conversations with several well-informed combating terrorism officials suggests that U.S. intelligence, law enforcement and its western allies are almost exclusively invested in programs tracking Sunni extremism and countering Salafi-extremist activities in the Islamic world and within western diasporas. Little combating terrorism focus is trained on Iranian missions. Here, the intensity of French focus seems a useful surrogate for the skewed U.S. and western distribution of intelligence and espionage assets away toward Sunni extremism and away from Iranian state-sponsored extremism. See Ludo Block, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of French Counter-Terrorism," *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no. 17 (September 8, 2005), <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369780>; Bruce Crumley, "France Loses its One-Man War on Terror," *Time*, 6 July 2007, <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1640908,00.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Sunni extremist use of non-co-religionists in the conduct of terror is very anomalous. The limited, and debatable, cases of this appear to have occurred during the period from 1981 to 2006 in the Philippines, where MILF operatives used non-Muslim tribesmen to execute sabotage strikes and facilitate kidnappings during the 1980s. Shi'a terrorism has utilized non-Shi'a agents in the planning and execution of terror more often, and most frequently in cases where Iranian agents sub-contracted assassination missions and individual car bombings to non-Muslim terrorists in Europe and Turkey. For a review of several cases involving Shi'a terror subcontracts to non-Muslims in Europe, see UNCHR Report, ¶¶ 64-66; Rempel, 1; Shay, 43-45, 78.

sect. Analysis over time suggests that Shi'a terrorists in non-combat zones tend to operate among co-religionists who are oblivious to their activity, while Sunni extremists work within a Muslim community that reports itself to be opposed to politically motivated terrorism, but remains empathetic with terrorist grievances and their proclaimed anti-oligarchy, anti-western outlook.

Ahmed Ibrahim al-Mughassil ("Abu Omran") and his fellow 1996 Khobar Towers attack conspirators were Saudi Shi'a Muslims who shared Tehran's belief that American military presence in the Kingdom was a threat to Islam in general and Iran specifically.<sup>76</sup> They were from the Shi'a diaspora in Saudi Arabia, but their terrorist activities were impossible to conduct without the external sponsorship from Iran and Hezbollah.<sup>77</sup> Conversely, Abu Moath and his colleagues in the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya were not Kenyan, and were inspired and facilitated via Salafi-Jihadist organizations in Sudan and elsewhere across the Arab Muslim world. However, their attack planning drew resources from within the Sunni Muslim community in Kenya, including the fundamentalist Arab charity organization, Al Haramain.<sup>78</sup> Although it likely would have fallen short of the spectacular success it achieved, the Nairobi U.S. Embassy bombing clearly would have been possible without external assistance.

Sunni terrorists, and especially contemporary Salafi-Jihadis, often harbor xenophobic tendencies. Their orientation and outlook makes them highly intolerant of moderate Muslims and deeply suspicious of liberal Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This insularity is reflected in their history of terrorist operations in non-combat areas from 1981 to 2006. The plotters, planners and executors of Sunni extremist terror come almost exclusively from within their insular, intolerant world. They rely on a general level of empathy from across the Sunni Muslim community – an empathy that comes from the general Sunni Muslim historical narrative claiming they have been systematically oppressed by the western world and corrupt Islamic oligarchs for more than a century. The resonance of this broad narrative creates a general empathy among most of the nearly 1.3 billion Sunni Muslims around the globe, and has allowed Sunni extremists room to maneuver widely in Sunni Islamic countries and Muslim

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<sup>76</sup> See Freeh, 1-19; *Al-Mughhassil* Indictment.

<sup>77</sup> The conspirators hailed from the Qatif region, the largest center of Shi'a Islam in Saudi Arabia. As of 2004, the total population of Qatif was 474,573, among the ten most populated counties in Saudi Arabia. It also had one of the lowest numbers of non-Saudi residents in the kingdom (only 59,808). See Freeh, 6-9.

<sup>78</sup> See Weiser; Hirschhorn and Feyerick; Hirschhorn.

Diasporas in the non-Muslim world.<sup>79</sup> They maintain this freedom of action to conduct terror against apostate governments and western infidel targets so long as the violence is not egregiously offensive to fellow Muslims, and so long as the targeted states are not exceptionally proficient at cracking down on terrorist activities.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, Sunni terrorist groups are best understood as having the ability to operate from within a generally empathetic co-religionist community, even though they do not reflect the broader community's general aversion to extremist violence.

Shi'a terrorists are better understood as operating among Shi'a Muslims who remain generally oblivious to the terrorists' goals and activities. This is true for several reasons. First, there are far fewer Shi'a Muslims than there are Sunni Muslims. Worldwide, some 1.3 billion Sunni Muslims dwarf an estimated 280 million Shi'a Muslims. Only five countries (Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain and Azerbaijan) have more self-identified Shi'a than Sunnis. Another ten states have Shi'a populations or diasporas numbering more than half a million and that hold a politically important minority position.<sup>81</sup> The upshot is that there are relatively few states with a critical mass of Shi'a Muslims in numbers anywhere near those found in Sunni Muslim communities around the world. Second, much of the

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<sup>79</sup> It is important to note that polling of Sunni Muslims globally from 2005 through 2008 has shown a broad and significant decline in support for extremism and violence. This trend is most pronounced in Sunni populations found in Southeast Asia, Western Europe, Egypt and on the Arabian Peninsula. It is far less pronounced in South Asia (especially Pakistan), the Levant and North Africa. The same polling also reveals that some 60 percent of all Sunni Muslims dislike the United States, and 30 percent of Sunni Muslims around the world still empathize with and/or support Usama bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida due to their pro-Muslim, anti-U.S./Israel activities. See *Zogby Poll of Arab Public Opinion* (College Park, MD: University of Maryland, 2008); "Muslim Public Opinion on U.S. Policy, Attacks on Civilians and Al Qaeda – 2006," *World Public Opinion.Org* (24 April 2007).

<sup>80</sup> Put in context, therefore, al-Qa'ida's recent public relations challenges and reversals of fortune in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and elsewhere do not yet threaten to pull it outside of the mainstream current of anti-Americanism and anti-Westernism that remains dominant across the Sunni Muslim world. Instead, its remedy for bad PR seems no more complicated than to assure that its operations are killing more westerners and fewer Muslims. For a common sense review of this logic, see "A Radical New Strategy: Kill Fewer Muslims," *Economist.com* (5 June 2008).

<sup>81</sup> In addition to the five Shi'a majority countries, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Syria, Turkey, India, Pakistan and Albania have Shi'a minority populations with significant numbers and political import. One should note that despite control by an Alawite, secular Shi'a leadership, Syria is a country with more Sunni than Shi'a. For more detail on the numbers and ratios of Sunni-Shi'a Muslims around the world, see *The CIA World Factbook – 2007*, <http://www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>; *The Arabist Handbook*, <http://arabist.net/archives/2007/01/30/handy-factbook-on-sunnishia-divide/>; Swivel Data and Analysis, <http://www.swivel.com/graphs/show/13900562>.

worldwide Shi'a Diaspora has no tether to the political philosophy of Tehran or to Hezbollah militarism. A majority of Iranian Shi'a expatriates are refugees from the Iranian revolution, and reflexively hostile to the Islamic Republic of Iran and its Mullah-driven worldview. A significant percentage of Lebanese Shi'a expatriates feel the same about Hezbollah. Third, unlike Sunni terrorist groups, who have perpetrated most of their terror waves in non-combat zone locations featuring co-religionist communities of well over a million in number, Shi'a terror campaigns have occurred in mid-1980s France and mid-1990s Argentina, where the Shi'a Muslim Diaspora was less than 160,000 and 20,000, respectively.<sup>82</sup>

While some analysts have suggested that the mere presence of a semi-autonomous, closed-off Shi'a sub-community, like those in three of Canada's major cities, indicates a latent potential for Hezbollah or Iranian terror activity on command, there is far more evidence indicating that the number of Iranian embassies, consulates and state-connected businesses within a host country more correctly points to Shi'a terror possibilities.<sup>83</sup> Shi'a population numbers are relevant, but as an indirect rather than a direct indicator. Countries with Shi'a Diaspora of greater than one-half-million are places where more substantial concentrations of Iranian agents and Hezbollah sympathizers might be found working in and around embassies, consulates and state-run Iranian enterprises. In turn, greater diplomatic and economic endeavors provide Iranian intelligence agents and Revolutionary Guards operatives with a high level of capability to discern and exploit host country weakness in anti-terror law enforcement and judiciary practices. The states in this category that have porous border areas where Iranian agents under diplomatic or business cover can smuggle their terror freely—like the Brazil-Paraguay-Argentina tri-border region or the vast lawless regions bordering Nigeria—are special areas for concern. Here, countries that stand out in addition to the “usual suspects” in the Middle East, North Africa, and South and Southeast Asia are states like China, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Ghana, and Brazil. Each of these states also has significant American

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<sup>82</sup> For estimated numbers of Shi'a Muslims in France and Argentina, see The CIA World Factbooks – 1985 & 1994 at <http://www.cia.gov/library/publication/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>; The Arabist Handbook.

<sup>83</sup> A link between Shi'a expatriate communities, Hezbollah and terrorist activities is implied by Shaul Shay. See Shay, 69-71. While his anecdotes from Canada are thought provoking, they are ultimately unconvincing. At best, the evidence suggests that Shi'a expatriate communities tend to finance terrorist-linked Shi'a-extremists in Lebanon. This makes them akin to Irish expatriate communities financing Irish Republican Army terror against Great Britain in the 1970s to the 1990s, not akin to fertile origins for terror from within the community.



and west European business and expatriate communities that would prove vulnerable to a concerted terror campaign. (See Table 3.)

**Table 3**

Shia v. Sunni Numbers and Official Iranian Presence  
The 'Big 5' and 15 Countries To Think About

Country	# Shia (in millions)	# Sunni (in millions)	# Muslim (in millions)	% Muslim Overall	Iranian Emb or Cons (E/C)
<b>Iran</b>	<b>58.2</b>	5.9	65.4	99%	N/A
<b>Iraq</b>	<b>15.48</b>	9.9	25.58	97%	None
<b>Lebanon</b>	<b>1.39</b>	1.13	4.2	70%	<b>E</b>
<b>Bahrain</b>	<b>.45</b>	.20	.65	100%	<b>E</b>
<b>Azerbaijan</b>	<b>6.53</b>	.25	7.25	93.4%	<b>E</b>
<b>Pakistan</b>	28.1	112.2	140.3	97%	<b>E + C</b> (Peshawar)
<b>India</b>	26.5	115.7	144.2	14%	<b>E + C</b> (Mumbai)
<b>Bangladesh</b>	6.34	123.2	129.54	85%	<b>E</b>
<b>Turkey</b>	12.97	56.79	72.0	99%	<b>E</b>
<b>Yemen</b>	2.85	15.8	19.0	99%	None
<b>Afghanistan</b>	5.09	21.2	26.5	99%	C(Herat)
<b>Syria</b>	3.07	14.2	19.2	90%	None
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	2.4	21.6	24.0	100%	<b>E</b>
<b>Kuwait</b>	.57	1.17	1.74	89%	<b>E</b>
<b>China</b>	3.12	35.8	38.92	2.9%	<b>E + C</b> (Shanghai)
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	1.35	21.8	23.15	82.4%	<b>E</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	3.19	62.3	65.49	47.8%	<b>E</b>
<b>Tanzania</b>	1.08	17.1	18.18	45.5%	<b>E</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	1.11	8.71	9.82	42.4%	None
<b>Brazil</b>	.79	1.18	1.97	1.1%	<b>E</b>

Sources: CIA Factbook (2007); The Arabist Hanbook, January 1, 2007; and, Swivel Data and Analysis at [www.swivel.com](http://www.swivel.com).

The states of Eastern Europe also feature a noteworthy nexus of Iranian embassies and state-run enterprises in countries where small Shi'a Diasporas may mask vulnerabilities associated with East Europe's weak counter-terrorist infrastructure and negligible historic experience with the patterns of Shi'a group

terrorism.<sup>84</sup> In addition, Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico, Paraguay and Argentina stand aside Brazil in a sweep of South American locations where full Iranian embassies are present.<sup>85</sup> Although any Iranian embassy will be under host nation scrutiny, their employees and agents in less prominent locations like South America, Eastern Europe and parts of Africa are far less likely to be under the kind of tight coverage and counterintelligence over-watch that shadows Iranians in other regions of the world.<sup>86</sup>

Shi'a terrorism's intense relationship with Iranian and Hezbollah political objectives has made operations much more diffuse and entrepreneurial. Whereas intense xenophobia inhibits Sunni groups' use of third parties and surrogates in the intelligence gathering, plan validation and strike phases of terrorist operations, Shi'a creativity in support of terror is far less constrained.<sup>87</sup> In each terror campaign by Shi'a groups in non-combat zones, Iranian agents and Hezbollah operatives have shown a willingness to subcontract or outsource for terrorist operations. In the 1986 Paris terror attacks, Iranian Embassy translator Wahid Gordiji paid-off French informants and hired non-Muslim drivers to park car bombs in pre-planned locations.<sup>88</sup> In the second campaign of terror against former government officials linked to the Shah of Iran, contract assassinations by non-Shi'as were carried out in several cases. Interactions between Iranian agents with Syrians, Turks, West Europeans and Africans of many faiths and denominations in the commission of terror exemplifies an approach to terror that is creative and wide-ranging. While there is no good evidence to indicate that Iranian agents or Hezbollah operatives have subcontracted Salafi-Jihadis for terrorism in past campaigns, such a tactic cannot be ruled out in the future.

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<sup>84</sup> Poland, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Macedonia and Ukraine each have a separate Iranian embassy. For a complete listing of Iranian embassies, see VisaHQ.com, <http://iran.visahq.com/embassy/>.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> I grant the point made by George Tenet in his 2007 memoir, *At the Center of the Storm*, but question whether it is completely relevant over a decade later and in a post-9/11 world. See George Tenet with Bill Harlow, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2007). In his memoir, Tenet states that part of the 1996 U.S. response to Khobar Towers was to make explicit contact with, and provide personal warnings to, Iranian intelligence and special actions agents around the world. Clearly, national U.S. counterintelligence operatives still monitor Iranian embassies and agents today. However, with the full-frontal focus of U.S. combating intelligence on al-Qa'ida and associates since early 2002, it is most reasonable to surmise that American counterintelligence attention on Iranian agents and potential operatives has not kept pace.

<sup>87</sup> For more on xenophobic limitations in *Salafi-Jihadist* terror methods, see Martinage, 62-88; Stout, et al., 1-23, 79-80.

<sup>88</sup> See Shay, 43-45, 78.

However, the intense animosity and jealousy between the Iranian leadership and al-Qa'ida—demonstrated in a recent outburst from al-Qa'ida deputy leader Ayman al Zawahiri denouncing Iranian efforts to discredit the Salafi-Jihad by spreading the myth that Israel generated the 9/11 attacks, not al-Qa'ida—can be expected to severely constrain this form of collaboration.<sup>89</sup> Al-Qa'ida literature and websites clearly demonstrate that Salafi-Jihadis consider Shi'ism to be apostasy and Iran to be a threat to proper jihad and righteous Islamic rule. Clearly, Iran's Mullahs know this, and know there would be a boomerang effect against their Shi'a Islamic Republic if collaboration with Salafi-Jihadis were to embolden a more immediate pursuit of a basic Salafi-jihadist objective of eradicating Shi'ism from Islam. In addition, palpable tensions exist between Salafi-Jihadist groups and Shi'a extremist militias from Iraq to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Lebanon.<sup>90</sup> Dramatically divergent operating philosophies, therefore, make it very unlikely that Iranian agents would subcontract Salafi-Jihadis for other than sporadic, limited operations in any new terrorism campaign.

Consequently, western intelligence and enforcement agencies need to open a wider aperture to prepare for any new, concerted Shi'a terror campaign. Subcontracted bombings, kidnappings, assassinations and other forms of terror will emanate from Shi'a operatives, but be conducted among a wide range of people. The focus on "middle aged Muslim Arab males," or MAAMs, which has become a hallmark of western operations to combat Salafi-jihadist terror, is clearly unsuited to deter and defeat a concerted Shi'a-inspired terror campaign.<sup>91</sup>

#### D - Abduct to Kill or Kidnap to Barter

While Sunni group terrorists kidnap most frequently to kill their victims, Shi'a terrorists have a more consistent track record of abducting to barter and

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<sup>89</sup> See "Al Qaeda No. 2: Major Attacks on Western Nations in Works," *CNN.com/world* (22 April 2008), <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/04/22/zawahiri.targets.ap/index.html>. The exact statement by Zawahiri accused Hezbollah's al-Manar television of starting the rumor. "The purpose of this lie is clear: [to suggest] that there are no heroes among the Sunnis who can hurt America as no else did in history. Iranian media snapped up this lie and repeated it," he said. The comments reflects Zawahiri's increasing criticism of Iran, which he has accused in recent messages of seeking to extend its power in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and through its Hezbollah allies in Lebanon.

<sup>90</sup> See Nasr (2008), 12-13.

<sup>91</sup> For more on the dangers of this MAAM stereotype to combating *Salafi-jihadi* terrorism as well as that from Shi'a-inspired activities, see Malcolm Nance, "How (Not) to Spot a Terrorist," *Foreign Policy* 87, no. 3 (May/June 2008), 74-76.

negotiate. The fates of American hostages Terry Anderson and Paul Johnson are typical. Anderson, an Associated Press journalist in Beirut, was abducted by Lebanese Shi'a extremists in 1985 and held until 1991. One of more than fifty cases of kidnapping perpetrated by Hezbollah and its allies against westerners during the first Shi'a campaign of non-combat zone terror, Anderson's ordeal was typical of Shi'a terrorism abductions in that he was kept alive—a human bargaining chip in a period of time when Hezbollah's survival, and the future of the Islamic Republic of Iran remained in doubt. Often referred to, but rarely seen, Anderson enabled Hezbollah and Tehran's Mullahs to put America at a point of disadvantage when necessary. Anderson was among the better than 90 percent of non-Israeli hostages taken by Hezbollah who survived captivity in Lebanon during the 1980s and early 1990s.

Lockheed Martin Engineer Paul Johnson was kidnapped and beheaded by al-Qa'ida in Saudi Arabia in June 2004. Disturbing visuals of the beheading's aftermath were posted rapidly to the internet for worldwide circulation. Quickly claiming credit but never setting demands for Johnson's safe release, Salafi-Jihadis heralded this event as a great victory for their cause of intimidating infidels and ending the illegitimate presence of western occupation in the Land of the Two Holy Mosques. Johnson's unfortunate fate remains typical of those targeted for abduction by Sunni terrorists. In dozens of abduction incidents from 1981 through 2006, including truly horrific incidents from Beslan, Russia (2002) to Cairo, Egypt (1996) and across the Philippines over nearly two decades, the Sunni modus operandi has been to seize hostages largely for propaganda and death, not for negotiations and release.

While Sunni beheadings of abduction victims have marked them as remorseless, Shi'a terrorists are unmistakably brutal as well. They kill often and kill ruthlessly when it suits their purpose. Bombings, suicide bombings and targeted assassinations (which will be addressed next) is each a form of Shi'a terror that traditionally ends in death for the victims. One should not lose sight of that fact. However, one should also be clear that the third most popular Shi'a terror tactic from 1981 to 2006—kidnapping—has not been a certain death sentence for its victims. Slightly more than 24 percent of Shi'a-inspired terrorism from 1981 to 2006 in non-combat zones featured kidnapping or hostage taking. Almost all of this took place in Lebanon, with about 10 percent of victims dying in captivity. This put kidnapping behind assassinations, around 35 percent, and bombing

events, around 30 percent, as the third most popular Shi'a terror activity during the period.<sup>92</sup>

**Table 4**

**Recorded Shi'a Terror Activities in Non-Combat Zones: 1981-2006**

<b>TERROR ACTIVITY</b>	<b># NON-COMBAT ZONE EVENTS</b>	<b>% NON-COMBAT ZONE EVENTS</b>
Targeted Assassinations	55	35%
Bombings / Explosive Detonations	47	30%
Kidnappings/Hostage Taking	38	24%
Airplane Hijackings & All Others	18	11%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100%</b>

Hostage negotiations matter to the political objectives of Iranian diplomats and Hezbollah officials. In the course of nearly forty kidnappings during the 1980s, Hezbollah and Iran parlayed live, extended captivity hostages, into direct and indirect negotiating pressures that helped secure a myriad of favorable outcomes. From ransom money to weapons transfers, to prisoner exchanges and more, Shi'a extremists learned the value of taking prominent westerners hostage and then bartering with them in the pursuit of political aims. Evidence from combat zone operations in Iraq confirms that the positive lessons of twenty years ago remain current. Iraqi Shi'a militants picked up by U.S. and Iraqi national forces in northeast and southern Iraq during late 2007 and early 2008 reported that they had been formally taught in Iran by IRGC-Qods forces to be terrorist trainers in Iraq and that the curriculum featured prominent segments on kidnapping and extortion.<sup>93</sup> Outside of Iraq, the fate of missing American Robert Levinson may be a harbinger. Gone without a trace since 9 March 2007 during a

<sup>92</sup> These percentages are based upon author analysis of the MIPT-TKB and START-GTD1&2 databases for non-combat zone events, with totals provided in the associated table. The percentages track closely with percentages that include Shi'a terrorist strikes against Israel as presented by Shay. See Shay, 81-85.

<sup>93</sup> See MNF-I spokesman quotes found in Scott R. Gourley, "MNF-I Outlines Iranian Support for Iraqi Groups," *Jane's Defense Weekly* (26 March 2008), 20.

private business trip on Khish Island, Iran, Levinson went missing a mere two weeks before fifteen members of the British Navy were detained by Iranian IRGC-Qods for naval forces, and during a spike in harsh rhetoric between Tehran and the west.<sup>94</sup> If Levinson is being held by Iranian agents, then we should not be surprised to see offers to help “find” him play out at a future time when Tehran perceives a bargaining advantage from publicizing his vulnerability.

This Shi’a record contrasts markedly with the non-combat zone record of Sunni extremists. There are documented cases of Sunni extremists taking hostages and then releasing them alive for money or in an exchange of prisoners.<sup>95</sup> But these are atypical, accounting for less than two-dozen incidents of the 115 Sunni terrorist abductions recorded in non-combat zones from 1981 to 2006.<sup>96</sup> Instead, terrorists inspired by the logic of *jihadism* typically abduct to kill. The very fact of abduction is most often the major point of the terror event. Indeed, jihadi claims of credit for abductions tend to be rapid, trumpeted across multiple dimensions of mass media and without any bargaining agenda. In more than 50 percent of the 115 cases identified, jihadi terrorists never declared hostage-release criteria. In over 60 percent of these abduction cases, victim bodies, or the very act of killing, were recorded and rapidly released to mass media outlets and the internet.<sup>97</sup> The propaganda value of killing abduction victims looms large in the approach of Sunni extremists, and especially Salafi-Jihadis, toward hostage taking. Consequently, they have shown great impatience in assuring that their captives meet a rapid, fully recorded demise, so that the record of vengeance against the enemies of their xenophobic brand of Islam is secured and the propaganda disseminated widely.

The different approach to abduction by Shi’a extremists is significant. In the event of any new Iranian-inspired Shi’a terror campaign, the return of more “kidnap to barter” situations will have major policy implications. Government officials will again be joined by prominent western businessmen, educators and

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<sup>94</sup> Daniel Levinson, “Missing a Father in Iran,” *Washington Post*, 22 June 2008, B7.

<sup>95</sup> Infrequent examples of Sunni extremist kidnappings for money or released prisoners include Moro Islamic Liberation Front abductions of westerners for money in the Philippines, primarily in the late 1990s, and some kidnapping for money by Taliban and Taliban-affiliates in Afghanistan during the mid 1990s. Such abductions, however, are far outside the overall Sunni terrorist—and especially the more recent *Salafi-jihadi* - norm.

<sup>96</sup> Derived from author count of 22/23 hostage-taking-and-release incidents linked to Sunni extremist groups as derived from the MIPT-TKB and START-GTD1&2 databases.

<sup>97</sup> Author analysis of more than 110 Sunni extremist group abduction incidents in non-combat zones from 1981 to 2006. Data derived from MIPT-TKB and START-GTD1&2.

journalists as favorite targets for abduction. Prompt, accurate claims for the hostage taking will be far fewer, as Iranian agents and shadowy Shi'a operatives seek to cover their tracks and mask their true identities. Westerners in general, and Americans in particular, will be confronted again with a business and diplomatic framework in many parts of the world that will feature a daily risk of abduction. The United States government will face a situation of nearly constant hostage negotiations from a position of weakness and will need to have a negotiating policy and associated public message that is consistent and sustainable. In many ways, what is now old will be again made new.

#### E - Targeted Killings, The One vs. The Many

Shi'a terrorism shows a propensity toward individual, targeted killings of specific people with a calibrated eye toward minimizing collateral damage to surrounding individuals and property. In the cases of former Shah officials like ex-Prime Minister Shapour Bakhtiar and his secretary, Soroush Katibeh, who were knifed to death in a Paris suburb in August 1991, roughly a dozen people were shot, knifed or bombed to death outside of Iran with no overt fingerprints. Iranian intelligence agents were always suspected, but rarely apprehended. Frequently, the Iranian operatives contracted the work out to professional assassins from countries on many different continents.<sup>98</sup> Operating as "Islamic Holy War" and "Islamic Jihad," Hezbollah also targeted primary Lebanese Christian, Lebanese Sunni, Israeli and western leadership antagonists for assassination. These took place in a series of attacks that played out for more than a decade. Growing evidence from Iraq in 2007 and 2008 indicates that sniper skills and targeted killing techniques remain a staple of the Iranian IRGC-Qods force terror-training curriculum for Iraqi Shi'a militia.<sup>99</sup>

The specific targets for Sunni terrorist killings are more ambiguous. The line between their targeted killings and a more generic attack against a hated group or location often is blurred. Bombing attacks by Egyptian Islamic Jihad or Egyptian Islamic Group against a European tour bus in the 1990s served the dual purpose of killing a number of unwelcome, impure westerners and killing a European consular tour escort as a message to Cairo that no European business

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<sup>98</sup> Bakhtiar had survived a botched assassination by four pistol-wielding conspirators in the summer of 1980, but that group of hired guns, led by a Palestinian terrorist, killed two others and wounded a third. The 1991 assassination was as ruthlessly elegant as the 1980 effort was clumsily botched. In 1995, French courts convicted eight Iranian expatriates, six of whom—including a high ranking Iranian intelligence official—were long-since back in Iran. See Rempel, 1.

<sup>99</sup> Gourley, 20.

presence is welcome in Egypt.<sup>100</sup> Car bomb attacks against western embassies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and periodic mortar attacks against the United States and other western embassies in Sana'a, Yemen are geared to kill the respective ambassadors and national officials, but are also chosen to confront all foreign nationals from the relevant country with the notion that they are unwelcome and not safe in these Muslim countries.

Again, these different extremist tactics matter to American combating terrorism policy. With the exception of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley's assassination in Amman, Jordan in 2002, a half dozen individual killings of random western businessmen in Saudi Arabia during 2003 and 2004 and a small number of others, targeted killings of western diplomats, governmental officials and senior businessmen has not been a prominent Salafi-Jihadist tactic.<sup>101</sup> Ongoing western attention to combating Salafi-Jihadist terror by safeguarding significant overseas political, cultural and executive buildings and businesses also has served to provide reasonable personal protection for the organizational leaders. The Shi'a terrorist approach to targeted killing in a new terror campaign will shred this synergy. Diplomats, government officials, military leaders and prominent businessmen and educators again would be individual targets. Homes, shops, eating establishments and routes to-and-from work would be put at risk. America and its western allies will again confront a dimension of terror it has not directly faced in almost two decades.<sup>102</sup>

## F - Claiming Credit – Publicity Scope and Sweep

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<sup>100</sup> Attacks of this type by EIJ, EIG and jihadi associates occurred frequently in Egypt during the 1990s, including events in October and November 1992 (Qena), March and June 1993 (Cairo), April 1996 (Giza), September 1997 (Cairo), and April 2005 (Cairo). See START-GTD1 and GTD2; "Chronology of Attacks on Tourist Targets in Egypt," Reuters Limited and U.S. Dive Travel Network, <http://usdivetravel.com/T-EgyptTerrorism.html>.

<sup>101</sup> For a review of these targeted assassination exceptions, see "Jordan Hangs U.S. Diplomat Killers," BBCNews.com, 11 March 2006, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4796280.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4796280.stm); Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, *Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia: Asymmetric Threats and Islamist Extremists – Working Draft* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005), 6-9, [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050106\\_al-qaedainsaudi.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/050106_al-qaedainsaudi.pdf).

<sup>102</sup> Incidents of identifiable Sunni terrorist targeted assassinations in non-combat zones during the period from 1981 to 2006 number no more than thirty of almost 700 total recorded terror events. This contrasts sharply with fifty-five of 158 Shi'a terror non-combat zone events recorded as targeted assassinations. It is also important to note that over 90 percent of the recorded Shi'a assassination events occurred in Lebanon prior to 1989. Consequently, it has been almost twenty years since the west in general, and the United States in particular, has confronted a concerted terrorist assassination campaign in non-combat zone areas. Data derived from MIPT-TKB and START-GTD1&2.



Sunni groups—especially Salafi-Jihadis—and Shi’a terrorists also differ fundamentally in their approach to publicity and propaganda of terror events. The twenty-five-year pattern of Shi’a terror in non-combat zones reveals a propensity toward low-key publicity regarding specific terrorist incidents and a reliance on normal press coverage and regular news cycles to broadcast their attacks. This is evident in the Khobar Towers attacks of 1996, where Abu Omran and his cohorts struck without positioning anyone to record the carnage, instead relying on open press accounts to confirm that their strike—perpetrated on behalf of a Shi’a actor—killed nineteen and wounded another 340 American servicemen.<sup>103</sup> Sunnis, however, have treated publicity as an independent variable to be manipulated and enhanced as a critical part of non-combat zone terror activity.<sup>104</sup> From special relationships with regional and global news networks, to ever-expanding use of the internet and digital image transmissions, to the development of its own media production company, *al Shahab* (the clouds), and a media distribution network, *al Fajr* (the dawn), Sunni extremists, especially al-Qa’ida and its associated movements, consistently strive to promulgate images and interpretations of terror attacks for those they wish to coerce and co-opt.

Salafi-jihadist terror in particular has become uniquely identified with immediate image transmission and attack glorification across the most advanced and sophisticated mass media outlets. By the time of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, Salafi-Jihadis had a well-developed protocol for immediate amplification of terrorist events, including formal claims of responsibility. Images of the terror attack were recorded. Recording and documentation were part of the terror planning and key elements in execution. Quite frequently, separate crews and vehicles were dedicated solely to recording the terror attack, with the goal of rapid dissemination of visual images and claims of credit for the attack. Early on in its organized activities, al-Qa’ida chose Qatar’s al Jazeera satellite station as its preferred vehicle for televised dissemination of its terrorist events and propaganda messages, and is now using *al Sahab* and *al Fajr* to do far more. Salafi-Jihadis are also making good use of the growing number of technologies for digital transmission of images on cell phones, blackberries and similar devices to promulgate images of death and destruction with messages of holy war.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> See *Al-Mughassil*, Indictment; Freeh; Downing Commission Report (30 August 1996), Findings 10, 11, 12, <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/downing/unclf913.html>.

<sup>104</sup> This focus on strategic messaging and hyper-propaganda flows logically from *Salafi-jihadi* ideology. For a review of this logic, see Stout, et al., 164-98.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 183-91.

When it comes to publicity regarding specific terrorist attacks, Shi'a group terror has trended in the opposite direction. Iran and Hezbollah have preferred "plausible deniability" in much of their terror operations. To avoid retribution or global condemnation, Shi'a terrorist groups have chosen relative anonymity—to the extent of rarely claiming responsibility for an attack, and even denying involvement in a plot that is uniquely their own.<sup>106</sup> Here, the exception that proves the rule is Hezbollah's al-Manar television station. Covertly funded by Iran and operating since 1991, it has, since the *Intifada* of 2000, served as the preferred outlet for Palestinian rejectionist groups claiming responsibility for terrorist attacks against Israelis. But al-Manar has taken on no similar role for Shi'a terrorist strikes outside of Israel. Aside from a general editorial narrative supporting terrorism against Israel and American agents anywhere in Muslim lands, al-Manar has eschewed the type of quick-turn amplification and glorification of specific terrorist strikes in non-combat zones outside of Israel that one finds so commonly featured in al-Qa'ida affiliated media venues.<sup>107</sup> From this quietist preference, Shi'a extremists operating in non-combat zones rarely dabble in self-generated amplification of their terrorism, instead letting the activity speak for itself and allowing the inherent ambiguity to work toward dialogue and negotiation on terms favorable to Tehran or Hezbollah.

The upshot of this difference between Sunni and Shi'a terror is meaningful. Iranian agent and wider Shi'a terrorist aversion to publicity will challenge the American intelligence and counterintelligence programs that have evolved over the last decade. Used to quick claims of responsibility, our government agencies will see far fewer clues about perpetrators in the hours after Shi'a terror attacks. Reduced forensics will be accompanied by Spartan clues about abduction victim locations. Consequently, prospects for hostage rescue for even those suffering more lengthy captivity will be slim. Agencies and law enforcement officials combating terror will also lose a familiar crutch for attack prevention. Salafi-Jihadi obsession with the immediate image and its rapid dissemination allows counterintelligence and law enforcement a template for use in safeguarding prominent terror targets—concentrate on the attack locations that afford good video coverage. Shi'a terror's disinterest in documentation and dissemination of bombing or other attack images will make deterrence harder. With less

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<sup>106</sup> See Shay, 123-24; Martinage, 106-21.

<sup>107</sup> For a review of al-Manar's divergent operating approach on the Palestinian-Israeli terrorism front from those in other, non-combat areas, see Avi Jorisch, "Al-Manar: Hizbullah TV, 24/7," *Middle East Quarterly* (Winter 2004), <http://www.meforum.org/article/583>; "Al-Manar Promotes 'Resistance,' Tones Down Anti-US Material, Lebanon," *Open Source Center* (8 December 2005), <http://www.fas.org/irp/news/2005/12/osc120805.html>.

choreography to manage, a Shi'a group strike is less easy to discover and prevent. The offshoot of less focus on publicity by Shi'a actors is that it will be more difficult to track and trace Shi'a-inspired terrorism due to its smaller attack footprint, and due to the absence of the audio-visual record that invariably complements the forensic evidence of Salafi-jihadist terror left behind.

#### **Part 4**

#### **Policy Implications: Preparing Now for Then**

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As demonstrated above, terrorism by Shi'a groups differs from Sunni terrorism in several distinct ways. The differences matter to proper posturing and preparation for a potential future campaign of terrorism by Shi'a actors. The quarter decade from 1981 through 2006 reveals that Shi'a terrorism outside of combat zones comes in discrete campaigns inspired by Tehran or Hezbollah objectives, as well as in cases where truly significant threats are felt by these two focal points of the Shi'a-world. Driven primarily by finite organizational and political objectives, Shi'a terrorism is less messianic than its Sunni counterpart and centers around Iranian embassies, consulates, front-businesses and some Hezbollah social service centers. It does not originate from or rely upon standard Sunni terrorism patterns developed around radical Sunni mosques or—more recently— inflammatory Salafi network websites. Terrorism by Shi'a groups and actors is far more prone toward abductions for barter and features targeted assassination more consistently and expertly than Sunni terrorism. The agents of Shi'a terror display a much greater willingness than Sunni extremists to subcontract for terrorism and rely far less on expatriate community support than they do on operational and material support networks that tie back to Iranian and Hezbollah control. In this context, Shi'a terror is detached from generally oblivious co-religionists, while Sunni terrorists can count upon a broad level of co-religionist empathy so long as they have not allowed indiscriminate violence to drive a wedge between themselves and the vast number of Sunnis sharing their anti-American, anti-western agenda. Finally, inspiration for Shi'a terrorism from Iranian-focused and Hezbollah-specific survival and organizational goals contrasts with the Sunni extremist focus on broad messianic objectives, driving Shi'a to drastically limit terror propaganda. This self-limitation is geared to assure plausible deniability for Iran and to safeguard important negotiating power in the bargaining anticipated to end the terror.

Subtle and consequential, the differences in Shi'a-inspired terrorism matter greatly as specific American focus on Tehran, and to a lesser extent Lebanon, continues to grow. It has been almost two decades since culmination of the last

medium-to-high intensity Shi'a terror campaign against non-Israeli, non-combatant targets. In the interim, Iran and Hezbollah have remained in good practice for their particular style of terror by persistent involvement in combat zones—for two decades against Israel, and most recently against American, coalition and Iraqi targets in Iraq. Simultaneously and understandably, western focus on terrorism has zeroed-in on the Salafi-Jihadist threat. Despite many noteworthy similarities, a focused review of Sunni and Shi'a terrorism in non-combat zones over a twenty-five year period suggests that greater attention to Shi'a terror patterns is overdue. Such attention highlights that ongoing western efforts to combat terrorism overseas seem insufficiently attuned to the most likely terrorism to come as part of any potential sixth Shi'a-inspired campaign of terror in non-combat areas. As part of any American preparation to seriously threaten, much less commence, a military campaign against Iran or Hezbollah, American policymakers need to consider our vulnerabilities in non-combat zones to the patterns history tells us that Shi'a extremists will follow. At a minimum, four adaptations to America's counterterrorism policies need to be undertaken before, not after, a decision to threaten military force against the territory of Iran or Hezbollah's hierarchy.

- **Refocus and Better Resource Intelligence and Counterintelligence against Shi'a Terror:** America's intelligence and counterintelligence for combating terror overseas must expand and extend capabilities to monitor Iranian embassies, consulates, state-owned businesses, their key employees and suspected agents of Shi'a terrorism. While some of this is certainly being done now, open source evidence suggests that our best and most expansive counterterror intelligence efforts overseas are targeted against Salafi-jihadist groups, organizations and individuals. An enhanced level of persistent, unblinking-eye monitoring of all Iranian embassies and consulates worldwide is necessary, but not sufficient. Our intelligence services should also be resourced to step-up monitoring and clandestine operations against Iranian officials and suspected operatives in several dozen critical countries around the world, most notably in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. Countries in these locations were most extensively exploited by Iranian agents during the major terror campaigns of the 1980s and early 1990s. Greater American intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities might be best directed at those states with weak governance; corrupt and inefficient law enforcement and legal systems; and porous borders, where Iranian embassies are located. These conditions are most attractive to Iranian agents and Hezbollah operatives, as they were among those that made Lebanon and several other states of the Arab world prime playgrounds for Shi'a group terrorism two decades ago. The states of the

Caucasus and Central and Southwest Asia rank particularly high on these criteria. Several western analysts have argued that Iran is already building-up relationships among South Caucasus and Central Asian terrorists and agents that could be tapped as part of a terror campaign against America there.<sup>108</sup> As noted in Table 3, the states of Eastern Europe and eastern South America also seem to be areas for greater scrutiny. America's Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence services must make the funding and personnel decisions necessary to re-orient toward these Shi'a-focused priorities in the most critical states. This will not be easy given the enormous demand for strategic intelligence in the fight against Salafi-Jihadis across the world. Hopefully, the low-key visit of Agency Director, General Michael Hayden, to Azerbaijan in September 2007 indicates that this kind of intelligence/counterintelligence adaptation is being undertaken in a sober, deliberate manner in the states of greatest potential American expatriate vulnerability.<sup>109</sup>

- **Enhance Targeted Intelligence and Law Enforcement Collaboration against Shi'a Terror:** The United States needs to enhance its collaboration with critical partners to get a step ahead of Shi'a terrorists and Iranian agents. This is a critical way forward for America in those states that have reasonably capable intelligence and law enforcement capacity, but have critical blind spots when it comes to patterns of Shi'a terrorism. Many of the states most vulnerable to Iranian agents and Hezbollah terror operatives in the 1980s have dramatically improved their internal security forces, rewritten terrorism laws and tightened border controls. But like America, these states have focused improvements against Salafi-Jihadist terrorism patterns and preferences. From Saudi Arabia, to Kuwait and Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, Sunni Arab governments that have established rigorous counter-terror programs in recent years have done so without intense focus on Shi'a-specific patterns and techniques. In several cases, Arab states with well-organized domestic intelligence and law enforcement systems cringe at the mere mention of a potential Iranian-inspired terror campaign on their soil. They acknowledge that their agencies do not know a lot about Iranian agent methodologies and rightly

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<sup>108</sup> For example, see Stephen Blank, "Walking A Tightrope: Azerbaijan and The Politics of Iranian Nuclear Weapons," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 9, no. 1 (10 January 2007), 10.

<sup>109</sup> Royshan Ismayilov, "Azerbaijan: Is Iran the Reason for the CIA Director's Recent Visit to Baku?," *The Eurasia Report* (15 October 2007), <http://www.thought-criminal.org/2007/10/05/general-michael-hayden-meets-with-azerbaijani-president-to-discuss-strategic-iran-war-plans>.

fear that what they do not know can hurt them.<sup>110</sup> Thus, American intelligence collaboration needs to do more to fill the gaps in regional allies' knowledge of Shi'a-terror methods and western expectations. The United States needs to establish protocols for timely sharing of national-level information regarding Iranian agent operations and transit of allied government territory. It also needs to work with allied state intelligence and interior ministries to target and share timely and accurate information on suspected Iranian agents, operatives and front companies in that state. Many of these allies will fear any exchange of information premised on looming war clouds and an expectation that Shi'a-inspired terror will come to their country. Consequently, a proactive and respectful American initiative must underpin our approach to this critical dimension of preparation for any future Shi'a terror campaign.

- **Dramatically Improve Overseas American Diplomatic Capacity to Manage Any New Shi'a Terror Campaign:** Next, America's diplomatic readiness abroad requires significant improvement to bear-up under the brunt of any future Shi'a terror campaign. This must be done soon. Led by the State Department, America's interagency team needs to focus its counterparts on preparation for a possible campaign of Iranian-backed, Shi'a terrorism in retaliation to American or Israeli military action. This program only can work if it has Administration support for improved resourcing and generates a viable action plan between our ambassadors and our overseas allies. Neither dimension will be established without better funding and organizational focus. First, we must secure much more detailed collaboration to combat anticipated Shi'a terrorism with our allies in their backyards. Without exciting undue alarm, we must draw greater allied law enforcement and security attention to protection of western schools, living quarters, places of worship and work places. Our State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security, along with U.S. Embassy specialists from Customs, Immigration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and others need to enhance local safeguards for diplomats, government workers, prominent businesspersons and journalists. Attention must be paid to a much more detailed array of abduction and assassination scenarios. Protocols for enhanced transparency on information about potential Shi'a terrorists and Iranian agents should be established and followed. Similarly, there is a need for improved consular mechanisms for informing American citizens about terror risks and related precautions. Our diplomats and politicians must also prepare to deal with a spike in hostage negotiations. Even if America again declares a policy

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<sup>110</sup> Author observations in meetings with Arab state security and law enforcement officials during the period from 2004 through 2007.

refusing direct negotiations with Shi'a-inspired hostage-takers, our diplomats will be required to work through international agencies and intermediaries to track and monitor the status of a growing cluster of political prisoners. All this must be managed in a sober and deliberate fashion, for if we cannot assure sound partnership with a couple dozen top allies on these enhanced security precautions, then the Secretary of State needs to know to advise the President that America remains unprepared to meet the demands of an intense terror campaign likely from Iran against vulnerable American and western "soft" targets around the world. To make all this happen, America must fund for success. We have already reviewed how overseas intelligence costs will go up to properly prepare ourselves and our allies for the likely dimensions of terrorism campaigns waged by Shi'a groups. The other dimensions of a credible preparation program for our embassies and allies must also be properly funded. Presently, they are not. As discussed in the Introduction to this paper, the most visible component of U.S. funding for countering terrorism overseas comes in the Department of State's programs for Combating Terrorism Abroad. Dominated by funding for the construction of and security for United States embassies and consular sites, this pool of money has grown in recent years, but not in a manner sufficient to ready Americans overseas for an intense wave of Shi'a-inspired terrorism. In fiscal year 2007, the total budget for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security Overseas was less than \$880 million, \$23.5 million of which was earmarked to programs specifically oriented toward "soft target" security enhancement, while less than \$100 million was in programs for collaborative security with host governments. To seriously address the pressing preparation needs in some two dozen of the most vulnerable overseas locations, the President's budget for overseas combating terror programs and activities needs a significant boost. An increase of a targeted \$1 to \$1.5 billion in these programs would be barely sufficient to sharpen the focus required to prepare for the inevitable. The Department of State has only a small emergency fund to make a start at this requirement. Working with the Congress, the Department of State and the Office of Management and Budget should find a way to inject this additional money to a well-structured improvement of combating terrorism abroad beginning this fiscal year.

- **Psychological Preparation of the Nation:** Finally, the American people must be mentally prepared for what they may see. A generation has passed since this country last endured hostage crises, targeted assassinations or random lethal attacks against its non-military citizens abroad. Sunni extremists, and especially Salafi-jihadist terrorists, have placed Americans at risk worldwide. But a new terrorism campaign by Shi'a groups targeting Americans in non-combat zones

would exacerbate this risk, and push it into dimensions not confronted in the popular American psyche for nearly twenty years. From the perspective that a properly informed public will make a more resolute and determined public, our political leaders need to disseminate public information regarding the additional dimensions of terror the nation would confront in the event of a new Iranian-sponsored, Shi'a terror campaign. Without fear-mongering, our public officials need to set general public expectations properly so that prudent precautions are taken to reduce personal risk and so that the psychology of terrorism practiced by Shi'a groups will not frustrate a public now calibrated to understand the risks from and precautions for Salafi-jihadist terrorism. Fear often rides a horse named ignorance. To prevent that horse from getting out of the gate, proper public information about the real risk of terrorism emanating from Shi'a groups and the best ways for minimizing them is a real public policy requirement.

## **Conclusion**

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America remains a unique country and indispensable nation. Blessed with great power and responsibility, we face many obligations and challenges. For thirty years now, America's relationship with Iran has been a challenge, one incredibly frustrating and difficult to manage. Rightfully, we continue to debate how best to deal with Iran, while fulfilling our obligations to Iran's neighbors, to America's regional friends and allies and to the many American citizens conducting business on the international stage.

As policymakers contemplate the way forward with respect to Iran's ongoing nuclear and Iraqi-Shi'a challenges, we need to take a look back. History shows major differences between Sunni and Shi'a terrorism in non-combat zones during the period from 1981 through 2006. These differences are in form and in substance, and stem from the state-sponsored, rather than theologically-driven, character of Shi'a terrorism, especially in contrast with the grandiose, ideological framework that conditions modern Sunni group terror. Any new spike in Shi'a terrorism will come as a campaign, not a wave. It will be conducted to secure dearly held policy objectives in Tehran and with the leadership of Hezbollah and its overseas affiliate Islamic Jihad Organization. It will radiate through agents and actors working with Iranian emissaries and operatives, and without the knowledge of—much less any reliance upon—local Shi'a co-religionist communities. It will feature kidnappings followed by negotiations and produce



more targeted assassination of vulnerable foreign officials, educators and businessmen. It will also be far less publicized than Salafi-jihadist terror. In short, any new campaign of Shi'a terror against Americans and our western allies in third-party countries will exploit serious vulnerabilities in America's overseas posture for combating terrorism. Such a terror campaign is therefore a significant tool in the Iranian arsenal for retaliation and response against American military might and must be fully considered as such in American deliberations about the way forward in its policy toward Iran.

At the end of the day, America's next moves against Iran need not be dictated by risks to overseas interests from Shi'a group terror. Iranian-instigated terrorism in response to an American or Israeli military strike is highly likely, but not absolutely certain. And while a concerted campaign of terrorism by Shi'a groups in non-combat zones certainly will have some negative impact on American and regional trade, travel and commerce, the worst outcomes from Tehran's response can be blunted if America and our allies make the effort to prepare—physically and psychologically—for the dimensions of this Iranian form of retaliation. If we wish to take the risk from military confrontation with Iran, we should then fully confront the need for sound preparation and prudent risk reduction. America needs to reorient critical dimensions of our intelligence, counterintelligence and force protection programs overseas. We need do so in deliberate and sober collaboration with our many allies worldwide and be prepared to calm their fears. If we take these steps, then our anticipation of worst possible outcomes from a full-frontal confrontation with Iran will be complete. If we do not, then we leave our allies and ourselves vulnerable to a critical element of a most likely Iranian response and set the conditions for follow-on commitments and entangling obligations that no clear-headed American policymaker may wish to encounter. To the extent that non-military means might address Iran's nuclear and regional military challenges satisfactorily, the unique features of Iranian-inspired, Shi'a terror would suggest that American policymakers remain wise to exhaust every possible alternative.

## **APPENDIX A - NOTES ON METHODOLOGY**

### **1 – Shi'a Terrorist Groups and Agent Attacks Coded in this Study (alphabetical order)**

Amal (Lebanon)

Beirut Martyrs Battalion – Lebanon

Beirut Martyrs Forces Organization – Lebanon

Committee for Solidarity with Near East Political Prisoners (CSSPA) – Cover name for Iranian terror agents in France, 1986-87.

Guardians of the Islamic Revolution – Name for Iranian assassins working in England and European Continent in 1980s.

Hezbollah

Iran Ministry of Operations and Intelligence (MOIS) Agents

Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps – Jerusalem Brigade (IRGC-Qods Force) Agents

Islamic Jihad – Lebanon (Hezbollah alias)

Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO) – Lebanon (Hezbollah's global terror arm)

Tripoli Martyrs Battalion – Lebanon

Turkish Hezbollah

Turkish Islamic Jihad (aka: Turkish Hezbollah)

Party of God (Hezbollah alias)

Revolutionary Justice Organization (Hezbollah alias)

## 2 – Sunni Terrorist Group Attacks Coded in this Study (alphabetical order)

Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) – Philippines  
Adan Abyan Islamic Army (AAIA)  
Algerian Terrorism Front  
Algeria\_Unknown (all bombings, assassinations & violent strikes against government agencies, western businesses, foreign interests and non-Sunni religions in 1990s)  
Al-Arifeen – Pakistan/Kashmir  
Al-Badr Hizbul Mujahiden – Kashmir  
Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG) – Egypt  
Al-Hamas Mujahideen – India  
Al-Intiqanii-al-Pakistan  
Al-Itada Tribesmen – Yemen  
Al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI) – Horn of Africa  
Al Jama'a al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatilah bi-Libya  
Al-Jihad or Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ)  
Al-Madina – Kashmir  
Al Muhajiroun (AM)  
Al-Nasireen – Save Kashmir Movement  
Al-Nawaz  
Al-Omar Mujahedin – India  
Al-Qa'ida/al-Qa'ida  
Al-Qa'ida on the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) – Saudi Arabia  
Al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers – Saudi Arabia  
Al-Qa'ida Organization in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (formerly GSPC)  
Al-Sunni Muslim Sect – Ghana  
Ansar al-Islam (AI)  
Ansar al-Sunna  
Ansar Sarallah  
Armed Islamic Group (GIA) – Algeria  
Army of the Rightous (Laskar-e-Tayyiba, LT)  
Asbat al-Ansar – Lebanon  
Asif Raza Commandoes – India  
As-Samedoun (aka: Arab Steadfastness Front) – Egypt  
Awami League – Bangladesh  
  
Batallion of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam – Egypt/Jordan

Draa El Mizan Seriat – Algeria  
Doka Umarov's Group – Russia  
Dukhtoran-e-Mullat – India/Kashmir

East Turkistan Liberation Organization (ETLO) –  
China/Kyrgystan/Turkmenistan  
East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) – China/Kyrgystan/Turkmenistan  
Egypt's Revolution

Faithful Resistance – Lebanon

Gama'a al-Islamiyya (IG)  
Generation of Arab Fury – Saudi Arabia  
Group Islamique Algerienne' (GIA)  
(GSPC) Salafist Group for Preaching and War – Algeria

Harakat ul-Ansar (HUA) – India  
Harakat ul-Jihad-Islami (HUJI) – India  
Harakat ul-Jihad-Islami/Bangladesh (HUJI-B)  
Harakat ul-Mujahidin (Harkat ul-Mujahedeen) (HUM) – India  
Hezbi-i-Islami (HiG) – Afghanistan  
Hizb-ul-Mujahiden (HM) – India

International Islamic Brigade – Russia  
Islamic Army of Aden (IAA)  
Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain  
Islamic Great Eastern Raider's Font / Islami Buyuk Dogu Akincilar Cephesi  
(IBDA-C) – Turkey  
Islamic Group (IG) – Egypt  
Islamic Jihad – Kuwait  
Islamic Jihad Beit-al Maqdis Group – Jordan  
Islamic Jihadist Union (IJU) – successor of IMU  
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)  
Islamic Revival Movement – Tajikistan  
Islamic Resistance – Lebanon  
Islamic Struggle Front – Jordan  
Islamic Terrorists – Algeria  
Islamic Terrorists – Egypt

Islamic Terrorists – Pakistan (in attacks on classic Sunni extremist targets = westerners, public officials and agencies and Shi'a gatherings and establishments)

Ittehad-i-Islami – Pakistan

Jaish-i-Mohammed (Army of Mohammed) (JEM)

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) (aka Jemahh Islamiyah)

Jamaat ul-Fuqra

Jamaat-e-Islami – Bangladesh

Jamait-e-Islami – Pakistan

Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam Fazlur Rehman Faction (JUI-F)

Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen – India

Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front – Pakistan

Jihad Group

Jihad Islamic League Front – Algeria

Kalifatsstaat (Caliphate State) (CS)

Kamal Boulander Group – Algeria

Katibat El Ahoual – Algeria

Kashmir Freedom Force – India

Kashmiri Militants – India

Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF) – India

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ)

Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (Army of Righteous) (LT or LeT)

Laskar Jihad (LJ)

Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) – Philippines

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) – Philippines

Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM)

Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) – Pakistan/India

Mohajir National Movement – Pakistan/India

Mosar Bayarav Gang – Russia

Mujhadeen Din Kindalk – Indonesia

Muslim Fundamentalists – Pakistan

Muslim Militants – Indonesia

Muslim Militants – Tajikistan

Muslim Separatists – India

Muslims Against Global Oppression (MAGO)

Muttahida Qami Movement (MQM) – Pakistan

National Movement for the Restoration of Pakistani Sovereignty (NMRPS)  
New Jihad Group

Polisario Front – Morocco

Riyadh U.S.-Salineya Martyr's Brigade – Russia/Chechnya

Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) (aka Salafist Group for Preaching and War) – Algeria

Save Kashmir Movement – India

Shahid Khalsa Force – India

Shykhk Subki Al-Salih Forces – Lebanon

Sipah-e-Sahaba – Pakistan

Special Purpose Regiment – Russia/Chechnya

Squadrons of Terror (Katibat El Ahoual) – Algeria

Sunni Muslims – Pakistan

Talaa'al-Fateh – Egypt

Takfir wal-Hijra (Excommunication and Exodus) – Sudan

Tanyus Shanin Armed Unit – Lebanon

Tarek ibn Ziyad Faction – Lebanon

The Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG)

Uighur Separatists – China/Turkmenistan/Kyrgystan

United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) – India

Youth of Islamic Awakening – Jordan

Zionist Resistance Fighters – Algeria

**3 – Partial list of Sunni and Shi’a Terrorist Group Attacks Not Coded for this Study due to exclusive focus upon Israel or within Active Combat Zones**  
(alphabetical order) [\* = *Groups with an exclusive focus on Israel*]

Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade\*

Al-Asifa

Al-Fatah\*

Al-Jaish al-Islami fi al-Iraq (aka: Islamic Army in Iraq)

Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (aka: Al-Qa’ida in Iraq - AQI)

Al-Qaeda of Khoristan (aka: Al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan)

Arab Revolution/Liberation Vanguard Organization – Kuwait (precise sponsors never determined, so could be secular, Sunni or Shi’a)

Chechen Rebels

Dagestanis

Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)\*

Hamas\*

Iranian Extremists/Militants – Kuwait (label applied by Sunni Kuwait government as a catch-all for unexplained acts and without independent corroboration)

Iraqi Islamic Vanguard for National Salvation

Islamic Army in Iraq (aka: al-Jaish al-Islami fi al-Iraq)

Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine\*

Islamic Resistance (Hamas)\*

Intifada Martyrs\*

Izz-al-Din al-Qassam Brigades\*

Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) (Marxist-Leninist origins)

Kurdish Democratic Party – Iraq (KDP)

Mehdi Army Militia (MAM) – Iraq

Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MeK) / Mujahedi-Khalq Organization (MKO) – Iran  
(Marxist, Anti-Velayt-e-Faqih)

Muslim Brotherhood – Syria (always a suspect “lumped together” title for anti-Assad dissidents, the MB was largely eliminated by military/paramilitary action in 1982, thus insignificant in most of the study period)

Muslim Iranian Students Society (MEK front organization used to garner financial support)

National Liberation Army of Iran (The military wing of the MEK)  
Saladin Brigades\*

Palestine Liberation Front (PLF)\*

Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)\*

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)\*

People's Militia of Dagestan – Dagestan/Chechnya

People's Mujahedin of Iran (PMOI)

Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)\*

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)\*

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-Special Command (PFLP-SC)\*

Popular Resistance Committees\*

Shiite Moslems – Pakistan (highly suspect reporting from Sunni Government of Pakistan in 1980s-1990s, and unable to corroborate independently)

Tanzim\*

Tanzim Qa'idat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (QJBR)\*

Tawhid Islamic Brigades – Iraq only since 2004

Umar al-Mukhtar unit of the National Revolutionary Command\*



#### 4 - Counting Events: Coding Terrorist Strikes as Sunni or Shi'a Terror.

There are several detailed, open-source databases cataloging incidents of global terrorism over the past thirty to forty years.<sup>111</sup> A couple of additional references provide partial chronological listings of major Islamic extremist terror events dating back to the early 1980s.<sup>112</sup> However, none differentiates in an explicit analytical way between Sunni terrorist (including Salafi-jihadist) episodes and Shi'a ones. The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism - Terrorism Knowledge Base (MIPT-TKB) did catalogue terrorist incident perpetrators by group, in the process listing all claims (and multiple claims) by terrorist organizations with names and declared affiliations. These details cued the researcher as to the religious sect origin of the terror event. In a similar vein, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism - Global Terrorism Database (START-GTD), run by the University of Maryland, aggregates terrorist perpetrators as religious in nature, thereby including clearly non-Islamic groups like apocalyptic Christian cults, violent anti-abortion protestors, Hindu nationalist extremists, ultra-extremist Russian Orthodox and Jewish groups, etc. The START-GTD also lists specific groups claiming responsibility for, or officially charged with, perpetrating the terrorist incident.

Together with the MIPT-TKB, the START-GTD event-by-event listing of terror incident perpetrators provided this study with its baseline data for analysis of Sunni versus Shi'a terrorism events. There are well over one hundred documented Sunni extremist and terrorist groups. (See Appendix A2.) Some have familiar names like al-Qa'ida and the Philippines' Abu Sayyaf. Far more feature obscure titles like the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA) and the Islamic Great Eastern Raider's Front (IBDA-C) in Turkey. All associate openly and directly with the anti-western, anti-modernization credo and commitment to violence that is the foundation of historic Sunni extremism and its principal

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<sup>111</sup> Chief among these comprehensive open-source data base resources are the RAND Worldwide Terrorism Incident Database, <http://rand.org/ise/projects/terrorismdatabase/>; MIPT-TKB; and START-GTD. These sources have limitations, including the propensity to include incident and casualty counts from war zones in their totals (see discussion in footnote 13). These limitations are minimized by detailed counting and calibration of data to the criteria established in this study.

<sup>112</sup> Here, the data and analysis about Islamist terrorism at IntelCenter is detailed and helpful, see IntelCenter, <http://www.intelcenter.com>. See also PBS-FRONTLINE chronology of Shi'a-inspired terrorism, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/etc/modern.html>.

manifestation today, the more virulent Salafi-Jihadist ideology.<sup>113</sup> The research underpinning this study relied heavily on identification of the group names and established links to Sunni extremism, Salafism and Salafi-Jihad in coding terrorist events as Sunni-related, thereby establishing the nearly 700 terrorist attacks attributable to the ideology's offshoot organizations in non-combat zones during the period from 1981 to 2006.

Conversely, the universe of Shi'a terrorist organizations and agents assessed in this study is far less diverse. In fact, outside of Iran's state agency terrorists, one single group, Hezbollah, is the major embodiment of Shi'a extremism known to conduct terrorist operations worldwide. (See Appendix A1.) Referred to during the 1980s as the Islamic Party of God, the Islamic Resistance or the Revolutionary Justice Organization, Hezbollah (or Lebanese-Hezbollah) is a unique and focal point for Shi'a terrorism that stands in stark contrast to the much more diverse cast of Sunni terrorist organizations perpetrating terrorist strikes around the globe in the past quarter century. Consequently, this study's coding of Shi'a terror incidents outside of combat zones and Israel relies heavily on counting and collating the 158 separate individual terror strikes pinned to Iranian agents or claimed by Hezbollah or in one of its aliases.

The resources and references available for this study are obviously incomplete and therefore imperfect. Despite detailed review of the two dominant databases and several less comprehensive chronological listings, this study of key Islamist terror patterns outside of combat zones can be no better than about 85 percent accurate in accounting for the universe of completed Islamist-inspired terrorist events over the twenty-five year period. Collectively, gaps from countries where press freedoms are extremely limited, like Syria, Libya and Sudan, and other systematic counting biases that are unavoidable when tracking many thousands

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<sup>113</sup> As noted in the body of this study, the radical ideology of *Salafi-jihad* that underpins many contemporary Sunni terrorist groups around the world is a darker, more global variant of historic Sunni extremism. This ideology, including its social critique of the ills in modern Islamic society, its call of the faithful to violence and its vision of a utopian future based upon a mythical interpretation of the Islamic Caliphate of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, provides a critical set of limits within which al-Qa'ida and dozens of other Sunni-extremist terror groups organize, plan and conduct terrorist operations. For a good overview of *Salafi-jihad*, its minority status, its distinction from Islamic fundamentalism and basic Salafism and its linkage to Sunni terrorism, see Stout, et al., 1-23; Martinage, 11-30. See also Michael Scott Doran, "Somebody Else's Civil War," in *How Did This Happen?*, eds. James Hoge and Gideon Rose (New York: Public Affairs [A Council on Foreign Relations Book], 2001); Moghadam (2008a), 14-16. Finally, for a review of the essential primary source reference on the modern inspiration for Salaf-jihad, see Sayyed Qutb, *Milestones* [1964] (Beirut, Lebanon: Holy Koran Publishing House, 1980), ch. 12.

of incidents a year from every country in the world means that any data will be biased toward under-counting of events. Acknowledging this limitation, the conclusions drawn here are advanced in the firm belief that they are sufficiently comprehensive and generalizable to merit serious attention by terrorism analysts and western policymakers for their implications upon anti-terrorism and counterterrorism policies, programs and resourcing decisions.