
Why America?

The Globalization of Civil War

“Terrorism should be seen as a strategic reaction to American power in the context of a globalized civil war. Extremist religious beliefs play a role in motivating terrorism, but they also display an instrumental logic.”

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The magnitude of the September 11 assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was unprecedented in the history of terrorism. The method of attack represented a novel combination of the familiar tactics of aircraft hijackings, which began in 1968, and suicide bombings, which developed in the 1980s. The four simultaneous hijackings required much more complicated and long-term planning and organization than had previous terrorist actions. Subsequent investigations revealed the existence of a vast and complex transnational conspiracy behind the hijackings.

The September 11 attacks are also the culmination of a pattern of anti-American terrorism on the international level. Since the late 1960s the United States has been a preferred target, the victim of approximately one-third of all international terrorist attacks over the past 30 years. In most instances Americans and American interests were attractive to the practitioners of terrorism because of United States support for unpopular local governments or regional enemies. This terrorism can thus be interpreted as a form of compellence: the use or threat of violence to compel the United States to withdraw from its external commitments. Terrorism should be seen as a strategic reaction to American power in the context of globalized civil war. Extremist religious beliefs play a role in motivating terrorism, but they also display an instrumental logic.

MAKING THE UNITED STATES THE TARGET

The development of international terrorism as it came to characterize the second half of the twentieth century was initially associated with left-wing social revolution. Beginning in 1965, the war in Vietnam legitimized anti-Ameri-

canism and equated hostility to the United States with anti-imperialism and national liberation around the world. Independent terrorist campaigns also emerged simultaneously in Latin America, the Middle East, and Europe as a result of localized conflicts and issues. These converging waves of terrorism shared an important feature that distinguished them from earlier violence. Primarily, the attacks involved the seizure of hostages to make political demands on governments. They also involved attacks on diplomats and on civil aviation, a newly available and convenient target.

In Central and South America, kidnappings and assassinations of American and other Western diplomats broke the taboo of diplomatic immunity. Revolutionary organizations, typically inspired by the Cuban example, wanted to demonstrate American complicity in perpetuating the military dictatorships they sought to overthrow. Their belief was that if the dependence of authoritarian regimes on superior outside power could either be revealed to the world or brought to an end, revolution could succeed. Unable to mobilize the countryside, their strategic emphasis shifted from rural insurgency to “urban guerrilla” warfare. Violent revolutionary campaigns flared briefly but were suppressed, often with extreme brutality, in the late 1960s and 1970s.

In the Middle East, the stunning Arab defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip aroused a Palestinian national consciousness. To the newly established Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the leadership of Yasir Arafat, the unmistakable lesson was that neither conventional war nor reliance on sympathetic Arab states could help the Palestinian cause. In 1968 the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine (PFLP), a minority faction of the PLO, initiated the practice of hijackings by seizing an Israeli El Al airliner. The PFLP claimed that the airplane was a legitimate military target because El Al had been used to transport Israeli troops in 1967.

The strategy quickly expanded to include the airlines of any country dealing with Israel—including the United States, which was fast becoming Israel’s chief ally and weapons supplier. In 1970 the PFLP accomplished a feat that before September 2001 was considered, according to analyst Peter St. John, the “most dramatic multiple hijack in history.” A TWA plane from Frankfurt, a Swissair flight from Zurich, and an El Al flight from New York were hijacked to Jordan on September 6. At the same time, a Pan Am plane was hijacked to Cairo. Two days later, a British plane was also hijacked. Four of the planes were destroyed. Fortunately, the hundreds of passengers were eventually released unharmed.

Terrorism generated by the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians escalated to include not only hijackings that ended without loss of life but also lethal attacks on diplomats, takeovers of embassies or other prominent public buildings (“barricade and hostage” incidents), bombings of aircraft, and armed attacks on passengers at airports. Most terrorist incidents were attributable to the more radical and Marxist-oriented Palestinian factions, which also attacked conservative Arab regimes. (As in Latin America, these regimes were doubly vulnerable as local elites and as American allies.) These secular extremist groups aimed for revolution throughout the Arab world, not just the liberation of Palestine.

Also as in Latin America, Middle Eastern terrorism involved attacks on diplomatic targets, notably in the March 1973 Khartoum incident in Sudan. Two American diplomats and a Belgian diplomat were killed by the Palestinian Black September organization, which had seized the Saudi Arabian embassy during a diplomatic reception. The American rejection of the hostage-takers’ demands marked the first implementation of the recently adopted no-concessions policy. Subsequent terrorist attacks killed American passengers at the Rome and Athens airports in August and December. In 1974 a TWA plane en route from Tel Aviv to New York crashed as a result of an on-board explosion, for which the Arab Nationalist Youth for the Liberation of Palestine took credit. In 1976 PFLP militants assassinated the American ambassador to Lebanon, along with the embassy’s economic counselor.

Membership in NATO as well as the Vietnam war enhanced the attractiveness of American targets in Western Europe, where two related developments stimulated terrorism. First, indigenous left-revolutionary movements arose from social protest movements in West Germany and Italy. Their roots were primarily in student disaffection, framed in terms of anti-imperialism and sympathy for the third world. Second, although the social and political roots of these organizations were domestic rather than international, they were inspired and assisted by the spillover of Palestinian

terrorism to the European scene. This spillover effect was demonstrated most shockingly with the Black September attack on Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics, during which 11 Israeli athletes were killed. Combined operations between German and Palestinian groups became reasonably common in the 1970s, as did cooperation between Palestinians and the Japanese Red Army.

Furthermore, West European revolutionaries, lacking popular support, saw their mission not only as overthrowing oppressive regimes at home but as assisting third world revolutionary movements, protesting American involvement in the Vietnam war, and revealing that NATO’s European members were merely fascist puppets of American hegemonic ambitions. The American military presence was thus anathema, leading to bombings of military bases (especially air force bases in Germany), assassination attempts, and kidnappings (for example, of General James Dozier in Italy in 1980).¹ Terrorism in Western Europe declined through the 1980s as governments became more efficient at countering the problem and as the social movements from which the terrorist groups recruited subsided.

ENTER THE STATE—AND RELIGION

In the 1980s, terrorism did not end but shifted course. Persistent state involvement, or “sponsorship,” of terrorism, especially by Libya and Iran, marked this period. The decade saw the advent of what is thought of as religious terrorism, driven by the success of the Iran’s Islamic revolution in 1979 and Iran’s intervention in the Lebanese civil war on the side of Lebanon’s Shia community in the 1980s. The war between Iran and Iraq began in September 1980 exacerbated tensions between Iran and the West, since most Western states sided with Iraq. Libya supported anti-American terrorism for reasons that remain obscure beyond a generic anti-imperialism without religious connotations.

Many sources of the terrorism of the 1990s can be traced to specific events associated with the Persian Gulf war and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The administration of President Ronald Reagan immediately adopted a “proactive” stance toward terrorism. The Iran hostage crisis had been a major turning point for the United States and a painful personal defeat for the previous president, Jimmy Carter. The crisis had a profound impact for several reasons: the Iranian government’s public assumption of responsibility for seizing and holding American diplomats; the seriousness of the violation of international laws and norms; and the apparent success of

state terrorism. The failed military mission to rescue the embassy hostages was an added blow to American prestige. The Reagan administration was determined to respond vigorously to the next challenge.

The hostage crisis reverberated beyond the immediate Iranian context not only because of the lessons learned by the United States but also because Iran was determined to spread the Islamic revolution to surrounding Arab countries with Shiite populations: from Lebanon and Iraq to American allies such as Kuwait. Iranian ambitions thus threatened the stability of a region that was and is economically and strategically vital to United States interests. Although Iran explained its actions in terms of religious principles, the original reason for the seizure of the American embassy in Tehran was not new. It was a reaction to American support for the shah's autocratic regime and not only that, for the shah himself, whose admission to the United States for medical treatment precipitated the embassy takeover.

These new dimensions of terrorism—open and deliberate state involvement and religious justification—heightened American anxiety. The civil war in Lebanon brought matters to a head. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 in a bid to end PLO attacks on Israel's border, the stage was set for American intervention in a benign effort to negotiate the PLO's withdrawal from Lebanon to Tunisia. After successfully overseeing the PLO's departure, United States forces withdrew. But the massacre of Palestinian civilians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut by Israel's Lebanese allies brought the United States back into the conflict as a would-be peacekeeper on both a local and a regional scale. Hoping to recapture the success of the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt, the United States expanded its mission to include resolution of the conflict between Israel, Lebanon, the PLO, and Syria. American efforts to rebuild a Lebanese state had the unintended consequence of convincing Shiite militants in Lebanon, supported by Iran, that the United States was acting as Israel's key ally and also backing the more immediate enemy, conservative Christian Lebanese factions. The most militant of Shiite organizations was Hezbollah, whose guerrilla arm inaugurated the tactic of massive truck or vehicle bombs. Some of these attacks were so-called suicide bombings—terrorist acts that require the death of the bomber to succeed. The American embassy in Lebanon was bombed twice, one in April 1983, with a loss of 86 lives, and again when a van exploded in front of the United States embassy annex, killing 2 American military officers and 12 Lebanese in 1984. In 1983 the American embassy in Kuwait was also bombed. Most traumatically, in October 1983 a Hezbollah suicide bomber killed 214 marines in an attack on the American Marine barracks at the Beirut airport. Early the next year, United States forces withdrew from Lebanon. Whatever the reason for the decision, Hezbollah proudly regarded it as a victory.

Retreat from Lebanon did not end terrorism, which continued with a spate of kidnappings and assassinations of Westerners. Since military targets were now scarce,

Hezbollah turned to civilians, including journalists and educators at the American University of Beirut, as well as officials. Kidnappings began in 1982, with the abduction of David Dodge, acting president of the American University of Beirut. Iran apparently instigated the kidnapping to pressure the United States to obtain the release of four Iranian embassy employees who had been kidnapped by Christian Lebanese militia. In 1984 Dodge's successor, Malcolm Kerr, was assassinated. More kidnappings of Americans, as well as other Westerners, followed in sequence. In addition to Iran's interests, Hezbollah leaders objected to Kuwait's arrest of a number of suspected terrorists with links to Lebanon. Hezbollah hoped to use the United States hostages to ensure that Kuwait release or at least proceed leniently with the prisoners, several of whom were linked by family relationships to Hezbollah leaders. William Buckley, the CIA station chief in Lebanon, was abducted at this time, probably due to Iran's interest in halting aid to Iraq. He died in captivity. The kidnapping of American journalist Terry Anderson in 1985 may have been a reaction to the United States veto of a UN resolution condemning Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon.

In June 1985, just as Israel relinquished most of the territory it had held in Lebanon, Hezbollah militants hijacked TWA Flight 847 to Beirut and murdered an American Navy diver on board. The militants demanded the release of over 700 Shiite prisoners in Israeli jails, most of them Lebanese. The demand was also linked to two other kidnappings of Americans. After two weeks of crisis, accompanied by massive publicity, a deal was successfully brokered. The hostages were then released unharmed.

In October 1985 Palestinian radicals affiliated with the PLO hijacked an Italian cruise ship, the *Achille Lauro*, and killed an American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer. The group also demanded the release of prisoners held in Israel. The United States military forced an Egyptian plane carrying the hijackers to land in Italy, where they were arrested.

Libya's militant adventurism added to the explosive mix of terrorism in the 1980s. Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi had embarked on an anti-Western campaign that included supporting terrorism by extremist Palestinian factions as well as financing and arming practically any group that caused trouble for the West, such as the Irish Republican Army. In December 1985 the Abu Nidal organization, a radical Palestinian group and a Libyan client, attacked El Al and TWA passengers at the Rome and Vienna airports.

In 1986 Libyan-sponsored terrorism (specifically the bombing of Berlin's La Belle discotheque, which killed an American soldier) as well as provocative naval maneuvers in the Gulf of Sidra provoked the United States to respond with air power for the first time. The American bombing of Tripoli apparently led Libya to seek revenge by organizing the midair bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988. The bombing killed 259 passengers, 189 of whom were American. That act was eventually traced directly to agents of the Libyan state, whom British and American authorities indicted in 1991. The im-

position of sanctions against Libya by the United Nations in 1992 and 1993 appeared finally to subdue Libyan-sponsored terrorism. However, when a special Scottish court in the Netherlands convicted a Libyan official of the crime in 2001, the Libyan government was defiant.

A “NEW TERRORISM”

The 1990s were not supposed to be an era of terrorism. The Persian Gulf war had ended in 1991 with the defeat of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, an outcome that seemed to presage a geopolitical realignment in the Middle East that could bring a stable peace. The remaining hostages in Lebanon were released in 1991. The cold war had ended that year also, and with it the generalized sense of insecurity caused by the nuclear stalemate between the two superpowers. The 1993 Oslo accords signaled the beginning of a peace process between Israelis and Palestinians.

Portraying the United States as an immoral enemy justifies terrorism to the audiences of the dispossessed.

When it came to office in 1993, President Bill Clinton’s administration minimized the threat of terrorism, defining it as one of a number of transnational or border-crossing threats such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, environmental disasters, crime, and epidemics of disease. Instead of peace and security, however, by mid-decade the United States felt threatened by the prospect of a “new terrorism” that would be decentralized, fanatical, and inclined to mass casualty attacks that included the use of weapons of mass destruction. The 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing made terrorist attacks on American soil a tragic reality. A 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system by the Aum Shinrikyo religious sect suggested new vulnerabilities and new terrorist methods. There were also bombings of military installations in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996, two American embassies in East Africa in 1998, and a United States destroyer in Yemen in October, 2000. In 2001 the new Bush administration had barely had time to set its agenda before the nation’s worst fears were realized in the devastating terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In October a series of suspicious anthrax infections gave a concrete shape to the new specter of bioterrorism.

Many sources of the terrorism of the 1990s can be traced to specific events associated with the Persian Gulf war and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The postwar sanctions against Iraq and the military enforcement of the no-fly zones in Iraq (the prohibition on Iraqi military

aircraft in most of the northern and southern parts of the country) perpetuated that conflict and mobilized anti-American sentiment. American support for the Afghan resistance to the Soviet Union in the 1980s, followed by neglect as the country collapsed into chaos, mobilized the resistance (called the mujahideen) and may have permitted the Taliban to seize power in 1996. Islamic militants from around the world gained experience fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and then returned to their homes, where radical organizations proliferated. Some, unwanted at home due to their militance, settled abroad. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the establishment of training camps in Afghanistan by Saudi-born terrorist Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda organization provided an ongoing arena for the socialization of Islamic radicals from across the world.

Yet much is familiar about the current manifestation of anti-American terrorism. Although often justified in terms of religious principle, its roots lie in American support for regimes with embittered domestic oppositions who appeal to Islamic values and have formed transnational ties and allegiances.² Militant Islamist movements could not have emerged in the absence of social and political conditions that leave many Muslims desperate and aggrieved. As close American allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are critical cases in point. Algeria is a third strand (the United States supports the Algerian government but is not a mainstay of the regime).

For many of the militants now engaged in Al Qaeda, opposition to authority at home, whether peaceful or violent, was ineffective. Local regimes countered dissent with severe repression. As a result, radical frustrations apparently were transferred to the United States as a symbol of both oppression and arrogance. As a free and affluent society, America is a target-rich environment, and one where sensational attacks elicit gratifying media attention. Portraying the United States as an immoral enemy justified terrorism to the audiences of the dispossessed, especially young men without life prospects whose only education is religious. These various strands have been knitted together in the transnational conspiracy that is Al Qaeda. One cannot understand Al Qaeda without understanding the domestic politics of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, or now much of the Muslim world.

First, the American alliance with Egypt, a reward for making peace with Israel, made the United States a target of radical Islamic groups seeking the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak’s regime (in 1981 President Anwar Sadat paid with his life for signing the Camp David accords). In the 1990s, Egyptian politics apparently spilled onto American soil. In October 1995 a blind Egyptian cleric, Umar Abd al-Rahman, along with nine others, was convicted of the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, which killed 6 people and injured more than 1,000. Planning to bomb other New York landmarks, including the Lincoln and Holland Tunnels and the United Nations building, was also part of the charges. Rahman was the spir-

itual leader of the al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya (IG), an extremist Sunni Muslim group active in Egypt since the late 1970s. Its aim was to overthrow the government and replace it with an Islamic state. The group was involved in several attempts to assassinate President Mubarak, including a June 1995 attempt in Ethiopia, after which the suspects were believed to have fled to the Sudan. In 1996 the IG and a companion radical group, Islamic Jihad, first began to operate extensively outside Egypt.

Another more mysterious figure behind the 1993 World Trade Center bombing was Ramzi Yousef. In 1995 he was arrested in Pakistan and extradited to the United States. In 1998 he was sentenced to life in prison with solitary confinement for his role in the World Trade Center bombing and for his plan to blow up other New York landmarks. He was also convicted in 1996 for his role in a conspiracy based in Manila, which planned to bomb several American airliners over the Pacific in 1995. Yousef's closing statement referred in rambling fashion to the atomic bomb dropped on Japan, the fire bombing of Tokyo, the war in Vietnam, the embargoes imposed on Iraq and Cuba, United States support for Israel, and opposition to the Palestinian peace process. Religion was not a dominant theme, although the judge said that Yousef claimed to be an Islamic militant.

The Egyptian connection also shows up in the Al Qaeda leadership. Ayman al-Zawahiri, a key associate of Osama bin Laden, is the founder of Egyptian Islamic Jihad. He apparently joined Al Qaeda in 1998. Similarly, Muhammad Atef, Al Qaeda's military commander, is Egyptian, as are at least four other advisers to bin Laden. All were placed on the joint FBI-State Department most wanted list in October 2001. In Egypt, factions associated with IG and Islamic Jihad were also responsible for deadly attacks on tourists in Egypt in 1997. Egyptian Islamic Jihad's alliance with Al Qaeda can be interpreted as an outcome of the group's inability to continue its terrorist activities within Egypt.

THE SAUDI CONUNDRUM

The problem in Saudi Arabia is more complicated. Here, as in Egypt, American support for a repressive regime as well as its continued military presence after the gulf war drew the wrath of domestic dissidents, who used Islam to oppose the conservative Saudi monarchy. However, the Saudi government itself bases its legitimacy on a strict and puritanical version of Islam, and it has encouraged and supported fundamentalist religious doctrine. Until September 11 it was one of the few governments that recognized the Taliban. The government and officially sanctioned charities fund the *madrassas* (religious schools) in Pakistan that educate the constituencies of young Muslim men from which Al Qaeda recruits, for example. Of the 19 hijackers on September 11, the United States government has concluded that 15 were Saudi nationals.

In 1995 five Americans were killed in the bombing of a Saudi National Guard office in Riyadh used by United States military trainers. Three of the four religious militants

who confessed and were subsequently executed had fought in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya. In 1996 a truck-bomb attack on Khobar Towers, an American military housing complex in Saudi Arabia, killed 19 United States military personnel, wounded 372 other United States citizens, and injured more than 200 non-Americans. The facility housed almost 3,000 military personnel responsible for enforcing the no-fly zone in Iraq.

Iran was suspected of involvement by assisting a group called Saudi Hezbollah, an offshoot of the Lebanese Hezbollah. Syria also was thought to have helped with the preparations. Although four members of the group were subsequently placed on the terrorist most wanted list, the United States could not acquire sufficient evidence to justify retaliation against Iran. Shortly before the Khobar Towers bombing, Secretary of State Warren Christopher had publicly condemned Iran for encouraging and financing terrorism designed to disrupt the Middle East peace process, specifically suicide bombings in Israel by Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas, the major Palestinian militant Islamic fundamentalist group. FBI investigators complained of a lack of cooperation from the Saudis.

In June 2001 United States courts indicted 13 members of Saudi Hezbollah plus 1 Lebanese (11 of the accused are in prison in Saudi Arabia, where they will be tried). The plot had taken about three years, and its purpose was apparently to support Iran in driving the United States from the gulf region. No mention of Iran was made in the United States indictment, however, and Iran denies involvement.

Osama bin Laden came to the attention of American officials during investigations into the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, although whether he played an active role in that attack is unclear. Bin Laden's history as wealthy financier of the resistance to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan is now well known. Returning to Saudi Arabia after the Soviet withdrawal—which must have been seen as a major victory—bin Laden turned to violence against Saudi and American interests. Saudi Arabia expelled him to Sudan in 1991, where he flourished with the support of Sudan's radical Islamist regime. However, Sudan in turn expelled him at the insistence of the United States. He retreated to Afghanistan in 1996, on the eve of the Taliban's seizure of power.

In 1997, from his hidden bases in the caves of Afghanistan, bin Laden gave an interview to CNN in which he declared a jihad against the United States. He had issued earlier calls to arms but now used American television media to communicate his message. He claimed that jihad was a response to United States support for Israel, America's military presence in Saudi Arabia, and America's "aggressive intervention against Muslims in the whole world." In 1998 he joined with Egyptian Islamic Jihad to establish an "International Front for Islamic Holy War against the Jews and Crusaders." The front called for attacks on American targets across the globe, both civil and military, to force an American withdrawal from Saudi Arabia and to end the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem. It focused on the

plight of the Iraqi people, but not the Palestinian cause. This appeal was ambitiously presented as a *fatwa*, or religious edict, which all Muslims were called on to obey.

In 1996 the United States had already initiated a grand jury investigation into bin Laden's activities, and the CIA began to target and "disrupt" his network. By the spring United States agencies were specifically monitoring his activities in Nairobi, Kenya. In March 1998 the State Department issued a worldwide alert drawing attention to a threat against American military and civilians following the February *fatwa*. A sealed indictment in June 1998 led to the arrest of 21 of bin Laden's associates during the summer. It charged the group with attacks on United States and UN troops in Somalia in 1993 and with leading a terrorist conspiracy in concert with Sudan, Iraq, and Iran. Press reports later indicated that the United States was also considering a raid into Afghanistan to arrest bin Laden, as a result of a 1998 presidential finding that authorized covert operations, including blocking bin Laden's financial assets and exercising close surveillance.

Despite this awareness and these actions, the August 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania came as a surprise. The Nairobi bombing killed 12 Americans, 32 other United States employees, and more than 200 Kenyans. Thousands were injured. In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, 11 people were killed and 85 injured. No Americans died. In form, the attacks resembled the bombings of the United States embassy in Beirut in 1983 and 1984, but the message was not that the United States should withdraw from Kenya and Tanzania. The intent instead appeared to be to issue a general warning of a terrorist campaign. In tactical terms, what distinguished the attacks and alarmed American authorities was that two embassies in different countries were bombed simultaneously, which indicated a highly organized conspiracy.

The Clinton administration responded immediately with cruise missile attacks on Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and on a pharmaceuticals plant in the Sudan. (The latter was suspected of manufacturing precursor chemicals for weapons use and was believed to have connections to bin Laden's business enterprises as well as to the Sudanese regime.) The decision to use military force was controversial. In particular, critics disputed the link between the pharmaceuticals plant, chemical precursors, and bin Laden. The retaliatory attacks may have been a signal of American resolve, but they inflicted no serious damage on Al Qaeda's capabilities. They may also have cost the United States the moral high ground. Rather than stressing that most of the victims of the bombings were African, the United States was seen to be bombing Muslim countries.

A second avenue of response was a strengthened law enforcement effort. United States authorities quickly apprehended four of the men who planned and executed the East Africa bombings. All four were convicted (and in October 2001 they were sentenced to life in prison). The group included a Saudi, a Tanzanian, a Jordanian, and an American who was born in Lebanon. Two were charged with direct

participation; the other two were found guilty of participating in the broader conspiracy. The lengthy trial in New York revealed many details of the operations of the Al Qaeda network, which appeared less like a cult of religious zealots than a far-reaching and profitable business enterprise. Bin Laden was said to control a global banking network as well as agricultural, construction, transportation, and investment companies in Sudan. Bin Laden was also said to have developed his hostility to the United States as a result of the 1993 intervention in Somalia. According to witness testimony (from Jamal Ahmed al-Fadl, a former bin Laden associate who had been cooperating with the United States since 1996), Al Qaeda was divided over whether to retaliate after the arrest of Sheik Rahman in 1993. The Egyptian members wanted to avenge his arrest, but others objected that innocent people would be killed. Some of the Egyptian members then left the organization.

The Taliban continued to reject the American demand to surrender bin Laden, which was first made in 1998. This persistent refusal resulted in the imposition of United Nations sanctions and the isolation of the Taliban regime.

The next public manifestation of Al Qaeda's terrorist activity came in December 1999, when a series of "millennium plots" was foiled. One involved an Algerian, Ahmed Ressay, who entered the United States from Canada to bomb the Los Angeles airport. His fortuitous arrest showed that Al Qaeda cells were operating in Canada and that the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) was involved. The plot was also linked to Al Qaeda cells in Britain. Eventually four Algerians were charged in the plot and brought to trial in June and July 2001.

Training in Afghanistan was a common theme in their experience. Ahmed Ressay described a decentralized organizational structure. Militants were trained by the organization, but then given funds and substantial autonomy in selecting targets. He also testified that Sheik Rahman had issued orders to kill Americans. (Another thwarted millennium plot involved attacks on tourists in Jordan and Israel. Jordan arrested a number of suspects.)

The link between Al Qaeda and the GIA was a product of Algeria's bloody civil war in the 1990s. When the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to win Algeria's national elections in December 1991, the Algerian government cancelled the results. The GIA emerged as the most extreme of the opposition movements. In 1994 members of the GIA hijacked a plane to Marseilles and threatened to fly it into the Eiffel Tower before they were killed by French security forces. As elsewhere, many Algerian militants had fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

In October 2000 Al Qaeda struck again. Although conclusive proof is lacking, the United States is certain that bin Laden's followers organized the suicide bombing of the United States destroyer *Cole* while it was refueling in Yemen. The death toll was 17 Navy personnel. The bombers were apparently Yemenis, but bin Laden was suspected of backing them. The mastermind was thought to be a Saudi of Yemeni origin, living in the United Arab Emirates. As in

Saudi Arabia, the FBI encountered difficulties in getting Yemeni authorities to cooperate in the investigation.

THE SCOPE BROADENS

The attacks of September 11 fit a pattern but also marked a dramatic escalation of violence. Subsequent investigations into the hijackings also revealed the astonishing scope of the transnational conspiracy involved. The hijackers included Egyptian, Saudi, and Lebanese citizens. The apparent leaders came from a cell headquartered at a technical university in Hamburg, Germany. Arrests in other countries such as Spain, Britain, Germany, and France targeted Kuwaiti, French, Algerian, Yemeni, Moroccan, Libyan, Syrian, and Tunisian activists, among others. One group was apparently organizing a parallel plot to attack the American embassy in Paris. The organizers were mostly Al Qaeda second-generation Algerians in France. The European branch of the conspiracy was said to revolve around two groups, the Egyptian Takfir wal Hijra (known in Europe as Vanguard of the Conquest or the new Jihad Group), led by Al Qaeda lieutenant Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat. The Salafists are thought to work with bin Laden but to maintain an independent leadership (in 1998 the Salafist Group broke from the GIA and apparently formed an alliance with Al Qaeda).

The reasoning behind the September 11 attacks was expressed primarily in a statement from bin Laden broadcast in Qatar on October 7, and to a lesser degree in subsequent pronouncements from Al Qaeda leaders. Such statements show a keen appreciation of different audiences and constituencies and are attuned to sensitivities to specific grievances. Typically, bin Laden did not claim direct credit for the actions but praised those responsible as a "group of vanguard Muslims." The statement referred specifically to 80 years of humiliation of Islam. It thus apparently dated the period of humiliation to 1921, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and the establishment of Britain's Palestine Mandate that provided for a Jewish homeland. Specific references to Palestine and Iraq were made, as well as more vague allegations that countries that believe in Islam had been urged against bin Laden by the United States. Bin Laden cited United States retaliation against Afghanistan in 1998 as another grievance. Echoing Ramzi Yousef, he also condemned the United States bombing of Japan in 1945. This comparison may be an attempt to provide moral justification for causing large numbers of civilian casualties.

The anthrax incidents this October have not been conclusively linked to Al Qaeda operatives. Previously, the only terrorist attacks using chemical and biological weap-

ons occurred in Japan, most notably with the subway sarin gas attack in 1995 by the Aum Shinrikyo cult. Since then the American government had undertaken a range of efforts to protect American cities and prepare for terrorist-caused disaster ("consequence management"). "Bioterrorism" was seen as the most likely manifestation of the threat. Even if the anthrax scare is not linked to international terrorism, it will increase fears that such attacks are likely.

THE PREPOSTEROUS IDEA

The United States has been susceptible to international terrorism primarily because of its engagement on the world scene and its choice of allies. Extremist groups in countries around the world have targeted United States interests in an effort to achieve radical political change at home. The United States military presence, whether in assisting local regimes or in peacemaking exercises, attracted terrorism, but so too did diplomatic and cultural institutions.

In the 1990s, a determined leadership, drawing its inspiration from an extreme version of Islam, took advantage of permissive political conditions and ample financial resources to construct a transnational terrorist coalition with deadly ambitions. To Americans, the idea that the United States could be compelled by terrorism to abandon its interests in the Middle East is preposterous; to the leaders and followers of Al Qaeda there is precedent in Lebanon and Somalia. In a war of attrition, superior motivation is often the key to the successful compulsion of an adversary, and terrorism is a way of demonstrating their determination and power. When civil war is expanded to the international system, vulnerability may be the inevitable accompaniment to the exercise of power. Although the response must deal with the immediate threat and the actors who are behind it, it must also deal with the long term. Future American foreign policy must consider the risk of terrorism as a central factor in calculating interests and strategies.

Notes

1. The United States experienced a similar domestic phenomenon, growing out of the student protest movement. However, the Weather Underground collapsed in the early stages of violence.
2. For a discussion of the general problem as well as specific accounts of Egypt and Algeria, see Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam; Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

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